KANOHI KI TE KANOHI:FACE TO FACE

***FRAMEWORKS FROM TIKANGA MĀORI MEET
VIEWPOINTS IMPROVISATIONS, SHOCKING THE
THEATRICAL ENCOUNTER INTO ALIVE-LI-NESS***

BY

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Improvisations, Shocking the Theatrical Encounter into
Alive-li-ness**

Dedicated to my mother, Irene Ruth who urged me on

2. Kalyanee Mulay as Eurydice, New Delhi.

Contents

5.	Abstract
7.	List of Illustrations
12.	Chapter One: Artistically Structured yet Wildly Free: A Journey Towards this 'Holy Grail' of Theatre
28.	Chapter Two: Improvisation and its Relationship to the Artistically Structured Moment
68.	Chapter Three: The Improvised Elements of New Zealand <i>Marae</i> Rituals and their Application to Theatre Performance
144.	Chapter Four: Viewpoints as an Approach to Performance: Combining Spontaneity with Structure
197.	Chapter Five: Exploring the Tension between Artistic Structure and Unpredictability in <i>Marat/Sade</i> and <i>Welcome to Thebes</i>
267.	Chapter Six: The Outward Gaze: Walking the Line between Chaos and Order: Redefining the Performance Dynamic
284.	Acknowledgements
285.	Appendix 1: Glossary of Māori terms
290.	Appendix 2: List of Productions and Timeline of Performance Research
298.	Appendix 3. List of Interviewees
301.	Bibliography

Abstract

How can we make theatre that sizzles with life that is kinaesthetically and viscerally experienced? As artists in the theatre our work is to combat the falling back into the habitual. We need to wake ourselves up, to see anew, to respond out of the moment: not out of memory (reaching into the past) nor out of desire (reaching into the future), both of which produce what Peter Brook has famously described as 'deadly' theatre. How can we consistently produce work that combats these 'deadly' tendencies?

Further, can we create work that is simultaneously artistically structured or fixed, created within the moment so that artistry and improvisation combine? This thesis investigates structures derived from the rituals of the New Zealand Māori, combined with choreography arising out of Viewpoints improvisations, testing them out in the context of actor training, predominantly at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. Together they provide a framework for theatrical work that anchors actors to the present moment. They refocus performers' attention towards purpose rather than performance. They allow the artistically structured to co-exist with the improvisationally free, engendering a sense of pulsing life, a quality I am calling 'alive-li-ness'. They re-frame the audience-performer relationship, drawing the audience from observation towards a more participatory stance, where the performance becomes a journey undertaken together. This is a creative research thesis in which my own performative research underlies the critical and theoretical examination through a series of productions. Through them I am able to test out this thesis both in performance and on the rehearsal floor, forming the spine of the thesis.

I begin with examining theatrical improvisation, the form in which the future is genuinely unknown, the qualities that characterise it and the structures that support it. I explore a variety of forms and uses of improvisation, seeking the underlying attributes of improvisers at their most effective. I then explore the possibility of those qualities co-existing in work where structures such as an extant text and a fixed choreography are used, focusing firstly on the structures and qualities derived from Māori frameworks, then from those arising from Viewpoints. Finally I bring these frameworks together in a series of productions, testing their efficacy in relationship.

In combining these two approaches I have developed a powerful tool for creating performance that is immediate and visceral, the attention of the performer firmly anchored to purpose and the present moment, playfully, without self-consciousness or undue tension. In this approach the life engendered lies with the ensemble rather than the individual artist. These frameworks advance our understanding of ways in which this immediacy can be achieved within artistic structures and are shown to be transferable to other contexts. By following a clear sense of purpose and focus on the audience, giving precise attention to choreography and timing, the actor is freed from the siren call of memory and the equally seductive temptation to plan the future, and is thereby held in a precise and vital engagement with the present.

List of Illustrations

Page No.

Cover

Photographer: Annie Ruth

1. *Bone Songs*: Sylvestre Koffitsee and Amy Ginther, International Centre for Voice (ICV), London. 2

Dedication

Photographer: S. Thyagarajan

2. Eurydice 3

Small Lives, Big Dreams

Photographer: Michael Parrott

3. 'Actual time doesn't matter' 59
4. Diagram: Stage Movement 60
5. Time Stops Mid-Gesture 62
6. Suspended Moments 64

Toi Whakaari

Photographer: Phillip Merry

7. *Pōwhiri* 105
8. *Marae*: Manutuke 110
9. *Mau Rakau*: Manutuke 111
10. Singing Audience into *Pakiwaitara* 112
11. Grusha Offering Baby 114

12.	Cast and Audience Intermingled: <i>Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>	115
-----	---	-----

Troilus & Cressida

Photographer: Brian Seach

13.	Love Triangle	121
14.	<i>Whare</i> : Parihaka	123
15.	Directors in Rehearsal	124
16.	Opening Sequence	126
17.	Final Song	127
18.	Agamemnon and Priam	129
19.	Costume Design: Hector and Achilles	130
20.	Hector's Changes	131
21.	Waikōrero Scene	132
22.	Thersites	134
23.	Aenaes Challenging Diomedes	135
24.	Small Children in Audience: Ruatoria	138
25.	Kaa and Ruth	142

Betty's Summer Vacation

Photographer: Michael Parrott

26.	Voice Two installation	165
27.	Experiments with Light	165
28.	Diagram: Floor-Plan	166

29.	Buck Assaulting Trudy	171
30.	Diagram: Movement Flow	172
31.	Voice Costumes	173
32.	Voices Breaking into House	174
33.	Voice Three Emerging from Couch.	174
34.	Diagram: Voices' Triangulation	176
35.	Voices Corralling Household	176
36.	Physicality of Voices	177
37.	Use of Repetition	179
38.	Working with Imbalance	180
39.	Falling Routines	182

The Glass Menagerie

40.	Tom Echoes Laura's Gesture	187
41.	Gestural Repetition	188
42.	Diagram: Movement Flow	188
43.	Proximity of Audience	189
44.	Diagram: Work and Rework Process	193

Marat/Sade

Photographers: Phillip Merry and Stephen A'Court

45.	Diagram: Multiple Frames	211
46.	Costume Design	212
47.	Diagram: Additional Frame	213

48.	Experimenting with Space	216
49.	The Space	217
50.	Diagram: Seating: <i>Pōwhiri</i> and <i>Marat/Sade</i>	218
51.	Diagram: performance Space	219
52.	Multiple Marats, Simones	220
53.	Mayor Welcoming Audience	231
54.	Gestural Repetition, Corday and Women	232
55.	Crew Add Hot Water	233
56.	De Sade and Marat's First Debate	237
57.	Use of Space, Marat and de Sade	237
58.	Ensemble Choreography	240
59.	Mayor Carried by Patients	244
60.	Mayor's Transgression	245

Welcome to Thebes

Photographer: Phillip Merry

61.	The Two Performance Spaces	252
62.	Gestural Repetition	255
63.	Pargeia and Tydeus	256
64.	Physicality of Actor	257
65.	Theseus and Eurydice	258
66.	Crowd Scenes: <i>Marae</i> Performance	261
67.	Audience: Manutuke	262
68.	Actors Improvise Scenes: Demonstration at Manutuke	263

69.	Discussion with Audience: Manutuke	264
-----	------------------------------------	-----

Tikanga Māori & Viewpoints Frameworks

70.	Diagram	270
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Welcome to Thebes in Delhi

Photographer: S. Thyagarajan

71.	Using Cultural Heritage	274
72.	Programme and Security Entrance	276
73.	Set Painter Drawing Tribal Motifs	277
74.	Constantly Negotiating Choreographic Timing	278
75.	Soldiers Briefing the Audience	279
76.	Eurydice using Mudra-Based Gestures	280

Bone Songs

77.	Actors in Rehearsal	284
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Additional rehearsal photography for all productions – Annie Ruth

Chapter One

***Kanohi ki te Kanohi*/Face to Face: Artistically Structured yet Wildly Free**

Introduction

'This is our lot: never – apart from a few keen moments ... to be precisely here, in the present, but always ahead of it or behind it, never in it, endlessly living life on the specious knife edge where memory and expectation commingle to create the illusion of time actually passing.'

(Bert O. States 'Death as a Fictitious Event')¹

When we engage in, or experience art, the world enters us through our senses. Information - intellectual, sensual, emotional - arrives immediately and all at once. Our brains then work at phenomenal speed, codifying and processing the data. Instantly we respond through habit, through imitation and through elimination. As artists in the theatre our work is to combat this falling back into the habitual, to extend those few keen moments when we are actually here. We need to wake ourselves up, to see anew, responding out of the moment: not out of memory (reaching into the past) nor out of desire (reaching into the future). This locking onto, this realisation of the present moment, is something we experience rarely in life, and only at moments of peak intensity, threshold moments such as birth and death, moments of passion and transcendence. And also in brief, rare moments stimulated by art. How can we make theatre that lives in those 'keen moments' States describes rather than in the half-life of memory or dream? Theatre that may not necessarily always have the best script, or actors of the highest calibre, but always, always performance sizzling with the life of a present viscerally and kinaesthetically experienced? This thesis will show that such abundant life can be found reliably and consistently under conditions that focus the actors on each other and their audiences in a state of acute observation and response, conditions that support an outward, rather than an inner gaze.

¹ Bert O States, 'Death as a Fictitious Event', *Hudson Review* 53, No. 3, (FAL 2000), 428.

Peter Brook, an influential practitioner addressing the question of liveness and immediacy in the 1960's, coined the term 'deadly theatre' claiming that: 'as a whole, theatre not only fails to elevate or instruct, it hardly even entertains'.² This is also my own experience in a lifetime of theatre going. For the 'keen moments' of intensity and illumination, one pays with hours of boredom on that 'specious knife edge' teetering between past and future. Yet these keen moments are so powerful, so deeply moving, that I, and others like me, continue to go to the theatre in hope of that threshold moment of peak intensity. Surely, we practitioners of theatre can achieve a better hit-rate than this, combating habit, imitation and elimination in order to see, hear and breathe the present, gifting this same experience to our audiences? Many artists and writers seek this in a quality described as 'presence', defined by Jane Goodall as 'a coalescence of energy, mystery and discipline'³ and locate it in the abilities of the exceptional performer. What I am contending is that a sense of exceptional life and vitality can be engendered, not only through a particular actor's outstanding ability or through the coalescence of factors in a unique and miraculous moment where 'the uncanny, the magical and the dangerous hover at the outer edges of these limits [what is known and knowable],⁴ but through the application of structures that direct the actor's attention towards an intense reading and responding to the shifting sands of the present. Further, that these structures allow artistic, fixed structures and improvisation to co-exist. It is this paradox that the art of theatre must be both fixed and free, that lies at the heart of my investigations.

Anne Bogart writes: 'While paying attention to the details and welcoming insecurity, while walking the tightrope between control and chaos and using accident, while allowing yourself to go off balance ... something is bound to happen'.⁵ It is my contention that a specific kind of 'paying attention' to the present stimulates vivid, intense life and opens the possibility for moments of transcendence. Further, that this fierce attention can be developed playfully and consistently when frameworks that support this outward gaze are in place. I have coined the term 'alive-li-ness' to describe this elusive phenomenon, elusive and yet instantly recognisable in all great theatre experiences, giving performance its sense of 'liveness', of vitality, of 'presence' and danger. Of course in all theatre performance the actors are necessarily alive, though, sadly, it does not always feel that way. And even recorded media make claims of 'liveness'⁶.

² Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, (London: MacGibbon & Kee 1968), 12.

³ Jane Goodall, *Stage Presence*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 19.

⁴ Goodall, 18.

⁵ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 136.

⁶ See Phillip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

'Liveness' is thus a contested term. But I am reaching for a state that combines both life and liveliness, a sense of vitality that is available only in theatre. Hence the term alive-li-ness: a condition of vitality, a sense of present danger and unpredictability, a state in which the senses are kinaesthetically engaged, giving a sense of awakening to the immediacy of the present.⁷

I explore both theoretically and on the rehearsal floor, the protocols of the New Zealand Māori, particularly those associated with the *pōwhiri*⁸ in which a sense of purpose and ritual frameworks support a free and improvised encounter in the present. I seek to apply the principles beneath these cultural practices, rather than appropriate their original form into a theatrical context, and draw on both my own work and those of other practitioners in so doing. I also look to improvisatory models, expressive and naturalistic, body-based and text-based, arriving finally at a choreographic approach arising out of the Viewpoints actor-training methodology developed by the American director, Anne Bogart.

Bogart claims: 'Listening is a creative act, and it can be an act of love'.⁹ Listening not just with the ears but with the entire body is an act that violates the sense of self through absorption with the 'other'. It asks us to focus outwards, away from the self, with clear purpose and acute observation, anchoring us in the present. As such it has been, and continues to be, pursued by artists in many different disciplines as well as people on a spiritual path. In Shakespeare's *King Lear*¹⁰, Kent advises the king to look again, to see his daughter's offering through a less familiar, but more appropriate lens. 'See better, Lear'. Through a similar disjunction with the familiar, Viewpoints derived choreography invites us to eschew the familiar in order to perhaps see more fully. I am using the word 'see', as opposed to other sensual data input because of its connotations of comprehension, and perception that is intellectual as well as sensual. The performance research of this thesis follows a set of questions interrogating this act of 'seeing' and 'paying attention'. Might Viewpoints-based choreography, twinned with *tikanga*¹¹ Māori create an attentiveness that brings a more acute sense of 'alive-li-ness' to the performative moment? What would be the effect on the relationship between performers and audiences? Would employing them together allow for genuine in-the-moment creation and a deeper exchange? And would they encourage this connection to occur more consistently? Would actors

⁷ The term was born in a discussion with Professor of Theatre at Victoria University, David Carnegie reaching for a way to describe this state.

⁸ Welcome ceremony.

⁹ Anne Bogart, *and then you act: making art in an unpredictable world*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), 60.

¹⁰ *King Lear*, l.i.158.

¹¹ Māori rituals and customs.

trained through this dual approach find greater ease in connecting with audiences? It is with these questions in mind that I begin the process of performance research of which this thesis is a part.

It is the combination of artistry and wild freedom that makes both *pōwhiri*-based frameworks and Viewpoints-derived choreography powerful tools for avoiding that ‘specious knife edge’ so eloquently described by States, where engagement with the present is illusionary, rather than actual. They direct the performer to focus outwards, away from the self. Both are very new approaches to performance which I link through my experience of the underlying elements of improvisation. Documentation on either of them as a foundation for rehearsal and performance is sparse and in combination non-existent. This is the contribution of this thesis: to map out an approach that holds the actor in the present moment using the twin lenses of frameworks drawn from *tikanga* Māori and Viewpoints.

Initially I explore these two approaches separately. It is only in the process of writing this thesis and conducting the related performance research in a series of productions, primarily with actors in training at Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, that I realise the power released by the two processes in combination. Their combined strength generates performances, where fixed form and improvisation, employed simultaneously, bring the unpredictability of the unknown to the artistically structured moment. Using a choreography developed out of the Viewpoints as a rehearsal methodology, along with an understanding gained from the flexible and metaphorical structure of the *marae*¹², I see that the present moment can be held in the actors’ awareness without excessive effort. By following a clear sense of purpose and focus on the audience and giving precise attention to choreography and timing the actor is freed from the siren call of memory, and the equally seductive temptation to plan the future and is thereby enticed into the pleasurable and dangerous moment in a precise engagement with the present.

¹² Māori tribal meeting place.

***Whakapapa*¹³ of the Writer**

Tikanga Māori, along with other indigenous research methodologies and performance research methodologies, asks the researcher to position herself clearly within the research, making explicit the cultural context from which she speaks. This is also a common practice in performance studies. Dwight Conquergood, writing on community performance, states: 'when one keeps intellectual, aesthetic, or any other kind of distance from the other, ethnographers worry that other people will be held at an ethical and moral remove as well'¹⁴. He encourages transparency around the context from which the performers speak and in my work and writing I seek a similar transparency. In a Māori context this corresponds to a *whakapapa*, a stating of genealogy and relationships, the articulation of which is part of any *pōwhiri* or meeting. One of the functions of *whakapapa* is to enable the listeners to make connections, to find what links them to the speaker. As I write this thesis my identity is not separate to the performance research I am undertaking. Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and Roberta Mock write: 'These processes [embodied research] always somehow include the researcher's own body, connected to other bodies in the world'.¹⁵ Encounters between performers and with their audiences, just like encounters on the *marae*, are deeper and more significant the more the whole person is brought into play. Such encounters shape us. When I look back on my life I can trace the links between my disparate experiences. I see that this question of 'alive-li-ness' has influenced many of my choices and led me to encounters where the challenge of difference has allowed me to see myself more clearly even as I opened to the unfamiliar and the challenging. What follows is my *whakapapa*.

I am a Pākehā¹⁶ woman of mixed Irish, Scottish, French and English descent. My family has been in New Zealand for five generations. My great-grandmother was the first nurse on the Gabriel's Gully South Island goldfields. I consider myself very much of this place, Aotearoa/New Zealand. I grew up in Port Chalmers, Dunedin, oldest of five, influenced by the mountains, rivers and seas of that place. When I was eleven my family moved to Wellington, the place I now call 'home'. Tangi-te-keo is the mountain, Raukawa the sea

¹³ Genealogy, in the widest interpretation. A traditional *whakapapa* includes the family and tribal genealogy of the speakers, the mountains and waters of the tribe, the canoe on which their ancestors came to Aotearoa/New Zealand, and mention of a significant ancestor. It may also include significant events or people that shaped the speaker.

¹⁴ Dwight Conquergood, 'Performing as a moral act: Ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance', *The Community Performance Reader*, Petra Kuppers and Gwen Robertson (eds.), (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), 58.

¹⁵ Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and Roberta Mock, 'Researching the Body in/as Performance', *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (eds.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), Chapter 9, 210-235, 233.

¹⁶ New Zealander of European descent: Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Online Dictionary.

and Ngāti Poneke the *iwi*¹⁷ of *Te Upoko O Te Ika*¹⁸. In Wellington's Victoria University I studied Political Science and then drama under Philip Mann, which led me to train as an actor at what was to become Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, then named The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council School, under its first director, Nola Millar.

After graduating from drama school I travelled extensively outside New Zealand, most significantly spending six years living and working in Athens. As with my connection to Māori my time in Greece has profoundly influenced me, deepening my visceral understanding of how landscape, the sounds, seas, mountains and rocks of a place influence perception and behaviour. Living in Greece gave me a deeper understanding of inter-cultural interactions, changed and enlarged me, particularly the experience of running a multi-cultural nursery school. The complexity of adapting minute by minute to different languages and cultures in a student body that ranged from Greek, Palestinian and Armenian, to Swedish, Japanese, and Australian was a daily challenge and pleasure and has given me an enduring curiosity about other cultures and an appreciation for seeing the world through culturally-different lenses. It showed me that such encounters have a capacity to wake one up, allowing a reassessment of self and values that is visceral rather than simply intellectual. Though I was not aware of this at the time, these experiences also prepared me for returning to New Zealand, and the Māori renaissance that had occurred during my absence. I have a son, Alexi, who is half Greek. His contribution to my life is huge and joyous. Through him I learnt how to look outside myself and truly engage with another (the other).

When I returned to Wellington I trained as a teacher and worked with Ralph McAllister and Dorothy Heathcote on drama in education and in the community. Their emphasis on learner-focused education and the power of role has shaped my work, particularly the understanding of the myriad contexts in which drama can be used for social and educational purposes. Working with them I had encounters of a different kind, with people marginalized through mental illness or physical disability. I learned from those people how to listen and be present in situations where the ground-rules are not always completely clear or shared and how a combined focus on purpose helps frame the encounter and ground it in a shared task.

¹⁷ Tribe.

¹⁸ 'The Head of the Fish,' the Māori name for Wellington.

I spent a year teaching at Newtown Primary School, where I again encountered a diverse student population, many of them Pacific Islanders as well as a handful of Greeks. The school attracted a large number of Māori, having a Māori-language stream. It also contained a Special-needs unit, which taught me a great deal about encountering difference. In all of these situations, staying alive to the moment without self-consciousness or barriers and an outward focus on tasks were key skills which I came to value ever more deeply.

I left teaching to work as a professional actor, spending a year travelling around the country with a theatre troupe made up of two Māori and three Pākehā actors, performing in schools. We also created and performed street theatre around political issues of the time including those arising out of the Treaty of Waitangi¹⁹ and homosexual law reform. I have performed in all the major Wellington theatres, and at Centrepoint Theatre in Palmerston North. My most significant role was playing Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* at Downstage Theatre in 1985. The alchemy of this role has stayed with me and exercises a subtle influence on my theatrical development and tastes. As a woman playing a male role I explored the magic of shape shifting and gender and appreciated the particular brand of magic and spectacle that the director, Warwick Broadhead, brought to the production. His was a far from traditional approach, having wild, anarchic energy, which transformed the performances into events, remembered for years by those who experienced them. Even now, 27 years later, strangers approach me describing their vivid, intense experience of that production. Broadhead was more interested in creating an event for the audience than on character development and plot. I did not fully appreciate the power of this at the time, but it stayed with me and emerged later in my own work as a director. Broadhead's playfulness included sequences where action had to be improvised, including using puppets to mirror the actions of the live actors. I loved those sequences and found them curiously relaxing, all my focus being on the others and their actions rather than on my own performance. There was a powerful clue there that again I did not fully appreciate at the time but that has influenced my work ever since and that I now consciously embrace and utilize.

My interest in improvisation deepened. I loved the correlation between improvisation and life, where the future is genuinely unknown and unknowable and only our past gives us clues as we struggle to weave the future. I loved the challenge, danger and exhilaration of creating something totally in the moment out of the combined skills of my fellow improvisers, the necessity for relinquishing individual control, the acute

¹⁹ The Treaty of Waitangi between Māori and the British Crown, signed 1840.

listening this requires. As a consequence, I became involved in Theatresports and worked with Keith Johnstone at Loose Moose Theatre Company in Calgary, Canada. I became a core teacher for Theatresports New Zealand. This led to my employment at Toi Whakaari in 1990, first as a part-time improvisation tutor,²⁰ then as a core acting tutor and Head of Acting until becoming Director in 1997²¹. During this time I continued to explore various forms of improvisation, including working with Anne Bogart and SIT Company in both Italy and the USA. This experience changed forever my directing practice and the learning from those experiences is part of the fabric of this thesis.

For the next twenty-one years I was on the staff of Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School. I have now resigned from the role in order to travel, complete this PhD and explore these approaches to making theatre in a wider, international context. My work at Toi Whakaari has influenced my professional practice profoundly, particularly the ever-deepening relationship to *Te Ao Māori*²². The struggle to find meaningful ways to incorporate this worldview into theatrical work is one that has shaped and continues to shape me. I have been privileged to have many great teachers to assist me, among them, Tiahuia Grey, Keri Kaa, Wikuki Kaaa, Tungia Baker, Rangimoana Taylor, Rona Bailey and Teina Moetara. Twenty-two years ago I attended a workshop run by Bailey for Pākehā on the Treaty of Waitangi. She introduced me to a different way of looking at the past, one that brought a seismic shift in my way of seeing. Through a graphic physicalisation I discovered that, from a European lens the future lies in front of us, the past behind, for Māori the past is seen as laid out in front, with the unknowable future lying behind. I began to understand that *how* one sees affects *what* one sees and this understanding has become embedded in my work. I have begun to realise that seeing through at least two lenses is a part of what it is to be a New Zealander. As well as being personally enriching this journey has given me opportunities to share my knowledge and skills in a Māori context, to be both learner and teacher, including the work arising in the context of this thesis.

I have begun a relationship with the National School of Drama in New Delhi, India and in 2012 directed a production with their graduating actors and designers²³. The work was performed in Hindi, with thirteen different mother-tongues among the cast. This allowed me to test out the work I have been developing in a

²⁰ See Chapter Two, improvisation teaching.

²¹ See Chapter Three.

²² The Māori World.

²³ See Chapter Six.

very different context. In the complex mix of cultures and languages the structures I have developed out of the frameworks of *tikanga* Māori proved a necessary cohesive device that resonated strongly with the cast and crew facilitating greater ease within the work. I also undertook a research laboratory for the International Voice Research Centre at Central School of Speech and Drama, London, again with a multi-cultural cast, focusing on the vocal outcomes of this approach, deepening my ability to work with the vocal Viewpoints.

My name is Annie Ruth.

This is my *whakapapa*.

Research Methodology

Performance Research and Indigenous Research Practices

Along with quantitative and qualitative research, performance research is emerging as a paradigm with its own distinctive approaches to designing, conducting and reporting research. Research in the arts is habitually seen as a retrospective activity – investigations into the work done by others and a scholarly analysis of that work. In chemistry and other sciences the research is the act itself, not just the recording of the work of others. Brad Haseman's 2006's article, 'A Manifesto for Performative Research'²⁴ argues for the inclusion of performative research alongside the more traditional methodologies of quantitative and qualitative research, asserting the validity of practice as a method of research as opposed to viewing practice simply as an object of study. This is a useful model for researchers in the performing arts to consider. We are doers, working on an active, embodied investigation into aspects of the art form. In this way Performative Research gives centrality to the act of doing, the act of making, to the 'on the floor' investigation/experiment/performance, as a major part of an intellectual inquiry. Riley and Hunter write:

While performance practices have always contributed to knowledge, the idea that performance can be more than creative production, that it can constitute intellectual inquiry and contribute new

²⁴ Brad Haseman, 'A Manifesto for Performative Research', Media International Australia Incorporating Culture & Policy, No. 118, 24 July 2006, 98-106.

understanding and insight, is a concept that challenges many institutional structures and calls into question what gets valued as knowledge. Perhaps the most singular contribution of the developing areas of practice as research (PaR) and performance as research (PAR) is the claim that creative production can constitute intellectual inquiry.²⁵

In this thesis enquiry I follow a process of performance as research, also described as performative enquiry, action research, practice as research, among other terms:

Most commonly, performative researchers progress their studies by employing variations of reflective practice, participant observation, performance ethnography, ethnodrama, biographical/autobiographical narrative enquiry, and the enquiry cycle from action research.²⁶

As an emergent field these terms are not fully distinguished from each other as yet, though for the sake of clarity I will use performance as research to describe my process. Performance as research, practice as research, creative enquiry, includes the positionality of the researcher as an acknowledged part, her point of view part of the embodied perception being examined, her own ideology and values part of the process of self-reflexivity. It is a key strategy in this kind of enquiry. August Wilson writes that 'art is beholden to the kiln in which the artist was fired'²⁷ and in this enquiry I use autobiography, or positionality unashamedly as part of the research journey. I place my own practice as a director at its heart, linking work to personal *whakapapa* in a never-ending, mutually enhancing loop. Robin Nelson decibes the process as 'heuristic learning'²⁸, the researcher present and growing throughout the process, which is certainly the case in my work. It traces the development of the kind of 'liquid knowing' described by Marina Abramovic, through and with the body: 'I call this kind of experience "liquid knowledge"....It is something that runs through your system'.²⁹ My performance as research journey follows my question around frameworks reliably supporting a sense of immediacy and alive-li-ness over a number of productions. Each production opens the question further. For example, *Marat/Sade* was intended as the culminating performance project, but the discoveries emerging from that work led me to explore *tikanga* frameworks more deeply in *Welcome to Thebes*, and

²⁵ S.R. Riley and L. Hunter (eds.) *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), xv.

²⁶ Haseman, 105.

²⁷ August Wilson, Preface from *King Hedley II*, (New York: TCG Books, 2000), vii.

²⁸ Robin Nelson. *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 6.

²⁹ R.Allsopp and S. Delahunta. *Connected Body: an Interdisciplinary Approach to the Body and Performance*, (London: Art Data, 1996), 18.

their transferability still further in a production of the same play in Delhi, India. As Haseman writes: '... creative practice is both on-going and persistent; practioner-researchers do not merely think their way through or out of a problem, rather they 'practice' to a resolution.'³⁰

Nelson identifies such practice-led research as following a doing-thinking praxis, in which location in a lineage, conceptual frameworks and an account of the process³¹ accompany the practice itself, a process I have followed in this thesis. He writes:

... individual or collaborative critical reflection on experience in the form perhaps of a documented conversation, may, through gesturing towards a more abstract conceptualization, assist in disseminating the initially embodied mode of knowing.³²

Thus, in addition to my performative engagement and critical description thereof, I integrate literature reviews to locate my practice within a lineage, peer interviews, reflection and analysis of previous personal performative research projects, and improvisation practice, including my own Production Diaries. I follow this with reflection and analysis of the cumulative performance research projects, *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes*³³. These processes also align with Haseman's account of performance as research practice:

For example, practice-led researchers have used interviews, reflective dialogue techniques, journals, observation methods, practice trails, personal experience and expert and peer review methods to complement and enrich their work-based practices.³⁴

Adopting a methodology that includes performance research resonates with the work I am exploring through *tikanga* Māori frameworks, corresponding to indigenous research methodologies such as described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith³⁵. Smith writes that: 'The processes of consultation, collective meetings, open debate and shared decision making are crucial aspects of tribal research practices.'³⁶ The collaborative

³⁰ Brad Haseman 'Rupture and recognition : identifying the performative research paradigm' in Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (eds), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 147.

³¹ Nelson, 34.

³² Nelson, 57.

³³ See Appendix 2 for a list and timeline of productions.

³⁴ Haseman, 105.

³⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (London & New York: Zed Books, and Dunedin: Otago University Press, 1999).

³⁶ Smith, 129.

rehearsal approaches described in this thesis and the interviews with practitioners, collaborators and audience members are part of this model. They allow for an inclusive and multi-layered approach that also contains the disruptive element of chance. Carter sees this as enhancing and deepening the research outcomes: 'It is a powerful, because complex and multi-sensorial, method of real-world analysis, and its aleatory, constitutionally open, anything-goes character, which is said to weaken its claim to rigour, is in reality, a sign of its sophistication'.³⁷ As Suzanne Little writes:

Kaupapa Māori is counter-hegemonic in its aim to challenge, question and critique 'Pākehā culture'. It is sceptical about words, preferring the palpability of deeds and thus Nelson's PaR³⁸ model involving a dialogic negotiation between practices of all kinds including writing without privileging one over the other has specific potential in Aotearoa/New Zealand's bicultural context.³⁹

Actually speaking with the people doing the work, making connections that are real and ongoing, contributes to a shared longitudinal research that is wider than the work of any one practitioner or researcher. Making links with the work others are doing in this area is therefore a key element in this performative research and positions the new knowledge developed in this thesis in an appropriate context. As Little also states, 'there is perhaps even greater potential than elsewhere in the world for the development of a praxis forging productive critical methods in this distinctive bicultural context'.⁴⁰ This thesis and the performance journey described within it is a contribution to that development.

Tuhiwai Smith also argues that research involving indigenous peoples should always feed back into the communities of those researched: 'Kaupapa Māori approaches to research are based on the assumption that research that involves Māori people, as individuals or as communities, should set out to make a positive difference for the researched. This does not need to be an immediate or direct benefit'.⁴¹ As I engage with these thesis questions the possibilities for feeding back into Māori communities become clearer and clearer. Performances on *marae* are a part of this but so are on-going performance works, my

³⁷ P. Carter. 'Interest: The Ethics of Invention' C. Barrett, and B. Bolt (eds.), *Practice as Research, Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 16.

³⁸ Practice as Research.

³⁹ Suzanne Little, 'Aotearoa/New Zealand and Practice as Research' in *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, Robin Nelson (ed.), (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 117-128, 125.

⁴⁰ Little, 128.

⁴¹ Smith, 191.

own and others, which deal with the concerns of those communities. I discuss some of my own work in 'feeding back' in Chapter Five. Conquergood believes that 'all performance has ethical dimensions, but I have found that moral issues of performance are more transparent when the performer attempts to engage ethnic and intercultural texts ...'⁴² and although the texts I am engaging with are not intercultural or ethnic, the frameworks through which I am exploring them are. That the work should continue beyond the pages of the thesis and contribute to the communities out of which it arises is a key value in my personal *kaupapa*.⁴³

This performance as research journey is a process of mindful, open-ended reflection on performance works which opens up further questions. As Dr Olu Taiwo states, this field is 'more like a terrain than a place, with many different paths through it'⁴⁴, and this thesis describes one particular path. I aim to fuse my extensive experience in models of theatrical improvisation with the discoveries of my current research to frame an approach to training, rehearsal and performance through Viewpoints applications and *tikanga* Māori frameworks. Together they bring a new perspective on combining improvisation and the artistically structured moment.

Ethics Approved interviews

Performance-based research is a key component of this thesis, centralising not only my own practice and praxis, but those of my collaborators. For my own work this includes reflection during and post practice-based research, journal-based analysis, and autobiographical reflection. For my collaborators I interview actors who participated in *Marat/Sade* and practitioners involved in utilising *tikanga* Māori frameworks to create performance. As Tuhiwai Smith articulates, sharing is an important element in indigenous research models:

The spiritual, creative and political resources that indigenous peoples can draw on from each other provide alternatives for each other. Sharing is a good thing to do, it is a very human quality. To be able to share, to have something worth sharing gives dignity to the giver.... To create something

⁴² Conquergood, 59.

⁴³ A philosophical stance, incorporating 'knowledge, skills, attitudes and values' - Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary.

⁴⁴ Olu Taiwo, Presentation at 'Embodied Cognition: Practice-based Research in Doctoral Programmes', The Higher Education Academy Discipline Workshop and Seminar Series, Winchester University April 30, 2013. Annie Ruth's notes.

through that process of sharing is to recreate the old, to reconnect relationships and to recreate our humanness.⁴⁵

As part of this human sharing I have interviewed a wide range of audience members who experienced both *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes*, including theatre directors, arts administrators, theatre critics, filmmakers, designers and artistic directors in order to support my own reflection with peer review. This was necessary given that Toi Whakaari practice does not allow review of second year student work. These particular practitioners were chosen for in-depth interviews after they had seen the shows, because of their varied positions in the industry and because their responses following the work indicated a range and depth of opinion. This gives a breadth of perspectives, cultural as well as disciplinary, supporting the central thesis that the approach brings out a quality of 'alive-li-ness' in the work.

In interviewing the student actors participating in this research, the power relationship of my position as both director of the production and Director of Toi Whakaari was explicitly acknowledged with the interviewees. Invoking the *kawa* developed and practised throughout the school, practises that Little describes as 'counter-hegemonic'⁴⁶, the interviewees spoke as freely and truthfully as they could, understanding that this would be the most useful contribution to the work. Practising collegial and open conversation around the creative processes is a learned and valued part of the Toi Whakaari ethos, crossing staff/student lines. Later in this thesis I cite instances where student actors challenge and block some of my directorial offers, giving me a degree of confidence that their responses in interviews were not skewed by the inherent power relationship.

Use of Present Tense

Whenever I write about a production, and indeed as often as is possible within the bounds of coherence, I am choosing to write in the present tense. This thesis examines the immediacy of the moment of performance. In using the present tense I am seeking to achieve in the written word that same moment of engagement and encounter. Brook states that 'The theatre always ... asserts itself in the present,'⁴⁷ yet so often both performers and audience drift through that moment in the half life of memory or dream. So too do readers and writers. If the temptation is always, as States articulates, to endlessly live 'life on the

⁴⁵ Smith, 105.

⁴⁶ See 23.

⁴⁷ Brook, (1968), 111.

specious knife edge where memory and expectation commingle' then surely that temptation exists for them also. Present tense evokes an urgency that helps to combat this and I hope that for you who read this, it awakens you to this present moment even as it awakens me through the act of writing.

Outline of Chapters

I have titled this introduction 'Chapter One'. Chapter Two begins where my own practice began, with improvisation, giving an overview of the uses of improvisation in theatre, including my own work. It sets out seven underlying principles in improvised work, which become one of the threads running throughout the thesis. Along with this I note the effect on the audience when work is improvised in performance and the way in which this can change the reception mode. Included in this chapter is a review of the current literature on improvisation both as a rehearsal tool and in performance. I examine two of my own productions, in the first of which the text is entirely improvised, the work developed out of the teaching and performances of Keith Johnstone, a major influence on my practice at the time. The work is titled, *What's Bred in the Bone Will Out in the Flesh* and uses the structure of a family genealogy to explore inherited traits under varying historical circumstances. The second is a deconstructed Chekhov/Bogart work, *Small Lives, Big Dreams* in which I examine the overlap of composition and improvisation and my first on-the-rehearsal-floor encounter with the Viewpoints improvisations.

In Chapter Three I explore the context of the New Zealand *marae* and the application of Māori frameworks to New Zealand theatre and their growing influence on my own work, particularly the combination of structure and improvisation. The chapter opens with a description of traditional *marae*-based rituals and relates them to the seven principles underlying improvised events outlined in Chapter Two. It goes on to examine the application of these rituals to New Zealand theatre, particularly, but not exclusively, to the work of Māori practitioners, and to the training of theatre professionals at Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School. Finally it examines my production of *Troilus & Cressida*, where these structures are incorporated both as rehearsal tools and in performance, again noting the effect on audience reception modes.

Chapter Four looks specifically at Viewpoints, a particular approach to improvisation focusing on time and space, and the way it is taught. It goes on to explore ways in which these concepts can be applied to text

and performance, referencing two contrasting productions of my own, Christopher Durang's *Betty's Summer Vacation* and *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. In these productions I detail the effect of utilizing choreography based on the underlying principles and training of Viewpoints which evokes the seven underlying principles of improvisation while combining with aesthetically precise movement and text.

In Chapter Five I bring together both *tikanga*⁴⁸ Māori frameworks and choreography based on Viewpoints for the first time. I do this through a critical examination of my 2010 production of *Marat/Sade*⁴⁹ and 2011 production of *Welcome to Thebes*⁵⁰. In both these works rehearsal and performance are informed by the principles and rituals of *tikanga* Māori and the working methodology is Viewpoints-based choreography. In combining these two approaches I discover a powerful tool for creating performance that is immediate and kinaesthetically embodied, artistically structured and simultaneously freely improvised; in which the attention of the performer is so firmly anchored to the immediately present that both the seduction of dream and the distraction of memory are eschewed for a keen connection in the moment. Chapter Six draws the strands of the thesis together and tests out the transferability of the methodology in a different cultural setting.

This is the contribution of this thesis. This is the new knowledge I am advancing: the outward gaze of performers who viscerally connect to each other and to audiences, employing Viewpoints-based choreography to anchor them playfully in the present. Performers whose sense of purpose, grown out of *tikanga* Māori, reshapes the nature of the encounter and with it the audience reception mode, moving them from passive to active, from observers to participants, the gift of the performance created in a living, improvised collaboration between them.

⁴⁸ Everything that is organized according to Māori custom.

⁴⁹ Peter Weiss. *Marat/Sade*, Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), Verse Adaptation, Adrian Mitchell, (London: Calder and Boyers, 1963).

⁵⁰ Moira Buffini. *Welcome to Thebes*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

Chapter Two

Improvisation and its Relationship to the Artistically Structured Moment

*I'll stop here, and I'll look at nature awhile.
The brilliant blue of the morning sea, of the cloudless sky,
the shore yellow: all lovely,
all bathed in light.
I'll stand here. And I'll make myself believe that I really see all this
(I actually did see it for a minute when I first stopped)
and not my usual day-dreams here too,
memories, my images of sensuality.*

(C.P. Cavafy, *Morning Sea*)¹

Introduction

Can the fleet-of-foot, made-up-on-the-spot quality of improvisation be brought together with artistically structured writing and movement?² What is the quality of work in which these elements are mutually present? What enables the structured and the free to be held in balance and jointly engendered? Tom Salinsky and Deborah Frances-White identify the essence of improvisation as being intrinsically linked to the moment of 'now', to seeing something created before one's eyes: 'Improvisation is an art form which survives in the moment. It lives because audiences and performers want to see and feel the instant of creation'³. Danielle Goldman speaks of improvisation as 'a spontaneous mode of creation that takes place without the aid of a manuscript or score.... Performance and composition occur simultaneously – on the spot – through a practice that values surprise, innovation, and the vicissitudes of process rather than the fixed glory of the finished product'.⁴ She goes on to challenge this definition, noting how often in improvised

¹C.P. Cavafy, *Selected Poems*, Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (trans.), (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), 29.

² I place this question in the context of theatre, but the discoveries could potentially be extended to dance.

³ Tom Salinsky, and Deborah Frances-White, *The Improv Handbook: The Ultimate Guide to Improvisation in Comedy, Theatre, and Beyond*, (New York & London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 381.

⁴ Danielle Goldman, *I Want to be ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 5.

forms composition and improvisation overlap. The values she identifies are upheld in most improvisatory practices, though the degrees of freedom versus structure vary enormously. Almost all improvisation depends on a degree of structure to encourage and give form to the freedom espoused. Viola Spolin, one of the earliest and most influential proponents of improvisation in the United States, defines it as 'playing the game; setting out to solve a problem with no preconception as to how you will do it; permitting everything in the environment (animate or inanimate) to work for you in solving the problem...'⁵ She discovered the effectiveness of games and improvisation in releasing the creativity of actors and freeing them from performance anxiety. Stephen Book cites this as a break-through moment in Spolin's understanding of improvisation training: 'It was probably here that she began her understanding of the difference between being *in the head*, where fear and prejudice dwell, and being *in the space* where playing occurs'.⁶ Spolin's emphasis on recruiting the entire environment to feed the moment of creation is a recurring theme in improvisation.

In this chapter I examine the qualities of that instant of creation, focusing on performance events where improvisation is intrinsically present, an acknowledged aspect of the event. I identify the structures that support the moment of creation and explore the ways in which the creative crucible allows freedom and structure to be mutually present. I include reference to my own practice in exploring this question, both in class-work and in performance, referencing the improvised production *What's Bred in the Bone Will Out in the Flesh* (1991),⁷ the New Zealand play *Ophelia Thinks Harder*,⁸ and the deconstructed Chekhov/Bogart work *Small Lives, Big Dreams* (2006).⁹ Central to this examination is the continuum between what is fixed and what is free. I am proposing that it is the element of freedom that gives performance its sense of 'aliveness' and that it is this quality (or even the possibility of it) that draws audiences and participants to such events. They demand that the performers encounter each other in as full and immediate a way as possible, requiring communication that connects them at a deeper level than simply the verbal, that 'reads' the environment in a continually shifting and responsive manner. Lesa Lockford and Ronald Pelias describe this as a 'communicative connection', which they identify as being present in all improvisation, regardless of form:

⁵ Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theatre*, (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1963,) 383.

⁶ Stephen Book, *Improvisation Technique* (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2002), xvii.

⁷ Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, 1991.

⁸ Jean Betts, *Ophelia Thinks Harder*, (Wellington: Women's Play Press, 1994).

⁹ Anne Bogart, 'Small Lives Big Dreams', Michael Bigelow Dixon and Joel A. Smith (eds.), *Anne Bogart: Viewpoints* (Lyme NH: Smith and Kraus, 1995), 165-199. Te Whaea Theatre, 2006.

No matter what the form or aim of the improv, the performer's work requires a communicative connection.... Improvisational moments are engaged through an ongoing process of negotiation and coordination, through a positioning and repositioning of performers and their characters, which is often done in an instant. Adapting to emergent circumstances, these performers are called to be aware communicators who can draw upon their cogitative, affective, and intuitive abilities – sometimes with great urgency – in order to absorb interaction details.... Establishing a communicative connection, they must listen to each other and adjust their thinking and behaviour accordingly.¹⁰

Stephen Nachmanovitch links this improvisational moment to the roots of all creativity: 'Looking into moments of improvisation I was uncovering patterns related to every kind of creativity.... I came to see improvisation as a master key to creativity. In this sense, all art is improvisation'.¹¹ Where creation is genuinely taking place in the moment, the line between participant and audience becomes blurred; in some sense *all* are participants when the work is engendered by the totality of the event. This is both its danger and its appeal. Simon Jones, echoes Nachmanovitch's thinking, identifying this moment as transcendental, one in which divinity and humanity meet, linking it back to relationships within ritual events:

From the very beginning, there has always been a radical erotics: the point where flesh encounters text, when flesh utters and words move. Both from the very beginnings of the gathering of performance (pre-historic) and the very intimacies of our own engagement with performance (1989): a going far back and a going far into. The audience member, no longer merely an observer, once more becomes a participant.¹²

While many engaged in this work do not, like Jones, evoke concepts of transcendence in this relationship, all require the audience to be more akin to participants than observers. It is out of this shared, participatory experience that the sense of alive-li-ness is born.

¹⁰ Lesa Lockford and Ronald J. Pelia, 'Bodily Poeticizing in Theatrical Improvisation: A Typology of Performative Knowledge,' *Theatre Topics*, Vol. 14, No.2, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, September 2004), 434.

¹¹ Stephen Nachmanovitch, quoted by David Zinder, *Body Voice Imagination: A Training for the Actor* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002) 9.

¹² Simon Jones, 'Imag[in]ing the Void: Or Hiding in Plain View: Thoughts after Bodies in Flight & Angel Tech's WHO BY FIRE' *The Presence Project*, www.presenceproject.co.uk.

Overview of Improvisation in Theatre

Improvisation has a lengthy history in association with theatre, from Commedia dell 'Arte in the West to Eastern traditions such as Kathakali in Southern India and the Barong dance in Indonesia. It is used in a number of contexts: as a device to generate new work in devising practices, as a process for rehearsing extant texts, and as a performance mode in and of itself. It occurs within work based on a written text and work derived from a form or set of protocols. It is part of the wild, spontaneous creativity that ignites the imagination, giving theatre the potential to be a vehicle for expressing personal and artistic freedom. Today it has become an accepted part of the actor's art both in training and in preparation for performance. Anthony Frost and Ralph Yarrow identify it as common practice: 'To some extent, the virtues of games and improvisation are now a part of mainstream training, and to a lesser, but still significant extent, public performance ...'¹³ The spectrum lies between what is fixed and what is free within each tradition or form.

In the twentieth century, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, the use of improvisation as a fundamental tool in constructing performance became widespread and continues to influence theatre practice. The understanding of depth psychology pioneered by Freud¹⁴ and the actor's access to various levels of instinctive response to stimuli opened up a wealth of possibilities for theatre practitioners moving away from written text. Joan Littlewood, in her Theatre Workshop, was a forerunner in using improvisations to add texture to the eventual performances. Often these included the use of fabricated language and explorations of back-story to support the text of the play. Clive Barker, author of *Theatre Games* and himself an authority in this field, comments on the effect of improvisation on Littlewood's performances: 'The games and improvisations became a laboratory through which Littlewood was able to explore ... and was also the process through which the rhythmic patterns of the performance were established...'¹⁵ She also used it to circumvent and subvert censorship. Her battles in this are a part of the wave of exploration that included form as well as political content. Looking at her work, Frost and Yarrow note:

Impro has always been the censor's nightmare ... theatre has always been a problem area for censors because of its immediacy and its dependence upon "texts" other than the purely literary....

¹³ Anthony Frost, and Ralph Yarrow, *Improvisation in Drama*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1st edn. 1990, this edn. 2007), 194.

¹⁴ See E. Jones. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984).

¹⁵ Clive Barker, 'Joan Littlewood' Alison Hodge (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 119.

The censor's nightmare is that, having licensed a play for performance ... the performers will alter it in performance by improvising. They will make their own substitutions, deletions, insertions and restorations. Or they will introduce non-verbal elements which contradict the censor's intentions.¹⁶

Improvisation is thus closely tied to challenging the accepted authority, both in form and content. Frost and Yarrow attribute to Lecoq the claim that the rediscovery of improvisation at particular moments in time is the key factor in opening space for renewal, aesthetic and political: 'If in poststructuralist thought "performance" mounts a challenge to the hegemony of "text", then improvised performance represents the epitome of that capacity. In its process, as well as often in its product, it is a politics, an operation mode of generating structural and attitudinal change'.¹⁷ This challenge to the status quo can be seen in the work of the foremost practitioners of the twentieth century, from Peter Brook in the UK and France, Augusto Boal in Latin America, to Jerzy Grotowski in Poland: there is an inherent challenge to authority in the form.

This use of improvisation brings a greater emphasis on the creativity of the actors and director as opposed to considering them solely as interpreters, as Ian Watson notes: 'The increased emphasis on improvisation ... placed creative responsibility entirely upon the performers and the director, since they no longer had a single, cohesive literary source to guide their rehearsals'.¹⁸ Similarly, in the work of Peter Brook, the actor is seen as the primary creative source. In placing his focus on the performer Brook emphasises the immediacy of the moment of performance and the connection between actor and audience in a shared experience¹⁹. Essentially he is examining the conjunction between artistic structure and the vitality of the moment, which makes his work particularly germane to this thesis. Other significant practitioners in improvised theatre are Jerzy Grotowski, mentioned above, whose theatre laboratory experiments in Poland and Italy inform the work of theatre makers internationally; Anne Bogart and Mary Overlie who developed Viewpoints improvisations; Eugenio Barba's *Odin Teatret*; theatre makers such as the Swede, Ingemar Lindh's Institute for Scenic Art (Institutet for Scenkonst) in Italy; the Wooster Group and Mabou Mines directors, Lee Breuer and Ruth Maleczek in the US; Romanian director, Silviu Purcărete; and Tim Etchells of 'Forced Entertainment' in the UK.

¹⁶ Frost and Yarrow, 191.

¹⁷ Frost and Yarrow, 194.

¹⁸ Ian Watson, 'Training with Eugenio Barba,' Alison Hodge (ed.), 215.

¹⁹ Peter Brook, *Between Two Silences: Talking with Peter Brook*, Dale Moffitt (ed.), (1st edn., 1999, this edn., London: Methuen 2000), 67.

Since the 1950s improvisation has become a widely used practice in training actors. The American schools of Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg and Sanford Meisner,²⁰ like Spolin, use improvisation exercises to deepen the connection between the actor and text. Philippe Gaulier builds a training process around the concept of 'Le Jeu',²¹ one that invites actors to be aware of the qualities they have that will enable them to 'win' in particular situations. His focus on play is targeted on making performers (and leaders) watchable. As Harriet Rubin writes, 'his school focuses on one essential objective: how not to be boring'.²² The training method developed by Jacques Lecoq includes improvisatory practices built around the physicality of the actor. In fact, use of improvisation as an actor training tool has become so widespread that it could almost be classed as a standard ingredient in actor training, whatever the approach of the particular school. David Zinder describes it as a fundamental aspect of actor training:

It is only through improvisation/creativity technique that the creative moment can be seen as it unfolds again and again in workshop, rehearsal, or performance. It is only through solid grounding in the improvisation/creativity tandem that the workings of that all-important ingredient of creativity – the imagination – can be revealed and turned into an 'on tap' technique.²³

Concurrent with this use of improvisation as a tool in constructing performance and in training has been the development of improvisation as performance, with the act of improvising becoming the performative event itself. Instances include dance improvisation, most markedly the extraordinary theatrical dance works of Pina Bausch²⁴ in Germany and Martha Graham's expressive movement in the US²⁵, drag performance, the theatrical 'happenings' that began in the late 1950's and 1960's and the comedy improvisation forms developed by Del Close in Chicago, Keith Johnstone's 'Theatresports', 'Gorilla Theatre' and other performative improvisation structures. Allan Kaprow in the late 1950s and early 1960s foreshadowed this

²⁰ American acting teachers associated with 'Method' acting.

²¹ The game, or gambling, also associated with acting.

²² Harriet Rubin, 'Boooooorriinnng!!!' www.fastcompany.com/magazine Issue 35, May, 2000.

²³ David Zinder, *Body Voice Imagination: A Training for the Actor*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2002). 9.

²⁴ Bausch's work with her ensemble Tanztheater Wuppertal has had a major influence on both the theatre and dance worlds. Gabrielle Cody in 'Woman, Man, Dog, Tree: Two Decades of Monumental Bodies in Pina Bausch's Tanztheater', *The Drama Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Summer 1998, 115-131, writes: 'Bausch is a pioneer in a dance aesthetic that confronts the cultural and historical significance of bodies by pushing her dancers to their physical limits and stretching Gestus to the breaking point of meaning'. 120. And: 'Pina Bausch - a quintessential witness of the postmodern condition, whose pieces are fraught with images of consumerism and waste - may be writing the truest, most credible naturalism of our time, a painful shorthand for the ecological drama Chekhov inaugurated over a century ago'. 129.

²⁵ See <http://www.pitt.edu/~gillis/dance/martha.html> - Chapter 3.

development with his focus on the audience/performer interplay coining the term 'happenings', a development from his visual arts practice. In these works the narrative emerged out of unexpected juxtapositions of objects, people and events. Initially scripted these became increasingly interactive as Kaprow saw the power of such interconnections.²⁶ In these events the sense of danger and unpredictability are the central values. Audience awareness of, and appreciation for, the challenge of improvisation is a focal part of such events, as it is in improvised jazz concerts. The work invites them to assess the challenges and responses and to ride the adrenalin of the creative adventure along with the performer/creators. Halpern, Close and Johnson draw attention to this active audience appreciation: 'Audiences appreciate a sophisticated game player. When a player listens and uses patterns that have been developed in a scene, it can elicit cheers from an audience ...'²⁷ In improvised work the grace of an outstanding and fulfilling performance moment can never be guaranteed. Yet it is for those gifted moments of creation that their audiences follow the improvised performance. That live moment, with all its dangers and unpredictability, is its defining characteristic.

Improvisatory performance is also employed with a social, political or therapeutic focus. In the 1950s and 1960s Boal developed a variety of interactive theatre forms designed to move the event from what he describes as the 'monologue' of traditional performance into a dialogue between the cast and the audience. In these forms the audience become performers, empowered not just to imagine change but to practise it, reflect, and out of this generate social action: 'Maybe the theatre in itself is not revolutionary, but these theatrical forms are without a doubt a *rehearsal of revolution*. The truth of the matter is that the spectator-actor practices a real act even though he does it in a fictional manner'.²⁸ Boal's politically and socially focused theatre is a major force world-wide. Jane Milling and Graham Ley cite him as 'probably the more influential of contemporary theoretical practitioners ... his books are essential reading for a new theatre of commitment'.²⁹ Boal calls these participating audiences 'spect-actors', as much a part of creating the event as the actors that initiate it: 'Boal's vision is embodied in dramatic techniques that activate passive spectators to become spect-actors – engaged participants rehearsing strategies for personal and social

²⁶ See Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, (Berkley CA: University of California Press, 1993).

²⁷ Charna Halpern, Del Close & Kim Johnson, *Truth in Comedy: The Manual of Improvisation* (Colorado: Meriwether Publishing, 1993), 28.

²⁸ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, A. Charles and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (trans.), (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 141.

²⁹ Jane Milling and Graham Ley, *Modern Theories of Performance*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 143.

change'.³⁰ His influence is felt in a variety of social and therapeutic contexts such as the work of Playback Theatre³¹, and in performances, often with strong improvisatory elements, serving social justice. Improvisation used in this context has a clear focus on purpose rather than quality of performance or formal aesthetics. Its strength lies in the opening up of social issues for embodied examination and the empowerment of audiences as participants in that examination. This performative use has a clear connection to the improvisatory elements in Māori ritual explored in Chapter Three and to the practice I am developing.

Seven Underlying Elements Present In Improvisation

In considering improvisation I am focusing on the larger threads, pulling out some underlying themes that can be applied across a range of forms. I have identified, from research and experience, seven underlying elements or principles that I will argue can be worked into and contribute to structured artistic moments, moments where the 'fixed' and the 'free' are both present.

'Body poeticising'

The first element is that of harnessing the creative and poetic abilities of the body. Lockford and Pelia coin the term 'body poeticizing' to cover the 'affective, physical and vocal capacities of the improvising performer'.³² They posit that when the body's senses are stimulated, especially the kinaesthetic sense, the performer moves forward through a response to direct body experience. The trained body's ability to respond kinaesthetically and mentally is a key element of performance, a watchful and embodied attentiveness.

³⁰ Mady Schutzman, and Jan Cohen-Cruz, (eds.), 'Introduction' in *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism*, (London, & New York: Routledge, 1994), 1.

³¹ 'Playback Theatre is an original form of improvisational theatre in which audience or group members tell stories from their lives and watch them enacted on the spot... Playback Theatre was founded in 1975 ... by Jonathan Fox with Jo Salas and other members of the original Playback Theatre Company'. *Centre for Playback Theatre Website* http://www.playbackschool.org/about_us_about_playback_theatre.htm.

³² Lockford and Pelia, 432.

Boundary negotiation

Boundary negotiation is the kind of acute listening, aurally and kinaesthetically, which arises out of the dialogue between performers and other performative elements, so that all are manifestly open and responsive to the events as they unfold. Frank Camilleri, writing on Ingemar Lindh's training and practice says: 'listening is when you start to make your actions reactions instead of conscious acts'.³³ Identities, in improvisation, are developed and formed through the liminal space between the improvisers. The actor does not create the character. Rather, where the text is being improvised in performance, the characters that emerge and the narrative that develops are a result of the interaction between the performers, rather than the intent of the individual performer.

Being in action

The act of doing as opposed to planning is the third strand I identify in examining improvisation practice. Improvisation is a discipline arising from doing, noticing, breathing and acting alongside others and very definitely not one involving planning, measuring, considering, reflecting or analysing. Mick Napier advises: 'at the top of an improv scene, in the first crucial moments, it is far more important that you do something than what it is that you actually do. It will snap you out of your head. And that's half the battle.... This is the first step to playing ...'³⁴ This is a key point: underlying improvisation practice and bringing improvisation techniques to artistically structured performance is all about being in action.

Spontaneity

Genuinely making it up as you go, being spontaneous rather than falling back on pre-planned solutions, is the most frequently cited characteristic of improvisation. It is all about spot decision-making: 'True improvisation is getting on-stage and performing without any preparation or planning'³⁵ write Halpern, Close, and Johnson, emphasising the value of acting and reacting in the moment of performance. Spontaneity calls into play our intuitive response to the moving, changing world in which we find ourselves. Spolin sees it as a 'reforming' of the self: 'It creates an explosion that for the moment frees us from handed-down frames of reference, memory choked with old facts and information Spontaneity is the moment of

³³ Frank Camilleri, 'The Practice and Vision of Ingemar Lindh', *The Theatre Review*, v. 524, (T200), (New York: New York University, Winter 2008), 85.

³⁴ Mick Napier, *Improvise: Scene from the Inside Out*, (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 2004), 15.

³⁵ Halpern, Close and Johnson, 13.

personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it, and act accordingly'.³⁶ The point about spontaneity and creating works of art is not so much around holding a value that decries pre-planning, as valuing the *effect* of the spontaneous moment; it brings out a quality of playfulness in the performers and draws forth from an audience a rapt, partisan attention. Unlike 'being in action' spontaneity can be verbal and emotional as well as physical.

Awareness of patterns

Awareness of patterns, the habitual noticing, remembering and reintroducing, the openness to the offers made from outside oneself, are all key elements underlying improvisation in performance. These are habits cultivated among improvisers, giving the form its unpredictability without loss of clarity or falling into chaos. Lockford and Pelia identify this habit as: 'improvisational moments [that] urge actors to be ever responsive to that which their bodies locate as embodied possibilities for and potential obstacles to performance'.³⁷ It is a kind of sedimentation so that the work builds as a palimpsest, each layer of invention writing on that which was 'written' before. Included in this is an awareness of story or narrative.

Attention to the manner or quality of an action

Attention to the manner or quality of an action – the rhythm, placement within the architecture of the space, the duration, the dynamic (hard/soft, staccato/flowing etc) - is another key focus for the improviser. Mick Napier makes this explicit: '*How* is everything in improvisation. How people do something in improvisation is most of the reason people laugh ...'³⁸ In this characteristic, improvisation is not fundamentally different from scripted work. The particular quality or nuance of an action gives art to the form.

Playfulness and attention to the underlying game

Finally there is the element of play – playfulness and attention to an underlying game. Playfulness, the relish felt by the performer and shared with the audience, is a distinguishing feature of improvisation. In every choice made, both players and audience know that it was only one of the many possible, both physical and verbal. The ability to play within this lack of certainty is a characteristic of the improviser. It assists acute listening and watching while invoking a sense of playfulness. Book writes, 'All human beings,

³⁶ Spolin, (1963), 4.

³⁷ Lockford and Pelia, 437.

³⁸ Napier, 25.

children and adults, are absolutely spontaneous when they are playing a physical game³⁹ and in focusing on a game rather than the quality of a performance both energy and playfulness are released in the performer.

In identifying these seven qualities I make no claims for them as a comprehensive list. They are, however, elements that recur again and again within the literature and are borne out through my own improvisation and theatre practices. They help lay a foundation of improvisation 'theory' and provide principles for constructing and interrogating performance work.

Application of the Seven Underlying Principles to Three Performative Contexts

I am choosing three performative situations through which to interrogate this improvisatory, real-time moment of negotiation and response, each differing widely from the others and each displaying to larger or smaller degrees, these seven underlying strands, all widely used in the international performance arena. These are:

1. Comedic improvisations
2. Naturalistic improvisations
3. Heightened improvisations

The focus of this chapter is less on the history of such practices than on the impact improvisation has on contemporary theatre performance, particularly its effect of making moments of performance that are 'alive' and unpredictable. In examining these diverse applications I identify those aspects of improvisation which enable the actor to experience life, to really see, as Cavafy, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, really saw the morning sea before slipping back into his memories. They are qualities that demand aware communicators working through all their cognitive, affective and intuitive abilities. At the heart of this research lies both demonstrating through doing and developing a language to describe that doing. Thus recurring examples from my own improvisation and performance work are integral to the examination along with widely recognised international sources.

³⁹ Book, xvii.

These three situations represent a wide spectrum in the performative use of improvisation and each of them has had (and is having) an impact on my own creative work, making them appropriate contexts through which to view the creative moment. In comedy improvisation the text is usually entirely free and, while there are structures supporting the work, these also can be set up and replaced according to the exigencies of the moment; in naturalistic improvisations, the text is usually freely constructed within a set of given circumstances; finally in heightened improvisation, the balance between fixed and free varies enormously. These last two categories are usually, but not exclusively, applied in support of artistically structured work and text.

As a performance form in and of itself, improvisation is relatively recent, as Salinsky and Frances-White attest:

performance improvisation dates back to the 1950s when Keith Johnstone began developing his techniques in London, and at around the same time in Chicago, the Compass Players were staging plays with improvised dialogue around a predefined scenario, and later performing improvised cabaret. That means the art form is currently around fifty years old.⁴⁰

While there are links to older traditions, such as *Commedia dell'Arte*, it is only in this contemporary form that characters as well as dialogue are created in the performative moment. This makes it particularly useful in examining the characteristics of the moment of creation within performance. In that moment the improvisers are particularly vulnerable and the level of risk is high. An essential part of the experience is whether they are able to create out of a state of unknowing or fall apart and have to leave the stage or be 'rescued' by their fellow actors. Lockford and Pelia describe this state of vulnerability as a crucible for newer or deeper discoveries:

When the actor experiences vulnerability, he may be gripped by a kind of imaginative stumping. The actor is thrown out of the scene and posed with the challenge either to break or remake the scene. Yet, in the instant, the situation creates a double-bind; the actor can't think of a way out of the situation and can experience only that he is in an abject state. The full weight of being a

⁴⁰ Salinsky and Frances-White, 30-31.

vulnerable self is brought to bear.... In these instances of vulnerability the momentary grasp of immobility and even a welling up of anger may yet spur the actor toward surprising new directions.⁴¹

Before examining improvisation more deeply in these three categories, it is useful to bring forward some of the terms most commonly used in structuring improvisation, regardless of context.⁴² The underlying understanding is that certain structures assist the 'in the moment' storytelling in which the improviser is engaged. Johnstone speaks of the improviser as 'a man walking backwards. He sees where he has been, but he pays no attention to the future. His story can take him anywhere, but he must still 'balance' it, and give it shape, by remembering incidents that have been shelved and reincorporating them'.⁴³ Here Johnstone is introducing two key concepts, 'shelving' and 'breaking of routines'. Shelving is putting aside some aspect of the story created so far and then bringing it back into the narrative, or 'reincorporating' it. This helps give a structure to the work. When 'breaking routines' the improviser 'builds a routine' doing something very ordinary and then interrupts it with something unexpected or unconnected. This building and breaking of routines, through 'offers' – an idea put forward by an improviser and 'accepted' or embraced by another who 'builds' or adds to the idea - along with shelving and reincorporating are the basic building blocks of improvised narrative. Mark Rafael calls this 'the tilt' – a way of disturbing the balance of a scene in order to drive the narrative forward: 'Once the situation is clear and the scene finds its balance, the improvisers introduce a "tilt" that upsets the stability. This is the primary structure for improv as well as for most drama in general'.⁴⁴ In more abstract work these 'tilts' might be gestural rather than verbal but the same principles apply. I said earlier that 'character' in improvisation is created in the space between the performers. A term often used in this context is 'endowment'. The 'offer' from one player becomes the character trait of the other. These are all patterns to which the improviser is attuned that allow unpredictability without falling into chaos and encourage the development of a shared reality.

In exploring improvisation within these three categories I refer to the underlying principles identified previously and include references to my own performative research. In this way I am building an embodied as well as theoretical model for performances that are 'alive', unpredictable and artistically precise. It

⁴¹ Lockford and Pelia, Ronald, 438-9.

⁴² For a more exhaustive list see Salinsky and Frances-White, 405-409, or Johnstone (1981), 109-142.

⁴³ Keith Johnstone, *Improv: Improvisation and the Theatre*, (London: Methuen, 1981), 116.

⁴⁴ Mark Rafael, *Telling Stories: A Grand Unifying Theory of Acting Techniques*, (New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus Publishers, 2008), 58.

should be noted that the categories are not discrete, aspects of them overlapping. Comedy makes use of heightened and surreal structures, rehearsal and training practices often move between metaphor and naturalism, and heightened improvisation often combines with or arises out of naturalistic improvisations. The separation is for the purposes of examination, and reflects their dominant, rather than exclusive characteristics.

1. Comedic Improvisations

For most people in the English-speaking world, the term 'improvisation' conjures up comedy and games, from the television show *Whose Line is it Anyway?*⁴⁵ to the stage formats of Theatresports and the Improv Olympics. Theatresports is a structure made up of competitive improvisation games. It was developed by Keith Johnstone, a British director and teacher who began his work in London in the 1950s and further refined it at Loose Moose Improvisational Theatre Company in Calgary, Canada. Theatresports is now a franchised product, licensed throughout the world.⁴⁶ The Improv Olympics arose out of Del Close's work in Chicago and focuses on 'long-form', particularly the 'Harold', in which improvisers to construct a pattern of recurring scenes, often creating an improvisation of twenty minutes or more.⁴⁷ The Seattle improviser, Randy Dixon, sums up the difference between these influential practitioners: 'I think Keith is the best observer I have seen.... Keith's strength lies in giving improvisers tools to create productive scenes. Del was more interested in why we do it, how it can affect an audience and how the performers could utilize themselves in their work'.⁴⁸ In these forms the text and the content of the text is the freest element in the performance. There are structures that hold and frame the event, but they are freely defined and can be changed in a nanosecond according to the whim of the performers or their reading of the audience. This is true also of drag performances which are structured by conventions rather than by text, though the form is more constrained, built around polarised gender constructs and the transformation or subversion of gender codes.⁴⁹ There is also a long tradition of comedic interludes within written texts where, either by intent, or because the actor seizes the opportunity to delight an audience with his/her skill, the performer deviates

⁴⁵ This began as a radio show in the UK and was developed for television in 1988. In 1998 it was developed by the ABC for an American audience.

⁴⁶ See the website for the International Theatresports Institute (ITI), www.theatresports.org.

⁴⁷ Halpern, Close & Johnson, 13.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Salinsky, 349.

⁴⁹ See Eve Shapiro, 'We're All Genderqueer Performers: Drag and Trans-Gender Identity', <http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/performing-arts/ion,1154418.html>

from the given text and works extempore. In this context, note Hamlet's advice to the players to eschew such practices⁵⁰.

The essence of comedy improvisation is the understanding by both audiences and performers that the work is being created in the moment. The form relies on a body that is acting rather than considering, responding rather than choosing a response. Mick Napier highlights this by describing what happens when this poeticised body is not in action: '... bad improvisation depends upon measurement and thinking. In a bad improv scene everyone from the light guy to the audience to the performers themselves is thinking. The audience has time to think because they're so damn bored'.⁵¹ Being in action, willing to act in the face of the genuinely unknown is a fundamental characteristic of the form. It requires a great capacity for playfulness and curiosity. Of course, these qualities are not always present in improvised comedy – but this is the state towards which the performers are reaching, a state in which freedom is valued and content and form fluid, responsive to the demands of the moment.

In being spontaneous and genuinely making it up on the spot there is an inevitable exposure of the inner self. Johnstone writes: 'If you improvise spontaneously in front of an audience you have to accept that your innermost self will be revealed. The same is true of any artist'.⁵² Thus the narrative exists on two levels, that within the scope of the scene, the other the story of actors, artists working with each other to make sense of that liminal space. By opening themselves to that necessary lack of personal control, their vulnerable selves are exposed to their audiences. They have to accept what their imaginations provide no matter how revelatory or confronting that might be. Which opens up the question of play, for it is this attention to an underlying game that releases the playfulness within which this 'struggle for glory'⁵³ exists and allows the audience to appreciate and enjoy both the vulnerability and the creative game.

The embedded ability to access the creative and poetic abilities of the body leads to a situation where, for experienced improvisers, the fear experienced under the exigencies of performance becomes enabling

⁵⁰ 'And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them...', Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 3, Sc 2 L5.

⁵¹ Napier, 6.

⁵² Johnstone, (1981), 111.

⁵³ Salinsky and Frances-White, 35: 'Competitive formats (such as Theatre Sports) tell two stories: The first is the story the improvisers are telling within their scenes and games. The second is the story of their struggle for glory'.

rather than debilitating. The improvisers are in a state that Lecoq describes as '*La Disponibilité*' an openness that is playful and witty and uses all the resources of the improviser's art:

The performer (most pointedly in improvisation) is always ready, always aware and able to respond...*Disponibilité* sums up in a single word the condition improvisers aspire to. It offers a way of describing an almost intangible and nearly undefinable way of being: having at (or in) one's fingertips, and any other part of the body, the capacity to do and say what is appropriate, and to have the confidence to make the choice.⁵⁴

In these circumstances improvising becomes a roller-coaster ride that exhilarates, terrifies and frees. Performers are practising a boundary negotiation that requires a high level of attentiveness. Keith Johnstone instructs: 'be altered by what is said' ⁵⁵ and 'unless you are willing to be changed you might as well be working alone'.⁵⁶ Improvisation is an act of collective creation in which who you are and where you are going are unknown at the beginning of the scene. Character and story will only emerge from the combined imaginations of all the actors responding to each other and to the audience. In this perhaps it more clearly resembles life itself, where 'who we are' is a changing feast depending on the observation point and time. In improvisation the constant presence of change is not only acknowledged but is a building block of the form. Thus, in comedic improvisations, spontaneity, being in action, playfulness and the boundary negotiation of creating a character are strongly in play. Married to these qualities and just as crucial is an awareness of patterning, an ability to see the structures that are being created from within that moment of creation. Awareness allows the improvisers to use the patterning, building, reincorporating, and giving coherence to the work. They can work playfully and spontaneously, knowing that the patterns they perceive will prevent the work from falling into chaos.

⁵⁴ Frost and Yarrow, 196, describing Lecoq's practice.

⁵⁵ Keith Johnstone, *Impro for Storytellers* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 59.

⁵⁶ Johnstone, (1999), 57.

What's Bred in the Bone Will Out in the Flesh

The comedic improvised performance I developed, *What's Bred in the Bone Will Out in the Flesh*⁵⁷, is an example of my performative research into improvised performance. It is structured around the lineage and events of a family over several generations. All key elements - narrative, characters and events - are created during the performance with input from the audience. The actors are students, and comparatively inexperienced improvisers, yet many manage quite a high level of spontaneity without descending into banality and cliché. The starting point is a contemporary family gathering of a kind chosen by the audience out of which the narrative and family past is developed. Their interactions create their characters as the palimpsest of their past is revealed. Much of the comedy arises from this emergence of character, the audience appreciating how their suggestions are used and built on through surprising twists. The actors' challenge is to incorporate the family trait chosen by the audience, note how it manifests in other scenes, and link that into their own, interlinking all the stories. It requires quick thinking, but even more it requires the courage to allow themselves to alter and be changed, to activate their 'vulnerable self' and to receive the offers as they come. Johnstone says: 'Good theatre is like tennis in that the spectators look to see how a statement is received, whereas in bad theatre it won't be received'⁵⁸. An example of this lack of reception comes in one performance. Prior to the show the audience are invited to write down a question that they had never found the answer to and the cast will then work with this 'unanswerable question'. On one particular day the question drawn from the hat is "Why do one and one make two?" The actor instinctively rejects the question as a joke. It does not fit into his pre-conception of an 'unanswerable question'. From that moment the contract between actors and audience is broken and the audience set themselves to trip the actors up, their offerings ungenerous and overly 'clever'. The actors did not receive the audience's offer and that rejection led to their being rejected in turn.

Being receptive means relying on and playing with each other, exposing their vulnerability even as they embrace the genuine risk that they will not know what to do or say. The more the actors pre-prepare, the less life there is in the work. The more they ride on their genuine and spontaneous reactions to offers the greater the pleasure they feel which is communicated to, and shared with their audiences. Keith Johnstone points out: 'The excitement of sport is maximised when there's a fifty/fifty toss-up between triumph and

⁵⁷ Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, 1991.

⁵⁸ Johnstone, (1999), 77.

disaster ... when I'm told that Theatresports has been "adapted to the local conditions" I can be sure that the risks have been minimized; that there'll be pre-game meetings at which the teams agree on the challenges ...'⁵⁹ When insecurity overwhelms their delight in creating, these young improvisers devise game-plans to lessen the risk and this dilutes the game. Yet the danger is the point, giving piquancy to the moment of success and the audience respond to revelations of their 'vulnerable selves' to use Lockford and Pelia's evocative term.

In an early performance there is a wonderfully alive sequence that grows out of an audience offer around a secret relationship between a wife and her brother-in-law. The actors develop this so that echoes of the forbidden love appear at different times in the family history. I see a kind of 'game' emerge where they hold back on revealing the secret love, allowing it to emerge organically and therefore surprisingly from their interactions. In one scene they show the revealed love becoming ever more extreme, the actor performing increasingly bizarre contortions trying to resist her infatuation, climbing walls and eating furniture. Her extremity is at once touching and incredibly funny. A couple of performances later I see another actor try to impose this same secret on the show and the results are contrived and leaden. The performance only really takes off when he lets go of the idea and begins to pay attention to what is really emerging in the show.

Improvisation is primarily developed out of the current understanding, life-style and cultural references of the performers. When improvisers locate themselves outside of familiar cultural territory or in an historical context, the work can quickly degenerate into cliché. To mitigate against this the actors in *What's Bred in the Bone* research three historical periods to be used in performances, as well as a contemporary timeframe: New Zealand during the great depression 1932, the New Zealand Wars of 1860 and the great fire of London 1666. By immersing themselves in the detail of these periods they hope to be able to bring a sense of them effortlessly into their improvised narrative. The level to which the actors are able to do this while still eschewing pre-planning varies enormously. But when they pull it off the work is exhilarating for both performers and audience. One performer describes it as feeling like flying. Salinsky notes: 'When improvisers are in the present – not planning for the future or re-creating what they have seen or done

⁵⁹ Johnstone, (1999), 67.

before, but truly in the present – it can be the most magical, beguiling art form in the world’,⁶⁰ a high claim from enthusiasts of course, yet, at its best, a glimpse of this is seen in *What’s Bred in the Bone*.

The section on the 1930s Depression is a good example. In New Zealand, that time is often referred to as ‘the sugar-bag years’⁶¹ arising out of the use of the rough sack that held bulk sugar for clothing, and anything else that was needed and cloth could provide. The era has become a part of our national sense of ourselves: ‘The Depression, which began as an episode in our history, has ended as an element of our national mythology’.⁶² In one performance it becomes evident to me that a particular actor has pre-prepared a section referring to these clothes. It is introduced without an organic connection to what has gone before and feels more like a history lesson than an intrinsic part of the performance. This makes it sit outside the flow of the storytelling and the reference is not picked up and developed by another improviser. On another occasion the very same reference arises as a response to a gesture from another player. The actor is fingering her clothing with distaste, aware of the rough texture of the fabric against her skin, and receives a murmur of recognition from the audience, quite a number of whom had lived through those sugar-bag years. The difference in quality between the two offers is totally apparent. In the second instance a dark comedy emerges as the players search for alternatives to the sugar-bag cloth, cannibalising curtains and recycling paper bags. It is funny and a bit wistful and, for the audience, deepens the sense of real people struggling while simultaneously giving them the opportunity to take pleasure in the actors’ virtuosity.

The game in play between the actors in *What’s Bred in the Bone* lives in the use of repetition, reincorporation and offers that arise from absorption, at a deep level, of the research into the various time periods. The blocks to this occur when the information remains at an intellectual rather than an embodied level and the work goes dead as the improvisers retreat into their memory banks. In this work both the joyousness of the roller-coaster moment of creation and the deadening effect of pre-planning are present. It is at its best when it hovers closer to the freedom end of the fixed-free continuum and at its worst when the actors panic and try to recreate a moment from rehearsal or pre-plan. Both the success and the lack of it in this comedy-based improvisation practice reflect the needs and balances of the genre, where in-the-moment, visible creation is the critical ingredient. Other uses of improvisation require a different balance.

⁶⁰ Salinsky and Frances-White, 381.

⁶¹ Tony Simpson, *The Sugarbag Years*, (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1st edn. 1974, this edn. 1984).

⁶² Simpson, 18.

2. Naturalistic Improvisations

Naturalistic improvisations are a widely used part of an actor's training as well as a rehearsal technique for deepening the engagement of the actor in the character or the world of the play. Krasner articulates this as, '... encouraging the actor's personal interpretation and investment, thereby freeing the actor from a dependency on words'.⁶³ These improvisations, sometimes lengthy, deepen the simultaneous engagement with action and text, linking them to the actor's embodied experience of the situation in the moment. In doing this they are seeking to increase the psychological complexity of the actor's work and deepen the emotional truth within performance.

Sometimes such improvisations are used as part of the performance itself. The desire to engage more fully with the audience during the late twentieth century led to experiments where the audience was invited to be part of, and change, the trajectory of the performance. Theodore Shank writes: '[experimental theatre companies] created performances which the audience perceived as sharing their environment.... The spectators interact with each other and the performers acknowledge the audience'.⁶⁴ Growing out of the 'happenings' of the 1960's, companies such as the Wooster Group in New York involved the audience in an active role, so that essentially they moved from observation to participation. In Spalding Gray's work, *A Personal History of American Theatre*, 1980, for example, Gray invites the audience to discuss with him the photographs and memorabilia out of which he has built the first part of the performance, shuffling a deck of cards to select stories and establish their order, 'so every performance is different and the emotional meaning of a story changes, depending on what brackets it'.⁶⁵ In the Wooster Group's *To You, the Birdie*, the set text is 'combined with improvisational elements to prevent atrophy'.⁶⁶ The company frequently retains an element of spontaneity in the work. David Savran writes of the spectators being required to:

make the kind of choices usually considered the province of the writer and/or performer. As a result, each piece must be considered only partially composed when it is presented to the public, not because it is unfinished, but because it requires an audience to realise the multitude of

⁶³ David Krasner, 'Strasberg, Adler and Meisner', Hodge (ed.), (2000), 132.

⁶⁴ Theodore Shank, *Beyond the Boundaries: American Alternative Theatre: Theory/Text/Performance*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2002, 92-93.

⁶⁵ Laurie Stone, 'The Time of His Life: Swimming with Spalding Gray, through good times and bad', TCG Online publication, www.tcg.org/publications/at/mar11/gray.cfm.

⁶⁶ Chris Johnston, *The Improvisation Game: Discovering the Secrets of Spontaneous Performance*, (London: Nick Hern, 2006), 169.

possibilities on which it opens. As each spectator, according to his part, enters into a dialogue with the work, the act of interpretation becomes a performance, an intervention in the piece.⁶⁷

In these performances, and many others, the challenge of immediacy and an engagement with the audience that required real participation led to structures that challenged or subverted the audience's ability to remain passive in the face of the work.

Improvisation as a rehearsal and actor-training tool became prevalent over the course of the twentieth century and continues in contemporary work. This takes many forms, including psychological realism, where an imaginary situation is created and the actor plays out the circumstances, *as if* they were happening to them. This magic 'if' is an often cited component of naturalistic acting – to behave truthfully in imagined circumstances, as if they were happening to the actors themselves. This arose out of the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky and was hugely influential in the many schools of 'method' acting in the United States, giving primacy to the imaginative work of the actor. Alison Hodge writes: 'In training, the emphasis on the actor's creativity beyond the interpretation of the text was often achieved through processes which implemented new skills and re-contextualised old ones'⁶⁸ and she goes on to cite improvisation as a major tool in doing this. In this area of improvisation the poeticised body of the performer, the acute listening that emerges from boundary negotiations, the quality or manner of the action and the aliveness to patterns are the dominant underlying elements.

As with other forms of improvisation, the ability to create within the moment is key, and in this more naturalistic form the ability needs to arise out of a deep understanding of the given circumstances of the particular improvisation, and a willingness to allow those circumstances to mingle and entwine with the individual life experiences of the actor, to access the vulnerable self and allow that to be visible, even exposed within the work. In these practises, that boundary between fictional and actual life is often blurred as the actors strive to link themselves to the joy and agony of life. Darryl Hickman aligns this to the core of what it means to be an actor:

⁶⁷ David Savran, *Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group*, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988), 55.

⁶⁸ Hodge, 3.

Acting in its purest form is an urge from deep in the human psyche to celebrate our aliveness, to act out our dreams and fantasies in a public display of our most private selves.... It is more physical than mental, more emotional than brainy, more spontaneous than a result of analytical skills.⁶⁹

This alignment of actor and character through improvisation is used as part of the rehearsal process to both deepen the connection between the two and to harness the actor's imagination in a partnership that riffs off the actor's personal history and links this to the circumstances of the script. Improvisation is also used to create experiences not easily (or even desirably) accessible to the actor. Brook's improvisatory work often flows from the outer to the inner world and back again in a continuous loop of experience to build up an understanding of otherness. For example, in working on *The Ik*, members of the group copied the postures of members of the Ik tribe, as recorded in documentary photographs. These postures are recreated in painstaking detail, with the actor 'listening' to information provided by the physical form. Whilst others observe and correct, the actor improvises the action or movement immediately preceding or following the instant captured in the photograph.⁷⁰ This enables them to access responses and feelings far from their own biological history. Similarly I use photographs to assist actors to explore acute situations as do many acting and improvisation tutors worldwide. German director, Harry Fuhrmann, exploring the extremes of poverty portrayed in Bertolt Brecht's *Good Person of Szechuan*,⁷¹ uses another kind of physical experience to assist the actors to come closer to the material. The cast empty buckets of mud over themselves to bring them a little closer to the physical experience of never having washing-water or clean clothing. As Hickman says, 'to reach the heights or probe the depths of modern humanity's spiritual odyssey, we have to reach past language...' ⁷² and thus physical metaphor as part of improvisation is used, not only in this relatively naturalistic approach to the Brecht work but in the heightened improvisations described in the next section.

Another frequent element in these kind of improvisations is the moment of decision-making, and the experience of the actor (and vicariously any spectators) of actually making a choice, what Robert Benedetti describes as 'the centre of the bridge': 'Because choice is the moment at which reaction turns into action, it

⁶⁹ Darryl Hickman, *The Unconscious Actor: Out of Control, In Full Command*, (Montecito, CA: Small Mountain Press, 2007), 25.

⁷⁰ Lorna Marshall, and David Williams, 'Peter Brook: Transparency and the invisible network', Hodge (ed.), 187.

⁷¹ UNESCO International Theatre Institute, World Festival of Theatre Schools, Barcelona, 2008.

⁷² Hickman, 97.

is the essence of drama...'⁷³ He goes on to say: 'Choice is the most revealing point in the process of action. If you can experience all the factors influencing your character's most significant choices, you will be in touch with everything needed to create the psychological aspect of your characterization'.⁷⁴ Through the process of an improvisation the actor is able to explore these factors and genuinely test them out, even re-playing the scene to experience alternative options. Experience is a key word here and many actors struggle to make decisions just as many of us do in life. Often, improvisations are set up without any relationship to a written script to give actors practice in decision-making, particularly where the decision is a difficult one with a likely lose/lose outcome. Hodgson and Richards take this a step further and claim that, in practising decision-making, the actor is also being taught to think and act quickly:

Improvisation is a means of training people to think. It aims at the inculcation of clear mental habits and the training of the expression of these thoughts in a concise and orderly way. Because it places people in a human situation involving other people, it calls for fairly quick thinking and at times for different levels of thought at one and the same time.... In so many other fields we are expected to think intellectually about something we have never experienced, whereas here the experience comes first, or accompanies the thought.⁷⁵

It is a kind of thinking that is rapidly converted into action and therefore able to be experienced kinaesthetically.

Naturalistic Improvisation in my Own Practice

In my practice I use naturalistic improvisations to deepen the connection with particular aspects of a text, to give kinaesthetically-experienced life to the 'back-story' of a character, and to give actors a tool to experience situations outside their everyday range of activities and knowledge. For example, I devise improvisations around male/female relationships and habitual occupancy of space to explore the background of the text for my production of *Ophelia Thinks Harder*,⁷⁶ a New Zealand script that takes Ophelia's story from *Hamlet* and reassigns to her some of his famous lines. The cast discover, through

⁷³ Robert Benedetti, *The Actor At Work*, (Boston: Pearson, 1st edn. 1970, this edn. 2005), 124.

⁷⁴ Benedetti, 125.

⁷⁵ John Hodgson, and Ernest Richards, *Improvisation*, (Reading, UK: Methuen, 1st edn. 1966, this edn. 1991), 22-23.

⁷⁶ Toi Whakaari, 2000.

both naturalistic and more expressionistic or heightened improvisations, that the way they relate to space is very different and that this difference is grounded in gender. That men and women relate differently to space has been explored by many feminist theorist and practitioners from Judith Butler⁷⁷ to Gillian Rose.⁷⁸ What is significant here, however, is that, for the actors, the discovery is personal and embodies and triggers a number of responses that they are able to use within the performance as well as informing and deepening their reactions *within* the performance itself. The set is a giant, four-poster bed and the women in the cast make evocative use of the curtaining to conceal and drape themselves, often hanging out from the posts, marginalising themselves, until finding the moments when the text requires them to combat conditioning and take centre stage.

In the classroom I devise improvisations to explore the moment of choice and the doubts that accompany it. These experiences are pivotal, not only for the people within the exercise, but for all those observing it. These are the moments, for example, when observers lean forward in their chairs and the pile of heaped chairs and mats before them transforms in their imaginations into the cold mountainside where decisions around life and death are being played out. In this particular exercise I am quoting the brief is to explore two friends on a climbing expedition together. At a certain point one of them is told she/he must fall and break their leg. They are three day's walk from safety with no cell phone coverage. The decision the actor has to make is to leave an injured friend to certain death on the ice or die together. For the actors inside these improvisations the thinking Hodgson and Richards describe above is accompanied by difficult moral choices. It is my experience that these can be almost as difficult and painful for an actor to make as they would be in their own lives. It is extremely difficult to abandon a friend even when the situation is essentially a fantasy, and it has sometimes taken a repeat of the exercise and considerable time for the actor to achieve this. This work counteracts tendencies towards glibness or pretence and directs the actor toward the hard work of genuine decision-making. It is invariably in that moment of struggling to make a decision that the watchers lean forward, holding their breath and the silence in the room becomes palpable. Zinder writes:

It's that moment *before*, that potential-packed second when all the options are open and a choice is about to be made – *that's* what fascinates me. Why? Because that is the Zero point, the heart of

⁷⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the discursive limits of sex*, (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁷⁸ Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of geographical Knowledge*, (Oxford: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers, 1993): 'unequal social relations are both expressed and constituted through spatial differentiation', 113.

any investigation into the creative moment; the moment of the purest, greatest creativity; the stillness that belies movement, the highly charged median point between one action and another when fateful decisions are being weighed in the imagination'.⁷⁹

It is also a moment when not only the actor is making a choice but the audience also consider the decision they would make *were they in that position*; in that moment, breath suspended, the audience watches the actor *act* on behalf of all.

There are, however, many situations where metaphor and an abstracted or heightened approach are more effective in bringing the actor towards an organic connection with a text or scenario. In these approaches the work is less focused on the conscious brain of the actor operating at a deeper, organic level, less connected with a narrative than with intuitive and kinaesthetic responses to the environment.

3. Heightened Improvisations

Heightened improvisations are those that require highly poeticised bodies from the actors, working outside the quotidian, with extended time signatures and great attention to rhythm. They depart from the naturalistic, magnifying moments in time physically and vocally, making use of musical and dance vocabularies such as Butoh⁸⁰, often incorporating non-verbal sound. These practices are most frequently articulated as a part of either the process of creation or the process of rehearsal. The heightened improvisations require intense focus and often deeply imbedded skills from the practitioner. Sometimes, but not always, they are linked with naturalistic improvisation, exploring the background or subtext of a play. The combination of disciplined, prepared form and spontaneity is seen as mutually enhancing rather than clashing, a principle that Grotowski characterised as *conjunctio oppositorum*, a conjunction of opposites: '... within this structure, the actor should discover an ever-changing flow of life that arises from contact with his

⁷⁹ Zinder, 11.

⁸⁰ Butoh is a dance form developed in post-war Japan. See James R. Brandon (ed.), Martin Banham, (advisory ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 173: 'Often referred to as *anoku butō* or 'dance of darkness'....The essence of the movement is its attempt to recapture the shamanic basis of the Japanese performing arts and rearticulate it as modern art'. Margaret Loke in *The New York Times*, November 1, 1987, writes: 'The hallmarks of this theater of protest include full body paint (white or dark or gold), near or complete nudity, shaved heads, grotesque costumes, clawed hands, rolled-up eyes and mouths opened in silent screams'.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/01/magazine/butoh-dance-of-darkness.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

or her partners ... a cycle of living impulses'.⁸¹ The opposites to which Grotowski refers are the mastery of a precise structure or code accomplished by the actor, freeing her to focus on the flow of life outside of her. The preparatory work engenders a responsiveness to the immediacy of the moment. James Dennen comments that 'every action performed contains within it some element of improvisation'⁸² but in these works this element is heightened through the attention paid to rhythm and response.

In this form the poeticised body is crucial in allowing the work to flow between the creators. It is work that lives primarily on the rehearsal floor and in the laboratory, flowing out from there into performance through the deeply embedded practice of the artists. For many practitioners this is developed over considerable time periods of working and training as a group, just as instilling an ability to respond through the body is a key element in actor training. We can trace this thread through the work of twentieth century theatre exploratory practitioners such as Jerzy Grotowski, Ingemar Lindh and Eugenio Barba, all of whom focus on the necessity to train bodies that are able to remain effective and affective within performance situations. Along with the poeticised body, awareness of patterns, attention to the manner or quality of an action and boundary negotiation are all underlying elements in this work, as the actors work with extended time signatures to explore moments in depth.

Barba writes: 'The invisible "something" that breathes life into what the spectator sees is the actor's subscore. By subscore I do not mean a hidden scaffolding, but a resonance, a motion, an impulse, a level of cellular organization that supports still further levels of organization'.⁸³ Barba sees this embodied training as bringing an essential resonance that lifts performative work into art. This 'resonance' is also evident in the work of the contemporary Romanian director, Silviu Purcarete, who uses improvisatory techniques around patterning to direct large choruses of actors. Purcarete was trained in the visual arts and his approach is strongly influenced by this:

In terms of how I use space, this is part of my first training as an artist in a High School of Painting and Drawing.... My work on choruses comes from the same source of inspiration.... There is no

⁸¹ Lisa Wolford, 'Grotowski's vision of the actor' Hodge (ed.), 205.

⁸² James Dennen, 'On Reception of Improvised Music', *The Theatre Review*, v. 524 (T200), (New York: New York University, 53:4 (T204) Winter 2009), 138.

⁸³ Eugenio Barba, 'An Amulet Made of Memory: The significance of exercises in the actor's dramaturgy', *The Drama Review* 41:4, Winter 1997, 127.

tyranny in my way of working. I very often work on improvisation with actors. As in any improvisation you might sometimes find a seed that can be developed ...⁸⁴

In Purcarete's work these crowds (50-100 people) do not function as a background for the action but rather develop under his direction into an autonomous being, become powerful by multiplying. He employs silhouette, mime and synchronised action as part of that multiplication. Andrea Tompa describes the effect of these scenes: 'his stage compositions are not purely visual, decorative pictures, but rather human landscapes, canvases of both inner life and society'.⁸⁵ She goes on to identify improvisation as a key element in this enlivening process, citing his production of *Pantagruel*, 2003, which she calls: 'a series of improvisations – not textual but gestural – to the themes of birth and creation.... It's as if art and music come into the world along with the human body ...'⁸⁶ These practitioners use heightened improvisations, stressing the reactivity of the trained body and its ability to respond in the poeticized way identified by Lockford and Pelia. It is this training which allows the actor to respond in an enabled way when the future is genuinely unknown, to be generated in the real time of the performance. In contrast to comedy improvisation, heightened improvisation tends to be located in a balance between fixed and free. Ryszard Cieslak, the lead actor in Grotowski's *Akropolis*, described this balance of score and response in an interview with Richard Schechner:

The score is like the glass inside which a candle is burning. The glass is solid, it is there, you can depend on it. It contains and guides the flame. But it is not the flame. The flame is my inner process each night. The flame is what illuminates the score, what the spectators see through the score.⁸⁷

Bringing improvisation techniques to artistically structured performance is more about the quality of actions developed through these embodied practices, where the 'flame' of the inner practice is visible in the precision of the score. It's less about analysing or even understanding, but having a willingness to respond to and through action. This willingness is aided by a sense of the recurring patterns of a theatrical work.

⁸⁴ Silviu Purcarete, 'Where are your training grounds?', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t909256459> (Online publication: 23 February 2010).

⁸⁵ Andrea Tompa, 'Silviu Purcarete's World', *Theater*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (Durham: Duke University Press, Summer, 2009), 35.

⁸⁶ Tompa, 38.

⁸⁷ Richard Schechner, *Essays in Performance Theory: 1970-1976*, (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), 19.

Bringing this patterning to textually-structured work, we can look at productions of Charles L. Mee's plays. Mee habitually works with directors such as Anne Bogart, who pattern choreographically in counterpoint to the text. Given that Mee's texts tend to be deconstructed collages, juxtaposing contemporary and historic situations, his own and classic text, this makes for a highly complex patterning aurally, physically and imagistically:

My plays are broken, jagged, filled with sharp edges, filled with things that take sudden turns, careen into each other, smash up, veer off in sickening turns. That feels good to me. It feels like my life. It feels like the world. And then I like to put this—with some sense of struggle remaining—into a classical form, a Greek form, or a beautiful dance theatre piece, or some other effort at civilization.⁸⁸

The layering articulated in the work of Anne Bogart is explored more deeply in Chapter Four, examining Viewpoints improvisation. Her use of layering leads to unexpected juxtapositions of image and sound, that enables a fresh perception of the world through the work. Director Tina Landau develops movement patterns through Viewpoints improvisation, bringing this into her productions. Reviews of Landau's work comment on the connection between this improvisatory methodology and the visible effects in her work: 'As a proponent of the performance technique known as Viewpoints and in her boldly experimental productions, Tina Landau has revealed herself to be one of those rare theatre artists who can straddle the worlds of theory and practice'⁸⁹ writes Sarah Schulman. I was able to observe this myself, when I saw her production of *The Ballad of Little Joe* at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre in 2000. Long before I had heard of her working methods I was filled with admiration for the complexity and vitality of the large chorus, impressed by the highly architectural, yet free-flowing movement patterns, patterns that evoked the kinaesthetic responsiveness of life. In all of the above examples, the improvisatory element lies in the explorations of the rehearsal or training room. Once in performance these patterns are laid down in an aesthetic, bringing art and choice to bear.

The particular quality or nuance of an action gives art to the form. In this characteristic, improvisation is not fundamentally different from scripted work. For example, the directors of Marbou Mines, Lee Breuer and

⁸⁸ Charles L. Mee, *The (Re)Making Project*, <http://www.charlesmee.org/html/charlesMee.html>

⁸⁹ Sarah Schulman, 'Tina Landau: the rest is metaphor' *American Theatre*, Vol.15, No.7, September, 1998, 68-9.

Ruth Maleczech, work with their company through an improvisatory base but they ask precise attention to form in the final work. Form in Bogart's work is used as a compression point, as a way of intensifying the moment for the actor, asking her to respond within a struggle to embody that form. She asks the actors to articulate whilst holding to precise and pre-determined body positions and actions. The degree of spontaneity within this moment of response inside form varies from practitioner to practitioner. Most of those cited above emphasise the artistically structured container of the form, the 'freedom' being an inner responsiveness. However, Jonathan Fox points towards a way of considering this in connection with freedom and responsivity: 'The idea of spontaneity as heedless impulse belittles the potential of the concept, which can include a difficult-to-attain notion of "right action" not unlike the Zen master's injunction to "eat while eating, sleep while sleeping"'.⁹⁰ This is another way of articulating the performer's trained responsiveness to his/her own bodily instincts and those of others. It also speaks to a willingness to sit within that physicality, in the moment, within the pattern of the work, without needing to figure out what it might signify.

⁹⁰ Fox, 80.

Small Lives, Big Dreams

My 2006 production of Anne Bogart's tribute to Chekhov, *Small Lives, Big Dreams*⁹¹ is an example of the use of heightened improvisations from my own performative practice. I am working with actors in their second year of training at New Zealand's national drama school, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School. Core elements in their training are the embodied movement taught by Lecoq-trained tutor, Tom McCrory and Viewpoints training, taught by myself from the work of Bogart, where the awareness of space and time is instilled through improvisations developing the ability of the actors to respond from a poeticised body. The text is a dense, poetic work and therefore highly appropriate for exploring more heightened improvisations in support of its development. The play is a deconstruction of the five major works of Chekhov: *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Ivanov*, devised by Bogart and her SIT Company actors. Five characters travel together in the aftermath of some kind of major disaster that has uprooted them from their previous lives, each one speaking text from one of the afore-mentioned plays. The journey changes them, interrogates their memories, and finally gives four of them the courage to go on. 'Ivanov' turns back, just as the eponymous character in the Chekhov play turns away from life by killing himself at the end of the play. In our production, *Cherry Orchard* is an actress of the old school, *Ivanov* a financial markets analyst who has just lost his job over suspected fraud, *Uncle Vanya* a 17 year old school girl and *Seagull* a directing student at Toi Whakaari. The fifth character, *Three Sisters*, is a clown-like street performer, making balloon animals for the younger people and passing out bubble-blowing tubes to members of the audience before the performance. We come to see him as a doctor who has made a terrible error and so retreats from his profession into clowning as a way of distancing himself from himself.

In *Small Lives, Big Dreams* there are three layers of disassociated narrative present: the words from the five Chekhov plays, the ordering of these and the exploration of the Bogart text, and the devised action relating to the immediate environment of Wellington, New Zealand, which is the action visible to the audience. Finding the particular embodiments for the five characters begins with provocations from me and the designer, John Senczuk. The detail grows through improvisations, predominantly heightened, throughout the rehearsal process, which over time become more refined and acquire depth. The actors bring considerable research to their roles, sparked off by our initial discussions. For example, much of the

⁹¹ Te Whaea Theatre, 2006.

texture we develop for *Uncle Vanya* comes from the actor Brooke Williams' research into the survivors of the tsunami in Indonesia and the story of one young woman who was raped by the man who rescued her. She explores this through abstract sound and movement improvisations rather than through any attempt to re-create such experiences. Actor Arthur Meek discovers a major aspect of his character when, exasperated by the level of abstraction, he stands on his head and suddenly the effort and life flowing through his body by upending the world for an extended period leads him to find the juxtaposition of painful searching and absurdity in 'Three Sisters.' The heightened improvisation provides a kinaesthetic understanding that the intellect could not unlock, and we take it into performance. These explorations create our cast of 'characters', thrown together by the disaster and forced to go on a journey, where magical and bewildering things happen to them.

The deconstructed nature of the Bogart text (Bogart describes it as 'aphasic fragments'⁹²) means consistent character development is impossible. Actors are creating and recreating characters in response to both each other and the audience. Even in the initial building of the work the possibilities are vast, so much so that the cast find it disorientating. The characters reach out to each other with words 'like depth sounders':⁹³

Cherry Orchard:	Every day I repeat - oh!
Ivanov:	A cry from the heart.
Three Sisters:	What a noise!
Cherry Orchard:	I keep expecting something to happen
Uncle Vanya:	The wind is up...
Three Sisters:	There's more light
Uncle Vanya:	A storm coming -
Cherry Orchard:	Is that - music? ⁹⁴

The sound of the words and the physical life of the piece are as important, maybe even more so, than the meaning. This gives the actors huge license in developing the choreography and a kind of existential terror along with it, the fear that no meaning will emerge. Alan Schneider, one of Beckett's favourite directors,

⁹² Bogart, (1995) 'Small Lives Big Dreams' stage directions, 167.

⁹³ Bogart, (1995), 171.

⁹⁴ Bogart, (1995), 168-9.

says that in a Beckett play 'many of the standard conventions are broken or ignored – the beginning, middle and end of an organised plot line, clear-cut character progression ... yet so many new ones laid down – tones, rhythms and cross-currents of relationship'⁹⁵ and advises his actors to focus on those tones and rhythms. In *Small Lives, Big Dreams* the rhythmic and tonal life of each character and the reaching out

3. "Actual time doesn't matter": *Small Lives, Big Dreams*.

to each other and to the audience is the sole thing on which the performers can rely. In rehearsals we explore improvisations that extend their ability to do this, slowing down everyday gestural sequences and speeding them up so that they become accustomed to reading the nuances of temporal shifts. They need enormous amounts of trust: in the work, in me, in each other, and in the ability of their audiences to assemble their own narrative out of a fragmentary journey.

Playing with temporal and theatrical time is a feature of the production and devices linked to this reoccur throughout the work: a clock projected onto the wall with real, three dimensional arms which an actor climbs to write on the wall, 'Actual time does not exist'; a pile of broken clocks that the actors have to

⁹⁵ Alan Schneider, 'Alan Schneider in Chelsea Review', *Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1978), 183.

navigate over and around; and, towards the end of the piece, a moment when an actor breaks a clock by hurling it on the floor, at which point all action ceases for both audience and actors, the actors remaining in a kind of frozen dance for at least three minutes. This improvising around time assists the actors in keeping the disconnected rhythms of each character focused outwards. By both extending and compressing time in unusual ways they are continually jolted out of their internal world into 'seeing' anew, much as the first glimpse of the sea triggered Cavafy, cited at the beginning of this chapter.

4. *Diagram of Stage Movement.*

The improvisatory element lies not in the words and characters but in movement. Anne Bogart writes: 'Sensitivity to time and an awareness of its plasticity and elasticity are the first steps toward creating an effective journey for audiences'⁹⁶. In this production, as with others developed through such embodied practices, the liminal encounter is a place of reading and responding rhythmically to the space-time choreography, requiring a kind of alertness, a tuned hypersensitivity to the environment, including the audience. In the practice that I am developing, even a slight shift from another body should elicit a response from everyone else on stage.

⁹⁶ Bogart, (2007), 129.

The audience for *Small Lives, Big Dreams* is a visibly and kinaesthetically linked part of these responses to time. Seated on a revolving seating block,⁹⁷ they follow the journey of the characters, revolving themselves in the space. The revolve is operated manually by visible technicians who work their timing off both the actors and the audience, the actors acknowledging and thanking them as they exit at the end of the play. This creates an element of spatial disorientation as well as physically relocating them within the space. They are, in a way, experiencing their own heightened improvisation as distorted time and rhythms challenge their perceptions. This audience journey is established in the opening moments of the work when the whole seating block rocks and shakes in a simulated earthquake, little runnels of dust falling from the grid. Wellington, New Zealand is situated on a major fault line, the Pacific 'ring of fire'. Wellingtonians are told frequently by the experts that it is not a question of 'if' a major quake occurs, but 'when'. The earth is not the solid ground we usually think of it as being, but a live force that will every so often rear up and shake us off its back.⁹⁸ Choosing to work consciously with this 'shifting ground' triggers memories in the audience even as the cast explore memory through the words of Chekhov.

Space is made within the work for the actors to examine and 'read' audience reactions, recognising that even when an audience seems to be reacting as one, it is in fact made up of many individual and diverse responses, both 'together and alone'⁹⁹ as Tim Etchells, puts it. Given the immediate and personal connection Wellingtonians have to earthquakes this is particularly important and varies enormously from performance to performance. One night I see Brooke Williams, playing 'Uncle Vanya' sit on the revolve and take an audience member by the hand, responding, I presume, to some gesture of distress or dismay from the woman that resonates with her. On one level cast and audience have entered a sustained improvisation together. The rhythmic shifts of the seating block moving, sometimes judderingly, sometimes smoothly is an ever-present rhythmic challenge for the cast against which they test their responsiveness. The very real sweat of these two men, labouring to move the audience, creates a rhythm within the 'actual' reality that juxtaposes with and interrogates the fictive reality.

⁹⁷ Designed by Australian designer, John Senzcuk, the revolve being part of his design concept.

⁹⁸ As I sit here, writing in October 2010, I can hear a siren blaring in the street, and a voice over a loud speaker telling me: 'Get ready. Be prepared. This is a test. The next time you hear this siren it could be a real disaster.' Two months earlier, September 4, a major earthquake hit the city of Christchurch, decimating it. Since then Christchurch has experienced thousands of after-shocks.

⁹⁹ Tim Etchells, (director of Forced Entertainment) *Programme Notes: Case Studies for Locating Experimental Theatre*, Daniel Brine & Lois Keidan (eds.), (London: Live Arts Development Agency, 2007), 26.

The challenge and the magic is the fusion it demanded of Chekhov, of Bogart and of me and my team. There are moments when our voices truly sing together, when choreography and improvisation co-exist and a responsive interplay between cast and audience is achieved. Stephen Nachmanovitch writes: 'There comes a moment when the whole thing slides into shape – you can almost hear the click – when the feeling and the form come into a state of harmony'.¹⁰⁰ This 'click' does not happen every night at every moment. But it comes frequently enough for audiences to feel they are part of an experience rather than just a performance. Ralph McAllister writes that it is: 'One of the most important and exploratory works to come out of New Zealand in some years'.¹⁰¹ There is a deep humanity in the work of both Chekhov and

5. Time stops mid gesture: *Small Lives, Big Dreams* (Arthur Meek, Laurel Devenie and Martyn Wood).

Bogart. They value the tiny moments of courage and connection in ordinary lives and have compassion for the struggle even as they smile at the absurdities. The interplay between the actual time of the performance and the memories of cast and audience is a part of this reflection on shared humanity.

On one level, the entire play of *Small Lives, Big Dreams* can be seen as a heightened improvisation since there is a level of independence between the narrative (used here to mean the sequence of unfolding

¹⁰⁰ Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc, 1990), 111.

¹⁰¹ Ralph McAllister, Private Email, August 11th, 2006. McAllister was for years the theatre reviewer for *The Dominion* Newspaper, Wellington. It is School policy not to request reviews of second year student work.

events) and the words spoken. A particularly effective element in bringing forward these nuances is the use of a physical and rhythmic 'score' as the foundation of the actors' work. This 'score' is based partially on the Bogart process described in Chapter Four, partially on other heightened improvisations designed by myself in which the actors discover repeatable expressive gestures. This gives them a meta-text (perhaps similar to the 'subscore' articulated by Barba earlier in this chapter) on which to place their work and helps make their performances vital and 'alive'. They have to stay connected to each other in order to achieve the 'game' hidden in the specificity of the timing while maintaining the very individual rhythm of each character. This game consists of holding to a pre-determined choreography while varying the timing and quality of the movement in response both to each other and the audience. The actors challenge each other to achieve synchronicity even as they constantly vary their timing.¹⁰² This focus on their kinaesthetic response gives their work a 'super-awareness' as well as a great playfulness and lightness. They have to practise boundary negotiation and trust their 'poeticised bodies' to be in action without ever knowing quite where this improvisation around the quality of their movement will lead them. In part this is achieved by an awareness of patterns, including the recurrent use of repetition, in both time and space. For example, at one point in the third act the action becomes 'stuck' at a certain moment in their memories. They rewind the action to replay the moment three times, each time recreating perfectly, not just their own movement but their movement in relation to the group, a moment from which sequence is shown in the image above. The gestural and physical dance is akin to the improvisations of jazz music, riffing on a phrase, necessitating a watchful and kinaesthetic attentiveness. They are asked to adhere with great exactitude to a strongly delineated choreography while retaining collective, in-the-moment decision making around the timing and quality of their actions. This juxtaposition of freedom and precision brings out an electric engagement from the performers. The quality of their observation holds the same avidity of expectation, the identical willingness to react instantly to whatever emerged, that can be observed in rugby players watching each other in the line out. It can only be achieved, I believe, where some element of the future is genuinely unknown and held to be important. And yet art demands form and the art of theatre demands repeatable form. Both through precise and physically demanding choreography and through handling difficult and intractable props, the actors are negotiating simultaneously real and metaphorical challenges, real time and imagined time.

When work created through heightened improvisation reaches performance, the demands of repeatable

¹⁰² See Chapter Four for more details on this approach.

form and a high degree of artistic coherence mean that the freedom of the actor in the moment is necessarily curtailed. However, in the work cited here, an element of freedom remains. Bogart says of her own work that she seeks utter fixedness and precision in the 'what' and the 'where' (what you are doing, where you are doing it) and utter freedom in 'when' and 'how' (the precise timing, the quality of the movement in response to similar choices by others.)¹⁰³ It is the poeticised body that allows this freedom within form, a body that is deeply attuned to the kinaesthetic responses of both other performers and the audience.

6. 'Seagull' & 'Uncle Vanya' during the 3 minute sequence of broken time (James Conway Law and Brook Williams).

'Cherry Orchard' celebrate the discarded detritus of 'Ivanov's life at the end of the play (Laurel Devenie).

At its best, *Small Lives, Big Dreams* creates a dangerous and alive space and an experience for audiences that ranges from carnival to deeply moving simplicity. At its worst it falls into confusion and chaos. Bogart writes: 'You cannot create results; you can only create the conditions in which something might happen'.¹⁰⁴ In this first attempt to embrace a Viewpoints-based choreography to develop a work my ability to create

¹⁰³ Bogart, Anne, speaking at LaMaMa International Directing Symposium, Spoleto, Italy, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Anne Bogart (2001), 24.

those conditions is embryonic. The cast does not fully trust me or the process and it is only after they experience the audience's avid and alive response that they feel confidence in the work. Perhaps their very uncertainty and vulnerability, allied with the courage to perform in the face of that doubt, is an element in drawing their audiences into their performances. The work is highly physical and the effort to reach out and connect with each other from a place of physical and emotional unbalance gives intensity and 'life' to the performative moment. They are constantly in a state of doing and responding. From my perception, the performance has its own, beautiful logic and the audience has to work too in order to meet it. Something is demanded, an opening. In future productions I go deeper into this opening between cast and audience in pursuit of the elusive quality of 'alive-li-ness' and develop a process that gives the actors a greater degree of confidence even as they abandon their habitual ways of working.

Summary

Improvisation, then, has become a recurrent feature of twentieth and twenty-first century theatre, both in the creation of work and in performance. It is work that, to varying degrees, depends on the development of performers who have a capacity to respond instinctively and effectively, through their poeticised bodies, to incoming physical and mental sensation, continually assessing and re-assessing the liminal space between performer and performer, actors and audience allowing that to inform, and in some cases, create the performance. It is a form that values action, and kinaesthetic response above considered response, asking the actor to actually see, as Cavafy articulates. It stresses openness to the audience within the moment of reception. Catherine Fitzmaurice articulates this as: 'a very full awareness of yourself, and of how you are being received, by whom, in what circumstances, and how all of this may impact your speaking'.¹⁰⁵ It is linked to the development or awakening of the creativity of the individual actor. Spontaneity is valued for the effect of the performer responding within the moment and the playfulness this engenders. It is 'an experiential condition; a way of being, which can be sought and found. It is a condition of being *centred* (in oneself) and balanced, ready to go in any appropriate direction'.¹⁰⁶ In the case of comedic performance improvisation, (and naturalistic improvisations when used in performance) this response is verbal as well as physical, emphasising the virtuosity of creating text.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Meier interviewing Catherine Fitzmaurice, 'Tremor into Action', *American Theatre*, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, January 2010), 40.

¹⁰⁶ Frost and Yarrow, 197.

To support and enable this moment of spontaneous response, requires performers who work with an awareness of patterns habitually noticing, remembering and reintroducing what has gone before. They work off each other in a kind of kinaesthetic dance, as referred to by Nachmanovitch, allowing for unpredictability without loss of clarity. Linked to this heightened awareness of total environment and emerging patterns is a sense of play, a relish felt by the performer and shared with the audience for the lack of certainty in improvisation as in life, acknowledging that we are walking into the unknown. It also evokes a kind of wildness, challenging the side of us that links to the Dionysian as opposed to the Apollonian and is linked with formal as well as attitudinal change. In performance improvisation this play continues visibly in front of audiences who also participate in it, allowing both performers and audience to feel the sensual pleasure of performing.

These qualities emerging out of improvisation have led to a wide variety of performance situations or styles, three of which I have examined here, all existing on a continuum between the fixed and the free within the moment of performance. It is this paradox that the art of theatre must be both fixed and free, that lies at the heart of my investigations, performatively and through the literature. Goldman, speaking about dance improvisation claims that 'if anything, it is the sped-up, imaginative, expressive negotiation with *constraint* that defines improvisation'¹⁰⁷ and this balance or tension between the two is the core subject of this thesis. The ground-breaking choreographer and dancer, Bill T. Jones spoke of the increasing importance of improvisation in his work: 'It's curious and unsettling, but I feel *The Breathing Show* only began to come alive when I decided to speak and to allow myself to improvise'.¹⁰⁸ In any performing art the balance between the artfully structured and the freely explored is a complex balance negotiated and renegotiated according to the performance situation and the artists involved.

The seven recurring strands I explore in relation to three different performative environments are a contribution to the conversation about this relationship between the fixed and the free. Through them I am interrogating the relationship between the related forms of theatre and improvisation, exploring the possibility of bringing them together. Each of these forms combines structure with freedom, as it can be argued, does all theatrical presentation. To smaller and greater degrees, rehearsed performance seeks to

¹⁰⁷ Danielle Goldman, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Bill T. Jones, 'Hopes and Doubts in the Gestation of a Dance', *New York Times*: (New York, Feb. 13, 2000).

incorporate elements that are essentially improvisatory. Mark Rylance articulates this clearly: 'I believe all rehearsals, all playing, benefits from a spirit of improvisation. Spontaneous life is what I want to hear and see when I witness acting'.¹⁰⁹ As soon as one utters the phrase, 'be in the moment' a cliché of the actor's art, one is invoking responsiveness to a present that cannot ever be completely planned or controlled. So the questions I am opening are essentially ones of degree. I am applying them to my own performance projects to particularise the interrogation and test them out in what is finally the only place where the art of theatre can be truly tested – on its feet, in front of an audience.

In my own practice, improvised texts such as *What's Bred in the Bone* and comedy improvisations have shown a limited capacity to create artistically structured text and movement, despite their undoubtedly joyful creativity sparked within the danger of the moment. My investigations have led me to an increasing curiosity about the contribution of two particular uses of improvisation, neither of which I have focused on in this chapter, both of which have been hugely influential in my own practice. These are the use of improvisatory elements in the rituals of Māori in New Zealand and their application to theatrical practices and the Viewpoints work of Anne Bogart. Both of these practices have a particular contribution to make to this debate around bringing together the artistically structured and the creatively free and will be the focus of the following two chapters.

The improvisatory aspects of *marae* ritual are significant in that they work strongly to purpose and function. They free the participant to react spontaneously and with ease, allowing an embodied response to every part of the external environment: the people, the landscape (natural and created) and the metaphysical, which for Māori is also part of the landscape. In these rituals boundary negotiation is constantly in play. The immediacy of the experience determines the manner or quality of the actions, and in this context actions include an intrinsic performative vocabulary. The recognition of and working with patterns, the intense listening and response and the ability to 'read' the environment and respond kinaesthetically recalls the 'body poeticizing' described by Lockford and Pelia. In the chapter that follows I explore the ways in which theatre can learn from Māori ritual in developing a practice that holds simultaneously a highly structured form and a charged and volatile freedom to respond within the moment.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Rylance, Introduction to John Abbott, *Improvisation in Rehearsal*, (London: Nick Hern, 2009), x.

Chapter Three

The Improvised Elements in Māori Rituals and their Application to Theatre Performance.

He tao rākau e karohia atu, ka hemo –

Te tāu ki, werohia mai, tū tonu!

(A wooden spear can be parried, and miss its mark –

The spoken spear always pierces and wounds!)¹

Introduction

International theatre practitioners and theorists could learn a great deal from the values, rituals and practices of Māori and the *marae*. The term *marae* refers to the formal space outside the meeting house of a Māori *iwi* where formal meetings take place, often also used to include the complex of buildings around it. It is also ‘an important symbol of tribal identity and solidarity’.² The greatest enemies of immediacy and alive-li-ness in performance, as I see it, are fear and self-consciousness, both of which arise from a focus on the self. At the *marae* there is no question around how well someone is performing. The focus is rather on the purpose of the event and how well that is achieved over and above the expertise of the participant/performer. This places the attention away from the person and onto function and purpose. Yet *marae* rituals are filled with theatre, their delivery largely improvised, and fuelled by acute and focused listening from all attending. Listening is different in an oral culture where absorbing, retaining and remembering are practised as vital cultural activities. Margaret Orbell writes that in traditional Māori society, ‘... language was always experienced as a part of lived reality, and because of this it possessed great weight and finality...people living in oral cultures considered words to be a form of action’.³ Hence the proverb quoted above. What a challenge to theatre⁴ and our struggle to make the work ‘alive’ and potent! Māori Director, Christian Penny notes that ‘on the *marae* you are always doing something in

¹ Sir George Grey, MSS Manuscripts in the Grey Collection, Auckland Public Library: *Ko Nga Whakapepeha me Nga Whakaahuareka a Nga Tipuna o Aotea-Roa*, quoted by Margaret Orbell, *Māori Poetry: An introductory anthology*, (Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 6.

² Cleve Barlow, *Tikanga Whakaaro: Key Concepts in Māori Culture* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991), 71.

³ Orbell, 6.

⁴ ‘Drama’, comes from the Greek word, ‘dran’ meaning ‘to act’.

service for something – in theatre that's hard to arrive at'.⁵ It is this sense of acting towards a common purpose that makes *marae* rituals so useful in developing frameworks for theatre practice. These rituals contain performative elements, but always in the context of the purpose and desired efficacy. Moreover these rituals contain a consistent and important element of improvisation: with the structure clear and known, the speaker, singer, caller or dancer is free (and indeed, encouraged) to respond within the moment. Taken together these factors make the social improvisatory framework of the *marae* highly pertinent to this thesis.

Marae rituals have had a significant effect on theatrical performance within the New Zealand context and within my own practice. The *marae* is a space for (among other things) formal encounters, particularly moments when one group meets another. These gatherings are known as *hui*. Every formal encounter begins with a *pōwhiri*,⁶ a formal welcome which takes place as the visiting group arrives. This is followed by the discussions and events, varying enormously from occasion to occasion, organised around the *kaupapa*⁷ for which the *hui* has been called. Purposes vary widely, from contentious issues around land settlements or political issues, to celebrations, to *tangi*⁸ to mourn the dead. *Hui* may last a day, three days, a week – whatever is needed to address the purpose. During this time the participants generally live, eat and sleep at the *marae*. At the end of the *hui* a formal farewell completes the event, a *poroporoaki*,⁹ which includes instructions given to those departing. In this chapter I focus mainly on the rituals of the *pōwhiri*, the moment of meeting, since this is the element that most strongly influences New Zealand theatre practice, though other elements of *tikanga* Māori will be referenced as appropriate.

The *pōwhiri* is structured with formal protocols each of which can be interpreted on a number of levels from the practical and mundane to metaphorical evocations of the spirit world, on all of which an element of improvisation takes place. The focus on encounter has clear relevance to the meeting between audience and performers, particularly for the structuring of such encounters. It is significant that knowledge of this cultural performative tradition is not widely disseminated in performance and theatre studies, yet I believe it

⁵ Christian Penny, Māori director and Associate Director, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School until 2011. Appointed Director, May 2011. Interview conducted by Annie Ruth, June 9, 2010.

⁶ Cleave Barlow, 99: 'Its customary meaning relates to the waving of the kawakawa leaves by the women to indicate the pathway by which the spirits of the deceased leave this world and enter the world beyond'.

⁷ Purpose.

⁸ To cry, mourn or weep, commonly used for funerals.

⁹ Leave-taking.

to have a significant contribution to make to the understanding of the moment of performance and to the relationship between structure and freedom within that moment. In his book, *The Floating Islands*¹⁰ Eugenio Barba, a practitioner who has examined in depth the question of 'presence' in performance, looks at the performative practises of many cultures, but does not touch on New Zealand. Similarly, Richard Schechner's seminal work, *Performance Studies*,¹¹ surveys a vast and fascinating range of the world's cultures but again the Māori of New Zealand are not included in his net. This lack continues, despite the work of Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal in uncovering early Māori performance vocabulary¹². The remoteness of our islands from the major landmasses of Europe, the Americas and Africa and the smallness of our population has no doubt contributed to this silence. In this chapter I will explore the ritual of meeting in Māori culture, particularly the balance between what is improvised and what structured, and the way in which this cultural ritual has informed theatre making in New Zealand, including my own.

It is significant in the context of this thesis that the nature of the improvisation that takes place within the *marae* complex is founded in encounters and discussions that are inherently important, sometimes life-changing, to the participants. Unlike comedy improvisation such as 'Theatresports' this is improvisation in a context where the lives of the participants may be vitally affected by the words and actions inside the event, which in turn affects the quality of the listening and participation. In these rituals the use of rich, metaphorical language drawn from *whakataukī*¹³ and other language forms, means that a more multi-layered text emerges than is possible when improvisers are drawing solely from everyday language. In addition, the particular framework that *marae* rituals evoke means that their inclusion in a theatrical context changes the reception mode of the audience. It moves them from spectators to participants, a significant shift when examining the potency and 'alive-li-ness' of the theatrical moment. This will be developed further later in the chapter.

¹⁰ Eugenio Barba, *The Floating Islands*, Ferdinando Taviani (ed.), Judy Barba, Francis Pardeilhan, Jerrold C. Rodesch, Sual Shapiro and Julia Varley (trans.), (Denmark: Thomsens Bogtrykkeri, 1979).

¹¹ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹² Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, 'Orotokare: Towards a New Model for Indigenous Theatre and Performing Arts', *Performing Aotearoa: New Zealand Theatre and Drama in an Age of Transition*, Marc Maufort and David O'Donnell (eds.), (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Long, 2007), 193-208.

¹³ Proverbs, 'A poetic form of the Māori language often merging historical events, or holistic perspectives with underlying messages which are extremely influential in Māori society'. <http://www.Māori.cl/Proverbs.htm>

In the first section of the chapter I describe the ritual of the *pōwhiri*, drawing on the work of Pākehā¹⁴ historian Anne Salmond, particularly her seminal work, *Hui*,¹⁵ which explores Māori ceremonial gatherings. Salmond is not a theatre person, neither theoretician nor practitioner, yet is instinctively drawn to theatre to provide the metaphorical language through which to view and understand these rituals. This perception is echoed by another Pākehā researcher, Dr Janinka Greenwood, who writes: ‘... the marae is the site of initial confrontation between the home people and the outsider, and the site where the confrontation is resolved, where the outsider is transformed into guest. The *pōwhiri*, whereby this transformation takes place, is a dramatic and a performative act’.¹⁶

In the second I underpin findings from interviews conducted through 2010, with the writings of theatre theoretician Christopher Balme. Collecting oral history is a key methodology in working with indigenous knowledge. Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes: ‘Story telling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research’¹⁷ and as such are an essential element in the work explored in this thesis. The face-to-face nature of these interviews allows for an encounter that echoes the more formal encounters on *marae*. Smith states that in-the-flesh encounters continue to be the major information-gathering tool of Māori and form the backbone of *kaupapa* Māori research:

Like networking, sharing is a process which is responsive to the marginalized contexts in which indigenous communities exist. Even in the context of New Zealand – a small country, relatively well-off in terms of televisions and communications – Māori people learn more about the issues which affect them at one of the many community gatherings which are held on *marae* than they do from the mainstream media.¹⁸

These interviews are with seminal Māori theatre practitioners Teina Moetara, Jim Moriarty, Helen Pearse-Otene, Christian Penny, James Ashcroft, Roma Pōtiki and Rangimoana Taylor, all of whom have made a generous contribution to this thesis. I also draw on the unpublished manuscript of Brian Pōtiki.

¹⁴ New Zealander of European descent. Sometimes used for any non-Māori.

¹⁵ Anne Salmond, *Hui: A Study of Māori Ceremonial Gatherings*, (Auckland: Reed, 1975).

¹⁶ Janinka Greenwood, *Journies into a Third Space: A Study of how theatre enables us to interpret the emergent space between cultures*, PhD Thesis published on-line, <http://www4.gu.edu.au:8080/adt-root/uploads/approved/adt-QGU20030226.091144/public/01Front.pdf> 164.

¹⁷ Smith, 144.

¹⁸ Smith, 160.

In the third section I look at the influence of *tikanga*-derived forms on actor training, drawing on the work of Teina Moetara, and Christian Penny. Finally, in the fourth, I explore the 2003 production of *Troilus & Cressida*, which I co-directed with Māori director, Rangimoana Taylor.¹⁹ Here I examine in-depth one example of *marae* rituals informing a theatrical work, creating a framework that includes the improvisatory within an artistic structure.

The Ritual of the *Pōwhiri*

The formal moment of meeting, the *pōwhiri*, occurs on the *marae*, a 'demarcated sacred space where all important rituals and ceremonial gatherings of the tribe take place'.²⁰ These encounters can be friendly, difficult or antagonistic, depending on the circumstances, such as historical tribal tensions or current political issues. Participants use oratory, singing, and dance, locating themselves in relation to the other group, improvising content in response to the encounter and invoking metaphorical as well as tangible references. *Pōwhiri* are an exercise in what Victor Turner calls 'public reflexivity',²¹ a community examining and reflecting on itself through performative actions, made more dramatic by the fact that in a *pōwhiri* at least two communities are encountering each other and through the process of the ritual, aligning themselves with each other at least in a willingness to discuss the issues for which the *hui* has been called. Salmond refers to the leading participants in these rituals as 'actors' and describes preparation for these gatherings as 'rehearsals',²² a telling observation given she is not a person of the theatre. Clearly the elements in these ceremonies evoke the world of the theatre so vividly to anyone familiar with both that comparisons between the two are not arbitrary, but arise effortlessly from the observation.

Salmond notices that improvisation and response within the encounter, rather than something pre-meditated and pre-planned is valued, noting that practising aloud is frowned upon – the words and gestures belonging only to the moment and context of the encounter: 'the old people in general don't approve of speeches being practised out loud away from the *marae*, especially funeral orations, because the

¹⁹ Rangimoana Taylor, (Ngāti Porou) Director and Actor. Note that Māori are often described in connection with their *iwi* or tribe, as I have done here.

²⁰ Christopher B. Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post Colonial Drama*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 63.

²¹ Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality', *Performance in Postmodern Culture* (Madison, Wisconsin: Coda Press, 1977), 33: 'The languages by which a group communicates itself to itself are not ... confined to talking codes: they include gestures, music, dancing... They are dramatic, that is literally, 'doing' codes'.

²² Salmond, 122: 'Aspiring young orators practice at home in the cowshed, or get together for special occasions'.

references to the dead which are part of any speech are bad luck in any other context'.²³ Thus, habitually the content is shaped by the structure, but created within the moment. In the context of the *marae* and its rituals, everyone is a participant. They are all, as Boal would say 'spect-actors'²⁴ participating actively, often unpredictably within the framework of the event. This total involvement means that the underlying strand of boundary negotiation is intensely in play, boundaries between those present, boundaries between the material, visible world and the world of the spirits, evoked in all Māori ritual. Assessment of intent, relationship, familial and historical connections permeate every aspect, from the *karanga*²⁵ that begins the ceremony, through *whaikōrero*²⁶ through to the *hākari*²⁷ that marks its conclusion. Awareness of patterns and attention to the quality of the actions are key elements in this context, magnifying the extent of the improvisation inherent in the event to include all participants, even those hidden from view.

During a *pōwhiri* everyone present is expected to be alive to both the event and its wider context, attuned to the needs and actions of the community. This is an awareness that has been built over a life-time of such events, many participants contributing without necessarily being consciously aware of the extent to which they are 'reading the room' and responding in an embodied way. This echoes the degree of trust and mutual awareness built up in any improvisation company that has worked together over time, where the 'rules' are embodied at a deep level, and every participant relies on the others to remain aware and to 'pick up the baton' as required. Mutual knowledge of protocols on the *marae* brings an ability to respond to the moment just as the known 'rules' bring freedom to improvisatory performance.

Teina Moetara,²⁸ has a unique perspective in drawing parallels between these rituals and theatre performance. Moetara is a senior tutor at Toi Whakaari, coming from a background where he has been steeped in the customs and learning of his *iwi*. He has a performance background that includes *kapa haka*,²⁹ performing in the musical *The Lion King*³⁰ and participating as a member of the creative team and as a performer in *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog*, a new opera performed at the New Zealand International

²³ Salmond, 122.

²⁴ See Chapter Two.

²⁵ Calling or summoning and response.

²⁶ Speeches.

²⁷ Meal or feast.

²⁸ Teina Moetara, (Rongowhakaata), Context & Practice Senior Tutor, Toi Whakaari, Artistic Director Tu Te Manawa Maurea Kapa Haka Group.

²⁹ Loosely translated as Māori action song and dance.

³⁰ Asian Tour.

Festival of the Arts, 2008. Moetara compares participation in a *pōwhiri* to actors improvising on stage, but notes that the numbers involved are considerably larger and the situation often more socially complex and possibly challenging: 'The general beauty of a *marae* can be seen by taking the idea of two actors on stage improvising, listening, working off each other and then magnify it by the amount of people that are there.'³¹ He goes on to note that every element is working to a common purpose with every other element: 'The framework allows you to be part of a singular group, especially when meeting another group'.³² This is articulated through the bodies of those speaking, singing or moving together and at the same time is represented in the building itself, through the nature of its carvings, the woven *tukutuku*³³ panels between carvings, the carved *pou*,³⁴ through all aspects of the environment.

Everything is part of the event, noted and incorporated into the 'story' being told – by both the people of the community and the incoming visitors. Hirini Moko Mead speaks of a 'mystical quality to the meeting house, elements of *ihi* (essential force), *wehi* (fearsomeness), and *wana* (sublimity)' ³⁵ all existing in the physical environment. 'Listening' thus takes in the physical as well as the aural environment. The acute listening required and the awareness of encounter and differences between the groups, cultural or political, mean that boundaries are negotiated in a sophisticated dance that takes in the space of the event as well as its contingent spaces such as the kitchen or the inside of the house³⁶. Awareness of role and the valuing of each participant bring clarity of purpose and focus to the listening practised. In the freedom-constraint dynamic, the roles are fixed but their articulation has a measure of fluidity and spontaneity, valued and interpreted by all participants in the ritual. Improvisation is an intrinsic element in the event and the improvisatory qualities of being in action, spontaneity and the awareness of patterns are being worked by all.

In the opening moments of the *pōwhiri*, the encounter between the *manuhiri*³⁷ and the *tangata whenua*³⁸ the unseen as well as the visible world is acknowledged. The older women begin the ritual, wailing call, the

³¹ Teina Moetara, Interview conducted by Annie Ruth, 3.12.09. *Hui* attendees can vary from as few as 50 to many hundreds, depending on the occasion.

³² Moetara, (2009).

³³ Woven lattice-work panels.

³⁴ Uprights supporting the structure of the roof.

³⁵ Hirini Moko Mead, *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori Values*, (Wellington: Huia Press, 2003), 216.

³⁶ The unseen work of the cooks and other *marae* workers is valued. Though not visible, they are paying attention to the ceremony outside.

³⁷ Visitors.

karanga, inviting entry into the space: ‘Enter and bring your dead, we shall weep for them together’³⁹ and the women among the *manuhiri* respond. The sound of the call is electrifying, the vocal harmonics as well as the words of the *karanga* taking the listeners into a different place, one where the atmosphere is charged and expectant. The invocation of the unseen world of the dead carries a possibility of unforeseen response. In the moment of calling, memories can and do surface. Attention is paid to these spontaneous moments, the women often pausing to allow the emotion of the moment to flow through them before continuing with the ritual. The call is not formulaic, though there is a very clear supporting structure. Both delivery and content can and do vary in response to the group encountered. The level of energy in the call varies enormously and the women on both sides adjust their delivery to match the sounds they are encountering. There are times when the quality of this call lifts the hair on the back of the neck, the sound setting up a vibration, or kinaesthetic response, in the bodies of all hearing it. At other times it can be quiet and gentle, less dramatic and perhaps more contemplative. These qualities are improvised in response to the complexities of the moment, even the quality of the air, and the shifting mood of the *rōpū*⁴⁰.

In 2008 I was welcomed onto the Rongowhakata *marae* of Manutuke, Moetara’s home *marae*, as part of a *rōpū* from Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School. For various reasons no-one in our group felt able to do the *karanga* and we entered without it. This brought shame on us as a group, all of us feeling deeply uncomfortable at our lack yet none of us having the confidence to step forward. A most inauspicious beginning to our *hui*. This incident became a major learning occasion for me personally. I am a Pākehā woman who has been privileged to learn *karanga* from two outstanding Māori women, Tungia Baker and Tiahuia Gray.⁴¹ However it is my understanding that outside the educational context I should not use this skill. Moetara gently drew my attention to the question of purpose. The function and doing what was needed were more important than my fear of being ‘wrong’ or inappropriate. Indeed it may well have been inappropriate for me to call – but also necessary. Purpose and function transcend the individual. All present are participants not observers, watching out for what is needed, providing it when they can, prepared to step forward and improvise as necessary.

³⁸ People of the place.

³⁹ Salmond, 117.

⁴⁰ Party of people.

⁴¹ Teaching Pākehā women the *karanga* is a contested practice, with some practitioners vehemently against it.

In the *karanga* the *whakapapa* of both *manuhiri* and *tangata whenua* are noted, and the purpose of the encounter framed. This framing requires both the women calling and those listening to be alert for change. Māori director and actor, Rangimoana Taylor comments that 'it is important that all listen to the *kaikaranga*⁴² as one of the roles of the *kaikaranga* is to call and advise her people of anything unexpected.'⁴³ Because complex and important social relationships are in play the level of listening and response rises well above the quotidian experienced in forms of improvised theatre. The visitors are brought forward just as a *waka*⁴⁴ is brought onto the shore, the metaphor made manifest in a *haka pōwhiri*, a chant accompanied by rhythmic movements, that 'settles' the guests, just as the prow of the *waka* is settled onto the pillow of the sands (the metaphor of one particular *haka pōwhiri*). The choice of the *haka pōwhiri* is usually made in advance, though the callers of the *haka* alter the delivery to reflect the particular quality of the encounter. It should be noted that *haka*, even the welcoming *haka pōwhiri*, include an element of challenge, 'I am prepared to meet you, will you also meet me?'⁴⁵

These are all known and customary elements in negotiating the first meeting and there are ritual and customary words included in them. But there is also an element of improvisation and particularity. No event is ever totally like another, as the two groups assess each other and consider what dangers and advantages might emerge from the meeting. As they walk into the space the *manuhiri* take on a formation appropriate to the occasion, known as the *whakaeke*. Often this involves the older women, those calling the *karanga*, to take the lead, with the men at the rear, protecting their backs. But if the group entering did not feel comfortable or safe another formation might suddenly be deployed: 'There are lots of different shapes for entering, for example the spider, with kids in the middle and two warriors at the front like eyes – legs moving to the side, testing the *tangata whenua*. You might use that shape if you didn't feel so safe, always having a ready awareness of the back, reading the group, working the ways to encounter'.⁴⁶ At times the *whakaeke* can be highly performative and choreographic, telling the hosts through physical actions something of the history and cultural identity of the group arriving. Not only the shape, but the manner of the entry might vary. The key lies in the reading of the encounter and the willingness to adapt and respond within the moment. Moetara explains: 'The choice of *whakaeke* reflects a quality of the *iwi*.

⁴² The person calling the *karanga*.

⁴³ Rangimoana Taylor, (2010b), Supplement to earlier interview, May 13, 2010.

⁴⁴ Canoe.

⁴⁵ Compare *haka* in this context to the challenging *haka* prior to an All Black rugby game. The purpose of the *haka* dictates form and content.

⁴⁶ Moetara, (2009).

The *kaupapa*⁴⁷ is first. Everything shifts and adjusts to serve the *kaupapa*.⁴⁸ The entry can be highly performative but it is chosen for its functionality. It is this ability to read the moment and to shift accordingly that is valued.

Currently the *wero*⁴⁹ which accompanies the *haka pōwhiri*, is only placed down when a person of high status is being welcomed or met. Rangimoana Taylor describes *wero* in the contemporary context as being the 'highest form of love, *te wero, te tino aroha*,⁵⁰ so the placing of the *wero* indicates respect for the person coming onto the *marae*. In earlier times, when inter-tribal war-fare predominated, the challenge might be a moment of great danger, and even today it is a moment of drama within the ritual. A symbolic object, often a clump of leaves, is placed on the ground in front of the leader of the *manuhiri*, accompanied by aggressive and challenging movements from warriors. If the leader picks it up, it is a signal that the visitors come in peace. Salmond describes such a *wero* at a *pōwhiri* for a Governor-General:

A warrior rushed out to the gate of the *marae*, jumping, grimacing and whirling his *taiaha*⁵¹ and laid a carved baton at the feet of the Governor-General, who stopped and picked it up as a sign of peace..... The challenger whirled around, raised the *taiaha* over his head with its blade pointing to the meeting-house, and stepped stiffly into the *marae*, followed at a distance by the official party.⁵²

Placing the *wero* and responding to it is a moment of high theatricality, with both challenger and receiver holding uninterrupted eye contact. The manner and quality of this interchange is negotiated within that moment, both challenger and receiver working off each other in a sustained improvisation that sometimes widens to include many of the young men present. The level of tension varies considerably, even in contemporary events, where the challenge is largely symbolic. I have seen the person to whom the *wero* was being given hesitate before picking up the object⁵³ and in that moment a ripple of response went round both *tangata whenua* and *manuhiri* as the possibility that it would not be picked up was made manifest. When eventually a person came forward, stooped and picked up the object a collective release of breath

⁴⁷ Purpose.

⁴⁸ Moetara, Second Interview with Annie Ruth, October 1, 2010.

⁴⁹ Challenge.

⁵⁰ Rangimoana Taylor. Interview with Annie Ruth, January 2, 2010.

⁵¹ A wooden weapon about 5ft long, with polished staff and carved blade.

⁵² Salmond, 72.

⁵³ Omaka Mara, July, 1992.

could be heard. Always at this moment the challenger is acutely aware of the symbolism and audience response. Taylor, also present at this occasion, explained this moment of tension:

Queen Te Ata Rangi Kaahu⁵⁴ was making her first official visit as *Te Ariki Nui* as well as patron of *Ngā Puna Waihangā*.⁵⁵ It may have been that the *mana whenua* [another word for *tangata whenua*], wished to honour her with the challenge, but it would be unseemly for her to pick it up herself and also for any of us to push ourselves forward to receive the challenge on her behalf. This caused a disturbance and confusion on both sides, with the home people ready to protect their own, and us wanting to uphold the *mana*⁵⁶ of the Queen. She requested that someone (I don't know who) pick up the challenge on her and our behalf, and both peace and *mana* was restored for all.⁵⁷

As with all elements of the encounter, engagement and response are negotiated in that moment. The sense that anything could happen is part of what gives a *pōwhiri* its drama and immediacy. This is boundary negotiation with a high degree of watchfulness inherent in the structure, taking in not only what is said and done, but their manner and quality. The nuances of this moment will influence the rest of the event and be a reference point for the speakers, as indeed happened in the example above.

Once the *manuhiri* have arrived in the meeting place both groups are seated, facing each other, with a space in-between. This space will not be crossed until the end of the ceremony. This is known as the *paepae* and is a liminal space marking the separation of *manuhiri* and *tangata whenua*, emphasising that this is an encounter that contains elements of the unknown. The duration of the event is driven by what feels right to those delivering *whaikōrero* and the time frame can vary enormously. Carlson talks of performance as being 'a specific event with its liminoid nature foregrounded, almost invariably clearly separated from the rest of life,'⁵⁸ and the ritual of the *pōwhiri* sits well within this definition. The separation of the two groups marks the importance of the encounter and the possibility that change may arise out of it.

⁵⁴ Dame Te Atairangikaahu, ONZ, DBE, (23 July 1931 – 15 August 2006), was the Māori Queen for 40 years, the longest reign of any Māori monarch.

⁵⁵ Māori Artists and Writers *hui*.

⁵⁶ Māori concept of an impersonal force or quality that resides in people, animals, and inanimate objects. Often translated as 'deserving respect'.

⁵⁷ Rangimoana Taylor, (2010b).

⁵⁸ Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996), 198-9.

As Victor Turner says, ‘... liminal time is not controlled by the clock it is a time of enchantment when anything might, even should, happen ... Liminality is full of potency and potentiality’.⁵⁹ This sense of potency and potentiality are part of what makes such events *tapu*.⁶⁰ The separation slows down time so that both groups can fully ‘see’ each other, get a sense of the otherness of the encounter, and absorb all the verbal and non-verbal languages that feed into the meeting. Jim Moriarty describes the *marae* as:

a very theatrical place in terms of a whole lot of life experiences, the to-ing and fro-ing, the welcoming and the fare-welling. Whatever the *hui* was there was always this protocol that slowed us all down and dignified engagement. And that’s what good theatre does. It slows us all down and says let’s stop and breathe all this together.⁶¹

In drawing this parallel with theatre, Moriarty points up the effect, both on the *marae* and on the stage, of creating a space that is, in some sense, outside time; the time distortion directly linked to the sense of potency and potentiality.

Whaikōrero is an improvisatory oratorical art form and speakers make use of humour, poetry, aphorisms, gesture and even song as part of delivering their message and creating a platform allowing the two groups to meet effectively. Part of this is the examination of *whakapapa*, through which links that join the two groups are traced and contextualised, including old alliances and grievances. The past is seen as a living and palpable contribution to the present. Moetara comments:

... in *whaikōrero* there’s a lot said before you get to the purpose of the *hui*, the *kaupapa*. You need to build up to talking about that and bring everyone with you in order to then hold the freedom of the improvisation that follows. *Whaikōrero* is the ability to chase a conversation – it sits outside of you, and you need to read that direction, chase it, and then you can move it around. That’s where the skill comes in.⁶²

⁵⁹ Turner, (1977), 33.

⁶⁰ Roughly translated as ‘sacred’ or ‘apartness’.

⁶¹ Jim Moriarty, (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Koata and Ngāti Kohangungu), Artistic Director of Te Rakau O Te Wao Tapu Trust. Interview with Annie Ruth, November 22, 2010.

⁶² Moetara, (2010).

This skill to chase down and use the flow of the conversation is highly prized. There is an element of challenge and debate, both around skill of delivery and content. Speakers listen intently and when they speak in turn, their facility in picking up points made by the 'other side', turning and re-framing them, echoing or challenging them, is a valued element in their *whaikōrero*. There is a degree of rivalry implicit in this, no matter how friendly the encounter, together with deep pleasure in the debate. Salmond writes:

Today there is no fear of warfare, but suspicion and hot pride can still be powerful underlying factors in rival group encounters on the *marae* and the rituals are often played out in a keenly competitive spirit. Actors on both sides exert themselves to give an impressive performance, with the fundamental principle that the more distant and powerful the other party, the more perfect your own part in the ritual must be.⁶³

The 'perfection' Salmond describes relates to their ability to fully embody and represent their tribe, rather than their own performative attributes. These speakers all improvise within the ritual frameworks. I have never seen a Māori speaker in a *pōwhiri* using notes. They speak 'extempore from their mother wit',⁶⁴ and that wit is an integral part of the experience. The words are potent evocations and should be called forth by the event itself, out of the life knowledge of the speaker and in response to the moment. It is the drawing together of all the threads of the experience that is valued above all, and that cannot be known in advance. Moetara comments: 'You never lose who you are – in fact you acknowledge it, clock it, and everybody does that.... You understand that all the threads that make up you as a person are there – you don't have to leave a part of you at the door. In fact your main task is to continue to pull all these threads in. That's where *whakapapa* (genealogy) fits in – its job is to help this'⁶⁵.

The juxtaposition of humour and grief, a feature of *whaikōrero*, is particularly striking, with speakers moving freely from teasing the living to mourning the dead:

The mixture of grief and happiness seems strange to outsiders, but not on the *marae*. Wailing is an integral part of the rituals of encounter because whenever groups meet they remember those who have died since they were last together. On the other hand, conviviality and clowning are also

⁶³ Salmond, 116.

⁶⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act 2, L.259.

⁶⁵ Moetara, (2009).

a natural part.... On the *marae* life is all of a piece, and there is no attempt to enforce one type of emotion or another.⁶⁶

This mixture of grief and laughter recalls the juxtaposition of the sacred and profane in Shakespeare's writing⁶⁷, the Japanese Kyogen inserted between Noh plays, or the satyr play between or at the end of tragedies in ancient Greek Drama Festivals. In those writers and traditions, as in *whaikōrero*, the fullness of humanity is explored. It is perhaps not too great a stretch to assert that this mixture of pain and laughter arises naturally during a *pōwhiri* out of the intense focus on the living moment as an intersection between past and present. It is the laughter that recognises our transience on the earth, a recognition that Jean-Luc Nancy sees in the writings of Derrida, a man whose work also focuses on the elusiveness of the 'now': 'It is beyond all opposition of serious and non-serious, of pain and pleasure.... There is only the lightness of laughter, this minute, the infinite lightness which does not laugh *at* anything ... but which is itself the lightening of meaning'.⁶⁸ This consciousness of working with the passing moment is all about making connections, connections with the past, with the present, and with the physical environment, linkages that will bring those present into a place where they can effectively be together. The introduction of comedy frees the speaker to improvise, just as Shakespeare's clowns improvised, recognising the release that laughter brings and, along with it, a renewed ability to be present.

Weaving together their past, connections with the *manuhiri* and linking them to the purpose of the meeting and the events of the day requires considerable agility and improvisation from the speaker. Salmond notes:

When a succession of such [brilliant] speakers stands on the *marae*, each one picking up comments, embroidering on them, making jokes or giving vivid accounts of history, taking up errors and subjecting the perpetrator to good natured ridicule, the *marae* comes alive with attention. Just because these speakers work with the unexpected, there is really no way of describing the structure of their speeches. They make their impact by departing from usual patterns ...⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Salmond, 112.

⁶⁷ Consider Hamlet, fresh from erroneously killing Polonius, joking that Polonius is 'at supper... not where he eats but where he is eaten', Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Sc. 3, L. 18-21.

⁶⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Elliptical Sense', *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, David Wood (Ed.), Peter O'Connor, (trans.), (Oxford, UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell Critical Readers, 1992), 41.

⁶⁹ Salmond, 165.

The patterns are important because they create poetic structures, and the improvisation of a gifted speaker is the dance in and among those patterns, picking out and extending unexpected threads in the tapestry. As Moetara noted, the woven *tukutuku* panels on the walls of the house echo physically the verbal weaving. Every element of the environment is part of the story, and it is by responding kinaesthetically to the total environment that *whaikōrero* is fashioned. Bringing heightened attention and awareness to the moment is integral, a quality Māori call *ihi*.⁷⁰ Hirini Moko Mead writes:

While engaged in the ritual encounter both sides have contributed to raising the stakes of excitement to the level of *ihi*. Both sides can say, '*I puta te ihi*'. What they mean is that the performances were brilliant and exhilarating. The participants know when they have reached the standard of *ihi* because they feel it, sense it, and are exhilarated by the occasion. The encounter is hair raising and full of tension until finally the parties withdraw and relax.⁷¹

This state of *ihi* means that a threshold has been reached, the sense of 'presence' and potency expanded for all participating. Often the challenge is more to do with truly encountering rather than opposing the other.

After each speaker a *waiata*, or song is sung by the group in support of their speaker. This adds the weight of the group who endorse the words of their speaker, the choice of song reflecting the topic. Sometimes the choice is profound, evoking emotions that intensify the encounter, drawing the two groups into a closer sense of shared values or even awareness of difference. Occasionally a song is chosen that has a connection to the other group and is sung, not only to support their own speaker, but to compliment, support, or give solace to the other. For example, in a farewell ritual, or *poroporoaki*, I attended, a song about cancer was sung by the *tangata whenua* of Manutuke *Marae* to acknowledge the death that day of the father of one of our group.⁷² The song expressed the wish that cancer be removed from this world to the other side of the *ārai*.⁷³ This had the effect of aligning us with them in a shared human experience, an evocation of our humanity. It also linked the singers to their own water, the stream named Te Ārai.

⁷⁰ Vitality, the intrinsic qualities of a person at their most excellent.

⁷¹ Mead, 119.

⁷² April 9, 2010.

⁷³ The veil of death.

Artaud, writing of Mexican civilisation, said: ‘... it is the act which shapes the thought,’⁷⁴ and the act of singing gives a tangible and physical presence to the thinking delivered by the speaker. Even within the chosen song it is possible for the singers to improvise, just as a jazz singer improvises – both with melody and words. Orbell notes that, ‘far from limiting the poets’ powers of expression, this formulaic diction [the stock phrases incorporated in many *waiata*] provided them with a system of rhetoric capable of infinite variation and subtlety’⁷⁵ and I have observed this improvising personally through watching Moetara and other practitioners. Actions are chosen according to what is *tika*,⁷⁶ and what is *tika* changes with every situation.

The final speaker, the *kaiwhakawhiti*, like an improviser or the final speaker in a debate, links together all that has been said. It is a key role because, like the climax of a play, the *kaiwhakawhiti* is charged with making sense of the entire event, marking its conclusion. He builds a platform for the *kaupapa* of the *hui* to follow. In this way the event will resonate into the future. As in Brechtian theatre, the end lies not in the encounter but in its influence on the wider world, particularly on the lives of the two groups who have encountered each other and the outcomes they seek. In concluding, this speaker invites the *manuhiri* to *hongi*⁷⁷ or share breath with each of the *tangata whenua*. At this point the central space is crossed for the first time since the beginning of the *pōwhiri*. It is a symbolic moment. The groups that were separated are now woven together and the *hongi* allows them to share the mingling of their physical, or life breath and something of the inner spirit of each person. Literally and metaphorically they have become one in a shared purpose. In a certain sense they are now actively participating in a group improvisation. The ritual of encounter wraps together into a whole that completes the formal part of the *pōwhiri*.

Finally the two groups share food and drink together to symbolise that they have now moved onto an everyday footing, that the formalities are complete. They are now *noa*⁷⁸, relaxed and easy with each other, replacing the formality of *tapu*. On large formal occasions this food might take the form of a feast, or *hākari*. On others it can be as small as a cup of tea and a biscuit. But the food is important – it reminds participants of the everyday world of bodies that need to be sustained. Food is also central to the

⁷⁴ Antonin Artaud, *Artaud Anthology*, James Hirschman (ed.), Raymond Federman (trans.), (San Francisco: City Lights, 1965), 67.

⁷⁵ Orbell, 6.

⁷⁶ What feels right for the occasion.

⁷⁷ Touching noses.

⁷⁸ Everyday.

manaakitanga that happens on a *marae*. Sharing food allows the discussions of the *paepae* to continue informally and it continues the work of the *pōwhiri* in forming a community. Sometimes these encounters over *kai*⁷⁹ are as significant as those on the *paepae*. Moriarty notes that ‘the feed is often where that *kōrero*⁸⁰ about what really happened to us through the course of the evening is investigated more deeply’.⁸¹ Moriarty is speaking about *kai* following performance, but he is drawing on his experience on the *marae*. Again, the community building begun in words, is made tangible through the body and the sharing of bread, in a sustained improvisation that can involve hundreds of participants.

The Ritual of the *Pōwhiri* Applied to Theatrical Performances

This focus on encounter in Māori ritual practices makes them particularly transferable to performance situations and is strongly influencing theatrical work in New Zealand, particularly, but not exclusively, Māori theatre. Both inside the work itself and in the encounter between audience and performer the interweaving of these two worlds can be seen, shaping the structure of, and expectations around, the event, giving them a very particular flavour. In this thesis I am focusing on the relationship between these practices and initiating a state of acute and involved attention. I reference the work of Christopher Balme, theorist and theatre historian, to underpin the discussion, along with the practitioners interviewed. Jane Goodall suggests that the performer with ‘presence’ is able to call up ‘elemental forces’, particularly when working within ‘unbroken indigenous traditions’.⁸² And indeed such traditions invoke the qualities she describes. I have found inspiration in the frameworks of *tikanga* Māori. However, in the work I am exploring, these elemental forces do not sit within potent individuals but in the spaces between them, in the listening tied to a common purpose.

Looking at a theatre event through the lens of *marae* protocols extends the acute listening, so highly valued between actors, into everyone present, from audiences to backstage workers. David O'Donnell and Bronwyn Tweddle claim that, ‘since the 1980s Māori theatre has become the most dynamic force in New

⁷⁹ Food.

⁸⁰ Discussion.

⁸¹ Moriarty.

⁸² Goodall, 3.

Zealand theatre.’⁸³ This dynamism arises as much from the form as the content. It is literally a re-framing of the act of being an audience into being, on some level, a ‘spect-actor’, empowered to take over the action. Alistair Campbell, writing of Boal’s work describes the re-framing of an audience into ‘spect-actors’ as, ‘entering into real partnerships and living dialogues’⁸⁴ and a similar alchemy is happening here. Balme speaks of Māori theatre as ‘less the creation of a new kind of dramatic writing than a new kind of perceptual frame’⁸⁵ and it is this invitation to active involvement, making elements of the event inherently unpredictable, that is significant. The *marae* is a place of particularity that invokes a framework that moves the theatre audience from observers to participants, stimulating a quality of attentiveness. Bogart writes that: ‘the only gift we can give to a situation is the force of our attention.... Sensation, awareness, past experience, and reflection (self-awareness) all participate in the phenomenon of attention’,⁸⁶ just as the *kaiwhakawhiti* gives full attention in order to draw in all the threads of the *pōwhiri*. It is this gift of attention, aligned with the welding together of a sense of purpose, and improvisation to build that purpose, that is the contribution I see made by Māori ritual frameworks. They shed light on the quest that is central to this thesis: the desire to understand the elements in play bringing unpredictability and ‘alive-li-ness’ into artistically structured moments, elements that enable the production of that magic conjunction more consistently.

Although ‘theatre’ as we know it did not exist in pre-European Māori society, theatrical elements were always a part of formal occasions and *marae* life⁸⁷ as described above, making the *marae* an obvious setting for the Māori playwrights emerging in the 1970s, who naturally observed the same connections with theatre in both form and content documented by Salmond. The *marae* has an essential function within Māori society both traditionally and in contemporary society. It is on the *marae* that the major dramas of Māori society are played out, from confrontations to the key events of birth and (most noticeably) death, making it a clear place for Māori playwrights to begin. Harry Dansey’s *Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross*⁸⁸ and Hone Tuwhare’s *In the Wilderness Without a Hat*⁸⁹, both situate key scenes on the *marae*,

⁸³David O'Donnell, & Bronwyn Tweddle, ‘Naked Samoans: Pacific Island Voices in the Theatre of Aotearoa/New Zealand’, *Performance Research: Voices*, Volume 8. No. 1: (Wales: Routledge Journals, March 2003), 53.

⁸⁴ Alistair Campbell, ‘Reinventing the Wheel: Breakout Theatre-in-Education’, Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz (eds.), 56.

⁸⁵ Balme, (1999), 62-63.

⁸⁶ Bogart, (2007), 52.

⁸⁷ See Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal.

⁸⁸ Harry Dansey, *Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross*, (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1974). First performed 1972.

⁸⁹ Hone Tuwhare, *In the Wilderness Without a Hat*, in *He Reo Hou: 5 Plays by Māori Playwrights*, (Wellington: Playmarket, 1991). First performances, 1977, Toured NZ, 1985. Tuwhare is one of NZ’s most revered poets.

from a heated debate in the former to the physical and verbal confrontation over the body during the *tangi* in the later. Moving from siting dramatic work on the *marae* to utilizing the *marae* as a framework for the entire theatrical experience seemed the next logical step in developing a theatre in which these protocols exerted their influence on every aspect of theatre process, from rehearsal to performance, including framing the encounter with the audience.

In late 1983 and 1984, two Māori theatre practitioners, Jim Moriarty and Rangimoana Taylor, made this transfer between *marae* ritual and theatre performance explicit in a concept they called *Theatre Marae*, building on the work of earlier practitioners such as Rore Hapihi, Selwyn Muru, Harry Dansey and Hone Tuwhare among others. In this framework the infrastructure of the *marae* and its attendant rituals shaped the entire theatre event. Even before the performance began, the audience were shifted into a different framework, one that was positioned from a Māori worldview; one that, for white New Zealanders of that time, was largely unfamiliar. By invoking a different framework, the theatre makers shift the audience's mindset, invoke values inherent in *marae* rituals and alter the ground rules for the whole event. Christopher Balme sees this reframing as 'a clear strategy to alter the receptive mindset of the spectator and transcend the so-called confrontational structure between audience and performers pertaining in Western theatre'.⁹⁰ This means that audiences were seeing, hearing and receiving in a different and heightened way, heightened not only because of the novelty of the style but because the framework demanded a different kind of participation. Here the demarcation lines between performer and audience were not so clear, located in what Balme describes as 'an intermediary semiotic space between art and ritual'.⁹¹ The framing prepares audiences for spontaneous contributions to the event, and these contributions do indeed occur.

One early production to draw overtly on Māori customary rituals was *Ngā Paki o te Māori* October 1983, performed by the Wellington-based group, Te Ohu Whakaari, led by actor and director Rangimoana Taylor. The piece was created by the collective and in content and structure reflected *marae* ritual, particularly *pōwhiri*. Balme writes: 'It began with a traditional *mihi* (introductory chant) and ended with a meal after the show, elements integral to the *hui* but by no means easily accommodated into the 'confrontational' spectator-performer relationship characteristic of European theatre'.⁹² Academic and critic, David

⁹⁰ Balme, (1999), 64.

⁹¹ Balme, (1999), 73.

⁹² Christopher B. Balme, 'New Māori Theatre in New Zealand', *Australian Drama Studies*, Numbers 15-16, (Sydney: October 1989/April 1990), 153.

Carnegie, comments on the effect this re-framing has on the actor-audience relationship and the receptivity of the audience to what is being portrayed:

What is at least as important as the writing for New Zealand theatre, and indirectly for the drama, is the changes such groups [as Te Ohu Whakaari] are making in the traditional actor-audience relationship. If instead of paying a contractual price at the box office and sitting in quiet anonymity to judge whatever the actors present before you, you are rather invited to make a *koha*⁹³, welcomed in traditional manner as if onto a *marae*, asked to receive the performance as a gift offered with *aroha*⁹⁴ and farewelled after the performance with a song and supper, it is bound to alter the mental set, the receptivity with which you accept the performance.... If the custom spreads to the Pākehā community, theatres could see a quite profound change in the dynamics of theatrical performance...⁹⁵

This re-framing of a performance as a 'gift' is a term Bogart uses in describing her work, saying 'we create journeys for others to be received in the spirit of a gift'.⁹⁶ Gift-giving is a very different experience to that of purchase and provision transactions.

Slightly earlier, Roma Pōtiki⁹⁷ was part of a group called *Maranga Mai*. Pōtiki worked with the *Te Ika a Maui Players*, with Rore Hapipi⁹⁸ and other Māori practitioners, absorbing both their approaches and political thinking, through the late 1970s and the 1980s – a time of Māori renaissance and activism in New Zealand: 'Myself and other Māori had a sense of operating from a Māori contextual base.... being exposed to a range of often very strong opinions which had a context that was the Māori control of things Māori and using theatre, poetry and other forms to advance this. I was taking it all in almost by osmosis'.⁹⁹ This led

⁹³ Gift, donation.

⁹⁴ Love.

⁹⁵ David Carnegie, 'Recent New Zealand Drama', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, No. 3 (Wellington: Dept of English, Victoria University, 1985), 11.

⁹⁶ Bogart, (2001), 5.

⁹⁷ Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri, Ngāti Rangitihī.

⁹⁸ Hapipi is of Lebanese and Ngāti Tuwharetoa descent. Since the early 1950s he has published stories, poems, plays and articles. In 1977 he formed his own theatre company, 'Te Ika A Maui Players', which toured his play, *Death Of The Land*, for three years. Hapipi won the Māori Affairs Writers Award (1975), the Feltex Award for Best TV Script for *The Protestors* (1982), and is a recipient of the Katherine Mansfield Fellowship (1984).

⁹⁹ Roma Pōtiki, Māori director and administrator. Interview conducted by Annie Ruth, March 4, 2010.

to her involvement with other groups whose work combined a Māori political agenda with a reframing of the theatrical event according to Māori ritual frameworks.

Maranga Mai evolved out of the politicisation and protest movements of the 1970s. The group created a play of the same name which toured the North Island of New Zealand, mainly to Māori and community venues, their primary focus to engage with Māori, and then with others. *Maranga Mai* tells the story of Māori land rights protests through a series of vignettes (created through improvisation and oral history), framed by an introduction and concluded with a *waiata*. The *kaupapa* was to expose the unjust taking of Māori land and the social and economic implications of that loss:

Kuia (Older woman): My poor old bones are so weary,
 I ask only this
 that when I am gone
 they will take me home to my papakainga¹⁰⁰ ...
 They have claimed that now
 under the new Bill,
 but my spirit will not rest
 if I cannot lie beside my husband, ...
 and all my other bones ...¹⁰¹

The play gave a Māori-centred voice to the protests that court action and government processes did little to resolve. Pōtiki says: 'the play was a wake-up call to our own people and an illustrated history of injustice for the Pākehā to become aware of and absorb'.¹⁰² Andrew Robb, now Press Secretary to Dr Pita Sharples, Minister for Māori Affairs, described it as:

... a dramatised version of what actually happened ... shown and recounted in logical order. But because it was a controversial history of land rights and Māori protest it was very powerful.... The

¹⁰⁰ Home place – literally place of eating.

¹⁰¹ Brian Pōtiki, 'Hey Māori People: Mairanga Mai: radical Māori theatre in the 1980s', unpublished manuscript by permission of the author, 42.

¹⁰² Roma Pōtiki, Follow-up interview with Annie Ruth, April 27, 2011.

country was trying to work out how to come to terms with Māori issues. Lots of soul searching. Disorientation. *Maranga Mai* was a clear statement coming out of that.¹⁰³

The play was highly controversial in a New Zealand where the white majority had yet to confront their own racism. Thus the issues were charged for Māori and non-Māori alike. The inclusion of Māori movement and *waiata* provided the vocabulary and form that assisted audiences to listen to and absorb the difficult content. Aroha Harris notes: 'An example of the politicisation of Māori arts, *Maranga Mai* made clever and artistic use of music and protest lyrics as a vehicle for getting through a performance which many audiences found harrowing'.¹⁰⁴

Audiences became vocal and responded, not just to the inclusion of Māori elements in the form, which was unusual enough, but also to the content. Brian Pōtiki quotes a performer describing a performance during the tour:

We'd stayed at the *marae* the night before and performed to all these old people. You'd have a feed and then do the play and then there would be all this talking through the night from the old people telling us *what you're saying in this play is what we and our parents and grandparents have been saying all of our lives, but we can't put it out there, so you must go and do it for us!* and then they'd come through with the petrol money to get us to the next place.¹⁰⁵

Likewise, those on stage interacted with the audiences. Harris quotes an incident when the group performed for a small group of Parliamentarians: 'In an unscripted moment at the very end a beer bottle was thrown against a wall. It was a dramatic reference to the kind of frustration simmering under the surface of a society that responded with complacency to an indigenous voice that felt consistently maligned and misunderstood, if not ignored'.¹⁰⁶ The small audience of MPs and other Parliamentary workers at this performance made the audience-performer relationship particularly intimate and the actors were able to address Parliamentarians individually in both scripted and improvised ways. The passion of the performers and the re-structuring of the encounter invoking *tikanga* Māori as much as theatre, meant that participation

¹⁰³ Andrew Robb, Interview with Annie Ruth, September 7, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Aroha Harris, *Hiko: Forty Years of Māori Protest*, (Wellington New Zealand: Huia, 2004), 99.

¹⁰⁵ Brian Pōtiki, 81.

¹⁰⁶ Harris, 99.

arose organically from the situation, improvisation occurring on both sides as a response to a highly-charged issue. The bottle was thrown by a supporter of the performers who took the opportunity to show his frustration and anger at the lack of justice for Māori and the inaction of Parliamentarians towards addressing those injustices. Robb, one of the Wellington supporters and organisers of *Maranga Mai*, was present. He makes clear that the bottle wasn't intended to cause physical harm, but to emphasise the immediacy and seriousness of the issues. It was a theatrical and dramatic way of bringing attention to injustices:

The cast were standing on the stage – the play had come to an end and there was this utter stony silence. Nobody moved. Not one clap. People weren't even breathing. The cast were looking out at the audience waiting for something to happen. The silence went on and on and on. People were just frozen – it was an incredible collective moment.... And then this guy stood up and marched from the back of the auditorium and marched towards the stage. He reached into the pocket of his great-coat and took out a bottle and flung it up into the air against the back wall There was the incredible zing noise of splintering glass, and he walked onto the stage and started haranguing the audience. That was the release – hubbub broke out. Everyone yammer, yammer, yammer – an incredible outburst of hubbub.¹⁰⁷

In both performance and reception, *Maranga Mai* is an example of a clear sense of purpose and political belief combined with a degree of improvisation in delivery, making the work vitally alive for the audiences that experienced it, whether outraged or approving. Robb speaks of the audience as: '...joining in the songs, crying'.¹⁰⁸ The invitation to participate was implicit in both the form and content of the work: to participate at the time of the performance and to participate in political action in the world. Mike Smith describes the first time he saw *Maranga Mai*:

I remember the first time I saw Maranga Mai perform it was in my home district of Whangaroa.... At times brutally angry and then gut-busting funny, achingly sad and then uplifting, it was an emotional rollercoaster performance. But above all intellectually explosive as it challenged the audience with attitudes unseen in public performance before ... We were young Māori kids from

¹⁰⁷ Robb.

¹⁰⁸ Robb.

small towns ... but when Brian Pōtiki challenged us to take up a sharpened stick and jam it up the backside of the justice system we certainly got that!¹⁰⁹

Roma Pōtiki later founded a theatre group called *He Ara Hou*,¹¹⁰ where not only the performances, but the whole working methodology took place in a Māori context, drawing heavily on the protocols of *tikanga* Māori. Community and shared experience were at its core, drawing on familial as well as community relationships. All work began with a *karakia*, Pōtiki describing this as an opportunity to ‘acknowledge something other than the self in an immediate, physical realm. At its heart it had a spiritual significance – we acknowledged the spirituality that is essential to relationship with each other, to the earth, with the environment, with the ancestors’.¹¹¹ This use of *karakia* to support working processes will be developed further, in the context of my own work, in Chapter Five. Pōtiki’s use of Māori protocols around encounter, food, ritual elements of dance, bird movement, and the metaphorical interlinking of all elements in the work echoes the explorations of Taylor and Moriarty.

The group created a watershed play called *Whatungarongaro*.¹¹² The play had *whānau*¹¹³ and belonging at its core, and explored inter-generational misunderstanding, ancestry, cultural alienation, youth suicide, and ultimately hope. *Whatungarongaro* was performed in Wellington, then toured the country and internationally. Throughout the tour, unscripted moments took many forms, both from the cast and the audiences. Among Māori the responses were shaped, not just by the content, but by the form, which evoked, as noted above, the protocols of the *marae*, giving the work a particular immediacy. Pōtiki comments that ‘audiences described their productions as emotionally impactful and they spoke the truth of their time to a Māori community’,¹¹⁴ a truth that resided in the re-framing of the encounter as much as in the content. Hone Kouka describes the work as groundbreaking: ‘The element that lifted it above previous work was the modern interpretations of traditional Māori symbols and ceremony. It invited the audience in with *karanga*; the play was the *whaikōrero* and was concluded with *karakia*, *mihimihī*¹¹⁵ and *waiata*’.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Mike Smith, quoted by B. Pōtiki, 121-122.

¹¹⁰ A New Way, sometimes translated as Creative Pathways.

¹¹¹ R. Pōtiki, (2010).

¹¹² Roma Pōtiki and *He Ara Hou*, *Whatungarongaro*, in *Na Matou Mangai*, Hone Kouka (ed.), (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999). Name taken from the Māori proverb: *Whatungarongaro he tangata, toi tu te whenua*: The eyes of the people may disappear but land remains.

¹¹³ Family.

¹¹⁴ Pōtiki, (2010).

¹¹⁵ Thanks.

The use of *karanga* to begin the theatre encounter in these works was a startling evocation of a very particular world and signalled this re-framing of the engagement between audience and performers. For Māori audiences this was a reinforcement of a familiar, though seldom reflected environment, for Pākehā and *tuiwi*¹¹⁷ it was a shift in perspective that was both challenging and enlightening. Significantly, for both groups it was an opportunity to stand in a different place within the theatre and therefore to experience it anew. These ritual elements are used more frequently now, but in the 1980s they took audiences by surprise. Rangimoana Taylor spoke to me of the very first time he used a *karanga* in the theatre. He talked of the fear and anticipation among the young women and himself as they waited to begin the *karanga*. He was not sure if this had ever been done before and he did not know how the audience would respond:

The first time was in the play, *Kōhanga* ... in the mid-80s. If you're going to do a *karanga* you must be 'ready' for the response – for people to react as they would on a *marae*.... I stood behind Whetu – the people responded [with their own *karanga*]. I felt the joy of the response – I thought 'this is *real*!' If we're calling out to them, calling on our ancestors and theirs' – then you cannot say 'do not respond' – you must allow it.'¹¹⁸

And audiences did and do respond. As Carnegie notes, the dynamic between audience and performer is altered and there is an implicit invitation to participate. Pōtiki sees this also: 'In *Whatungarongaro* we had a *karanga* to the audience as they came in and sometimes there were women in the audience who would respond.... Māori women in the audience, many of whom had not come to the theatre before, felt comfortable to engage in that way ... *karanga* is electrifying anyway'.¹¹⁹ The eerie, riveting sound of the call, the response that might or might not come from the audience, the content and manner of that response and the invocation of the unseen world that connects all present to their ancestors sets a framework that shifted the ground rules of theatrical encounter so that the unexpected was invited.

Thirty years on, the incorporation of a *karanga* at the beginning of a theatrical performance still evokes a heightened expectancy in the audience. You can feel the audience shift in their seats and look around at

¹¹⁶ Hone Kouka (ed.), *Ta Matou Mangai: Three Plays of the 1990s*, Introduction 22.

¹¹⁷ People from different places.

¹¹⁸ Taylor (2010a).

¹¹⁹ R. Pōtiki, (2010).

each other. O'Donnell and Tweddle, referencing a performance of *Bone Flute Ivi Ivi* by Lemi Ponifasio's Mau company write: 'The European frame is disrupted as the performance begins with a powerful Māori *karanga* from the auditorium, invoking the spirits of dead ancestors and suggesting the ritual framework of a *marae* visit.'¹²⁰ The possibility of the unseen is being acknowledged and the realisation that this might not be an occasion for detachedly sitting back in the dark is made manifest. It is not surprising therefore, that performances framed in this way often draw a performative response from their audiences. They are implicit invitations to actively engage, and since that engagement cannot be known in advance, they are also implicit invitations to bring an element of improvisation into the event.

The sense of purpose driving the event is another area where *marae* ritual has an influence on performance. The speakers in *whaikōrero* are improvising around a theme as they seek to weave together two disparate groups into a shared understanding, if not always shared purpose or amity. Whatever the purpose, the speaker must shape their *whaikōrero* to both reflect the purpose and to respond to those present. The use of *waiata* supports the intent of the *whaikōrero* using the power of music consciously to bring people into a shared state. Taking this sense of purpose into theatrical performance has a profound effect on both performer and receiver. James Ashcroft (Ngāti Kahu/Ngā Puhī), Creative Producer of Taki Rua Productions,¹²¹ New Zealand's longest-running Māori theatre company, and a graduate of Toi Whakaari describes this effect, saying 'the level of ownership is visible on stage: a different kind of working together and listening and confidence,'¹²² all arising out of the clarity of purpose.

What was to become Taki Rua¹²³ was established in 1981 by Downstage Theatre as an alternative space, called The Depot, in which to mount more experimental work. In 1983 it became independent, re-named the New Depot, with a *kaupapa* of staging only New Zealand work and with the added *wero* of bringing a consistent Māori voice to the New Zealand stage. Debates around the inclusion of *marae* rituals, the place of *tikanga* in theatre, the relationship between Māori and Pākehā practitioners and the right to use indigenous materials and practises, characterised this stormy, artistically fertile time. Out of these debates the current acceptance of the inclusion of *marae* rituals by both Māori and other theatre-makers was born. In 1992 The Depot became Taki Rua/Depot and in 1994 formally changed its name to Taki Rua, as

¹²⁰ O'Donnell and Tweddle, 54.

¹²¹ Since 2006.

¹²² James Ashcroft, Interviewed by Annie Ruth, October 1, 2010.

¹²³ The name Taki Rua is a weaving pattern and means to go in twos-signifying the bicultural nature of the theatre: Two Strands.

O'Donnell says, '... completing the evolution from a New Zealand-only theatre into an indigenous theatre space that provided a powerful sense of *tūrangawaewae*¹²⁴ for Māori artists'.¹²⁵ The theatre practice that emerged, both at this company and in other Māori work, deepened this connection between the *marae* and theatre. William Petersen writes: 'During the 1990s a Māori theatre practice began to emerge that not only reflected the protocols of the *marae*, but literally embodied the *marae* by either transforming neutral or traditional theatre space into *marae* space, or by using the *marae* as the place where a work is performed before a largely Māori audience'.¹²⁶

In 1997 Taki Rua closed the venue, now in need of costly structural repairs, deciding that a more effective use of resources would be to support work able to travel outside Wellington. Since then it has functioned as a producing house, mounting works that are shown in theatrical and non-theatrical venues nationwide. They tour internationally as well as to New Zealand's small towns and rural areas. Its twenty-seven year history makes it a significant force in New Zealand theatre. The company describes itself as: 'a creative rule breaker, unpredictable and unconventional, challenging and evolving the definition of Māori theatre'.¹²⁷ They go on to state:

We exist to connect our heritage, past and present and ensure the foundation for Māori voices to be heard worldwide. Stemming from a traditional culture and adapting to a multicultural world, Taki Rua is a call to our audiences and artists to celebrate and share stories from our own back yard that define and challenge the essence and perceptions of who we are as the indigenous culture of Aotearoa.¹²⁸

The company tours works in *Te Reo* Māori annually for schools, *marae* and community centres throughout New Zealand as well as mounting works in English.

Purpose allows leadership and response to emerge from unexpected places, since when you are focused on the purpose of the event you can act without fear of treading on someone else's toes. Brian Pōtiki

¹²⁴ Place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and *whakapapa* – literally a place to stand.

¹²⁵ O'Donnell, (2009), 12.

¹²⁶ William Peterson, 'Writing into the Land: Dramatic Monologues in the Expanding Landscape of Aotearoa/New Zealand', *Performing Aotearoa*, Maufort and O'Donnell, 112-113.

¹²⁷ <http://www.takirua.co.nz/about/about>

¹²⁸ <http://www.takirua.co.nz/about/about>.

writes: 'I've been in – and observed – theatre groups with a hierarchy of leadership: the director with his or her beret, the stage technicians who never say much.... Directing *Te Raukura* had taught me to trust the natural leadership in Māori community'.¹²⁹ As Moetara says, 'When the "leader" doesn't know, know to take the lead',¹³⁰ making explicit that leadership can come from anywhere. In performance, this attitude accounts for some of the spontaneous comments generated by Theatre Marae, Taki Rua, and other kinds of Māori performance. Individuals in the audience feel free to comment when they see they have something to contribute and the cast needs to stay awake to the possibility that this will happen and respond, not out of anxiety, but out of a sense of shared purpose and ownership. It places responsibility for appropriate response¹³¹ on all present, both among those performing and those receiving. Balme states that this willingness to contribute comes from a fundamental difference in perception around role at a theatrical event. In the Western theatre tradition the role of the audience, by and large, is to receive the work and to regard it as a kind of representation of something outside the theatre.¹³² Phenomenologists, such as States¹³³ would disagree. In any case, in Māori theatre, the event is clearly and inherently phenomenological, it is the thing itself:

In the eyes of Māori spectators, at least, they do not submit themselves to the general semiotic law of most theatrical cultures whereby anything on stage, whether person or object, can lose its primary cultural referentiality and be transformed into a sign of a sign.... Their performances are often located in an intermediary semiotic space between art and ritual.... Māori theatre frequently aims to derive its special character and effects from precisely this ill-defined area between ritual and theatre.¹³⁴

It is not unusual for spontaneous appreciation, commentary or challenge to follow a work of Māori theatre, in the form of *karanga*, *waiata*, *haka* or *whaikōrero*. I was present when *Waiora*¹³⁵ was first performed at

¹²⁹ B. Pōtiki, 45.

¹³⁰ Moetara, (2009).

¹³¹ Appropriate in this context meaning aligned with *tikanga*.

¹³² Of course this is not true of the more populist forms such as Music Hall, Children's Theatre and Stand-up. Experimental theatre has been challenging this model for the past hundred years and more. Yet it is the model that persists in the major theatres, and it is those theatres that attract the major funding.

¹³³ Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre*, (Berkley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1985): '... theatre ... is really a language whose words consist to an unusual degree of things that are what they seem to be. In theatre, image and object, pretense and pretender, sign-vehicle and content, draw unusually close....' 20.

¹³⁴ Balme, (1999), 71-73.

¹³⁵ Hone Kouka, *Waiora*, (Wellington: Huia, 1997). Kouka is also a graduate of Toi Whakaari.

Downstage Theatre, Wellington in 1996. Māori in the audience erupted with *haka* and *karanga*, acknowledging the achievement of writer and cast, speaking back to the performance from their perspectives in a highly performative fashion. It extended the performance out into the audience in an electrifying way.

The physical environment of the *marae*, in particular of the *pōwhiri* has also had a profound effect on New Zealand theatrical work. The *pōwhiri* is the ritual most frequently used as the theatrical reference point, one that Balme describes as ‘inherently dramatic in its oppositional arrangement and ... not unlike the patterns of formalised debate in certain forms of European drama’.¹³⁶ The space between two groups gives visible and kinaesthetic form to intellectual, cultural or geographical separations and to the interactions that may eventually bridge that divide. O'Donnell and Tweddle cite the scenography of *Ngā Tangata Toa* (The Warrior People) as an example where the tangible fact of the seating arrangement conditions the nature and quality of audience response: ‘the traverse set was designed to resemble a *wharenui* (meeting house) on the *marae* (sacred meeting ground), complete with *pou* (carved posts representing ancestors). The audience therefore symbolically became *manuhiri* (guests) at a *hui*, the play itself presented as a discourse’.¹³⁷ All theatre events springing from this inspiration source do not take the same audience-stage configuration, but everyone I have interviewed and all productions I have observed, support the underlying assumption that everything in the environment - the people, the space, the design elements - are in a conversation with each other, and the audience is welcomed into this conversation and invited to participate.

Māori theatre frequently extends this conversation between stage and auditorium in what, in Western theatre, might be called a forum. But in this context the conversation is a continuation of the performative conversation begun on the stage, a theatrical version of the *poroporoaki*. The two-way dialogue is a valued part of the experience and audiences at these works want to have their voices heard, just as they might in a ritual situation with something of substance to discuss. Speaking of Te Rakau's performance of *Wātea*¹³⁸ Helen Pearse-Otene describes the final parts of the presentation:

¹³⁶ Balme, (1999), 71.

¹³⁷ O'Donnell and Tweddle, 53.

¹³⁸ Devised by Moriarty and Pearse-Otene together with the company, most of whom were inmates at Christchurch Women's Prison, 1999.

It didn't end with – this is the end of our show, clap and off you go – people would come down onto the stage and they would share, they would *kōrero*, they would *haka*, they would talk about a deep *mamae*¹³⁹ that they'd held, and suddenly felt able to present to us. An incredible honour. A privilege. I've not been involved in much work where an audience has been able to do that, and that barrier is lifted, where we come together.¹⁴⁰

This lifting of the barrier between performer and audience and the acknowledgement that the work ends in community and is carried back into the community is a key element in work arising out of *Kaupapa* Māori. This has resonances with Brecht's Epic Theatre, which he characterised as a learning process in which the playwright and the audience are engaged. Brecht sought to create a theatre where the event was not completed in the theatre, but would influence actions within people's lives and in society. Brecht writes: 'What is "natural" must have the force of what is startling. This is the only way to expose the laws of cause and effect. People's activity must simultaneously be so and be capable of being different'.¹⁴¹ Brooker describes this 'distancing effect'¹⁴² as able 'to reveal a suppressed or unconsidered alternative'.¹⁴³ Māori theatre structures this act of making connections and comparisons, this active engagement into the fabric of the event itself. It is no accident that Māori theatre has, from its inception, dealt with the conditions of life for Māori and the politics behind these conditions. It is a contribution to a wider conversation made explicit in the time of place of the performance and in the active relationship with audiences. This focus on efficacy links it strongly with Brecht's thinking. It is the *kawa*¹⁴⁴ with which Māori theatre surrounds the theatrical event that allows the audience to both feel with the actors and simultaneously analyse and draw comparisons. It is not possible to know whether Brecht was aware of these Māori protocols, though he did meet the New Zealand playwright Bruce Mason in 1945 and asked him what Mason describes as 'searching questions' about theatre in New Zealand and the position of Māori.¹⁴⁵ Ironically, in the context of Māori protocols, the distancing effect desired by Brecht is actually achieved by bringing the audience closer

¹³⁹ Pain.

¹⁴⁰ Helen Pearse-Otene. Interview with Annie Ruth, November 22, 2010.

¹⁴¹ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development on an Aesthetic*, John Willet (trans.), (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1957, this edn. 1964), 71.

¹⁴² Also translated as 'alienation' or 'distanciation'.

¹⁴³ Peter Brooker, 'Key Words in Brecht's Theory and Practice of Theatre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, Peter Thompson and Glendyr Sacks (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 185-200, 194.

¹⁴⁴ *Marae* protocol, the customs of the *marae*.

¹⁴⁵ Bruce Mason, *Every Kind of Weather* (Auckland: Reed-Methuen, 1986), 37.

through a sense of shared purpose in the event. Discussion, as part of the *poroporoakī* function of farewell, opens an opportunity to articulate that response, making a space for consideration and debate.

Up to this point I have discussed examples solely within Māori performance works. However this reframing of the theatrical encounter is also entering the work of Pākehā – New Zealanders of European descent – and Māori and Pākehā are coming together to work out of this sensibility. As O'Donnell and Tweddle remark, 'there are now fewer clear boundaries between Pākehā and Māori work, and it is likely that in time the clear distinction will fade, as NZ theatre becomes increasingly defined by Pacific voices rather than those of Europe'.¹⁴⁶ Colin McColl¹⁴⁷ and Murray Lynch¹⁴⁸, both Pākehā, have directed a range of Māori works. I recently attended a performance of *Mark Twain in Māoriland*,¹⁴⁹ as part of Wellington's biennial International Arts Festival. It was written by a Māori, David Geary, but directed by an Englishman, produced by Taki Rua, and had a mixed cast of Māori and Pākehā. At the end of the performance a *karanga* and *mihi* spontaneously erupted from the audience. This echoes the earlier experiences of Pōtiki and Taylor, showing that performative audience responses have entered the theatrical sensibilities of Aotearoa:New Zealand¹⁵⁰.

American director Leo Gene Peters, a graduate of the directing programme at Toi Whakaari¹⁵¹, has worked consciously with these principles, particularly in the shows *Strange Resting Places*¹⁵² and *Awhi Tapu*¹⁵³. He speaks of the specific kind of engagement working with these principles invites:

My work is increasingly influenced by (I wouldn't say 'based on') *marae* practice. As much as anything it has involved shifting the focus away from a notion of performance and towards a place of communal meeting.... It changed the way we bring the audience in – the closest and most direct thing – and that will continue in my work even when not working with things Māori. This changed

¹⁴⁶ O'Donnell and Tweddle, 53.

¹⁴⁷ *Waiora*, Downstage, 1996. *Blue Smoke*, co-written by Lynch and Rawiri Paratene, NZ International Festival of the Arts, 2000.

¹⁴⁸ *Nga Tangata Toa*, Taki Rua Theatre, 1994.

¹⁴⁹ Soundings Theatre, Wellington, March, 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Students at Toi Whakaari have responded to performances from international artists with song and *haka*, showing appreciation, merging Māori and Pākehā protocols.

¹⁵¹ Master of Theatre Arts in Directing, taught and awarded jointly by Victoria University, Wellington and Toi Whakaari.

¹⁵² Rob Mokaraka, and Paolo Rotondo, *Strange Resting Places*, Wellington. Original production, Bats Theatre 2004, followed by tours nationally and internationally, 2004-2009.

¹⁵³ Albert Belz, *Awhi Tapu* (Wellington: New Play Press, 2007). Centrepoint Theatre, Palmerston North 2009. Taki Rua Theatre touring production, 2010 – 2011.

the fundamental relationship to the audience throughout the piece ... it became a different way of being in a theatre – theatre as a discussion, a question we are exploring with an audience – this makes for a more direct meeting.¹⁵⁴

These comments are endorsed in reviews of the work. Melody Nixon writes:

The open approach is similar to Te Rakau Hua O Te Wao Tapu's¹⁵⁵ theatre marae style, in which a *kai* and a *kōrero* form part of the whole theatrical proceedings. The *Strange Resting Places* audience is welcomed with coffee and pastries, and farewelled with bread, and garlic oil made fresh on stage. The actors, far from scampering into the shadows after closing, invite us to share a glass of vino and chat amiably as the garlic oil is devoured. The house lights are kept up throughout the play and the audience, quite literally, is not left to ponder by themselves in the dark.¹⁵⁶

Peters is not Māori, he is a Texan immigrant to New Zealand. Yet increasingly his work is taking him into a connection with Māori-influenced practices, developing on from the exposure to these at Toi Whakaari during his training. James Ashcroft, the creative producer of the work, related strongly the success of this production to the marae-based *tikanga* that was so integral to both its creation and performance: '*Strange Resting Places* was missing all "theatrical *kaupapa*"¹⁵⁷ but came from a place more honest and true to *kaupapa* Māori protocols.'¹⁵⁸

I was present at a performance of *Strange Resting Places* at Downstage Theatre¹⁵⁹ when a large group of army veterans attended the performance. *Strange Resting Places* tells the story of an encounter at Monte Cassino, Italy 1944. A young Māori soldier from the 28th Māori Battalion goes out to steal food and bumps into an Italian soldier taking cover in a stable. They find themselves trapped in a dangerous and deadly standoff, but surrounded by Germans just outside, they need to work together to survive. The piece was

¹⁵⁴ Leo Gene Peters, Interview with Annie Ruth, September 28, 2010.

¹⁵⁵ Te Rakau, founded by Jim Moriarty, is the longest surviving Māori Community Theatre and Theatre in Education company in Aotearoa: New Zealand. A registered Charitable Trust, Te Rakau utilises the unique form of 'Theatre Marae' to work in marginalised and mainstream communities.

¹⁵⁶ Melody Nixon, Review, *The Lumière Reader* (Wellington: On-line magazine, July 17th, 2007) <http://lumiere.net.nz/reader/item/1159>.

¹⁵⁷ Protocols.

¹⁵⁸ Ashcroft.

¹⁵⁹ March 2009.

created out of the family histories of the actor-writers who created the piece with Peters. At the end of this performance the vets sat around talking and chatting with the cast about their stories and the show. I watched little groups clustering around each of the actors, drinking a glass of wine and talking, others joining them then moving to another group. This was not an audience that had come to sit in the dark but rather an audience that was a full collaborator in sharing a part of our history. They treated the end of the performance like a *poroporoakī*, responding to the work and giving advice from their own experiences. As with *Mark Twain in Māoriland*, this work was frequently responded to with *haka* and *waiata*. Peters remembers particularly the performance at the Hamilton Museum on ANZAC¹⁶⁰ Day: ‘we performed in the ANZAC Day exhibition. In was a moment of amazingly clear alignment of form and content. Afterwards they sang to us.... Several times audiences responded with *haka* and song. It was a really potent experience’.¹⁶¹

These examples endorse Tweddle and O'Donnell's claim that a new sensibility is appearing in New Zealand theatre that has its origins in Māori theatre but is no longer confined to it. Peters notes the readiness in New Zealand audiences to embrace this change: ‘The knowledge of the form is there in New Zealand [*pōwhiri* and *poroporoakī*] – it's so much a part of the culture so people respond within it. Something of it is recognised.’¹⁶² This sense of recognition remains nascent, but increasingly directors and theatre makers are drawn to work that shifts the reception mode of their audiences in ways that draw on *marae* ritual and that invite their audiences to become collaborators in an extended improvisatory event that includes, but is not confined, to the script prepared in the rehearsal room.

The Ritual of *Pōwhiri* as an Element in Actor and Theatre Training

For nearly thirty years Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School has been wrestling with the idea that including practices indigenous to New Zealand in the training of theatre and screen professionals will lead to artists whose work reflects the country in a living and embodied way, that they will be stronger in their art-form and make a greater contribution to the worlds of theatre and screen coming from such a base. The first two directors, Nola Millar and George Webby, were well aware of these challenges and their focus on

¹⁶⁰ Australia/New Zealand Army Corps.

¹⁶¹ Peters.

¹⁶² Peters.

manaakitanga as integral to the school processes, and their selection of Māori students, reflect that awareness. In my own year, 1972, Rawiri Paratene, then known as David Broughton, was one of the students, and I remember Nola Millar speaking with him and us about his path. At the time Rawiri was deeply involved in *Ngā Tamatoa*¹⁶³, the urban Māori protest movement that pushed for greater inclusion of Māori in political processes and 'played an important role in revitalising the Māori language'¹⁶⁴. Choosing his future path, politics or theatre, was a major part of Paratene's year and we were all affected by and often resented his frequent absences as part of his political activist work. But Nola took a wider view and saw the importance of assisting this young actor living in both the Māori and the Pākehā worlds. His illustrious career in both theatre and film well bears out her faith in him and her understanding that accommodations need to be made to serve a bicultural situation. In 1982, Webby, reflecting on the absence of Māori, either as participants or audiences, in the theatre, wrote in the *Evening Post*:

I do not like to think it is all due to economics or nervousness or ignorance. I dislike even more the thought that it is my actions that are keeping Maori people out, but in what way can I make it relevant, without the charge of paternalism being levelled at me? Theatre ceases to be real when it operates for the few or for a coterie.¹⁶⁵

Robin Payne recalls that in fact Webby fought strenuously for the inclusion of Māori and Pacific Islanders in the school¹⁶⁶ and, when Webby retired in 1987, his intake for the 1988 student cohort, saw fifty percent Māori and Pacific Islanders. Thus, Andrew Noble, taking up the directorship, encountered a school with a its largest ever cohort of Māori and Pacific Island students. Sima Urale, one of these, recalls:

When George Webby left people saw a door opening, and the opportunity to have their say about how the school should be run: that biculturalism should do this: more brown people, more this, more that. Andy got inundated with all sorts of demands and we felt he was taking a lot of pressure.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ The Warriors

¹⁶⁴ Te Ara Encyclopedica of New Zealand. www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/22967/nga-tamatoa. In the photograph the young man sprawelled on the step with the afro is Paratene.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Bill Guest. *Transitions: Four Decades of Toi Whakaari*, (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2010), 116.

¹⁶⁶ Guest, 116.

¹⁶⁷ Guest, 117.

This significant cultural shift in the school, along with other logistical issues, made Noble's task extremely difficult, and after only twelve months in the role, he resigned, a casualty of the challenge of creating a school that truly reflected New Zealand's cultural make-up. Sunny Amey, previously director of Downstage, New Zealand's first professional theatre, was brought in as a transitional director to introduce a deeper connection with Māori *kawa*, and so the school's exploration of working actively and consciously in a bicultural context was begun. Sunny had significant support from the Māori community, most significantly from her mentor Keri Kaa (Ngāti Porou), with whom she had worked extensively in the past. It was under her leadership that the school acquired its Māori name – Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa. Guest writes, that by the time she left, 'Sunny had more than fulfilled her brief for the school: not only had she steadfastly held the students during an extremely difficult period of change, but she had also restored stability and supported the bicultural needs of the school'.¹⁶⁸

Robin Payne, following Amey as director in 1990, extended and deepened the interweaving of things Māori throughout the curriculum, appointing part time Māori staff, setting up a Māori advisory panel, Te Roopu Tautoko, taking the school to *hui*, holding a week's intensive every year in Māori practices and making *tikanga* Māori a core element in the training. Speaking to her vision in taking on the role, Payne saw the opportunity for making something far more inclusive at the school:

If the role of theatre is to heal, to educate, to inspire, then what better tool was there than a drama school that was preparing practitioners for the theatre of the future, to bring them together and give them an opportunity to understand both the cultures of this country? ... I had been raised probably closer than a lot of Pākehā are to Māori culture.... I had a personal interest in the culture and how it impacted my world: that their world of *whaikōrero*, of *karanga*, of ritual with welcome ceremonies, their pantheon, their understanding of the world seemed to have real parallels with ancient Greek times and the development of the theatre in ancient Greece. So it seemed that here was a prism through which we could look at drama school, which would make the world really accessible and interesting to the Pākehā students, at the same time sharing our [Pākehā] culture with the Māori students.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Guest, 139.

¹⁶⁹ Guest, 137.

Alison Richards, reflecting on the differences between Toi Whakaari and its equivalent Australian school, The National Institute of Dramatic Art, writes: ‘...the most obvious source of difference between the two national drama schools lies in the way elements of indigenous language, ritual and performance culture have been introduced into the structure and content of curriculum and the corporate rituals of the New Zealand Drama School/Te Kura Toi Whakaari’.¹⁷⁰ Richards sees this as entering ‘an engagement with a new kind of imaginative politics’.¹⁷¹ The struggle from my perspective has been finding out how to do this effectively, so that any sense of tokenism is eschewed. Of course, to fully integrate indigenous practices, issues of power and leadership need to be addressed. This has been and continues to be a challenge. The struggle reflects the wider society of New Zealand and the efforts since the mid 1980’s to address cultural inequities and the injustices of the past. For fourteen years I was the Director of the School, and Head of Actor Training for the six years prior to that under Payne’s direction, so my own practice is deeply grounded in the questions raised through taking this approach.

From the mid 1980s the New Zealand government required organizations to take a number of steps to include things Māori in their names and in their processes. For many this has been a superficial process that has had no systemic relationship to the purpose of the organisation. But at Toi Whakaari the work to integrate a Māori perspective in the work has been a sincere one, from Amey onwards, and has profoundly influenced the school and the training it delivers. In 1998 I delivered a paper at the Concepts Conference¹⁷² in London. I wrote:

The commitment to reflect a bi-cultural world is also reflected in the curriculum. *Taha Māori* (things Māori) is a core subject; at least one production a year has Māori content; elements of Māori culture are integrated into other core curriculum areas.... This has had a clear follow-on in the wider theatre world where graduates of the School have been major players in the development of a theatre form with an infrastructure that draws on the traditional Māori forum of the *Marae*.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Alison Richards, ‘Bicultural Bodies: the production of nation at The New Zealand Drama School/Toi Whakaari’, *The Reinvention of Everyday Life: culture in the twenty-first century*, Ed. McNaughton Lam (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2006), 101.

¹⁷¹ Richards, 103.

¹⁷² Concepts Conference: Whatever Happened to Political Theatre, organised by De Montfort University, Leicester, London, May 2-3 1998.

¹⁷³ Ruth, ‘Reframing the picture: Māori & Bi-Cultural Theatre in Aotearoa from a Pākehā perspective,’ Concepts Conference, 1998.

Achieving this integration within a theatre and screen education is a complex and challenging proposition and the school struggled and occasionally floundered in its attempts to find an appropriate way to implement *tikanga* into the curriculum. In theatre circles the School was criticised for too much attention to things Māori; in Māori circles for not enough or worse, appropriating *tikanga*, imperfectly understood, to gain kudos. By engaging with this question the School placed itself in a contested and uncertain place. Richards comments that in taking this path the school 'must be prepared to invite the participation (and to come under scrutiny) of Māori cultural activists, insofar as it offers itself as a strategic ground upon which the potential course of cultural revival can be explored in its interaction with the Pākehā community'¹⁷⁴ and indeed that has been and continues to be the case.

At the same time Toi Whakaari has been exploring an issue that is still contentious in *Te Ao Māori*, the right of women to speak on the *paepae*. Over the years *kaumatua*¹⁷⁵ associated with the school have advocated the right of women to speak in the school environment. This was instituted by Wikuki Kaa¹⁷⁶ in 1996 when he was the *Tikanga Māori* tutor at the school, and has continued to be the practice over the past fifteen years. This is currently under fierce discussion and the outcome uncertain, with the current incumbent coming from a tribal tradition that does not allow women to speak on the *paepae*. However, opportunity is always made for female speakers, though sometimes this comes after the formalities are completed, so that it sits alongside the role of *kaiwhakawhiti*. Again this reflects a wider debate within New Zealand society, particularly within Māoridom.¹⁷⁷ In unravelling the complexities of these issues the School keeps coming back to function and purpose. The practice of *pōwhiri* at Toi Whakaari remains an evolving improvisation affected by and affecting the development of the school within the context of the country.

There is also the question of power-sharing. In 1998 there was only one part-time Māori staff member at the school and this integration was being attempted in what was essentially a traditional, British-style acting school. Since then the school has grown considerably and the range of courses offered in 2012 includes directing, design, costume construction, arts management, and entertainment technology alongside the original actor training. Currently there are four Māori staff members, one of whom is the Director, as well as

¹⁷⁴ Richards, 103-104.

¹⁷⁵ Elders.

¹⁷⁶ Ngāti Porou.

¹⁷⁷ See Vanessa Bidois, NZ Herald, January 18, 2000. 'On the Marae: Seen but not heard?' 'The fuss over women's speaking rights on marae is dominating headlines.... Debate among Māori reveals a range of views on what should be the correct *kawa*, or protocol, for both Waitangi Day and the general issue of women's speaking rights.... But the grounds are already shifting.'

two Pacific Island staff members, and the cultural diversity of the student body continues to increase. The school has diversified both culturally and educationally and the application of Māori frameworks has become part of the learning environment, permeating the specific skills teachings of the disciplines.

The success of graduates in the New Zealand theatre and screen industries and comments from national and international guests has reinforced the value of the experiment. Ashcroft cites his training at Toi Whakaari, in particular, '*Troilus & Cressida*, classes with Māori teacher and director Christian Penny and the work explored by some students in the *Solo* programme',¹⁷⁸ as contributing to the focus on purpose and ownership that is core to the work he leads at Taki Rua. The focus and the difficulty at the school has been to integrate this work fully into the business of preparing actors, directors, technicians etc in such a way as to ground them in the practices indigenous to the country, to grow our awareness of what is *tika* on each occasion.

It is clear that international visitors to the school see something unique and filled with vitality in the *pōwhiri* through which they are welcomed to the school. These visitors see the *ihi* evoked by the ceremony, the sense of potent and unencumbered presence in the participants and instinctively relate that to theatre. They respond to the sense of an encounter that takes place on both the physical and the metaphorical

7. Haka Pōwhiri at Toi Whakaari, actor Sam Neill speaking to the school.

Actor Dame Maggie Smith reacting to pōwhiri by Toi Whakaari.

¹⁷⁸ Ashcroft.

levels. As the school has worked to deepen the understanding of the underlying values in *pōwhiri*, these 'welcomes' have become stronger in their focus on function rather than performance. This in turn has increased the confidence of students and staff to take up the roles required, to speak from that sense of purpose and to listen and improvise accordingly: '*Pōwhiri* create a space within which students can greet their guests as fellow practitioners and human beings, however exalted. And this in turn opens up a true possibility of exchange'.¹⁷⁹

At the Asia Pacific Conference of UNESCO International Theatre Institute of Theatre School Directors 2009 Richard Schechner spoke of the necessity to train practitioners using what he called the 'local local' – the practices of the place, and this chimed with the thinking developing at Toi Whakaari. Schechner said:

Our work ought to be about where cultures do not fit together, where there is conflict, misunderstanding, drama. Our mission needs to be cooperation and collaboration within contexts where that is difficult, where that is the juice. Rituals are beliefs enacted and in the ritual aesthetic the form is inflamed by entanglement, by debate and exchange. Schools are sited mostly in large cosmopolitan cities, but there are also real, local areas in these lands. How does our work preserve or destroy the local local?¹⁸⁰

At the school the journey has been to see how difference can be encountered, the discomfort of misunderstanding and disagreement held, so that a genuine meeting is possible. In all of this the aim has been to develop practitioners who are grounded in the particular and robust in the face of difference. As Christian Penny says, they are developing the ability to endure the 'vulnerability of truly encountering another perspective'¹⁸¹ and to be active in the face of that difference, searching for the specific, the *tika*, the 'in the moment' response.

In 2003 I wrote a paper for our Board, who were looking at the strategic development of the school in which I likened the training to a *hui*:

¹⁷⁹ Annie Ruth, 'Tikanga Frameworks and the Learning Environment at Toi Whakaari', *New Zealand Journal of Research in Performing Arts and Education: Nga Mahi a Rehia*, December 20, 2011. www.drama.org.nz. See article for more details.

¹⁸⁰ Richard Schechner, Address to UNESCO ITI Conference of Theatre School Directors, Shanghai, June 9, 2009, Annie Ruth's notes.

¹⁸¹ Christian Penny, (June, 2010).

The shape of the training at Toi Whakaari can be described and experienced in a similar way to that of a *hui*. There is a time of entry and welcome. A time of challenge, of learning and of change. Then there is a reconnection to the world outside the school and a departure, each individual taking with them the learning & insights of this very particular education... The impact of this *pōwhiri* structure on the students and staff is huge. Our connection is acknowledged as being more than convenient, useful.... Community is a core value at Toi Whakaari and in theatre... This is the huge strength of *pōwhiri* as I understand it – a place to stand, to meet, to challenge, to value and to be valued, to embrace wholeness. It is also the huge strength of the school in adopting this framework for the training of the theatre and screen professionals of Aotearoa.¹⁸²

However, from my perspective in 2012 I see that the work, though sincere, did not reflect a clear idea of how to bring out the underlying values and structures of *Te Ao Māori* and make them an active part of the work of training people for theatre and screen. The danger was always that they would seem (and even be) a tokenistic attempt at integration rather than work that would ‘enliven’ and particularise the training. Richards clearly perceived these dangers, looking at the school through the period 1996-1998, ‘...the programme at Toi Whakaari remains in an experimental mode. Like *marae* ritual itself, its outcomes cannot be taken for granted.’¹⁸³ Since then the school has worked to bring the imaginative use of frameworks from *Te Ao Māori* into the centre of the training at the school by focusing on the underlying values. These values and thinking currently inform both the work of the school and my own investigations, including this thesis, and provide a framework for an artistic investigation. They are frameworks that develop an ability to meet a situation and to act within that moment, calling on those improvisatory qualities identified in Chapter Two, particularly those of boundary negotiation, being in action, spontaneity and the awareness of patterns. The deeper the structures are understood and absorbed, the greater the freedom to respond within the moment. Hence the focus in the school on understanding and embodying the structures in order for them to free staff and students to make ever stronger and more ‘alive’ work.

The transformation into a more articulate and applied practice has largely been the work of two young teachers Teina Moetara and Jade Eriksen, appointed to the staff in 2008, whose thinking I am quoting extensively in this chapter. Nor is it a practice that is complete. It is in a process of continuing discovery:

¹⁸² Annie Ruth, ‘The Significance of *Pōwhiri* & the Holistic Shape of the Training at Toi Whakaari’, Paper to Board of Trustees, 2003.

¹⁸³ Richards, 104.

research, application, return to thinking and redevelopment of models, application etc. reflecting the discourse in which the entire country is engaged. It is important to note that these influential staff are a Pākehā woman and a Māori man. Both grew up in the same part of New Zealand. They have a profound respect for each other, and the questions around working through Māori frameworks. Penny, in a paper to UNESCO ITI International Festival of Theatre Schools describes the impact of their dual presence, grappling with these questions:

As they started to work with these questions together – their very strength and integrity of their relationship provided a provocative model to staff and students alike – even if we couldn't understand or articulate the why and the how – the truth and freshness of this relationship in our country asked us all to at least consider more thoughtfully this area of school life.... They wanted the students to understand the principles of what they were involved in through Māori process and how this related to making them better artists. They began examining what is the strength of Māori culture that could be of use to training in the theatre.¹⁸⁴

Moetara and Eriksen set about working with the staff to create a community at the school that would take the frameworks of the *marae* and apply these to the work of theatre and of training, embedding the thinking so that the work could emerge organically. In other words, they moved away from skills teaching (though this remains an element of the work) into an exploration of the fundamental structures and concepts that frame the skills. Working this way has made the practices, articulated in my 2003 paper, a far more grounded reality than we were able to achieve at the time. Meeting twice weekly as a school in sessions called *koiwi*,¹⁸⁵ the staff and students have the opportunity to practise being a responsive, cohesive unit, sharing learning, discovering the significance of their work as artists, guided by *tikanga* frameworks. The entire community being learners and leaders together is a profound shift into developing a culture where everyone takes responsibility for what is being built together, rather than leaving the thinking (and therefore the commitment) to the designated leaders. This investigation into the application of Māori frameworks is an ongoing and complex question and one which the School community is continually evolving. Since May 2011 it has a Māori Director at the helm. As the absorption of the framework or structures deepens, the

¹⁸⁴ Christian Penny, Paper presented to UNESCO ITI International Festival of Theatre Schools, Peru, August, 2010, 8. Document in my possession.

¹⁸⁵ Literally translated as 'bones' here used metaphorically as 'community'.

ability to freely improvise within them grows. It is a piece of longitudinal performance research that attends to the manner and underlying quality of actions, and the courage to act arising out of framework patterning.

Moetara identifies the purpose for performance in Māori society as a social act, 'our premise for performance is a social practice.... in the social context *manaaki*¹⁸⁶ is the goal, not the performance as such'.¹⁸⁷ His work with a *karakia* he wrote for the school¹⁸⁸ as part of actor training is to apply this to theatre performance in order to arrive at a more authentic engagement. It is an engagement that has an essential element of fluidity since it is responsive within the context, involving intense listening and curiosity about what is outside the self, while maintaining a sense of self and purpose within the event. Penny cited his own work at the International Playback Summer School in New Zealand as a strong example of this working in practice: 'The quality of vulnerability out of a real meeting with difference translates onto the stage with a high degree of risk, purpose, sensitivity, listening, and vulnerability. In that environment I have seen some of the best improvising I've ever seen – it comes out of the service they are doing....'¹⁸⁹ Again the alignment to purpose rather than performance is clear, as is the struggle inherent in applying a social frame to a theatre event. Nevertheless this is a struggle in which Toi Whakaari is actively engaged. In a sense the entire organisation is employing the principles of improvisation in order to charter new, and as yet unarticulated, pathways in which theatre practice is reinvigorated by thinking arising out of *tikanga Māori*.

To deepen and contextualise this engagement, Toi Whakaari annually takes its students to live and work on a *marae*. In the 1990s and early twenty-first century this was a brief experience, confined to first year students. As of 2010 this visit includes all students and staff and takes place over a week during which the process of learning within the specific disciplines of the school continues, but now in a Māori context. Penny described the impact and the school's continuing struggle to articulate this impact:

... when I arrived at the school nearly nine years ago now, this exercise lasted one night and essentially involved some staff and the first year students getting a taste of indigenous culture. Its effect was piecemeal to say the least. We have been developing this part of our programme

¹⁸⁶ Showing respect, hospitality, caring for the other.

¹⁸⁷ Moetara, (2009).

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter 5 for detailed discussion.

¹⁸⁹ Penny, (2010a).

however, and this year we took the whole school, 170 students, staff and families, to live together for one week on a marae.... Over this week we ran the school from this place and were involved in a series of exchanges with the local community – including shows, classes and workshops.... In the Māori world view – like in the performing and screen arts– the work of the community works best– *if* all folk know and observe their roles – but also are able to act *independently* to see what is needed at any given point.... If we do this well we have laid down a key pathway for ourselves in preparation for working on productions in the coming terms. On the last few *marae noho* this aim has been made explicit by Teina Moetara.... We have been hosted at his family *marae* and this in many ways has enabled so much of this work to be carried out so explicitly. Throughout the trip he would repeat this mantra. We were practicing this skill before we carry it out in production.¹⁹⁰

8. Entering the Marae at Manutuke.

Part of the practice includes hard skills such as bird movements and *mau rakau* (staves) work with the students and staff learning together across the years as in the photo below. The *mau rakau* movements are patterned, but retain a freedom to remain open and responsive within the moment. The community experience of the *marae* is thus available to be translated directly into performance work. This reinforces

¹⁹⁰ Penny, (2010b), 10-11.

9. *Mau rakau* at Manutuke.

the value that role, rather than the person filling that role, is the key value. Leadership can come from anywhere. Everyone can be both leader and learner. In focusing on function and purpose the aim is to enable both cast and crew, in their future production work, to feel empowered to keep watching, listening and offering, just as they did within the *marae* community, to assess according to what is needed and respond. This invokes an 'aliveness' to patterns, physical and visual, all requiring them to work as a cohesive unit. And it enables all of the School community to become learners together, staff working alongside students as equals.

From Training into Performance: Two Productions at Toi Whakaari

Moetara takes the guiding principle of working through the structure of a *pōwhiri* into theatrical performances he co-directs with Jade Eriksen at Toi Whakaari. In 2008 *Pakiwaitara* (translated by Moetara as 'stories run down the walls like water') is performed at the Museum of Wellington City and Sea, which used to be the headquarters of the Harbour Board for the Port of Wellington. The work is built from an investigation into the stories represented within the museum, from Pākehā settlers, to the treatment of Pacific Island immigrants, to the sinking of the *Wahine*¹⁹¹ in 1968. The rehearsal process builds on the community theatre work explored by Littlewood and other practitioners but is also guided by *marae* protocols with a strong emphasis on sense of role and purpose:

¹⁹¹ On the morning of 10 April, 1968, cyclone Giselle hit Wellington at the same time as another storm which had driven up from Antarctica. The two storms met over the capital, creating a single storm just as the inter-island ferry *Wahine* was crossing Cook Strait. The ship was wrecked on Barrett Reef and 51 people drowned.

Going in to mine people's histories and stories, we had a task to uphold the *mana* of these people, we had a job to do, not to just show off ourselves. So I used *marae* structure to hold the importance of that. For example we did *karakia* before entering the space, and not just Māori *karakia*, but everyone offered something that ... put them in a position to enter. And that way we could work with those histories and stories.¹⁹²

Pakiwaitara is built through a series of improvisations exploring the spaces of the museum. It is a promenade piece, beginning outside the building and traversing a series of rooms – the old board room, the stairway the Wahine room and the art gallery. The stories range through the hundred and fifty years of the building's history and continue an element of improvisation in performance.

In the photos below the cast are calling the audience into the space. The *waiata* they are singing contains

10. Singing the audience in.

elements of the *karanga*, adapted and focused on the situation and place of the performance. The cast are summoning a sense of their *mātātaki*¹⁹³ in doing this, the people for whom they are standing in that moment, the school of course, but more importantly the people whose stories are about to be told. This is

¹⁹² Moetara, (2009), 2.

¹⁹³ Stance.

reminiscent of Pōtiki's work with *Whatungarongaro*. The *karakia* brings an acknowledgment of purpose in the wider world and sets up an expectation that performance, role and listening all have weight, that the audience have a role to play in allowing these stories to have life, and that they will have the opportunity to share in building the event. And indeed the performance ends with the opportunity to share stories and memories with the cast and crew – all of whom stand together to farewell their audience just as they had greeted them together.

The framework of the *marae* is also applied in the 2009 graduation production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.¹⁹⁴ Brecht's play has of course, no intrinsic relationship to *tikanga marae*, but using this framework enables the cast to hold a stance in relationship to the audience that is both strong and fluid, growing out of a sense of shared purpose and a willingness to let the audience contribute to that. The physical environment assists this. The work is staged in the round, without a clear delineation between audience space and the stage. Sometimes the work is in the centre of the space and sometimes it happens on the seating blocks where the audience have chosen to sit which means some people have to move to make way for the action. In fact the audience needs to move constantly, either to see the next part of the work or to make way for actors intruding on their space.

Brecht's play is built around a question of ownership: Who owns a child? The person who gave birth to it or the person who cares for it? The child of a rich landowner is abandoned by its mother, fleeing the revolution and the peasant girl, Grusha, rescues the child and pretends it is her own in order to save it. She even marries a man she does not love in order to give the child a name and the protection of a family. At the end of the play the birth mother contests this and attempts to reclaim the child (and the land the child has inherited). In this production the child is played by a different young person every night, pre-selected but with no knowledge of the plot. This child watches the first half of the play with the audience, cared for by a designated cast member. The audience are asked to take care of the child and to watch over him/her.

In the second half the child stays outside with Grusha until the moment when the question of the rightful mother is to be settled. So every night the child is improvising, genuinely reacting to the work as it develops and the cast too are responding according to the child's reactions. As are the audience, for we are explicitly tasked to take on the role of protectors towards this child, making us hyper-aware of their

¹⁹⁴ Te Whaea Theatre, October, 2009, directed by Christian Penny.

11. *Grusha* (Juanita Hepi) offering the 'baby' to child.

every reaction and movement. The image above is from the first Act. *Grusha* is giving the child sitting with the audience the 'baby' embodiment of herself to hold.

The joint ownership underpinning the work reflects the sense of roles developed on the *marae*. Moetara describes it as 'a sense of doing the same job even though it looks different for each one of us, not wanting to put the self above everyone else but being there to do a job and doing it collectively ... translating frameworks, that's what I'm doing'.¹⁹⁵ The resulting work has a particular quality of ownership rarely seen in the theatre, which translates into a sense of acute listening that is both playful and 'dangerous' in that one doesn't know what might happen next. The director, Christian Penny, encourages the cast and crew to keep listening and to respond and adapt to the audience and each other, so that not only are no two performances the same, but even the same performance is different depending on the choices you make as an audience member: choices about where to sit and when to move. And of course, the reaction of the child and her/his individual qualities differs markedly from performance to performance.

¹⁹⁵ Moetara (2009), 3-4.

12. Audience and cast mingle, watchers often having to move to accommodate the action.

In the photo above at least one audience member is sitting in among the action. This of course is not new. Companies such as Forced Entertainment¹⁹⁶ have experimented since 1984, with forcing the audience to move in response to the work. Likewise Marie Irene Fornes, in her 1977 play, *Fefu and her Friends*, required that the audience be led off in groups into 'rooms' where they experienced the work from different points of view. In her 1970 work, *1789*, Ariane Mnouchkine cast the audience as the people of Paris, encouraged during the play to become one with the revolutionaries and take part even in the debates. As with these seminal works, the sense of purpose and adaptability stands out in *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Comments from people who see the work indicate that something unusually potent and filled with a quality of 'alive-li-ness' is taking place. Cast member Sophie Lindsay reflecting months later writes:

The discussions we have at the dinner table still include reflections and thoughts about the past few weeks at Toi,¹⁹⁷ notably the success of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and the Graduation Ceremony. For me, they both showed the potency of what can happen when theatre-makers work

¹⁹⁶ Sheffield. See forcedentertainment.com

¹⁹⁷ Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School.

together, when we focus on a common purpose and when we enter into a contract of keeping to this purpose. Theatre is *tāngata*,¹⁹⁸ people and community.¹⁹⁹

This is reflected in responses to the work. Willem Wassenaar, a local director and another graduate of the directing programme at Toi Whakaari²⁰⁰ writes:

I felt the work had a strong heart and I was blown away by the ritualistic nature of theatre and the world that we were invited into.... everything was raw, tender, imaginative, dirty, dangerous and felt unexpected. Yet as an audience (which started operating as a community in itself) I never felt alienated from the action. I felt, I thought, I questioned, I debated, I repulsed; I did a lot in extremes as the ensemble gave me the empowerment and trust to do so ...²⁰¹

Ironically Wassenaar is citing alienation effects at the same time as he notes his sense of involvement, so clearly the production affected him on several levels, from the visceral to the intellectual. Of course, great performances from whatever culture generate this sense of excitement. What is particular to this production is the application in its working methodology of the inclusivity within role found on the *marae*. It is my contention that this feeds directly into the quality of the performance. Moetara uses the name of his tribe to explain it: '*Rongowhakata* – it's in the name, to listen, listen to what's needed and then apply it, show it'.²⁰² In meeting these challenges the cast and crew draw on *tikanga* to embody improvisatory principles such as the poeticised body, one receptive to all input, kinaesthetically and aurally; a body in action, aware of patterns and able to respond out of those patterns, a body negotiating minute by minute the boundaries of self and others and achieving this with a sense of ease and playfulness, freed from self-consciousness by a sense of purpose.

Another feature of this work is the hosting of the audience. Just as a *pōwhiri* concludes with food and drink, so this production ends with a glass of vodka for the exiting audience members, encouraging them to stay on and talk with cast, crew and each other. This is similar to the hosting that occurred in *Strange Resting*

¹⁹⁸ People.

¹⁹⁹ Sophie Lindsay, 'Museum Hotel Scholar 2009' in *Shakespeare Globe Centre NZ Newsletter*, November 2009.

²⁰⁰ Graduate of Master Of Theatre Arts in Directing, Co-taught and awarded by Victoria University of Wellington and Toi Whakaari.

²⁰¹ William Wassenaar, email to Christian Penny, October 25, 2009.

²⁰² Moetara, (2009).

Places and arises out of the same *kaupapa*. At half time cast also serves the audience with a cup of tea from a samovar – in keeping with the play but resting on the *marae* value of *manaakitanga*, caring for and showing hospitality to the other, the guest, the *manuhiri*. In offering these ‘gifts’ along with the performance the audience becomes ‘companionable’ with the cast and crew. In a sense the performance continues after the last lines of the text were spoken in a kind of extended group improvisation that included the audience, in the same spirit as the informal gathering around the *hākari* on the *marae* extends the events into a group improvisation ritual described by Moriarty.

Thus, in these two productions the quality and nature of the encounter between audience and performer is reframed through the absorption into theatre of Māori *marae* rituals. The underlying value is that the sense of one’s past, one’s role and one’s purpose free the performer to encounter the audience and the unexpected, to be in action. This freedom brings unpredictability and focused attention to the moment of engagement, making it both structured and ‘alive’.

The application of these frameworks remains a work in progress, but one at which the school grows ever stronger. Practitioners within the school and its graduates are taking this work out into the wider community and applying the principles that govern *tikanga marae*, particularly the *pōwhiri* to bring a stronger sense of connection and life to the work they are making in both community and professional theatre settings. Carnegie, writing in 1985, predicted ‘a quite profound change in the dynamics of theatrical performance’.²⁰³ Perhaps that change has taken another step towards its realisation through the work coming out of Toi Whakaari.

²⁰³ David Carnegie, (1985), 11.

The Rituals of the *Pōwhiri* within the 2003 Production of *Troilus & Cressida*

*He wahine, he whenua, e ngaro ai te tangata: (By women and land are men lost)*²⁰⁴

Getting Started: A Series of *Hui*

In 2003 I invite Rangiamoana Taylor to co-direct with me a production of *Troilus & Cressida*²⁰⁵ at Toi Whakaari's Te Whaea Theatre, employing Māori *tikanga*-based frameworks and practises. Rangimoana had worked extensively with theatre *marae*, as described earlier in this chapter, and is therefore the ideal collaborator for this, my first experiment using *marae* principles in my directing. This focus leads us to set the production during the New Zealand wars when British colonists and Māori were locked in conflict over the ownership of the land. Through Shakespeare's text we seek to draw out the parallels between our own history and the Greek/Trojan conflict. The approach has two major factors in its favour: the situations truly do resonate - the rhetoric may be different but the conjoint needs for land and trade drove both invasions²⁰⁶. And the world of ancient Greece and Troy and the *Te Ao Māori* have some marked similarities in the ways in which they relate to their gods and in the stories told. There are, for example, parallels between the trickery and disguises of Maui²⁰⁷ and those of Dionysus.

We seek to discover through the process what this juxtaposition might illuminate, both in the text and in our own past. Eugenio Barba claims:

Theatre moves our inner universe toward the world of tangible events, urging our Small History to dance with the Big History.....There exists a big history that drags us along, submerging us and in which we often feel incapable of intervening.... Nevertheless, in the Big History it is possible to

²⁰⁴ *Whakatauki* - traditional Māori saying, cited by, T.H., Mitiria. *Takitimu*. New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, Appendix B.: Whakataukāki or Proverbial Sayings, <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-MitTaki-t1-back-d1-d3.html>

²⁰⁵ In 2012 Rachel House directed a production of Haumihiata Mason's *Toroihi raua ko Kahira* – the Māori *Troilus & Cressida*, for the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. This production then opened the international Shakespeare season at the Globe, London, April 23, 2012. This was more than a year after this chapter was written, but it is interesting and perhaps significant that this play has given rise to two productions referencing the Māori history of New Zealand.

²⁰⁶ The abduction of Helen, was of course, the pivotal act leading to the Greek invasion of Troy, But the territory and trade issues were also present and following the sack of Troy, Greek tribes expanded into this area.

²⁰⁷ A demi-god in Māori mythology, reputed to have pulled the North Island of NZ up out of the sea, and to have slowed the passage of the sun to allow crops time to ripen. history-nz-Māori9.html.

outline small islands, tiny gardens where our hands may make their marks and where we can live with *our* small histories.²⁰⁸

In our 2003 production of *Troilus & Cressida* we seek to create a work that lives and resonates with the bigger history of our country. We use rituals arising out of *pōwhiri* as an entry point and way of approaching the content. In approaching a Shakespeare text, Schechner posits four approaches open to the director: realisation or doing as the author intended, interpretation, putting one's own slant without altering the text, adaptation and deconstruction.²⁰⁹ In our case the work falls largely into the category of 'adaptation' prompted by the context we are exploring, including reordering some of the scenes and rewriting some of the text in *Te Reo*. Schechner describes adaptation as occurring when 'the director no longer finds the text adequate and plays with it, as Shakespeare did to his sources'²¹⁰ and in order to illuminate the history of Aotearoa/New Zealand it becomes necessary to highlight some of the play's themes and set aside others. Some of these changes are decided from the beginning of the process and others emerge during the journey through rehearsals.

At the time of this production I had recently been introduced to Anne Bogart's²¹¹ Viewpoints, and seek to apply them to the rehearsal process along with *marae*-based frameworks. This is the first time I have attempted to work through Viewpoints in a production and on the whole I struggle to bring it to the process. Aurally it helps us work through the continuous sound-track of the production, with every cast member playing live percussion whenever they are not acting in the scene. We employ it to create a choreography linking the roles of actor and musician, a kind of web of movement underlying the entire event. However, it is the *tikanga marae* that predominates, with both the subject matter and Rangimoana Taylor's participation leading rehearsals in that direction.

Troilus & Cressida is a play about war, a snap-shot that begins seven years into the Greek invasion of Troy, with the Greek army encamped outside the walls besieging the city. It is not a play that glorifies war, but rather one that exposes the cynical and self-serving interests that drive such conflicts. Its anti-war

²⁰⁸ Eugenio Barba, 'A Chosen Diaspora in the Guts of the Monster', extract from a talk given 6 February 2002, *The Drama Review* 46, 4 (T176) Winter 2002, 148.

²⁰⁹ Richard Schechner, 'Re-wrighting Shakespeare: A Conversation with Richard Schechner', *Teaching Shakespeare Through Performance*, Milla Cozart Riggio and Michael Kahn (eds.), (New York: MLA, 1999), 137.

²¹⁰ Schechner, (1999), 137.

²¹¹ This will be further unpacked in Chapter Four.

stance is probably the reason why it 'disappeared from the English stage until the twentieth century' when two hugely destructive world wars and innumerable smaller conflicts, twinned with the highly visible effects of these wars through increasingly available media coverage, led to a re-assessment of the causes and effects of war.²¹² The story follows three romances, the famous one of Paris and Helen, that of Cressida, who is in love with Prince Troilus, and that of Achilles and the young man, Patroclus, whose death finally persuades Achilles onto the battlefield. The two young lovers, Cressida and Troilus, are brought together by her uncle, Pandarus, only to have Cressida sent to the Greek camp as part of a negotiated exchange. There she looks around quickly for a protector and is soon taken up by one of the leading Greek warriors, Diomedes. The warfare between the two groups is intensified by the personal relationships that have become enmeshed in it – by the end some key players are dead and their enmity is entrenched.

For New Zealanders, the Māori-European wars remain a living experience. Land claims dating back to the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, a treaty between British colonisers and Māori, are still being settled.²¹³ Where entitlement can be proved, a Tribunal makes recommendations to government towards redressing the misappropriations and thefts of the past. This is achieved by passing ownership of crown-held assets back to their original owners, the Māori, or paying substantial settlements. The process is long and complex and continues today. It makes New Zealanders intensely aware of our past, whatever our individual positions within the political debate. To some extent we have become a Treaty-driven society. Nor do claims focus solely on land, many focusing on *taonga*²¹⁴ and even on the language itself:

'The language is the core of our Māori culture and mana. *Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori*.... If the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us? Then, I ask our own people who are we?' These were the words of distinguished Māori Battalion veteran and Ngāpuhi leader Sir James Hēnare when he spoke, in 1985, before the Waitangi Tribunal as it heard the Māori language claim. The claim asserted that *te reo* Māori ... was a *taonga* ... that needed to be nurtured. The tribunal's recommendations, released in 1986, were far-reaching. They led to legislative and policy changes that assisted in the resurgence of *te reo* Māori from the later 20th century.²¹⁵

²¹² William Shakespeare, David Bevington (ed.), *Troilus & Cressida*, (Surrey: Arden Press, 1998), 92.

²¹³ See Waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz.

²¹⁴ Property, treasure, anything prized.

²¹⁵ New Zealand History On-Line, www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/Māori-language-week/waitangi-tribunal-claim.

In making a work that examines these issues we acutely need, as a group, to find a shared *mātātaki*, a stance that will allow us approach this play in both *Te Reo* and English and to deal with our past and its wrongs as an ensemble even as we allow ourselves to be fully aware of the different perspectives that history, culture, colonialism and skin colour bring with them.

13. *Love Triangle*: Cressida (Rashmi Pilapitia), Diomedes (Paul McLaughlin) and Troilus (Louis Sutherland).

The cast are apprehensive about entering this territory, worried that they might short-change either Shakespeare or our own history, worried because few are fluent in *Te Reo* (Māori language) and the proposal is to use *Te Reo* as part of the text. Further, they are cast along racial lines, with the brown students (of whatever ethnicity) playing the Trojans/Māori and the white students playing the Greeks/British. One of them comments, 'if you look Pākehā you were in the Pākehā camp and if you were darker you would be in the Māori camp. It made us all look at ourselves differently. Before we were an ensemble'.²¹⁶ The signifying force of the body in terms of skin colour is important in giving audiences a key for distinguishing the two sides in this complex play. It is also a key decision within the creative process, a spur to deal with the discomfort of our history and the privileging of one skin over another that is an intrinsic part of it. In the photo above illustrates the love triangle invoking both races.

²¹⁶ *Capital Times*, Wellington, September 10, 2003, 12.

In New Zealand 'Treaty' issues are hotly debated. The cast fears that division and controversy over our racial relationships will mar their production, which, as their graduation piece, is particularly significant for them. In line with *tikanga* values, Rangimoana and I call a *hui* with the cast so that they can make their concerns clear. From our differing Viewpoints both Rangimoana and I offer our thinking in entering this territory. Echoing the proverb with which I began this chapter, Rangimoana states: 'It's not weapons that start or finish wars – it's what you think and say.'²¹⁷ This awareness of the importance of robust and continuing discussion permeates our approach to the work. The *hui* structure gives an equal voice to all and signals a willingness to keep talking for as long as it takes. Going forward requires a commitment from the whole group so we invite them to decide whether this production concept should go forward or not. This might seem like a foregone conclusion, given that I am director, both of the production and of the school, and therefore in a position of significant authority. But the *kawa* we have developed means that acquiescence is by no means assured. The students are aware that they can choose to take the work in a different direction. Eventually they opt to continue, but not without laying down a powerful *wero*: seed the work on a *marae* to ensure that we go forward in a way that is *tika*; set up working structures that will support them and us and fully embed *tikanga* Māori in the work. We agree, and after further discussion with the group around possible venues, decide to approach the *marae* of *Te Niho o Te Ati Awa* at Parihaka, a place rich in history as the first ever example of non-violent struggle. There the chiefs Te Whiti and Tohu practised passive resistance long before Gandhi. As a place of peace, perhaps it can help us encounter war.

Parihaka

Mahinekura Reinholt, then spokesperson for the house of *Te Ati Awa*, whose *marae* at Parihaka is open to students of the world interested in passive resistance and Māori *tikanga*, invites us to meet with her and discuss the proposition. Rangimoana and I travel to Parihaka and spend several days with her discussing the project and how to proceed. Rangimoana writes in his journal:

There are three meeting houses and dining halls in Parihaka and we would spend time in each house presenting *to maua take te kaupapa* (our reasons and plans for *Troilus & Cressida*). I felt

²¹⁷ Rangimoana Taylor, Research Paper held at Toi Whakaari, Wellington, 2004, 2.

very tentative because the people of all the houses were commemorating Tohu and Te Whiti²¹⁸ and planning how to effectively deal with the government over the foreshore and seabed confiscation [another Treaty issue]... I felt decidedly bourgeois and middle class and our *kaupapa* seemed to be so unimportant... I put forward our plan as gently as I could before Hurihangi Waikerepuru, a nationally recognised teacher, academic and one of the great orators of today. We were listened to, and after discussion the people asked that we bring our students in order that they could meet and talk with them regarding the play.²¹⁹

14. Whare: Te Niho O Te Atiawa, Rangimoana leading us forward.

Mahinekura, Annie and Teru at Parihaka.

Through this time of discussion and debate we hope to gain clarity of purpose. The process of *hui*, making time to discuss and discuss until some concord is reached, is central to *tikanga* and *marae* protocols. In adopting a *kaupapa* that spans both Māori and European processes we hope to find a way to mount a performance within which clarity of purpose allows the cast to be responsive, alive and adaptive in front of their audiences. Coming back again and again to *hui* each time we hit an obstacle keeps us together and on track throughout the process. Looking back it is clear to me that we could have utilised this protocol even more. After each *hui* the work bounds forward. Taking the time to align ourselves always pays off in renewed focus. It is counter-intuitive to my background which tells me to just push on with the work. But as I look back on the production I see that this Māori process of constantly ‘taking care of the room’ and bringing all participants into alignment by talking through the points of contention and disagreement is ultimately an effective one.

²¹⁸ Leaders of the Passive resistance movement at Parihaka, 1881.

²¹⁹ Quoted in Taylor, (2004), 4.

There is a Māori proverb that says '*Ka ora pea a koe, ke ora koe i a au*' which roughly translated means 'Perhaps I survive because of you, and you survive because of me' and the difficulties and conflicts inherent in negotiating this troubled and all too current aspect of our history bring a vitality to the work born out of the need and purpose to understand who we are. Julie McDougall writes: 'Their joint approach to the direction of the production demonstrates that a bicultural way of working can be successful, even if it seems difficult to attempt'.²²⁰ It takes time to keep stopping, discussing and aligning, but ultimately saves time by galvanising the work and, as McDougall indicates, this commitment is very evident in performance.

15. The directors in rehearsal, Annie Ruth seated, Rangimoana Taylor standing.

Following this preliminary visit to Parihaka, the entire cast and crew journey north to this small Māori settlement about six hours travel from our base in Wellington. We are there to spend a week seeding the work, embedding the values with which we wish to approach the work, and testing out our thinking with the *iwi* living at Parihaka. We hope that they will contribute to our thinking and in so doing give their own particular blessing to our enterprise. The isolation from the city also has an effect in compressing and focusing our thoughts. The cast, once more riddled with doubts, are astounded to find the *iwi* of Parihaka, not only excited by the concept, but determined to attend the first night performance down in Wellington.

²²⁰ Julie McDougall, *Māori and Pacific Shakespeares in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, MA Thesis, (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 2006), 107. This production of *Troilus & Cressida* was one of the works she examined from the point of view of an audience member.

This week has a huge effect on the entire production, particularly in helping us establish a common purpose. Ashcroft, currently creative producer at Taki Rua Productions, was a member of the cast. Looking back on the process he notes: 'At Parihaka we started off with an example of process. A *marae* framework is – it's a circle, not a triangle – all with the same status but different sets of functions and responsibilities. In bringing everyone together there is the invitation to be around clarity of purpose',²²¹ a way of working which he has taken into his current role.

Rehearsals and Performance

In the weeks that follow our return to Wellington and Toi Whakaari we go back again and again to the lessons we gleaned at the *marae* to help us through times of turbulence when we lose our way and can only see the racial divisions of our country and query our decision to enter this territory. Arising from our experience at Parihaka, every rehearsal for *Troilus & Cressida* begins with a *karakia* to settle us into work together. Sometimes this takes the form of a movement sequence that Rangimoana developed to reflect the Māori cosmos, sometimes a call on the elements from pre-European *karakia*, sometimes just some thoughts offered by one of the cast.²²² Each day we seek to re-make our community in order to begin work.

We also seek to include a Māori performance vocabulary in the work we are making. We incorporate the *whakaeke* formations described earlier, with the Trojan/Māori entering the stage as a *taua*,²²³ doing a *haka* as Queen Victoria/Agamemnon enters with her troops in military formation singing 'Rule Britannia'. With a smoke machine creating ground mist and percussion music by leading New Zealand composer, Gareth Farr, this is a dramatic and rousing beginning, one that many audiences comment on and respond to. Above the two war parties, seen in the photo below, Paris and Helen stand oblivious in an embrace, the ostensible impetus for the war but ignored by both parties. McDougall writes:

... biculturalism is evident in the opening scene of the production which also encapsulates many of the play's themes and demonstrates the production's willingness to depart from Shakespeare's text when appropriate... Emphasis is laid on 'and that's the quarrel,' which immediately reduces the

²²¹ Ashcroft.

²²² Over the past 200 years the nature and function of *karakia* have evolved and changed, ranging from the original invocations, to prayers following the contact with Europeans, to sometimes anything that inspires a group, as I am using it here.

²²³ War party.

heroic Trojan war to the level of a lover's quarrel. Rather than moving straight into the love story... the entire cast then assembles on the stage with the Māori/Trojan on one half of the stage and the British/Greeks on the other half... The way that the British martial music drowns out and overpowers the music of the Māori could be seen to represent the way that the British drowned out and overpowered the indigenous culture of the Māori. New Zealanders viewing this scene are likely to be reminded of the bicultural nature of the Treaty of Waitangi and the subsequent loss of land by many Māori.²²⁴

16. Opening Sequence of the Play with Helen and Paris observing from above.

Importantly for this thesis, the timing and interaction of the two groups is constantly renegotiated in each performance so that a movement dialogue in two different cultural vocabularies sets the scene for the cultural and military clash that is to follow. McDougall speaks of the martial British music overpowering the Māori *haka*. This experience would very much depend on where an audience member is seated. For the Wellington performances we configure the audience seating with a central aisle. The blocking of the work gives half the stage predominantly to the Trojans and the other to the Greeks, so any particular audience

²²⁴ McDougall, 107-109.

member will discover a degree of geographical alignment with one party or the other arising out of their choice of seat. The predominance of British over Māori, Māori over British differs from night to night, with the actors negotiating the sequence in response to the particularities of the moment. Their bodies are 'poeticised' to respond instinctively and effectively to any incoming physical and mental sensation and right from the beginning of the play responses vary markedly from one performance to the next. They are in action, doing and responding. The racial composition of each audience, among other factors, influences the duration and quality of this opening scene. This is especially evident in the performance at Ruatoria, where we take the work at the invitation of a *kaumatua* of Toi Whakaari, Keri Kaa. It is in the heartlands of *Ngāti Porou*,²²⁵ a small town on the East Coast of New Zealand with a predominantly Māori population. We perform there in the school *marae*.

Earlier, during our visit to Parihaka, we were gifted with the words for a song, by an elder of the *iwi*, focusing on peace and the struggle to achieve it. We decide to use this at the end of the play as our final

17. Final Song.

waiata, serving too as the counter-balance often offered in performances during Shakespeare's time, when tragedy was followed by a dance or jig to remind the audience of another aspect of the world²²⁶. In this play about war we will end with a footnote that celebrates peace, written by a member of an *iwi* that has put

²²⁵ Rangimoana's and Keri Kaa's *iwi*.

²²⁶ See Hugh Macrae Richmond, *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Dictionary of His Stage Context*, (London: Continuum, 2002), 135.

their bodies on the line in passive resistance, to achieve an equitable peace. Gareth Farr puts this to music and it becomes a counter-balance to the stand-off of the warriors that begins the play. It also functions like the *hongi* at the end of a *pōwhiri*, bringing the two sides of the story together, after a performance in which they are divided along racial lines. For the first time the cast is not divided but stands together to give their final offering to the audience.

Visually, placing the work in 1850s New Zealand is carried both through the movement vocabularies we employ and through the costumes, beautifully, and sometimes wittily designed by professional designer Toni de Goldi. They reflect the mix of tradition and adapted British costume typical of the early colonial period and are an anchor for the audience in a play where the shifting allegiances in a war could easily become confusing. The colour-based casting has the effect of highlighting other issues we want to explore in the production, issues relating to race, sex and power. McDougall writes:

Ruth and Taylor may be seen to be making a contribution to the debate on race in theatre by making the appearance of race extremely visible in this production. For example, Helen is white and held in great importance, is worth fighting and losing many soldiers for, in sharp contrast to the dark-skinned Cressida who no-one fights for, not even her lover or her uncle.²²⁷

We also cast women in leading roles, including Agamemnon, Aeneas and Priam, challenging the role of women in both societies then and now, along with the concept of who and what a hero might be. This again is a contemporary issue in New Zealand, with speaking roles on most *marae*²²⁸ reserved for men, as has been noted earlier:

The way that women have been cast as central characters in this production can also be seen to be 'particularly subversive in cultures which have always reserved for male elders both the power and the prerogative of public action'.²²⁹ In Māori culture, protocol normally dictates that women (even including female Prime Ministers) do not have speaking rights on the *marae*...By incorporating so many women into the Māori/Trojan camp in this production, particularly in

²²⁷ McDougall, 111.

²²⁸ In some *marae*, including some Ngāti Porou, women have speaking rights.

²²⁹ McDougall is quoting Helen Gilbert, and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 120-21. As discussed above, this is not currently true for all *iwi*.

leadership roles, Ruth and Taylor could be viewed as challenging this aspect of Māori society and history'.²³⁰

In making these choices Taylor and I are dealing with the pragmatics of the gender balance of a particular group of actors. But we are also consciously 'turning' the audiences' expectations in order to look at these questions in a fresh way. We choose to highlight the same-sex relationship between Achilles and Patroclus

18. Agamemnon/Queen Victoria (Jodie Hyland).

Priam/Māori Chief (Noa Campbell).

and at the same time, through costume choices, (both very blonde, both dressed in white) to emphasise the connection between Patroclus and Helen as desired objects, worth fighting over and even dying for. For Taylor, himself a gay male, this has a particular challenge in the context of performing in his home area: '... we were not afraid to look at the gay relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. In public Achilles is always the hero but in private he needs someone to cuddle him.... To not dilute this in performing to Ngāti Porou took a kind of fearlessness'.²³¹

²³⁰ McDougall, 114.

²³¹ Taylor, (2009).

There is also an inherent potential for some members of the two sides to improvise through their clothing, donning and discarding garments as their allegiances sway and change. Through this medium they are able to explore the cross-pollination of the two cultures. Hector, for example, begins the play in very European dress, advising a settlement with the Pākehā. The process of the play sees him gradually discard these so that in the end he fights in *rāpaki* (grass skirt) and with *taiaha* (wooden spear) and *patu* (club), choosing the way of his ancestors. The timing of discard and transformation varies in every performance as the actor responds to the particularities of each encounter.

19. Tony de Goldi: Costume design for Hector and Achilles.

We decide to deliver any text where only Trojans are present in *Te Reo Māori* most notably in Act 2, Sc. 2, the debate in the Trojan camp whether to keep or return Helen to the Greeks. In order to keep our audiences (most of whom cannot speak *Te Reo*) connected to the debate we give parts of the original Shakespeare text to Andromache, whom we place, watching the debate from a balcony, with Helen. Given that Helen is Greek, not Trojan, it makes sense that Andromache will need to translate the arguments for her. The debate is fierce, recalling Harry Densey's powerful scenes threaded through *Te Raukura*²³²,

²³² Dansey, 1-3, 10, 15, 21-25, 29-30, 34-35, 49-50, 54-56.

where Tamatane and Koroheke debate. As in that seminal work, the debate is unresolved. There is a sense that Paris' arguments hold sway only temporarily. The text is beautifully translated into *tuturu*²³³ by Te Kohe Tuhaka²³⁴, then a second year student at the school. He is fluent in Māori, his sole language up until school age. In doing this he is aided by elders, *kaumātua*, from his *iwi*. Through these sections *marae* protocols are fully in play, and we are able to exploit the fact that Paris is the youngest brother, or *pōtiki* in Māori society. *Pōtiki* are given a particular and mischievous character in Māori myths. As the *pōtiki*, Paris can get away with things his older brothers cannot, hence the theft of Helen in the first place.

20. Hector Act 1 (Andrew Ausage.)

Hector battling Achilles.

McDougall speaks of the effect of this scene in *Te Reo*:

..using te reo Māori can be seen to 'Other' the English language in the way that Māori has been 'Othered' for many years. However, it is not only the English language that has been superseded in these brief moments of te reo Māori, but it is Shakespeare's English which is held sacrosanct by some... and demonstrates that te reo can carry elevated language as well as 'speaking back to the centre'... Whilst the replacement of Shakespeare's text with te reo Māori is important for a Māori audience, its loss is also significant for a Pākehā audience. With the loss of words as a medium for communication of meaning, more visual signals are needed to indicate the tenor of the

²³³ Classical or heightened Māori.

²³⁴ Ngāti Porou and Tuhoe. Tuhaka is paid to undertake the translation.

discussion.... For a few minutes, a Pākehā audience may experience the loss of language that Māori have had to contend with for many decades.²³⁵

Because this scene is so steeped in *marae* protocols it is important that all the actors remain alive to the negotiation of the present moment that is such a feature of *pōwhiri* and *hui*. Listening, as I have noted before, is a different kind of activity in an oral tradition. Although contemporary Māori are literate and the Māori language a written one, the *marae* remains a place where the oral holds sway. Words spoken are stored in the heart and in memory and this means that the quality of listening includes retention and contextualisation, a task relegated to the written word in most contexts in the contemporary world.

21. Hector (Andrew Ausage) and Deiphobus (Francis Kora) listen to 'whaikorero'.

Hector accosts Troilus (Louis Sutherland).

Jane McRae writes:

Few Māori have sought to publish their manuscript histories, perhaps because print serves a public who has long been indifferent to Māori culture, perhaps because they are family histories. There is sentimental attachment to the voice and face-to-face communication... As the *marae* exemplifies, there is a preference for company, exchange of talk and performance.... Print cannot equal the

²³⁵ McDougall, 124-125.

warmth and intimacy of the human voice or the association of words on the breath which come from and link to the gods and ancestral world.²³⁶

Pōwhiri give weight to the spoken word in a context of debate and Māori audiences in particular respond to this in vocal and partisan manner. By placing it in this context they also become participants in the debate, in some cases vocally, in a boundary negotiation that moves them from observers to aligned 'actors' in the scene. For Pākehā audiences the effect, as McDougall notes, necessitates a close reading of body language and visual signals and a visceral understanding of the power of language to exclude. For those non-Māori speakers in the cast it has the added challenge of articulating in a tongue not their own in front of audiences containing fluent speakers of *Te Reo*. In the photo above, Hector moves from a formal position alongside the *tohunga*/high priest, Deiphobus, to arguing for the return of Helen, resisted by his brother Paris and his cousin Troilus.

Thersites is played as a drunken newsman, observing, photographing and reporting on the conflict. From this 'outsider' position we give the actor a strong mandate to improvise and negotiate in response to the developing conflict, both to the cast and in relationship with the audience. His text is set. His actions strongly shaped. But in a role that so often speaks directly to the audience we feel it important that he have a degree of freedom within that, especially given the live political debate with which we are dealing. This particular actor has a flair for irony and finding ways for that to be manifest physically. In a piece of improvisation during rehearsal that found its way into performance, he enters with a cricket bat and attacks the flagpole on the set. Not only is this a great comic moment, but it resonates with the English love of the sport and of 'fair play' as well as referencing a flagpole incident famous in New Zealand history when a Māori chief, Hone Heke, chopped down a flagpole flying the British flag in protest at British land grabs. His playfulness and willingness to respond within the moment is a feature of that talent, supported by Viewpoints improvisations and by a focus on purpose and listening growing out of *tikanga* Māori frameworks. We give him centrality as the alienated commentator on a conflict that becomes less and less 'noble' as it goes on. In a deconstruction of Shakespeare's text, we alter his fate by having him killed in the fighting, as so often journalists are destroyed in the conflicts they are covering. His death signals the birth of a new order in the Trojan/Māori camp as Troilus departs from the warrior's honour code upheld by

²³⁶ Jane McRae, 'From Māori Oral Traditions to Print', *Book & Print in New Zealand : A Guide to Print Culture in Aotearoa* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997). Electronic version http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-GriBook-_div3-N107A7.html.

Hector into a more brutal and pragmatic approach to war. In this play no side is 'glorious' and war contaminates all. Laurie Atkinson singled out the actor, Nick Dunbar, in his review in the *Evening Post*, noting the success of this way of articulating the role:

... there are some excellent touches. The comparatively minor role of Thersites, whom Shakespeare describes as "a deformed and scurrilous Greek", is in this production a thoroughly scrofulous drunk who is a war correspondent and takes photographs of the famous with all the venality of a member of the paparazzi. It is a marvellous concept and fits perfectly into the scheme of the production'.²³⁷

22. Thersites (Nick Dunbar) Act One.

Thersites meeting his death at the hands of Troilus.

Through rehearsals, the rituals of the *marae* are worked into the structure of the performance, giving it a particular flavour. The meeting between Aeneas and Agamemnon (presented as Queen Victoria) contains the heightened tension, not only of the Greek/Trojan conflict, but the meeting of cultures, European and Māori, through a *wero* or challenge being laid down by Aeneas. We know this will be instantly recognisable in the local context, triggering the audience into their individual and collective experience of such negotiations. Aeneas is both acknowledging Agamemnon/Victoria's status and claiming the land as properly belonging to Troy, since it is the *tangata whenua* (people of the place) who customarily have the right to challenge. The laying of the *wero* is inherently theatrical since it involves a war-like dance, wielding

²³⁷ Laurie Atkinson, *Evening Post*, (Wellington: September 15, 2003).

a *taiaha* and confronting the visitor, never losing eye-contact, and finally placing an object at their feet, which the visitor must pick up without any sign of intimidation or discomfort. Aeneas is visiting Agamemnon at the Greek camp. Customarily it would not be his place to lay the challenge. But in doing so he is not only challenging the Greek, but saying: 'You are the foreigner here, this place belongs to us.' Yet, along with the challenge, Aeneas is opening up the possibility of dialogue. It is significant that the object presented in this challenge is a white feather. This is a reference back to Parihaka, since Te Whiti's symbol of peace is a white feather. We are playing with the irony that such a symbol be used in challenging the Greeks to a duel with Hector. As noted at the very beginning of this chapter, words are powerful weapons in the oral environment of the *marae* and have huge weight in *tikanga Māori*. The challenge and response

23. Aeneas (Erina Daniels) laying down the wero. Diomedes (Paul McLaughlin) picking it up, watched by Agamemnon (Jodie Hyland) and Ulysses (Tahi Mapp-Borren).

has the potential to end or exacerbate the conflict. In the moment the actor is improvising, gauging the response of other actors, and gauging the reactions of the audience to the challenge too. It is a volatile moment in the performance and sets the stage for the next series of encounters. It also has an element of humour. The Greeks/Pākehā didn't quite know how to react and their hesitant responses are noted with hilarity by some of our audiences.

Audience Responses

Rangimoana notes in his journal following opening night that ‘at the end of the evening *kuia*²³⁸ and *kaumātua* talked about how thrilled they were with the production and that they could not believe that the majority of those speaking Māori on stage had never spoken Māori up until seven weeks ago.’²³⁹ We feel that the cast have absorbed *marae* rituals and are able to live reasonably authentically within that context and this has flowed on to their ability with *Te Reo*. On the opening night in Wellington, a contingent of twenty from Parihaka *iwi* arrive and are welcomed by a *karanga* and *pōwhiri* into the school. Even before they enter the theatre, the parameters are being altered and re-contextualised towards the *marae* with the call of the *kuia*, ringing in the space. In the warfare that follows the decision to keep Helen in Troy, *taiaha* are as prominent as swords. This permits a level of chaos and brutality in the close-up fighting, while keeping alive the cultural clash that has been so clearly depicted at the beginning of the play.

At the end of the play *Teru*, a Parihaka *kaumātua*, stands and does a ringing *mihi* to the cast, calling to them in *Te Reo*, supporting the work. This also happens in the Ruatoria performance. As discussed above, Balme writes that in Māori theatre ‘performances are often located in an intermediary semiotic space between art and ritual’.²⁴⁰ In this production the ritual elements are the power engine beneath the art that lead to the highly responsive encounters with audiences. The use of the powerful drumming composed by Gareth Farr, the invocation and very clear representation of *marae* protocols as part of the performance, and the underlying use of ritual embedded in the rehearsal process means that a degree of ‘alive-li-ness’ alters the relationship with the audience, moving them closer to participants. It keeps the cast responsive, practising boundary negotiation out of ‘poeticised’ bodies that have entered into a kinaesthetic dialogue with their audiences.

After opening night I receive a letter from the eminent New Zealand theatre designer, Raymond Boyce, who writes:

My enjoyment was complete on Friday night to see the triumphant performance of *Troilus & Cressida*. First time for me to recognise a total and successful integration and service to our

²³⁸ Older woman.

²³⁹ Taylor, (2004), 8.

²⁴⁰ Balme, (1999), 73.

theatre arts from both cultures. Was it the play that offered the possibility for this? I guess so, in some major part, but it never could have exploded into this new threshold without your sensitivity and leadership. Please congratulate and thank the company for a magical performance and total design concept.²⁴¹

Reviewers also find it a satisfying experience, as Laurie Atkinson, *Evening Post* theatre critic attests:

Strung across the scaffolding high above Tony de Goldi's dark red platform stage is a banner that reads *The Tragic History of Troilus and Cressid – a Comedy*. This neatly sums up not only the complexity of one of Shakespeare's 'problem' plays but also Toi Whakaari's entertaining take on this play...The production begins with a thrilling burst of martial drumming as the Trojan/Māori warriors perform a *haka* and the Greek/British troops led by Agamemnon/Queen Victoria sing *Rule Britannia*. It ends with Pandarus singing about venereal disease in Shakespeare's epilogue that sounds as if Brecht had written the words and Weill the music. This mocking approach seems absolutely right for most of the play.²⁴²

In a similar vein, John Smythe in *National Business Review* notes:

The posturing endemic to both Māori and British allows the lethal absurdities of war to be well sent up. And yet the bloody inevitabilities of armed conflict remain.... Right now, to us, the production might say as much about the foreshore and seabed debate or the US/British response to Afghanistan and Iraq or the Israel/Palestine conflict as the land wars of 140-odd year ago....²⁴³

Ruatoria Performance

When we perform the work at Ruatoria we have an entirely Māori audience – a community from babies in arms to the very old. Performing in the school *marae*, the audience dynamic is already predisposed towards participation, reflecting the experiences of Roma Potiki and He Ara Hou. They are wonderfully

²⁴¹ Raymond Boyce, Private letter to Annie Ruth, September 15, 2003.

²⁴² Atkinson, (2003).

²⁴³ John Smythe, *National Business Review*, (Wellington: September 19, 2003), 57.

partisan, following each stage of the battle, clearly investing in the outcome. When the Trojan warrior Margarelon, played by a tiny Indian woman, moves through the aisles from behind the audience pursued by one of the Greek warriors, I watch in amazement as audience members move instantly to participate, stepping out of their seats to become a human barrier, hindering the Greek while aiding the Trojan. This is totally unexpected, as is the vociferous shouting and cheering that accompanies it. It is clear as the performance progresses that they have adopted a position wildly different to that of passive spectator. In a very real sense they are participants and the immediacy of their responses affects everything. They, like the cast, are in action, negotiating boundaries and connecting the current story to their own *whakapapa* just as they would during *pōwhiri*. The cast seize on the pattern of audience response and move among them more frequently to build on and deepen their partisanship. In many ways this is a less polished performance than the work that had opened in Wellington, unsupported by the wonderful, multi-level set. But the rawness is accompanied by a vital and ever-shifting response to the audience that gives it a quality of alive-li-ness.

24. Small children at the back of the audience, Ruatoria.

When Aenaes lays the challenge there is a huge intake of breath among the audience as the implications are assessed. And when Agamemnon/Victoria hesitates to pick up the challenge they are alive to the repercussions, for a *wero* left lying is a prelude to warfare. Sitting at the back I watch them lean forward

into the situation and the way this affects the cast who in turn prolong the tension of the moment until finally Ulysses steps forward and picks it up for her, getting the nod from the Trojan advisor.

Further, this particular hall has resonances of its own. Beautifully and ornately carved, it resembles a meeting house, or *whare nui* on a *marae* as is evident in the photo above. The carvings and *tukutuku* panels speak to the context of the conflict and the performances are interpreted in that same context just as *whaikōrero* on a *marae* is interpreted simultaneously with the visual stories that surround it. It is for this reason that Māori playwrights so often reference the *marae* physical environment, noted by Petersen in speaking of Briar Grace-Smith's work: 'The inscription of cultural practice into the physical world of Māori is reflected in Briar Grace-Smith's *Ngā Pou Wāhine*, the first significant dramatic monologue by a Māori woman. The title itself refers to the *po*²⁴⁴ found on a *marae* that depict ancestors or *tīpuna* as carved posts'.²⁴⁵ In the Ruatoria *marae* the ancestors of our audience are viscerally present and the wars we are invoking are ones in which they fought.

Their partisanship increases as the performance progresses. When, late in the play, Cressida is about to betray Troilus with the Greek warrior Diomedes, they erupt with a chorus of 'Don't do it girl!' and 'Watch out for the Pākehā!' so that their calls and responses accompany Shakespeare's text like the roar of the crowd accompanies a rugby match. For them the re-framing Christopher Balme described as a key characteristic of Māori theatre is total. For the cast and crew (and indeed me) it opens up another way of engaging with and seeing the work of theatre and our place in it as storytellers who might carve a vital link with our history and through theatre become a part of the story. In his play, *Salvage*, Stoppard has his protagonist, Herzen, say: 'History knocks at a thousand gates at every moment.... We need wit and courage to make our way while our way is making us....'²⁴⁶ In setting *Troilus & Cressida* during the New Zealand Wars we are making our way into our history, becoming part of it, dealing with contentious and nation-building/nation-dividing issues, supported by the structures and protocols of *tikanga marae*.

House's 2012 production of *Troilus and Cressida*, set during the tribal wars of pre-European Aotearoa/New Zealand, and rehearsed through Māori *kawa*, evokes similarly strong responses. Although it is exploring an

²⁴⁴ I believe the writer to be referring to *pou*, support pillars for the roof.

²⁴⁵ Peterson, 113.

²⁴⁶ Tom Stoppard, *Salvage: The Coast of Utopia Part III*, (New York: Grove Press, 2002), 119.

earlier period in our history than our own 2003 production set during the clash between colonists and Māori, it clearly illuminates many of the same issues:

Among the surprises of seeing the action transplanted to Aotearoa ... is the sight of Shakespeare's Trojans and Greeks recast as preening Maori warriors, prowling across the stage like prize fighting-cocks.... As well as being a remarkable sight ... it's as thoughtful a representation as I've seen of the play's sardonic gender politics.²⁴⁷

In this production, critical responses remark on the energy and *ihi*, as was observed in our own work, bearing out my contention that it is the approach to the work that brings that energy, that the frameworks of *tikanga* Māori, both in rehearsal and performance, bring a quality of alive-li-ness to the event:

... the Auckland-based Ngakau Toa company, performing in classical Māori, offer a potent, swaggering production... The Globe has always been a place that rewards large performances, and few have been as outsize as this, which begins with a bulging-eyed, tongue-wagging, foot-stamping haka-style war dance and rarely loses its energy thereafter.²⁴⁸

Dominic Cavendish comments:

Seldom watching this play have I been so persuaded that here were warriors, rather than actors impersonating warriors: capable with their thews, sinews and deftly handed spears ... of carrying out mighty acts of slaughter.²⁴⁹

It is remarkable that these two productions, nine years apart, both referencing the history of Aotearoa/New Zealand in the same Shakespeare play, receive such positive responses, in which the *ihi*, the gender politics and the sense of life are commented on. I am not implying that Taylor and my student production is as sophisticated as House's professional production. I am contending that the life-force in both works is not coincidental but a direct result of the frameworks employed.

²⁴⁷ Andrew Dickson, *The Guardian*, www.guardian.co.uk Culture-Stage-Theatre, Review, Tuesday April 24, 2012.

²⁴⁸ Dickson.

²⁴⁹ Dominic Cavendish, *The Telegraph*, April 24, 2012. www.telegraph.co.uk Culture-Theatre-Theatre Reviews

In choosing to work through a Māori vocabulary we are opening a door into a different, and perhaps more vital relationship with an audience that will make a contribution towards the development of theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand, a relationship that embraces chance and unpredictability as intrinsic to the event, one that focuses on a two-way encounter. The inclusion of the social improvisatory framework on the *marae* is invoked both as an approach within rehearsals and as a strong element in performance. Taylor and I strive to hold an improvisatory approach to the moment of encounter (cast to cast, cast to audience) within strongly placed formal protocols. We seek to alter the reception mode of the audience to a participatory and connected stance such as participants' experience within *marae* rituals. The rich, metaphorical language of *Te Reo* stands in dialogue with that of Shakespeare, in a context that was and is socially and politically controversial for New Zealand audiences. Through applying these protocols we seek a significant shift into a more potent and vivid theatrical moment. The degree to which we achieve this varies from performance to performance. In some ways I would describe the work as a 'rough draft' of a future and stronger work. We also endeavour to bring some of the Viewpoints thinking about space and time into the production. In that area the work is under-developed and for the most part I abandon the application of Viewpoints in order to focus on the impact of *marae* protocols. The task of holding these two frameworks simultaneously remains for a future work, described in Chapter Five.

Summary

I note at the beginning of this chapter that a clear sense of purpose frees the performer or participant from fear and performance anxiety and focuses them instead on serving the event in the fullest and most appropriate way. The acute and focused listening inherent in the oral traditions of the Māori, exemplified by *marae* protocols connects to this sense of purpose. They have the potential during encounters to give rise to a state of *ihi*, greatly valued in *tikanga marae* and instantly recognisable by participants as a state of heightened awareness, of a threshold being reached. *Whaikōrero* and other *marae* rituals take place in both the immediate and the metaphorical world and are driven by specific social needs. It is possible that all great moments in the theatre contain these attributes: actors freed by a sense of purpose to engage with audience and material without self-consciousness, acute attention placed on the other (audience, fellow actors), and a free and untrammelled ability to respond kinaesthetically through action. The question is how to invoke this more systematically, to increase the likelihood of a state of *ihi* in theatre performances.

It is my contention that the frameworks of the *marae*, fully embodied, allow great freedom to be aware of, and responsive to, the surprises of the moment. They are tools for action that direct toward purpose. Mead writes that 'Mātauranga [knowledge] Māori is not like an archive of information but rather is like a tool for thinking, organising information, considering the ethics of knowledge, the appropriateness of it all and informing us about our world and our place in it'.²⁵⁰ While not always seeking to adopt a Māori world view, theatre practice in New Zealand, is being affected in significant ways by this thinking, shifting practitioners and audience into a different kind of engagement with each other. This is manifest in the work of Māori theatre practitioners, increasingly in the work of Toi Whakaari and its graduates and to some degree is influencing performance in New Zealand generally. It has also been and continues to be a major focus for my own performance research: the search for frameworks that encourage the juxtaposition of the unpredictable and unknown with the artistically structured in the moment of performance.

25. Kuia Keri Kaa (Ngati Porou) with Annie Ruth, Rangitukia marae outside of Ruatoria.

In the 2003 production of *Troilus & Cressida* Taylor and I strive for an improvisatory approach to the moment of encounter drawing strongly on *marae* protocols. We place the work in the context of Māori rituals as a central part of the performance language, and in so doing move many of our audiences into a different and more active relationship with the stage. The work has a quality of 'alive-li-ness' commented on by reviewers, a quality furthered by the current and controversial topicality of the themes explored in the work as well as by the invocation of *tikanga marae*. We also weave Māori processes into the rehearsal

²⁵⁰ Mead, 306.

structure. The contribution of these processes is fundamental to the success of the production. Ashcroft speaks of it as ‘...something quite binding – more so than any other production – there was something that made it a unifying community experience for that group’²⁵¹ and this sense of unity is revealed in the work. Atkinson writes in his review, ‘...this production has a drive, energy and scabrous humour, particularly in the first half...The final scenes, when the unarmed Hector is savagely murdered by hooded Myrmidons (mercenaries) and the duplicity of Cressida is revealed are as rigorous as any Shakespeare.’²⁵² I am not in any way suggesting the work is unflawed. It is not. But such vitality as is achieved owes its strength to this focus on the ‘local local’ that Schechner has identified as an animating force for theatre in the contemporary world. Taylor contextualises this, noting that ‘*Troilus & Cressida* was fearless. *Wero, wero, wero*. I have never had the same feeling since. So I am thankful that I had that experience. I have never before worked in a place that really got what this country is about – really good awareness and right inside our struggles. But Troy was destroyed and we are still here!’²⁵³ In this production the artistically structured and the free-flowing improvisatory elements were held together through following *tikanga marae*.

Following this production, the ‘local, local’ exploration of *tikanga marae* frameworks continues to underpin my work, becoming ever more deeply embedded in the operating structures of Toi Whakaari. However, questioning from the *Troilus & Cressida* cast continues to resonate in my thinking. Although working alongside Rangimoana Taylor allowed me to work reasonably freely in a Māori vocabulary, at many points during rehearsals we were challenged about the appropriate use of *tikanga*. I am now considering if there is a way to ground my own practice in these structures without appropriating the culture. Can I employ *tikanga* structures without necessarily using Māori visual representations? In the meantime, my performance research takes a different path, flowing into a choreographic practice arising out of Viewpoints improvisations, the subject of the chapter that follows. It is not until 2010 that, aided by the work of Moetara, I see a way to combine both approaches, utilising frameworks of *tikanga marae* to inform Viewpoints-based choreography. It is this combination in rehearsing *Marat/Sade*, that catapults my performative research forward, bringing the discovery of frameworks that consistently support a quality of alive-li-ness in performance.

²⁵¹ Ashcroft.

²⁵² Atkinson, (2003).

²⁵³ Taylor, (2010a).

Chapter Four

Viewpoints¹ as an Approach to Performance: Combining Spontaneity with Structure.

*'The sense of danger must not disappear:
The way is certainly both short and steep.
However gradual it looks from here;
Look if you like, but you will have to leap.'*

(W.H.Auden 'Leap Before You Look',)

Introduction

The 'leap' that Auden advocates in this context requires 'poeticised bodies' equipped to see and utilise the patterning available at every moment in the world. Nachmanovitch, the jazz improviser quoted in Chapter Two, writes: '... when we are totally faithful to our own individuality, we are actually following a very intricate design'.² Viewpoints training equips performers to be intensely aware of and responsive to that design both in themselves and in every aspect of their environment. As in *tikanga Māori* they are encouraged to bring all of themselves into the room. It is out of such awareness that Auden's 'leap' demonstrates not just courage but a creative oneness with the world, encouraging both noticing and acting. Out of that effort of noticing and acting, art is created. Viewpoints were developed by the American director, Anne Bogart, as a system for articulating points of awareness that a performer or theatrical creator has while working. They arose from her observation of the pioneering work of Mary Overlie, choreographer and dancer, who first used the language of Viewpoints to articulate a range of foci for dancers in creating and inhabiting choreography.³ Overlie herself emerged from the revolution in dance led by the visionary, Martha Graham, who codified dance movement in a highly expressive way: PBS describe Graham's impact on the dance

¹ Anne Bogart, and Tina Landau. *The Viewpoints Book: A practical guide to Viewpoints and Composition*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group Inc., 1st edn., 2005). Note that the authors refer to Viewpoints as a singular collective noun. I have chosen to refer to them in aggregate in the plural, since I frequently refer to particular Viewpoints and the plural makes this clearer.

² Nachmanovitch, 26.

³ Overlie's six Viewpoints are : Story, Emotion, Timing, Shape/Design, Movement, Space/Blocking. See Mary Overlie, 'The Six Viewpoints', Arthur Bartow (ed.), *Handbook of Acting Techniques*, (London: Nick Hern, 2008), 193.

world as ‘staggering and often compared to that of Picasso’s on painting, Stravinsky’s on music, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s on architecture. Her contributions transformed the art form, revitalizing and expanding dance around the world’.⁴ Bogart took Overlie’s Viewpoints and adapted them for theatre, creating what is now a technique for training actors. They are a form of improvisation preparing actors to engage more fully with time and space, propelling themselves forward in intense play, in which the challenge is to remain aware and connected, not just to scene partners but to everything. As discussed below, there is debate around the application of Viewpoints tools in performance. Through my own practice, I have developed a process through which Viewpoints tools are used in rehearsal to set precise choreography, then carried into performance to inform in-the-moment choices about timing and qualities in execution of that choreography.

My own association with the methodology began in 2001 when I attended the LaMaMa International Directing Symposium at Spoleto, Italy, where Anne Bogart was one of the master teachers. In 2003 I participated in the SIT Company⁵ Intensive training, where I had the opportunity to improvise alongside experienced practitioners working the Viewpoints on the floor. Then in 2006 I worked with Tina Landau, again at LaMaMa in Spoleto, again exploring Viewpoints, particularly in relation to composition. Since then I have applied this thinking to both class work and productions.

In Chapter Two I explored an overview of improvisation and performance. In this chapter I focus on a particular improvisatory model – Viewpoints. I explore the effect of Viewpoints training and its application to performance, including my own performative research. As I am applying it, it is another way of coming at the question central to this thesis: how can a theatre maker hold, at the same moment, the artistically structured and the organically free, leading to work that is more consistently filled with a quality of ‘alive-li-ness’? The effort to generate active listening, or a state of vigilance, is a recurring question within contemporary performance research, from the work of Brook and Grotowski through to Lindh⁶. Camillieri, a long-time collaborator of Lindh, describes the effort to remain in the ‘here and now’ as a kind of hyper-listening: ‘The actor’s ability ‘to listen’ to what is happening within and around oneself can be described as

⁴ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, USA. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/martha-graham/about-the-dancer/497/>

⁵ Saratoga International Theatre Institute - Company led by Anne Bogart. This included work in Viewpoints, Suzuki training and composition. ‘The Suzuki method works to build an actor’s awareness of his body, especially his center. The method uses exercises that are inspired by Greek theater and martial arts and require great amounts of energy and concentration’. <http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/glossary/suzuki-method/> There is great focus on the actors’ feet and their relationship to the floor. SIT Company has a long association with Suzuki and the process is a cornerstone of their work. Ellen Lauren, a founding SIT Company member, is a major proponent of this work. See her article, ‘In Search of Stillness’, American Theatre magazine, ‘Approaches to Training’ edn, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, January 2011).

⁶ See Chapter Two.

a form of psychophysical awareness that makes it possible to inhabit the event in the here-and-now of occurrence by way of considering the various components present within a context.⁷ For innovators such as Lindh, the ability to deepen the quality of listening is predicated on longevity of practice: 'The psychophysical awareness that a practitioner cultivates by means of a long-term practice is underlined by Lindh's use of the term 'to listen' in the context of the improvising actor's capacity to perceive and (re)act. This kind of sensitivity marks "a state of vigilance" that is crucial ...'⁸ In Bogart's work, designed to meet the daily exigencies of a world where four weeks rehearsal is the norm, the Viewpoints have been developed to take an actor into something of the awareness Lindh seeks within a very short time span. It is in this context that I explore work generated out of Viewpoints-based choreography.

In Chapter Three I looked at the frameworks of the New Zealand *marae* for an insight into combining structure and freedom. In this chapter I apply these same questions to choreography based on Viewpoints sensibilities. Focus on choreography and a fierce attention to the movements of others, as on the *marae*, removes the actors' consciousness from themselves and places it onto the other (actor, audience, etc). The first section of this chapter deals with an overview of Viewpoints. In the second I describe the process of Viewpoints training and in the third identify a particular application of Viewpoints thinking referencing my own productions: Christopher Durang's *Betty's Summer Vacation*⁹ and *The Glass Menagerie*¹⁰ by Tennessee Williams. The works differ greatly in style and genre. *Betty's* begins in a style somewhere between naturalism and a live-audience sit-com and rapidly develops into farce while *Glass* is a contemporary 'classic', most frequently approached through naturalism and psychological truth. Williams himself describes it as a memory play. In exploring Viewpoints-based work against these contrasting texts I am testing out the limits and versatility of the approach. I am also challenging my own ability to encounter text, cast, and collaborators in the time and space of the work with both specificity and an open heart and gaze. My question in this has been how far a choreography grown out of Viewpoints is assisting me to meet Kent's challenge to Lear and 'see better'.¹¹

⁷ Camilleri, 250.

⁸ Camilleri, 248.

⁹ Christopher Durang, *Betty's Summer Vacation*, (New York: Grove Press, 1999). Performance Te Whaea Theatre, 2007.

¹⁰ Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, (New York: New Classics, 1970). Performance Seeyd Theatre, 2008.

¹¹ See Chapter One.

Attentiveness of the Actor

Viewpoints are, in the first instance, a language for discussing what occurs on stage, a language that is not based on psychological relationships between 'characters' nor on narrative nor text. They are, rather, a language based on the physiological, born out of acute observation of each present moment. In this way the Viewpoints articulate a tangible reality, something that exists in the world to which the actor pays attention. Scott Cummings describes them as 'a system of fluid and variable signs, which in staging a performance are arranged and combined for aesthetic or rhetorical purposes.'¹² The nine Viewpoints are: Spatial Relationship, Shape, Relationship to Architecture, Tempo, Duration, Kinaesthetic Response, Topography, Gesture and Repetition. They are neither abstract nor metaphoric, but break down the elements of time and space with great precision so that each element can be isolated, articulated, viewed and reviewed.

The fluidity that Scott identifies makes them a highly flexible tool, responsive to the purposes of the individual theatre artist. I would go further and say that the Viewpoints-based choreography, by extending the awareness of each performer out into the space of the performance, at the very moment of performance, sets up conditions for the creation of poetic, powerful images. These images have the potential for a reverberation far greater than any of the participants could have summoned individually through deliberative, objective-focused intention. Their immediacy is an instance of what Bachelard has described as 'the ecstasy of the newness of the image.'¹³ They begin their life in rehearsal, but are not simply repeated, they are re-created in the performative moment, presenting themselves to the audience, *as they do to the performers*, new-minted and surprising. It is this relationship between exact choice and creation within the moment that makes them strong.

The precision engendered by this approach is not the outcome of a single authorial voice but is generated by all members of the ensemble working collectively. As Bogart and Landau describe their application: 'Viewpoints and Composition offer a way to *collectively* address the questions that arise during rehearsals... [they] shift the tables so that every participant must find a compelling reason to be in the

¹²Scott T Cummings, *Remaking American Theatre: Charles Mee, Anne Bogart and the SITI Company*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), 113.

¹³ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Maria Jolas (trans.), (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 edn.), xv.

room, to have a stake in the process, and to claim ownership in the outcome.’¹⁴ The images are compelling, not because of the artistry of the individual, but because they are formed with collective and individual ownership. I have carried these tools into performance so that precision of choreography developed in rehearsal is maintained, even as their rhythm, quality and timing are improvised in response to the entire performative environment. Of course many, if not most, directors strive for this kind of collaboration. The contribution of Viewpoints is that it sets up a situation where the collaboration is engendered structurally. All collaborators become creative partners in the work generated.

Tension between Autonomy and Precision

Working with awareness among the entire ensemble opens the possibility for generating the intensively alive moment. This aligns strongly with the sense of function and role explored in the previous chapter on *marae* frameworks, where each individual is empowered to stay alive and provide what the moment requires. At the heart of the work is the struggle to remain aware of, and reactive to, the many elements of the physical and temporal environment. Just as *marae* protocols stimulate intense listening, so does the choreography direct a demanding engagement with the entire environment external to the actor. Bogart describes the effect as one of magnifying the presence of the actor. ‘Exactitude concentrates and magnifies an action....And yet, what makes something feel “real” is the exactitude itself, rather than the correct choice precision engenders presence.’¹⁵ The energy the actor pours into achieving an almost impossible exactitude generates a gravitational pull in the audience towards that actor.

The desired precision is not just a matter of perfectly executed movement and sound. It is an *active* precision, one that is constantly negotiated. This is one of the greatest gifts arising out of Viewpoints work: the element of danger or heat in every performative moment of the work. In a choreography that is utterly precise in stipulating what is done where, Viewpoints leave a freedom around the precise timing and the quality of the movement, responding to the particular performative encounter. And because in every moment the real world changes, so then must the actors, (and even the technicians) in the dynamic and timing of their movement. Julia Varley writes of the exercises and improvisations in her work with Lindh: ‘We had to be aware and ready so as not to miss the opportunities offered by chance and by

¹⁴ Bogart and Landau, 18.

¹⁵ Bogart, (2007), 104.

circumstances, as though the training was a kind of practical prayer'.¹⁶ A similar awareness is demanded in Viewpoints-generated work, its particular contribution lying in its precise language and transportability to any performance situation, holding the actors in a state of being in action. Just as on the *marae*, the audience role becomes a more active one. Bogart writes: 'On the stage, the space between actors and audience must be continually endowed with quality, attention, and potential danger.' Extending the awareness of the performer out from the stage, responsive to any changes or movement in the abody of watchers, encourages the performer to maintain an active awareness of the audience. The actors must meet it with the same highly charged attention that they give to other performers. This brings a tangible tension into the space between performer and audience, allowing the work to reverberate within the viewers.

Disjunction between Text and Choreography

The movement choreography exists in conversation with the verbal text, making Viewpoints a flexible tool for generating work that is poised between the artistically fixed and the unpredictably free, generating the sense of danger and excitement that arises where the future is genuinely unknown. The complexity arises from the inherent layering in the process. Each element (text, movement, music) is assembled separately and then placed against the other elements, so that in some ways the moments of alignment are random. The audience or spectators are thus endowed with the vital role of making sense of the layered experience; they bring their own histories and memories to fashion the whole. To clarify this by a hypothetical example: a play text of a conversation between siblings around the disposition of their mother's remains following her death might be juxtaposed with a movement sequence based on a Rodin sculpture or a theme of oppression and release. When the text is draped over the independently created action, a dialogue between act and word ensues with neither subservient to the other. Eelke Lampe speaks of the effect of this kind of dissociation of elements as creating a clash out of which new life emerges: 'she dissociates movement from verbal text, live music from recorded, visual elements and sound production from the expressive behaviour of the performers. The resulting clash allows for a new creative merge of the disparate elements in the spectator's mind during the performance experience'.¹⁷ Mark Rafael describes

¹⁶ Julia Varley, *Notes From an Odin Actress: Stones of Water*, (London and New York, Routledge, 2011), 17.

¹⁷ Eelke Lampe, 'From the Battle to the Gift: The Directing of Anne Bogart', *The Drama Review* 36, No 1, (T133), Spring 1992, 25-26.

them as 'a physical architecture of performance that can enhance or contrast with the relationships and words of a text'.¹⁸

The layering leads to unexpected juxtapositions of image and sound, enabling a fresh perception of the world. The very disjunction can help us to see anew. The words are the final act in the struggle to overcome the difficulty of reaching across all our separate lives and genuinely communicating our shared humanity. They are not the sole driver of the act. The actor's task of holding all these elements in awareness is huge. But its very difficulty stimulates her to reach out towards the challenge. The demand is that they stay in that state of impossible effort and work from that place. In pinpointing these characteristics of the Viewpoints I am not contending that they are the only methodology to achieve 'alive-li-ness' in performance through separating out the various theatrical elements. Practitioners such as Forced Entertainment characteristically hold words and image in dialogue rather than in sync:

In Forced Entertainment's work, words work hard, their semantic meaning often in opposition to the semiotics of the accompanying visual image, the tone of delivery, or the context in which we are hearing them... The company's latest show, *Spectacular*, we are told in the advance publicity, is (amongst other things) about 'the strange contact between two performers on-stage and an audience caught between what they are watching and what they are being told'.¹⁹

Forced Entertainment are thus explicit about their exploration of this disjunction and the value they place on disruption to awaken and enliven their audiences.²⁰ Disjunction and disruption is common to much contemporary theatre. So it is clear that Viewpoints is not unique in its use of layering and disjunction to assist kinaesthetic attentiveness.

However, the overall effect of the Viewpoints is to set up a dynamic of 'paying attention' to everything that occurs in the theatre in the moment in which it is occurring. The elements which build this capacity are: the high degree of precision that Viewpoints elicit; the layering and complexity Viewpoints invite; the

¹⁸ Rafael, 144.

¹⁹ Dorothy Max Prior, 'I give you my word: Dorothy Max Prior meets Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment,' *Total Theatre Magazine*, Vol. 20, Issue 04, (Brighton: Winter 2008-9) 12.

²⁰ Note Simon Shepherd's theories around live performance and the kinaesthetic response of audience to performer, 'Time-span, pulsing, shape and space: these seem to be some of the crucial factors in the way a performance apparently works on its audience. They are part of the mechanism of kinaesthetic engagement.' Simon Shepherd, *Theatre, Body and Pleasure*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 79.

empowerment of *all* collaborators as active participants in creating the 'score' of the work; the demand implicit in the work that performers stay aware of subtle shifts in each performance; and the active engagement with the audience as part of the Viewpoints process. Most of all, through the way in which I am able to apply them to performance, they combine the precision of a pre-determined, aesthetically-driven choreography and moment by moment negotiation around timing and quality of action. Together they create a dynamic and alive tension between what is fixed and what is free.

Application of Viewpoints to Performance

In the past Bogart and Landau have stated specifically that 'Viewpoints training can be used to create staging (blocking) for a production'.²¹ Yet this interface between Viewpoints improvisations and performance is contested and has given rise to debate. Bogart writes:

I am often asked about how to apply the Viewpoints to a rehearsal process. The question arrives so frequently that I have begun to wonder about the impulse behind the inquiry. I also hear from many people that they are indeed using the Viewpoints to make theater. I am curious both by the recurring question and the reports from the rehearsal front.

I find the Viewpoints exceptionally useful as training, as practice. In the context of encouraging a collaborative environment, the Viewpoints can provide theater artists with an opportunity to work together on a regular basis, using the languages of time and space to generate fiction from a blank canvas. The Viewpoints encourage deep physical listening and help cultivate an actor's ability to make action and interaction both outwardly visible and inwardly transparent. The practice asks actors to join technical precision with spontaneity and unpredictability. But at heart the Viewpoints are an improvisation. From a blank slate, beautiful human moments and even societies can be engendered. And then they disappear. Ideas about the world of a play may become visible. And then they evaporate. The Viewpoints are inspiring to watch because they embody a philosophy

²¹ Bogart and Landau, 133.

about how societies might function – non-hierarchical, respectful, and sensitive to ongoing change. And yet I resist the notion that the Viewpoints provide a method of rehearsal.²²

While respecting Bogart's comments I am arguing that the sensibility they engender, 'non-hierarchical, respectful, sensitive to on-going change', as she says, can be applied to the creation of tightly choreographed work. They make a dynamic contribution to rehearsal practices and thereby to creating a sense of 'alive-li-ness' on stage. In the work that I am doing it is the game I place beneath precisely held choices, the play with timing and quality of action, which opens the possibility of simultaneous structure and freedom. What I extrapolate from Bogart's comment is that some directors are attempting to bring the improvisations themselves onto the stage, much as contact improvisation does in dance. This would be interesting to explore, though my hunch is that they would be of limited use and require very strong parameters. Bogart speaks of the violence of making choices:

I do not believe that improvisation is, by nature, art. Art happens once something is set, once it is decided upon. And the act of decisiveness can be brutal. In the decision the gentle life-breath that gave birth to the impulse is killed. And yet, the theater is the art of repetition. The artist's task is to bring back to life what has been annihilated by the decisive act of choice. This act of resurrection marks when and where the art begins'.²³

These necessary choices are very much a part of my explorations in applying this work to rehearsal and performance.

The Training

The Viewpoints²⁴ can be divided into three categories, those that are concerned with space, those concerned with time, and those that concern space and time together. They are:

- Space: Spatial Relationship, Shape, Relationship to Architecture
- Time: Tempo, Duration, Kinaesthetic Response
- Space + Time: Topography, Gesture, Repetition

²² Anne Bogart, Blog, September 1, 2009. <http://siti.groupsite.com/blog/index.html> 2.

²³ Bogart, (2009), 2.

²⁴ Bogart and Landau, 7-12. For this discussion I have relied primarily on my personal notes from their Viewpoints workshops in Saratoga and Italy.

These nine Viewpoints have been developed by Bogart and Landau over a considerable time period during which they have tested and refined, moving away from the original Overlie Viewpoints²⁵ which included emotion and story. Rather than working with dancers Bogart and Landau focus on actors, who, through their training already lean heavily towards emotion and story, making these elements less useful as points of concentration. They also have the possibility to pull the actor away from what is actually occurring into memory and planning, re-creating feelings that appeared in rehearsal or that they think the story-line requires. The Viewpoints allow the emotional life of the actor to flow like a kind of internal weather system, alive and responsive but never the conscious focus of the actor, never strived for, but arising and disappearing without effort.

Re-defining 'Character'

Note that in the comment above I am speaking of the emotional life of the 'actor', not the 'character'. The actor is responding to the kinaesthetic, vocal and verbal input of her/his own body and those of others and of the environment, one element of which is the spoken text. The interpretation of this as 'character', as I see it, is a task for the audience, just as in life where we act in response to events internal and external, the sum of which responses look like 'character' to those outside of ourselves. In the practice I have developed there is little attention to character. Bogart and Landau write: 'Viewpoints and Composition suggest fresh ways of making choices on stage and generating action based on awareness of time and space in addition to or instead of psychology'.²⁶ As I am using them in performance, the actor's focus is on the self in action, not presumed character, responding to both choreography and text and holding onto a sense of purpose in encountering the audience.

How Viewpoints Works on the Floor

Bogart and Landau have refined the naming of the Viewpoints with a focus on exactitude and revealing all the time/space possibilities. For example, 'Topography' was initially named 'Floor-pattern'. They then realised that the Viewpoint was more complex than that articulation, that 'Floor-pattern' was an example of

²⁵ Overlie, 'The Six Viewpoints', Bartow (ed.), 193.

²⁶ Bogart and Landau, 17.

Topography but did not capture the full potential exploration in that area. The nine Viewpoints therefore represent a distillation of their experience, tested both in classrooms and with their companies.

Space:

- Spatial Relationship: the physical relationship between the actors in the space, such as proximity and distance, vertical and horizontal space, angles etc.
- Shape: the shape in which the bodies are arranged, the shape of the bodies themselves.
- Relationship to Architecture: the placement of bodies in space relating to the specific architecture of the working space so that architectural features become a recognised factor in the work, so that the actors 'dance with the space'.²⁷

Time:

- Tempo: the speed at which actions and reactions occur both individually and in the ensemble, the rhythms that are developed, the pauses etc.
- Duration: the amount of time a particular action, stance, or pattern is maintained by either an individual or the group.
- Kinaesthetic Response: the instinctive, unthinking physical response from the body to an event outside of itself.

Space + Time:

- Topography: floor-patterns that are developed and qualities with which parts of the space (both vertical and horizontal) are endowed and then built on within the improvisation. For example, through the process of the improvisation a portion of the floor might become endowed with the quality of stickiness, or a wall given the quality of repulsing touch.
- Gesture: shape that includes movement, both expressive and quotidian.
- Repetition: the repeating of space or action or indeed any of the other Viewpoints, both within the individual body and within the ensemble.

These nine Viewpoints break down action so that the individual components can be employed consciously in making work. Bogart and the members of SITI Company typically teach Viewpoints in a series of improvisations in which the focus is placed on a particular viewpoint for the purposes of investigation, while acknowledging that all are present, always, in all human (and animal) life. In the initial work the

²⁷ Bogart and Landau, 10.

'vocabulary' of the improvisation is limited so that the participants can fully focus on the quality under investigation: 'Learning the individual Viewpoints is like learning to juggle. First there is only one ball in the air, then a second is added. Then a third ... - how many balls can you keep in the air before they all drop?'²⁸ As the participants become more aware of the tools and language and confident in their application, the improvisations become increasingly complex, culminating in 'open Viewpoints' where all the Viewpoints are consciously in play and the vocabulary unlimited. Any one of the Viewpoints can be given prominence according to the instinct of the participants and/or according to the internal logic of the particular improvisation.

At this point music can be added as a variable. This complements the physical work but is not to be taken as a prompt to it. A danger in its addition is that the participants will succumb to the rhythmic offerings in the music and lose autonomy. As Bogart says, 'Music is the most compelling thing in the world so it can be a problem because it's so defining. It's an ongoing struggle not to have the music lead but for the music to seem to emanate from the actors' bodies.'²⁹ Bogart is drawing attention to the autonomy within the group experience that the Viewpoints demand. The music is another player in the work, another improviser on the floor and should be actively collaborated with rather than succumbed to.

Finally text is added. Again great care is taken to resist the dominance of text, so firmly a part of the Western theatre tradition. Ideally, in an 'open Viewpoints' improvisation, text should arise and fall away as a response to a particular moment, just as every other element in the improvisation arises and falls away. This is a key moment in developing awareness through Viewpoints improvisation. The life of the text, clearly articulated, is not a psychological addition to the work but an aural one. The 'meaning' or interpretation of the moment lies in the combination of the layers and elements present in the work. At no stage should the movement be seen as a servant to the text. Each exists in its own right. Their juxtaposition is a part of the exploration, not its focus.

In this way, training through Viewpoints improvisations build awareness of time and space into the bodies of the actors, a sensitivity that can then be taken into the rehearsal room. They also build courage to allow dissonant elements to coexist. At a minimum they provide a shared language for describing the work on the floor, a reference point for analysing performative moments and a vocabulary for generating images.

²⁸ Bogart and Landau, 36.

²⁹ Joan Herrington, 'Breathing Common Air: The SIT Company Creates Cabin Pressure' in *The Drama Review*, 46, 2 (T174), Summer, 2002. 134.

As Bogart and Landau claim: 'Viewpoints is your gift for exploding the envelope, working outside the box, finding more unexpected choices, remaining open to what happens and what stirs you...'³⁰ It is an instrument that encourages Auden's 'leap', facilitating imaginative, embodied response before an understanding of what such a response might mean within the given context.

The Vocal Viewpoints

Alongside the Space/Time Viewpoints Bogart has developed a set of vocal Viewpoints, to complement the movement-based vocabulary. They have the same characteristic of naming and of exactitude, paying precise attention to the voice as an instrument, separated from its function of carrying meaning. The vocal Viewpoints are: Pitch, Timbre, Dynamic, Acceleration/Deceleration, Tempo, Silence/Pause, and Repetition. These are typically taught separately to the physical Viewpoints, applied to a piece of text. In my own practice I have begun to introduce them into Viewpoints improvisations and they have increasingly become a part of my performance research. During a laboratory project for the International Centre for Voice at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London 2012, for example, I also coined a further vocal Viewpoint – that of 'Texture' to describe experiments with smooth and staccato deliveries not quite brought forward by the other titles. This project falls outside the frame of this thesis but it worth mentioning here to note my ongoing research into this aspect of the Viewpoints.

Viewpoints (physical and vocal) assist performers in building the imagistic world of a performance and in countering preconceptions both from actors and director. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Stanislavsky's work, built on minutely observed behaviours, enlivened the work of theatre practitioners³¹. Today the prevalence of his methodology, adapted by other practitioners such as the Actors Studio in New York, who have narrowed, codified, and rigidified his practice, needs to be challenged and other ways of working investigated. This is not to deny nor diminish Stanislavsky's later work around physical actions or the biomechanics of Meyerhold³² both of which counter this trend towards the psychological. However this more physical work does not have the hold on actor training and traditional theatre that his earlier,

³⁰ Bogart and Landau, 125.

³¹ Freud's work on the subconscious was, of course, part of the zeitgeist of the time, and although Stanislavsky uses the term differently, the influence is there, despite their being no evidence that Stanislavsky himself read Freud. He was likely influenced by others who did.

³² See Jonathon Pitches. Vsevolod Meyerhold, (Routledge Performance Practitioners Series), (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

psychologically-based process exert. This is true not just in western academies but also in China, India, Latin America and Romania. Through my work as a UNESCO-designated master-teacher I have had the opportunity to see the performance work of a great many theatre-training academies and to discuss their pedagogies with School Directors. The focus on the psychological continues to be the dominant mode. It is precisely because of this that Schechner spoke so passionately about including the local, local.

Theatre, to remain alive, must constantly reinvent itself, as practitioners from Robert Lepage to Arundhati Nag have stated.³³ From my observation of professional theatre, particularly in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, I see naturalistic, psychology-based works continue to be the norm, despite the work of innovative theatre companies over a considerable time span. Viewpoints, which is gaining considerable currency in the United States, is a powerful and articulate tool for countering this. In this process of reinvention in my own practice, Viewpoints, along with other improvisatory practices, and the application of New Zealand *marae* based frameworks explored in the previous chapter, are a part of this 'reinvention'. Together and severally they create the conditions for an intensity of 'life' in performance, for a vitality that lifts the work so that the audience member feels that they are witnessing something 'authentic' as well as unexpected, in other words an experience of 'alive-li-ness'.

³³ Lepage, receiving the MIT McDermott Award: 'The survival of the art of theatre depends on its capacity to reinvent itself by embracing new tools and new languages'. Arts.mit.edu/mcdermott/lepage-at-mit. Anasuya Menon, interviewing Nag states: 'Despite the presence of technology ... Arundhati feels theatre needs to reinvent itself', *The Hindu*, September 21, 2012, Features/Metro Plus.

Developing the Choreography: Application of the Principles of Viewpoints to *Betty's Summer Vacation*

In undertaking the production of Christopher Durang's play, *Betty's Summer Vacation*,³⁴ my underlying assumption is that the sensibilities developed through Viewpoints training can be effectively applied as a rehearsal methodology. I have approached earlier works³⁵ with elements of the Viewpoints in rehearsals, but this is the first time I undertake an entire rehearsal process solely through this lens. I am working with actors in the second year of their training and designers and managers in their final year. Prior to entering rehearsals, my inquiry into Viewpoints had raised a number of questions for me, and my hope is that the process of rehearsal will go some way towards answering them. This contemporary script seems particularly appropriate for the investigation, with its movement between colloquial, quotidian dialogue and extended, absurd propositions inviting physical comedy. I seek evidence that they could guide the investigation of the wider social context of the play; I question whether the Viewpoints have an inherent bias toward abstracted work and are therefore unsuited to the colloquial nature of much of the Durang text. I am curious about the playfulness I perceive in them and whether this may intensify the comedy; and I want to see, as noted above, what this work will do to the customary rehearsal hierarchy, where the text sits at the apex of a triangle³⁶, all the work being directed towards fulfilling its requirements.

I also have relationship questions. How will a cast, habituated to text-based methodologies, character and narrative development, respond to an approach based on space-time relationships? Will they embrace this radically different working method, used as they are to process built around objectives and character development. And if they do, what will be the factors that assist them to do so? In working on *Small Lives*, *Big Dreams*, the scepticism of the actors had created a point of resistance during rehearsals that I had been unable to fully overcome. For this production I challenge myself to find an approach that opens up the possibilities more clearly at each step of the process so that playfulness might replace anxiety and their curiosity become engaged. Hitherto, character development had been a key element in my work. Now, through the application of the Viewpoints, the in-the-moment life between the actors is given primacy. As discussed earlier, I intend to re-direct their gaze from imagining what the 'character' might be feeling and

³⁴ Toi Whakaari, 2007.

³⁵ *Troilus & Cressida* and *Small Lives*, *Big Dreams*.

³⁶ The work of the director and the designer form the other two points with the actor working to all three.

replace this with doing the choreography, speaking the text, and allowing themselves to feel what they will. I want to explore acting as a response to the text rather than as a servant to it. Will the language of Viewpoints enable the actors to articulate their discoveries and questions, both through application on the floor and analysis afterwards? All of these questions relate to buy-in from the cast and other collaborators. I want to test how reliant this methodology is on the charisma of its originators. Can I truly access it to make 'living' exciting theatre with this group of student actors, and in this time and place?

Written in 1995, *Betty's Summer Vacation* is set in a holiday home on the American northeast seaboard. Its theme is the invasion of the media in contemporary lives and the increasingly mediated nature of those lives. Betty and Trudy (with whom Betty has a slight friendship), go on holiday to a beach cottage in which Trudy's mother owns a time-share. Trudy never stops talking. The other housemates turn out to be a sex-mad, no boundaries lout – Brad - and a sweet, withdrawn but definitely odd character called Keith, carrying a shovel and hatbox (who might just turn out to be a serial killer). Betty has been looking forward to a relaxing holiday by the sea, but within minutes it is clear that this is the one thing she will not get. To top it off Trudy's mother, the bizarre Mrs Siezmagraff, arrives to holiday along with them and the peaceful holiday cottage turns out to have voices that comment on their every act and a sit-com laugh track built into its walls. The action rapidly descends into controlled chaos. Among the plethora of surprises, Mrs Siezmagraff is stung by a sting-ray, a severed penis is revealed in the fridge, a flasher in a raincoat joins the company at Mrs Siezmagraff's behest and the 'Voices' materialise on the stage. Betty is reduced to walking a thin line between sanity and survival as everything that can happen does happen and horror and farce go hand in hand. I believe Viewpoints will assist the cast to meet the stylistic challenge of moving from naturalism into farce.

The Aesthetic Produced through the Disjunction between Text and Choreography

I set out to examine how style might have an impact in utilising Viewpoints. I wrote earlier of the potential effectiveness of the disjunction between text and movement. Reviews of Bogart's productions often point up the choreographic nature of her direction. I had observed an example of this myself in her production of *Death and the Ploughman*.³⁷ In this work the movement of the actors did not illustrate the text spoken. The

³⁷ Translated by Michael West from original work by Johannes Von Saaz (1401), performance at The CUB Malthouse, Melbourne Arts Festival, October, 2005.

choreography, challenging, working off-balance much of the time, was juxtaposed with the medieval text. Disjunction of word and movement is a technique Bogart has used in other productions but here it was a particularly bold and adventurous offer, the verbal and movement languages having remarkably different textures and origins: a medieval European text and a movement vocabulary arising out of the work of Tadashi Suzuki³⁸ and the Japanese tradition. Reviews took opposing views on the effect of this disjunction. Alison Croggon wrote of the Melbourne Festival performances:

Most of the time, it is impossible to see what the abstract movements - some of them recognisable from Suzuki workshops - have to do with the text. These abstractions are unsuccessfully integrated with literal human gesture. Each movement is arrested, discretely separate from the next, which gives a strangled and conflicted feel to the stage dynamic but, for all its sharpness, the choreography seems curiously blurred. Aside from the comic sequences, it is like watching a slow, gestural equivalent of Tourette's syndrome.³⁹

Matthew Murray, writing of the Off-Broadway performances concurs: '... the actors barely rein in their bodily manipulations long enough to convince you to listen to their words'.⁴⁰ The New York Times critic saw it in a more generous light while still having reservations about the impact of the work, commenting that: 'Ms. Bogart's rigorously choreographed theatrical method emphasizes idiosyncratic physical gestures set to eccentric tempos.... This results in clean, visually powerful stage pictures that rearrange themselves according to undefinable rhythms'.⁴¹

Taking a different view, Ng Yi-Sheng wrote:

Their precisely choreographed movements mirror, dodge, and clash with each other, tinged with polysemy but never quite corresponding to the literacy of the text.... It is this relentless, deliberate beauty that ensures that every moment of the play remains purposeful and alive. It buoys up the weight of the difficult text, allowing it to become almost music, exquisite even without attention to its meanings, and spiritually dazzling once one actually listens to the warring declarations of the

³⁸ See Tadashi Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, Thomas J. Rimer (trans.), (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1986).

³⁹ Alison Croggon, Independent Theatre Reviews and Commentary, <http://theatrenotes.blogspot.com/2005/10/miaf-death-and-ploughman-la-clique.html>, October 18, 2005.

⁴⁰ Matthew Murray, Theater Review, http://www.talkinbroadway.com/ob/11_10a_04.html, October 11, 2005.

⁴¹ Charles Isherwood, 'THEATER REVIEW; Trying to Get the Last Word With the Grim Reaper', (New York: New York Times, November 12, 2004). www.nytimes.com/2004/11/12/theater/reviews/12deat.html

sanctity and futility of human life.... The piece is fabulously concerted, blending light, sound, movement and text into a spellbinding blue-note harmony.⁴²

Ng's review, though lacking the credentials of *The New York Times*, comes closer to my own perception. As I experienced the work, the separation of text and movement led me to listen to the argument of the play in a detached, intellectual way for the bulk of the time, denying me an emotional connection, allowing me to admire the density of the argument. Then, in the final ten minutes of the performance, I was suddenly swept into a full, kinaesthetic connection to the work, with all the emotion I had been denied up until then flooding in. It was almost like being hit in the solar plexus, literally taking my breath away. I do not know if this was Bogart's intention in directing the work. Nor can I explain why the quality of the abstracted movement distanced my emotions for so much of the work. Looking back I appreciate the time when I engaged fully, though coolly, on an intellectual level so that I could really consider the text. The emotional connection was stronger for having been resolutely denied by the performers for so long.

I have taken this space to explore these various critical responses since they speak strongly to style and the disjunctions in Bogart's work in a production I had been fortunate enough to see. I am curious as to how far the Viewpoints provoke a particular style of theatre, or whether they can be applied to all. Eelke Lampe, writing about another production of Bogart's, says: 'Characteristic of her recipe is paradox. The external does not amplify the internal but coincides with it, possibly contradicting it.'⁴³ This was very much the case in my work on *Small Lives, Big Dreams* where the choreography was typically in counter-point to the text. However, Bogart and Landau explicitly claim that the approach can be applied to any kind of theatre: 'Viewpoints does not imply a style. The work produced by Viewpoints can be highly formal and choreographic or highly naturalistic and behavioural'⁴⁴ with the Viewpoints just held in the actors' awareness. I want to test out this proposition and discover if the more formal and choreographic approach can also be applied to illuminate naturalistic, behavioural texts. I want to explore with the actors the application of the contradictions Lampe described and discover what they might illuminate and what leave dark.

⁴² Ng Yi-Sheng, Flying Inkpot theatre reviews, July 2, 2006, <http://inkpot.com/theatre/06reviews/0602,deatplou.ny.html>

⁴³ Eelke Lampe, "From the Battle to the Gift", *The Drama Review*, 36:1 Spring, 1992, 22.

⁴⁴ Bogart and Landau, 133.

Awareness of the Actor: Life Discovered through Form

In applying the Viewpoints to the rehearsal process in *Betty's Summer Vacation*, my initial focus is thus on the actors staying in the room with each other: not just literally, but present in a state of noticing. This is very different to focusing on character, narrative and emotion. It is an approach that privileges what is happening right now over memory, text and any pre-determined appropriateness of feeling. In fact, the emphasis on generating emotion, common within American theatres (and often in New Zealand ones too from my observation), is one of the factors that led Bogart towards the Viewpoints as an alternative approach. Bogart contrasts this with her own working methods, saying:

I prefer to look at the body, at placement, at arrangement. I'm interested in the emotions, but I don't want to strangle them. I think that the work of the Actors' Studio, especially, while fantastic on film or television, is deadly in the way it separates actors from each other. That's because the emphasis is, to a large extent, on trying to generate feeling, instead of on being present in the room.⁴⁵

Thus in *Betty's Summer Vacation* the challenge I set to the cast is to stay alive to every aspect of what is occurring within the space, playing the noticing 'game' I refer to above, and ensuring they include the audience in this 'paying attention'. In rehearsing we focus on the body, the placement and arrangement that Bogart describes, and let the emotions flow as they will. This does not mean that the actors' work is without feeling but that it is not built on emotions or decisions about appropriate emotions. Within the structure they have the absolute freedom to feel whatever arises in them in that moment, never reaching back to some experience that originated in rehearsal or reaching forward to some state they feel is required by the text.

I am not intending to imply that I ask the actors to ignore character history, their insights into psychological make-up, or the story. What I do ask is that none of these become the driver of their work. The knowledge gathered through their research and preparation for rehearsals can be allowed to simply sit within them and emerge or not as they encounter text and choreography within the moment. Lampe's description of Bogart's work illustrates how these things can co-exist: 'Bogart combines choreographed movements improvisationally developed by the performers with conventional psychological character work. The

⁴⁵ Bogart quoted in 'Balancing Acts' interview with David Diamond *American Theatre Magazine*, Vol 18 Issue 1, (New York: TCG 2001), 33.

performer-generated abstractions derived from daily behaviour provide a container for performer-generated psychological life.⁴⁶ In these rehearsals I want to go further and deliberately focus the actors away from the psychological. My hunch is that this will liberate the actors' subconscious to allow them to make connections unhampered by their willing them to happen. In this way their emotional life will be free to exist like weather, coming and going in response to the life of their bodies or triggered by anything that occurs in the room/on the stage. I hope that the very precision of their movement will free their inner life to be stronger and more fully lived. By precise attention to choreography and timing my quest is to discover life through the rigorous application of form.

First Rehearsals: Setting up an Environment of Listening and play

Initial rehearsals include the development of installations, compositions, Viewpoint improvisations, and physical routines off a series of provocations. I choose to set up a condition of play from the outset by staying away from the text and focusing instead on exploration. I want all involved, cast and designers, to have a sense of abundance in terms of time (though in fact the rehearsal period is only four weeks) so that exploration and risk, rather than results, are being prioritised from the outset. I devote a whole week to this exploration which sharpens the cast's awareness of each other in time and space and begins the process of developing a shared vocabulary with which to meet the work. It does not demonstrate that the work can be applied to text but I discover that it makes the cast hungry to meet the text and answer that question for themselves.

Devoting so much time to exploration gives a strong message to cast and crew: We have all the time we need. We have time to play together. It shows that exploration is valued and that this exploration doesn't have always to be tied directly to text to have a place in our work. We are building sensitivity to each other among the cast, an ability to listen in a heightened way. Bogart and Landau write:

Viewpoints leads to greater awareness, which leads to greater choice, which leads to greater freedom...Viewpoints awakens all our senses, making it clear how much and how often we live only in our heads and see only through our eyes. Through Viewpoints we learn to listen with our entire

⁴⁶ Lampe, 21.

bodies and see with a sixth sense. We receive information we were not even aware existed, and begin to communicate back with equal depth.⁴⁷

Bogart's own company is an ensemble who have been working together and developing their practice over more than twenty years. The question posed for the collaborators on *Betty's Summer Vacation* is whether this active listening can be achieved in our brief rehearsal period. This is a challenge that the actors accept and work with actively both in the initial exploratory week and consistently throughout the rehearsal period. More essentially for the development of the work is that the actors are established as active collaborators. They understand, viscerally if not completely intellectually, that their creativity will write the score of this production. I will assist and shape. But I will not begin by imposing or using them as puppets for my own creative vision. A great gift of Viewpoints application to rehearsal as I experience it is that they combine precision and aesthetic, choreographic values together with empowerment of the actors.

The cast are encouraged to transform their insights into strong physical realisations, well outside the bounds of naturalism. Bogart says in *and then you Act*: 'Create a body and a state that would say the particular words of the play and then speak.... This is not an emotional condition, rather it is an expression of the amount of energy that you are trying to access for yourself. ...The situation engenders a physical state and from that state, you speak. You articulate....It is a physical body in search of freedom.'⁴⁸ This articulation of the body is the development we seek and my initial observation is that all of the actors extend personal boundaries and release inhibitions as well as create strong physical routines.

One of the first tasks I set for the actors, inspired by my work with Tina Landau,⁴⁹ is to create a series of installations to explore their 'characters' in an abstract way. This serves to free the cast's imagination in the context of shared metaphoric worlds, assisting them to live in their bodies in imaginative ways while staying linked to each other. They increase their sense of their relationship to each other in spatial terms. An outstanding example in these creations is the work of the actor playing 'Voice 2', (Dawn Cheong). In her installation (see below) she makes a woman who grows in size while greedily devouring newspaper articles and images and she takes into the later work the quality of devouring space, things and even

⁴⁷ Bogart and Landau, 20.

⁴⁸ Bogart, (2007), 21

⁴⁹ Tina Landau, LaMaMa International Directing Symposium, Spoleto, Italy, 2006.

27. Dawn Cheong as Voice 2: Installation.

people. Cheong is a small woman and finding this sense of enlargement through swallowing up the worlds of others helps her to be both predatory and expansive within the space. It also encourages the whole cast to explore from the very large to the very small, working in extremes of size, along with extremes of tempo, all of which emerges in performance, all of which are part of the language of the Viewpoints.

Another exploration is around the relationship with light and I work with the student lighting designer to find a way to play with light in as organic and precise a manner as the work we are developing choreographically, to make light a full collaborator on the stage. To this end the lighting designer works with the actors on a series of provocations to explore light both reinforcing the narrative and in counterpoint to it, much as Bogart works with movement in counterpoint to text. We want to add complexity to the event

28. Cast explore shadow effects.

we are creating through this other medium. For example, can the shadow thrown by Keith, as we get to know his homicidal proclivities, contradict his 'boy-next-door' exterior? While only a small part of this exploration appears in performance the work means that the actors are interacting actively with the light and are prepared to be not just responsive, but adventurous. As in the photos above, I am interested in lighting that contradicts or adds nuance to appearances. This is an application of Viewpoints that I am determined to explore in a future production and indeed becomes a part of the work on *Marat/Sade*, 2010.

Prior to rehearsals and during this initial workshop phase, the designers work in the room, seeking to translate these concepts around space into their own design processes, seeing the floor-plan and stage architecture as a kind of provocation to the actors in their dance with space. In particular they work with Repetition, later creating right angles and doorways which the actors are able to echo through their bodies. Thus the relationship between actor and designer is a two-way and evolving process, each using the vocabulary of Viewpoints to feed the other. An idea that emerges for the designers from this initial exploration is to embed opportunities for repetition into seemingly decorative set elements. For example,

28. Floorplan.

a painting of a fruit bowl with an apple fallen from it is hung on the kitchen wall. In the second act we find a moment for a real apple to mysteriously fall, apparently unaided, from the real fruit bowl on the table, to heighten the sense that the house is invaded by mysterious forces and subject to physical as well as psychological manipulation. These design elements match the surprises in the Durang text. Another example is the stairs at the front door entrance which in the second act become detached from the wall, transforming into a vehicle that The Voices can manipulate as they take on corporeal being in the space.

A further example from these initial explorations lies in the work of the two actors playing Mrs Siezmagraff (Julia Croft) and Trudy (Kirsty Peters). Through a series of physical routines they develop a shared vocabulary of habitual movements and gestures as mother and daughter which enables them to work off each other to great effect. This is then translated by the designers into the costume choices. They make Peters' costume a paler and watered down, childish reflection of her mother's. The actors are able to discover a similar reflection in movement (Shape, Gesture, floor patterns and other) Tempo (Repetition, sharp changes of dynamic, acceleration and deceleration) in a very organic, non-cerebral way. Croft's willingness to extend beyond naturalism leads Peters to play in that area. In fact, Peters finds a hitherto undiscovered strength and nuance as an actor and her performance is strong and memorable as a result. In this way we lay down a habit of exploration throughout the first week, including daily Viewpoints improvisations, practicing awareness and choice.

We discover motifs that become a part of the work, quotidian and expressionistic. I notice, for example, that the actors playing The Voices tend to huddle together and then explode outwards into the space. In one session someone sneezes just as this outward explosion is happening. So this too becomes a part of the vocabulary. Viewpoints improvisations are heightening our ability to notice and utilise chance events and to act out of intuition. Nachmanovitch sees this access to intuition as a key creative force: 'The outpourings of intuition consist of a continuous, rapid flow of choice, choice, choice, choice. When we improvise with the whole heart, riding this flow, the choices and images open into each other so rapidly that we have no time to get scared and retreat from what intuition is telling us'.⁵⁰ It is this wave of intuition that we are riding as we start to explore the text alongside our evolving movement vocabulary.

⁵⁰ Nachmanovitch, 41.

In my diary on May 9th I write about the cast: 'they are already high on the ideas of this play ... we need to keep their crazy, roller-coaster ride energy going. I have really embraced the thought that there can be no back-up plan. We will go for the Viewpoints and composition all the way'.⁵¹ And so we enter rehearsals proper with a wild curiosity. I say 'we' because cast, crew and designers appear to have bought into the approach and all are avid to test it out on the text.

The Rehearsal Process: Viewpoints meet Text

Prior to rehearsals I have broken the text up into a series of what I call 'rhythms', sections that seem to hang together musically. Whenever a new quality or element comes into the text (sometimes the entry of a character, sometimes a major turning point or event) a new rhythm is introduced. In this way I am responding to the inherent music in the text without seeing any of these choices as definitive or 'right' in terms of textual analysis, but rather as useful working segments for rehearsal purposes. I give each of these rhythms a title to bring forward a quality or dominant focus I see inherent in that section which becomes a point of departure for the actors in building their compositions. For example, Rhythm 12, Act One is titled 'Buck's Photo Album' and covers a stretch of shared dialogue between Trudy and Buck, ended by Betty's entrance, introducing a new rhythm. If looked at alongside 'beats', 'units' and other methodologies for breaking down and analysing text, rhythms tend to be larger than segments of action and reaction, more responsive to the music of the text than its narrative content.

The method I used in creating the physical score of the work was one I had been introduced to by Anne Bogart in 2001.⁵² It is not a definitive method for working with Viewpoints, as I feel sure Bogart herself would state. But it is a way I find useful and inspirational throughout this production process. For each rhythm we create seven⁵³ still moments in the space. These are chosen by the actors in response to a provocation from around some element of the dynamic of the scene, including the title. For example, Act 1, Sc. 1, is divided into eight rhythms, the titles of which are: 'Betty and Trudy arrive', 'Trudy talks', 'Enter Keith', 'Laughter', 'Mrs. Siezmagraph crashes the holiday', 'Mrs Siezmagraph gossips about her daughter',

⁵¹ Annie Ruth, Production Diary, 2007.

⁵² Anne Bogart, LaMaMa International Directing Symposium, Spoleto, Italy, 2001.

⁵³ The number is essentially arbitrary and I have worked on other scripts using "five". Odd numbers feel more dynamic than even ones, a principle observed across a range of art media from visual to dance. Note Doris Humphrey's comments in *The Art of Making Dances*, (Princeton: Princeton Book Company, Dance Horizons, 1959): 'to use too much symmetry ... will spell monotony and death for a dance', 51.

'Enter Buck' and 'The phone call'. Each series of stills or resulting composition incorporates an awareness of the Viewpoints explored in our earlier work-shopping phase, positions that playfully revealed something about the space they are in, so that Topography, Spatial Relationship and Repetition reveal both character and narrative. I then ask the actors to move from one position to the next, exploring different qualities and tempi in response to each other, making sure that the sequencing of the 'stills' remains synchronised. We then drape the text over the action created out of the sequence of stills and their ever-changing movement linkage. By 'draping' I mean that we develop a choreography of movement in the space, set this (without setting the tempo or quality), and then the actors speak the words while performing the established movements. Thus the movement and the text are in dialogue.

I have referred to this earlier as initiating a kind of 'game' for the actors. The playful challenge is to ensure that the sequencing remains correct while exploring and challenging expectations through being kinaesthetically responsive to anything that arises. Thus a particular actor may delay moving from 'point 3', extending the duration of that moment even as the rest of the ensemble move towards 'point 4'. The ensemble would be aware that they could not progress to 'point 5' until the actor on 'point 3' has moved through 'point 4' even if that moment is long delayed or unbelievably brief. Working in this fashion, the actors explore timing, sometimes working in unison, sometimes in counterpoint. To achieve the choreography they have to know what every other actor is doing at any given moment. The quality of awareness engendered by this 'game' is acute. It is one of the huge benefits of this way of working, this intense alertness to the movement of others. They are in action. The fierceness of their attention animates the space. The focus is outwards and not on the self. It is impossible to drift into memory and repeat the decisions of a previous rehearsal when your most intense concentration is focused outwards to catch a fleeting moment in the movement of another.

In a text-driven approach the text determines the action. In this approach there is a conversation between the two, the conversation reported by Lampe earlier in this chapter. In *Betty's Summer Vacation* the movements are not strongly dissociated with the text as they were in Bogart's *Death and the Ploughman* or *Small Lives, Big Dreams*. It is a closer conversation, but a conversation nevertheless and often opens up moments that are unexpected and filled with that elusive quality of 'alive-li-ness'. In early rehearsals one of the challenges for me is to encourage an awareness of scoring in the actors so that they work off their own patterning rather than off my responses, developing a focus on actions in space rather than diving into

interpretation of the text. What becomes visible to us all is the density of the text/body that is emerging through this approach. For example the actor playing Buck creates a sequence of actions that relates to sexual invasion: 'Wow, I've got a boner. Wanna see?'⁵⁴ When we drape the text over the action, that quality is still there, as expected. What is not expected is the quality of tenderness that also emerges, as though this predatory male is simultaneously a child seeking comfort. This gives the relationship between text and choreography and between actor and actor a greater degree of complexity.

The other delicious variable in this choreography of movement is the 'how'. The quality of the gesture from each actor is a provocation to the others. "Today I see you make that gesture a caress and my kinaesthetic response is to respond with my own gesture as a slap," (or an answering caress or whatever arises in the actor at that moment.) Because the actions are created independently from the text, with time and space as their impetus, the actors naturally make choices that are physically alive and quite often physically challenging. They avoid the 'social norm' of standing a socially acceptable distance apart and just talking at each other that is so often the default position in a naturalistic script, including the beginning territory of this play, choices of 'socially acceptable' but theatrically mundane. Structuring blocking around Viewpoints compositional elements gives them a multitude of possibilities in exploring the 'how' of the action, choices changing in every performance, with the audience's contribution (their reactions, movements etc) a part of that change.

Of course, an understanding of their 'characters' informs these choices. But the choices themselves are made for reasons other than character, avoiding the comment: 'But that's not how my character would behave'. I believe such comments arise from a fear of the unexpected and the uncontrollable. They are essentially reductive because if we apply the same comment to ourselves we see that circumstances can propel us into doing things we would previously have considered inconceivable. The physical life of the people on the stage becomes the beginning place and the actors find themselves doing almost anything and perversely (so it seems to them) finding that almost anything can work to illuminate the text. Through their poeticised bodies, to use Lockford and Pelia's beautiful phrase⁵⁵, the unconscious is free to offer options that need no logical or analytical justification so often those choices are compelling, surprising and revelatory.

⁵⁴ Durang, (1999), Act One, Scene Two, 13.

⁵⁵ See Chapter Two.

29. Buck assaulting Trudy: Rehearsal and rehearsal script.

Placing different rhythms and realities hard against each other is another technique we explore and develop over the rehearsal period. As we place our choreography against the text we become aware of the way in which it resonates against Durang's words, the naturalistic world of Betty disturbed and distorted by the relentless sounds from Trudy as she crashes around the beach house at the top of the play, by the entry of the other 'flat mates' and by the increasingly bizarre events of the play.

This aural dimension is challenging for the cast while being an enormous source of playfulness. Vocal habits are deeply connected to the sense of self and more difficult for these training actors to explore than the life of the body. A deeper mining of the possibilities in the vocal Viewpoints would have assisted, I believe, a rather 'soggy' moment in the second act, where the energy between the actors dipped and the text felt over-written, the alive-li-ness of the work compromised. This is around a sequence when The Voices cajole and bully the exhausted holiday makers into entertaining them further as they try to go to bed: 'Well, we're *not* tired. Don't leave us, Betty, help us focus our minds on something'. 'I want to see naked pictures of Brad Pitt', 'We're not done yet!' while the ever-reasonable Betty remonstrates: 'Now look! - you've had a sexual assault, a removal of genitals, a beheading and a simulation of a very dramatic trial. I don't know what else you want from us'.⁵⁶ In their best performances the dip almost disappears. But never entirely. This may be an attribute of the Durang text as well as of our particular production. However, greater attention to timing, rhythm and collisions of rhythm in this section may have tightened the work.

⁵⁶ Durang, (1999), Act Two, 78.

In the first rehearsals on the text there is an extraordinary moment of 'aaahaa!!!!'. Suddenly the actors become aware of the possibilities opened up by this way of working. They see that the first scene has a sense of life and an exciting shape, right from the first moment. They see that they are active in making that shape. 'Life' can be, and is discovered through form. They then key into the fact that they can be playfully aware of each other at the same time as being utterly specific in their physicality – shape, gesture, position

30. Movement flow around set.

in space. As articulated by Bogart, quoted in Chapter Two, the 'what' and the 'where' are fixed while the 'when' and 'how' are free. I take this on board in making this work and the actors seize it with alacrity. As we work we target Spatial Relationship, and Kinaesthetic Response, developing extended routines and choreography. These Viewpoints of Space assist the young actors to find the exuberance of Durang as well as to truly fill the space. In my diary, May 15th, I write: 'The precision is also building ... their attention is not on the feeling or their expression but on the exactness of the gesture in placing it in space and in its own details.... To this they add the awareness of each other that will dictate/influence the timing and the how.... They are being authors'. The actors are utilising the choreography and their understanding developed through Viewpoints to create a body text, a dramaturgy that sits alongside Durang's, sometimes enhancing, sometimes opposing it, always consciously sculpting space and time.

An interesting challenge is the realisation of *The Voices*. They function as a unit while having strong individual flavours. The designers, Megan Frauenstein and Leanne Stevenson, create costumes for them indicating that they are deeply accumulative. They see them as representing the world of media and sensation, greedily adding stories, images etc to their costumes as they exploit the emotions and stories of the other characters. These design choices reflect the work done with the actors in the first week of exploration. The designers look for opportunities for the actors to interact with their garments, incorporating

31. *Voices costumes.*

Repetition, encouraging them to link with each other. In the early scenes these qualities are entirely communicated through their voices as *The Voices* comment on the on-stage action: 'We're uncomfortable. And so we laughed'⁵⁷, 'What did Keith say? ... Did he say he cut off heads?',⁵⁸ 'It's his penis, stupid',⁵⁹ becoming more and more invasive and demanding. They work strongly with acceleration and deceleration, and once they have materialised on the set they continue this physically, adding images and trinkets to pockets and tucks in their costume, cannibalising the household's magazines. They are also given a strong Relationship to Architecture – appearing out of it and then destroying the environment of their hosts.

⁵⁷ Durang, (1999,) Act One, Sc. 3, 20.

⁵⁸ Durang, (1999), Act One, Sc. 4, 32.

⁵⁹ Durang, (1999), Act One, Sc. 5, 41.

Using the Viewpoints of Repetition, Tempo and Kinaesthetic Response helps the actors anchor themselves to each other in opposition to the rest of the cast and thinking about these issues through the language of Viewpoints is useful to the designers in assisting them to make choices that aid such a linkage. In

32. Voice 1 (Kristyl Noho) breaking through painting.

Voice 2 (Dawn Cheong) emerging out of the fridge.

exploring the Viewpoints of space we pay attention to working the number 'three', both spatially in triangles and numerically in deploying the Voices. When they physically enter the space they appear from three

33. Voice 3 emerging from couch.

Designers' (Meggan Frauenstein & Leanne Stevenson) drawing.

points on the set, emerging out of the furniture. I love this moment. It so transgresses the realities of the physical space and the violation for the holiday-makers is extreme. Voice One breaks through a large photo of Marilyn Monroe (taking on Marilyn's gestural language as she does so). Voice Two appears out of the fridge (taking on a certain coldness and contained quality), and Voice Three come up out of the couch on which Betty is sitting, appearing like the body invaders in the film, *Alien*, groping hand foremost, (exploring gross, invading gestures, violating domestic security). They triangulate the space, sending Betty, the only one on stage at that moment, hurtling from area to area in an attempt to evade their grasp. When the Voices act together as a mass the effect is to tilt the balance of the stage, weighting it in one direction or another.

As the play progresses this manipulation of the space becomes concrete, with entry stairs removed by the actors playing the Voices, whirling around in the space to create a moving platform, both as a kind of battering ram to advance on the rest of the cast, and as a makeshift trial dais. At this point, with the entry platform taking up the central space on the stage where the couch had been, the Voices heave the couch into a space in the front row of the audience, joining them as audience. By now the fourth wall is well and truly broken with the audience themselves invaded by the usurping Voices. As the rehearsal process develops we begin to focus on the Viewpoints of rhythm, exploring moments of extended duration so that the rhythmic life of the piece become layered and complex. We introduce moments of acceleration and deceleration. I note an increasing ability in the cast to take the work into ever freer explorations breaking away from psychological realism. They find extremes of physicality, becoming comfortable with a wider range. Contrasts are deepened and collisions encouraged, working from the unbearably close and the impossibly loud, to distressingly far and disturbingly soft. Because they are focusing on these concerns, they are not tempted to dilute them into a preconceived notion of appropriate characterisation, and so are able to find a wide and varied vocabulary. The work, initiated in the first week of exploration, continues to inform the strong choices, so that text and action remain in conversation with each other rather than the latter being at the service of the former.

We work with the Voices using Vocal Viewpoints to develop their impact in the first act, when they are heard but never seen, working with rhythmic sequences, endowing each voice with a different tonal quality and tempo. We explore acceleration and deceleration and changes in pitch. Most successfully, we explore Repetition to highlight humour in the text. I had intended to continue this work with the whole cast,

particularly in the developing chaos of the second act, but time constraints and other points of focus fill up the time. The only other time we work with a sustained, strong and conscious use of the vocal Viewpoints is in the epilogue, where Betty (Sara Allen) explores changes in pitch and pace to highlight her departure from being the one sane point of focus in the play, to someone now utterly out of touch with reality, a woman who has been pushed too far.

34. *Voices triangulate set.*

As we go into the theatre for final rehearsals we refine and revise our beginning choices. Often we find that they have not been bold enough or that we have lost the precision. A huge joy in terms of this performative

35. *Voices corral the women.*

Voices accuse Trudy, 'TV' Trial - Technical rehearsal.

research is hearing the actors calling for us to return to the Viewpoints to ignite or refine the work. Whenever we hit a moment of difficulty they return to the choreography, work for greater precision or challenge each other with the timing. It is clear that they have 'bought in' to the methodology and made it

36. *Physicality of the Voices.*

their own. In fact, time and again an actor will comment: 'We could not have achieved this in any other way'. They see the methodology as their creative friend and apply it constantly. This 'buy in' from the actors is achieved by the effectiveness, in their eyes, of the methodology. It is also apparent that they remain extremely alert to each other. When actors are working with an awareness of Viewpoints the individual cannot lose track of the rest of the ensemble – they are always conscious of what everyone else is doing, keeping their work edgy, watchful.

By opening night the cast are hungry to bring this work to an audience, to weave audience reactions, whatever they might be, into the total work. The outrageous comedy in the script, married to such dark content makes that particularly unpredictable. We hope to beguile them initially into behaving like a sit-com audience so that they gradually discover the invasiveness of the Voices along with the inhabitants of the house and experience a similar shift in perspective. In a work that juxtaposes laughter and rape, dating strategies and mass murder, can we keep them with us and will the work we have done to maintain a quality of 'alive-li-ness' be enhanced by their presence?

Performance: Encountering the Audience

The application of Viewpoints in making a physical and rhythmic 'score' as the foundation of the actors' work gives the cast a meta-text that helps to make the work vital, resonant and expansive so that they can fully inhabit the bizarre and extended world of Christopher Durang. It also gives them huge permission to work with and off each other and the audience. Through a number of devices, we have set up a condition of possibility for the audience. The close attention paid by the actors to each other, watching for changes in timing and dynamic, finding the moments of simultaneity and repetition, conjures up a sense of expectation and anticipation for the audience and deepens their quality of attention in an unconscious kinaesthetic response to the actors. This focused listening is noted by Jude Gibson, the professional actor brought in by the school to provide feedback to the actors. She writes:

From the moment the lights went up I found myself immersed in the world of the play.... It never faltered. All of the characters were unique and well delineated.... Each character's physicality made sense and I delighted in hearing each actor's true voice at work. As an ensemble the focus on stage was clear from moment to moment, everyone was listening intently to their fellow actors and keeping the ball in the air.⁶⁰

Yet in rehearsals we gave no focus to delineating characters, working, rather, on space and time. Gibson's comments bear out my contention that 'character' arises in the perception of the observer and the strong choreographic choices and focus on rhythm help her to hear each actor's 'true voice'. Their state of 'being in action' means that the ball is always in the air.

The Durang script has a number of surprises written into it and these moments of shock are definitely a part of his aesthetic. But these alone would not have provoked the quality of attention I perceive in the performances of *Betty's Summer Vacation*. It is a quality set up by the cast and experienced by both themselves and the audience. It is not constant. There are moments when it drops. But the cast and I both identify those moments of success to be twinned with moments when the actors are working strongly and joyfully through this methodology. The audience are able to participate in genuine moments of

⁶⁰ Jude Gibson, External Assessor's Report, Toi Whakaari 2007.

discovery and surprise as part of the game. I compare this to the crowd at a rugby match. They share with the players a fundamental understanding of the rules of the game but not the particular strategies or tactics that will be employed. In the moment they, like the players, discover the way it will play out.

Towards the end, when the world of the play begins to utterly unravel, there is a second where all the actors coincide in a moment of gestural repetition – each performed at a different rhythm and with different qualities, but each building up a total stage picture as if something outside of them has begun to control their action. Below are images of this moment – in rehearsal and in performance. In the photos the

37. In rehearsal.

In performance.

actor playing Mrs Siezmagraff is not in sync with the other actors, though she is for the instant prior to the photograph. In playing with the timing of these moments while holding a sense of autonomy, the cast set up a creative tension that contributes to the surprise and effectiveness of their work in performance. The language of the Viewpoints gives us a means to focus the pressure-cooker intimacy of the environment. The juxtaposition of cruel and funny is an aspect we had explored in rehearsal many times, using repetition of gesture and spatial relationships to place situations up against each other and to remind the audience, perhaps subliminally, that they have seen these gestures before in a different context. In this way we bring the wider social context, explored initially in rehearsals, into the performative moment.

As the performance continues, it is Trudy's world that is reinforced so that Betty's imperative to hold onto her reason and reality becomes more and more challenged. Bogart has described the task of the actor to

'speak clearly, to articulate, from a state of imbalance and to carve the experience while in flight.'⁶¹ For the actor, working with juxtaposed tempos heightens this sense of imbalance and draws in the audience to

38. Sara Allen (Betty) working with imbalance, rehearsal and performance.

viscerally experience Betty's plight. Bogart says: 'The art happens in the midst of flight. It does not happen from a state of equilibrium or balance.... It happens when you leap with intention.'⁶² By the end of the play Betty is working in a state of precarious balance, her rhythms interrupted, distorted and finally destroyed even as the beach house burns: 'I seem to be on the beach. And the house seems to be smouldering somewhere behind me in the distance. Isn't the sound of the ocean wonderful? ... Now I'm sad. Now I'm frightened. No, now I'm fine. Listen to the ocean'.⁶³ Working first with a rhythmic focus and later with physical imbalance gives her a concrete place from which to hold these elements. The actor does not have to mine her own experiences and bring them into line with her character as in a 'method' approach. Rather, together we set up the conditions for her body to tangibly experience the loss of equilibrium and out of that loss she speaks the text. That this happens in a space the audience had previously considered 'theirs', at the end of the third row of their seats, in a final breaking of the fourth wall, intensifies their identification with the actor.

⁶¹ Bogart, (2007), 20

⁶² Bogart, (2007), 39

⁶³ Durang, (1999), Epilogue, 88.

We work the Viewpoint of Repetition, not just in the moment, but by referencing previous sequences. For example, the many times when a character opens the fridge: Buck gets a beer from it and flings himself onto the couch; Mrs Siezmagraff gets a martini from it and flings her herself over the couch, echoing Buck's movement and taking it further; then later, Betty opens the fridge and finds the severed penis in it; she flings herself backward, pirouetting, falling over the couch, pirouetting again and finally dropping to the floor at the front of the stage. The earlier moves are echoed, extended and taken to a new place. It is still funny but also horrible.

The use of surprise revelations of character, object and space is a successful element in the production arising out of experiments with the Viewpoint: Relationship to Architecture. Mrs Siezmagraph has gin bottles hidden all round the set – in the arm of the couch, in the bottom tread of the stair, in the picture over the sink and finally in the back railing of the central aisle among the audience seating. The fridge's interior is different every time it is opened, from quotidian beer-bottles, to the severed penis, to the emerging of Voice Three. It makes a statement that objects are mutable and nothing is necessarily as it seems. The culmination of this is the *coup de théâtre* of the Voices emerging from the furniture. From that moment of entry, the demolition of the world of the holiday cottage begins. The Voices peel away the stairs from the entryway and use them as a movable platform stage for their interrogation and intimidation of the others. They intrude into the audience space, settling the couch among the front row, making themselves an audience for 'Court TV'. They put pressure on the rest of the cast to respond in a rapidly disintegrating environment. All of these choices are inventive and playful ways of working with spatial relationships and the architecture of the set and represent collaboration between the designers and the actors, all utilising the Viewpoints according to their particular discipline.

Playfulness leads to another strong choice throughout the production, prompted by the demands of thinking and exploring through the Viewpoints the virtuosity of the physical routines developed by the cast. These increase as rehearsals progress. We make the choice to accelerate the tempi to kinaesthetically reinforce the increasing lack of control by the characters. Mrs Siezmagraph in particular has a number of 'falling' routines that occur mostly around her entrances and exits. For example, the 'stung by a stingray' moment at the end of Act 1, Scene 2, routines that see her somersault over the couch, and most spectacularly see her fall down the flight of entrance stairs in Act 2. Buck (James Kupa) enters in Act 2 to find the stairs gone from the door and drops to the floor in a fall that becomes a somersault. The entanglement of most of the

cast in the telephone wire, as Buck sets up his rendezvous with the local 'randy widow' highlights the increasing entanglement of the characters in an out of control world, and Betty's long epilogue speech is a bravura performance by Allen, where she stays physically off balance the entire time, balanced on her toes, physicalising her lack of connection with normality by her lack of connection with the earth.

39. Mrs Siezmagraff's falling routine.

Her entry into the darkened house.

Looking back I see that I could have made stronger use of the physical adeptness of this cast. We could have deepened the pleasure of the audience in their agility, while keying in more deeply to the role of the Voices through the use of Repetition. Working more strongly with duration, giving space and 'air' around those sequences, and making use of repetition to feature them, would have heightened both awareness and enjoyment in Mrs Siezmagraff's entry and fall down the stairs, for example. The actor could have done this twenty times in a row if asked. Had we repeated it several times, each time winding time backwards in order to see it again, we would have reinforced the voyeurism of the Voices and their power relationship to the people of the house, as well as our own pleasure in the theatrical moment.

I could also have made stronger and more consistent use of the vocal Viewpoints to unlock the actors' vocal habits and encourage the same degree of playfulness and awareness as they were discovering in their bodies. Bogart and Landau point out 'Vocal Viewpoints generates an adventurous attitude to the voice's potential through freedom, control and responsiveness'.⁶⁴ The cast have found great freedom physically but their vocal work remains constrained. I determine to bring this aspect forward in my next production and discover if a disjunction between the words and the manner in which they are spoken can

⁶⁴ Bogart and Landau, 105.

have the same enlivening and surprising effect as that achieved by separating the choreography from the text.

There also remains a contextual question in my mind about giving the full weight to the violence (off stage) in the play as balanced against the comedy. There are places where we never quite got this right. This may be a textual question rather than something to address through the Viewpoints but I cannot be sure. Most significant was the off-stage rape of Trudy. We focused attention on her mother, Mrs Siezmagraph, and her inability to respond or take the rape seriously – which I think was appropriate, and the intention of the text. But surely there should also have been a moment where the true horror of the situation was allowed to sit with the audience? Had we found that moment of punctuation I think the audience reactions to the rest of the scene would have been more complex. This is again a question of rhythm, and of style. Can farce crack open to allow us to absorb the weight of the subject beneath the humour? I believe it can and I believe that this intent is inherent in the Durang text. Working with a radical change in rhythm, slowing down time so that the situation could be absorbed and considered, might have brought this out. But it was not something we ever fully embodied in this production.

Durang's play gives us characters pressed up against each other in a confined environment, the isolation of a holiday cottage. Highlighting this discomfort could have been taken further. A stronger focus on a collision of rhythms could have deepened the manifestation of this collision of worlds interrogating further the possibilities arising out of their uncomfortable proximity to each other. Proximity is not the same thing as connection, and working with this to highlight the 'disconnects' might have held the darker themes of the work more firmly. Art critic Leo Steinberg described *Washington's Golden Egg*, an art work by Rauschenberg, saying: "...Near and Next admit no felt neighbouring, only disjunction by juxtaposition. The more closely pressed, the keener the dissociation. Items estranged by adjacency, like renters in urban apartments, or travelers, economy class."⁶⁵ Steinberg was writing about Rauschenberg but he might just as well have been writing about the work of Christopher Durang. In *Betty's Summer Vacation*, characters constantly violate each other's autonomy. They force intimacy. They desire it and grab for it. But they resist the mutuality of relinquishing their own autonomy. In all of them love has mutated into greed. They are vitally alive in their insatiable greediness. We needed to hit these disconnects harder and stronger and I believe Viewpoints work ideally in striving to achieve this.

⁶⁵ Leo Steinberg, *Encounters with Rauschenberg*, The Menil Collection, (Chicago: Houston & The University of Chicago Press), 67.

At the end of this process questions remain for me. While *Betty's Summer Vacation* is primarily a naturalistic text, Durang distorts that naturalism taking it into a weirdly extended world, showing where our preoccupation with 'performing' rather than 'living' our lives is taking us. It is clear that the Viewpoints methodology has been an excellent tool in making this text, especially its comedy, sing, that they had a truly vitalising effect and liberated the cast to make work at great speed and that this served well Betty's crazy and extended world. The disjunction between text and action highlighted the disjunctions of Durang's world and contributed to the comedy. But what would be their effect on works that were more delicate, texts that are thought of as essentially character driven? How would my directorial proposition sing in a work that dealt in a more complex and subtle way with character relationships? Could such a text speak strongly through its words even as the actors speak through their bodies?

Bogart has been criticised for lacking an appreciation of words. Lampe comments on this, seeing Bogart's focus on *action* as a product of her American sensibilities: 'Despite the inspiration she received from the mature experiments of her European teachers and colleagues, she recognised an essential difference. No matter how experimental the productions were, the emphasis was on the analysis and interpretation of the *word*. In contrast, her American sensibility focuses her scrutiny on *action*'.⁶⁶ Charles Isherwood criticises a more recent production of Bogart's: 'She [Anne Bogart] does not have a delicate ear for text, to put it mildly, and the house style acting of the SIT Company favours movement over literate interpretation.'⁶⁷ I cannot comment on these productions, not having seen the work. But the question of Viewpoints effectiveness as applied to highly literate text is a key performance research question in this thesis. I ask at the beginning of the work on *Betty's Summer Vacation* whether the Viewpoints could be applied to work of any style. More importantly, in the light of the work on *Betty's Summer Vacation*, I am now asking: can the Viewpoints be applied without imposing a level of abstraction or heightening on the work? To explore this further, I need to apply the understanding developed over the course of directing *Betty's Summer Vacation*, to a more complex, delicate and literary text.

⁶⁶ Lampe, 21-22.

⁶⁷ Charles , wood, 'Proof That Virginia Woolf Did Have a Light Side', *New York Times*, (New York: January 26, 2009) www.imdb.com/name/nm0941173/publicity

***The Glass Menagerie* 2008**

I begin these rehearsals with that clear question before me: will the time/space language of the Viewpoints allow for the delicacy and nuance that *The Glass Menagerie* invites, while making it vitally alive? Will the actors still buy into this methodology when the text is part of the literary, twentieth century canon? This is a 'workshop' production, edited down to a half hour presentation and technically unsupported except for whatever these actors in their final year of training can create themselves. From the outset I work only through a Viewpoints-based choreography as a rehearsal tool. Persuading the actors that all the nuance and delicacy of the *Glass Menagerie* would stay in play through this approach is a challenge. They need convincing that they can extend their physical life without destroying, but rather enhancing the relationships in the text. The challenges becomes lesser daily as I grow confident in leading them in Viewpoints-based work and they make delightful discoveries that make the text sing in both their bodies and imaginations. One danger of naturalism is that it can bleed the aesthetics out of performance. In this work the cast and I are focusing on physical and vocal aesthetics in a playful manner, always following the actors' choices initially and then refining them as stronger options became visible, trusting that the strength of the text will remain. We hope of course to make it more visible through this 'dance' of sound and movement. In dance audiences accept quite abstracted movement and have learnt to interpret it. My suspicion is that theatre audiences can be just as at ease with stylised movement when words enter the performance vocabulary – if we allow them to be.

The Glass Menagerie tells the story of a family living in St Louis during the Great Depression. It is told from the perspective of the son of the family, Tom, who has fled the hopeless and claustrophobic life with his mother and sister, and is haunted by their memory. The play has strong autobiographical elements for Williams, as Lyle Leverich writes: 'For the first thirty years of his life he was living *The Glass Menagerie*, and it was from that traumatic experience that his masterpiece – this "little play," as he disdainfully called it – evolved'.⁶⁸ In the play Tom works daily in a shoe factory while his mother tries to marry off his crippled sister Laura to a 'gentleman caller'. Williams describes the repetitiveness of that time in his life: '... seems

⁶⁸ Lyle Leverich, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), xxiii.

like one day in my life. It was all one day over and over'⁶⁹ and it is this sense of endless repetition that we seek in developing the physical score for the play.

As in *Betty's Summer Vacation*, the application of Viewpoints to making a physical and rhythmic 'score' is the foundation of the actors' work. The choreography gives them a meta-text on which to place the character work they have explored and helps to make it vital – more resonant than could be found (I believe) in the psychological approach as is usual in such 'naturalistic' texts. For this project we work with the number 'five'. Each rhythm (set in much the same way as described for *Betty's Summer Vacation*) contains five static, unison, choreographed moments, chosen by the actors to embody some quality or relationship of each particular rhythm. The choice to work with a smaller number of fixed points per rhythm is instinctive rather than driven by analysis, but seems to work well, as we explore the possibilities on the floor. We pay particular attention to rhythm in doing this. As we see it, each of these characters has a markedly different relationship with time and the level of urgency that ebbs and flows between them. This Viewpoint is worked with more fully in this production than it had been in my earlier work.

Given this sensitivity to rhythm and timing I choose to work with a live musician on stage rather than in the wings as indicated in the text. The cello player constantly improvises alongside the actor's movements and the spoken text. Linking Laura with the musician assists her to keep the disconnected rhythms of her character focused outwards, a point of resistance to her character's tendency to disappear into an internal world. Similarly Amanda and Tom experience time differently, Tom fighting the pull of two forces, his responsibilities at home and his need to engage with the world as an artist, Amanda holding onto the world and time of her youth and attempting to impose it on her children. For her it is a struggle to make time stand still and conform to her expectations of it.

The use of Viewpoints takes the work into the distortions of memory and helps to make clear that the world seen through memory, is not necessarily daily reality. Tom, for example, enters the space repeating the gesture Laura is doing with one of the glass pieces. From the very beginning Tom states that the play is memory and therefore not realistic and here he repeats whatever gesture she is exploring at that moment, as does Amanda, her mother, watching from the doorway. The repetition is underneath the action. Each of

⁶⁹ Leverich, 483.

the characters/actors fills the gesture with their own needs of the moment: 'The play is memory. Being a memory play it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic'.⁷⁰ In this production we work to make the distortions of memory palpable, without losing the deep connection between the family members. We are creating a dramaturgy of bodies in space that sits alongside Williams' beautiful text, at times highlighting the poignancy of the moment, at others revealing how very funny we can be at our most serious or vulnerable.

40. Laura (Esther Green) examining a glass animal, observed by Tom (James Kupa).

We discover a sense of lives shared and steeped in a claustrophobic space over considerable time, and this sense emerges and is reinforced without any psychological prompting. This patterning recurs again and again, with gestures repeated and echoed by others as can be seen in the two rehearsal images below. The first image shows Amanda's drive to 'get alongside her daughter' and persuade her to entertain a 'gentleman caller'. In the second, a moment that always delights me in performance, Laura's gesture with one of her glass menagerie is echoed by the other two actors, each of whom has an entirely different

⁷⁰ Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, (New York: New Directions Books, 1999, original publication New York: Random House, 1945), Scene One, 5.

quality to and reason for the movement. This provides an exciting and demanding point of focus for the actors – using the Viewpoint of Repetition they maintain their distinctive rhythms while still echoing each other physically.

41. Gestural Repetition.

To build the work we focus on the Viewpoints of Tempo, Duration, Topography, Kinaesthetic Response and Repetition. This means that the space is very fully used. The decision to place it in three-quarter audience

42. Performance space showing characteristic movement flow and audience position.

surround, very close and intimate, emphasises the stifling nature of the small apartment. It also recognises the rough nature of the basement theatre space, creating a small place of cosy light in a crude surround – much as Amanda was creating (attempting to create) a home in the bleak surroundings of down-town St Louis during the great Depression. This is one aspect that I believe I could have intensified, using the Viewpoint of Relationship to Architecture, and building a deeper acknowledgement of the actual performance space. Encouraging the actors to be more deeply aware of the grunge and hostility of the actual surrounding space would have heightened their relationship to the entire architecture, and through this to the difficult and cramped conditions experienced by this family in depression time St Louis. Through this, the actors and we the audience would have found a deeper appreciation of the fragility of this world of the play, the world of our own memories, and the ease with which any glass menagerie can be broken. In the image below the proximity of the audience to the stage is clear.

43. Proximity of audience.

Towards the end of the performance there is a scene where Tom and his mother are left at the breakfast table, drinking coffee. Using repetition and mirroring the two actors are able to anchor the sense of ingrained family patterns and behaviour as cups are lowered or raised together; and to mark the dislocation when Tom chooses to break the uncomfortable silence and attempt reconciliation. This setting up a pattern and breaking it has comic as well as dramatic effect. Cummings describes a similar use of everyday movements in Bogart's production of *Private Lives*, where a sense of shared ritual is emphasised:

As the prim-and-proper foursome banter about the glories of travel, they share the ritual of morning coffee...placing their napkins, stirring their coffee, clinking their spoons, and raising their cups to drink at precisely the same time. The boorish Elyot Chase, out of sync with the others, finds that each time he clangs down his cup in its saucer the lights change noticeably, the first hint that the surface of theatrical events will not remain smooth.⁷¹

In our scenes from *The Glass Menagerie* the musician underscores the play between the actors, so that when Tom finally gets to his feet to apologise to Amanda we have a rare moment of silence into which his awkward words fall: 'Mother. I – I apologise, Mother. I'm sorry for what I said, for everything that I said, I didn't mean it'.⁷²

Both Tom and Laura play off the cellist considerably. Tuning into rhythm and duration as part of the structure of rehearsals has made them kinaesthetically sensitive to the musical offerings. Another feature of this aural landscape is the play with duration, physical and vocal. Full stops (a complete suspension of action and text) are used to point up moments of emotional intensity, such as when Tom throws his writings up in the air. The actors wait until the fluttering papers come to rest before carrying on with the scene. This suspended moment allows the audience to catch their breath and to fully take in the sense of transgression in his action.

In *The Glass Menagerie* we are able to work more effectively with the vocal Viewpoints. Vocal Viewpoints approach the text for its aural qualities rather than its meaning, giving the actors a point of reference to experiment with the sound. As with movement choices this helps to break them free of the habitual and the quotidian and to explore more unusual and evocative choices. Amanda uses acceleration as part of her mimicry of the typing instructor in her confrontation with Laura around her non-attendance at Rubicon's Business College. She gets faster and faster in her delivery so that her voice has some of the qualities of type-writer keys pounded by the expert and patronising instructor, deliverer of this unwelcome news of her daughter: 'I wonder if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days' attendance? ... Her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys! The first time we

⁷¹ Scott T. Cummings, 135

⁷² Williams, (1945), Scene Four, 31.

gave a speed test, she broke down completely – was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room!’⁷³ At the same time the increasing speed communicates Amanda’s rising distress.

Tom and Amanda work with changes in pitch, volume and dynamic during their confrontation over his frequent attendance at the movies. This is encouraged by having a live musician on the stage with them, so that an awareness of musicality is built into their aural environment. Contributing to this is the richness of Williams’ beautiful text which draws this vocal experimentation out of the cast and leads me as director to give particular focus to their vocal qualities both for the sound as sound and for their contribution to layering and enriching the performance. Amanda’s pitch and volume choices are echoed and repeated by Tom and vice versa. Tom mimics Amanda’s intonation on the word ‘house’: ‘... I won’t allow such filth to be brought into my house’,⁷⁴ and moments later Amanda reciprocates:

Tom: I don’t want to hear any more!
 Amanda: You *will* hear more, you –
 Tom: No, I won’t hear more, I’m going out!⁷⁵

Neither of these actors had worked instinctively and habitually with a wide vocal range. Yet working with the vocal Viewpoints, they feel free to explore these qualities anew in every performance, sometimes discovering an unusual timbre which the other would then echo. Not only does this highlight the argument, it reminds us that they are mother and son, and despite the huge differences in world view and desire, their genetic links sound in their voices. Watching, I find the moment funny, sad, and deeply human. By focusing on the tangible vocal qualities, they are able to find a deep psychological connection without striving for it, without tension or self-consciousness.

We make use of practical lights which the actor playing Tom controls, so that moments of Repetition, Duration or vocal distortion can be highlighted. This also reminds us that we are in the world of Tom’s memories – the past selected by him and revealed in flashes of light rather than through a linear narrative structure, light controlled in an overtly theatrical way by the narrator. This use of light is more connected to a sense of space and time as explored through the Viewpoints than we achieved in *Betty’s Summer*

⁷³ Williams, (1945), Scene Two, 14.

⁷⁴ Williams, (1945), Scene Three, 21

⁷⁵ Williams, (1945), Scene Three, 22.

Vacation. Bogart and Landau's claim that Viewpoints 'explodes the envelope'⁷⁶ liberating the actors to make more lateral choices is borne out by our experiences as we explore ways to stage this contemporary classic inside a rough, bare space. We are able to surprise both ourselves and our audiences and doubtless this contributes to the sense of 'alive-li-ness' in the work.

Summary

Following these explorations I feel increasingly confident that Viewpoints as a rehearsal methodology illuminates any text to which it is applied. I began this exploration with *Small Lives, Big Dreams* in 2005. Discussed in Chapter Two, and the two productions discussed here open up a great deal more in the application of a Viewpoints derived choreography and its life-giving properties. This interrogation is an inspiring and liberating addition to my work as a director, inviting the sense of danger that the Auden poem evokes, combined with a spirit of 'play'. It grows out of my earlier improvisation work, such as *What's Bred in the Bone*⁷⁷ where I discovered the powerful need of the performer to play and the deep pleasure experienced by an audience when they witness the genuine moment of creation. Viewpoints-based choreography allows the actor to play while held within a tightly controlled structure in which both choreography and text are fixed. It encourages a playful response within the ensemble and allows the audience into that playfulness. In the summary of Chapter Two I write of performers who work with an awareness of patterns, noticing and remembering in a kinaesthetic dance, using their poeticised bodies to be sufficiently free to act and adapt within the moment. The work with Viewpoints is a very particular approach to improvisation, one that has the potential to continue the 'play' into performance without compromising the artistic structuring of the work. It has the improvisational qualities of boundary negotiation, being in action, spontaneity within patterns and attention to an underlying game. At the same time it has the quality of artistry that resides in making choices and holding to them with fierce precision.

I continue to develop my own way of working with these Viewpoints concepts, drawing on my work with both Bogart and Landau (International Directing Symposium, LaMaMa Spoleto 2001 and 2006 respectively). Both practitioners open up for me ways of thinking about stage time and space. But it would be arrogant to describe my way of working as 'the Bogart way'. Rather, it is an approach I draw from her

⁷⁶ Bogart and Landau, 125.

⁷⁷ See Chapter Two.

teaching and may in fact have little or no resemblance (or indeed every resemblance) to her way of putting a show together, as I explore this juxtaposition of precision and volatility.

I can now see that the work has also opened up a space that continues outside the theatre for performers and audience alike to consider both the content and form of the work, and that the act of paying attention to the present also opens up a way for all to pay attention to the text. Far from distracting or supplanting the

44. Process of work and re-work.

text in the performance event, the choreographic life of the production allows the words of the text to be heard, and heard anew, just as I heard so clearly the text of Bogart's *Death and the Ploughman* when I saw it at the Melbourne Festival. In the case of *Betty's Summer Vacation*, the dissonance between the movement vocabulary and the text is not as great as in the Bogart work and it is a smaller and less challenging journey for the audience to link the two events, to be delighted by the conversation between the two vocabularies. The rhythm and pace of the work, at its best, had all present breathing in a complex harmony that surprised, opened possibilities and took questions into the time and space after the event.

This paradox is very pleasing to me, the possibility that by refusing supremacy to the text, the text is heard more clearly, more vividly and with greater reverberation than had we set out to serve it. Bogart describes this as a kind of 'turning' which allows multiple meanings to emerge: 'To release the potential in a word or action requires the actor to perform in such a way that does not describe its meaning but rather turns it slightly so that the multiplicity of its potential meanings are evident and awake'.⁷⁸ Casting across gender and emphasising race through casting 'turned' the audiences' expectations in *Troilus & Cressida*. It encouraged them to see the world from a different perspective. Similarly, for the actors in *Betty's Summer Vacation*, paying attention to precision in space and time created the conditions for this multiplicity to manifest. What I begin to see is that all of these qualities, which we, engaged in theatre, consider to be desired outcomes, can be given a language in terms of the Viewpoints. This is what I believe to be their great strength: that they make articulate what we instinctively know, that life is in the present moment, in the complex rhythmic dance of space and time. They give theatre-makers a way to practice living and exploring our performative questions, putting them on the floor where they can be examined, interrogated and experienced.

In working in this way on *Betty's Summer Vacation* and *The Glass Menagerie* each actor relinquishes an element of choice in order to remain responsive to the others. This is arguably the strength of the work, the juxtaposition of acute precision and wild responsiveness. Bogart writes: 'great performances exude both exactness and a powerful sense of freedom',⁷⁹ and while in no way claiming 'greatness' for these performances, at their best moments the quality of attention the cast paid to each other was electric and commented on by audiences as well as observed by the company. The cast experienced a similar ownership of the work to that articulated by SIT Company concerning their process on *Cabin Fever*: 'The Viewpoints allow a group of actors to function together spontaneously and intuitively and to generate bold theatrical work quickly.'⁸⁰ The cast took control and took the Viewpoints principles into their bodies, enabling them to hold this sense of unpredictability within the form and remain alive to each other during the short performance season. This is the response from our audiences, even those who found the play, in the case of *Betty's Summer Vacation*, disturbing⁸¹.

⁷⁸ Bogart, (2001), 54-55.

⁷⁹ Bogart, (2001), 46.

⁸⁰ Herrington, 129.

⁸¹ The subject matter was challenging, with body mutilation, murder and rape all handled with considerable levity and some people reported finding this deeply disturbing. As Durang intended of course. In this production I deliberately highlighted this discomfort.

Throughout both processes there is a clear uptake of the Viewpoints vocabulary by the cast and crew. They use it both to achieve rehearsal tasks and to analyse the effectiveness of those tasks, to analyse the relationship they achieve with the audience, to chart the shifting dynamics between actor and actor, actors and audience, and to make adjustments to those relationships. In this it is clear that Viewpoints had achieved two key goals: to deepen and make more articulate the awareness of space and time throughout the company; and to give the performers agency within the work, enabling them to use that language to own, refine and breathe life into their choices.

This sense of finding life inside the presentation of work is a key question in the art of making theatre: how can work be staged so that it is 'real', *living* – awake and vital in time and space? It is a question that has been addressed by theatre practitioners and critical writers examining and/or advocating a plethora of genres and approaches. Moreover, there have been a plethora of definitions as to what might constitute such 'alive-li-ness' and 'truth'. In exploring the application of Viewpoints-based choreography as a rehearsal methodology, I am seeking an articulation of the contribution made to the discourse by this particular approach. More importantly, I am seeking this through *practice*, not solely through theory, through the application of this work, tested and interrogated on the rehearsal floor. Improvisation, in and of itself has proved unsatisfactory for me within my artistic practice, as I discussed at the end of Chapter Two. The shallowness of most improvised text and the lack of precise movement and image-building frustrates me, even as I delight in the freedom and anarchic joy that improvisation, at its best, unleashes. In Viewpoints I am discovering a practice and a vocabulary that allows the exact and the anarchic to coexist. This coexistence is facilitated and deepened when the performers (and indeed all involved in the production, on stage and off) have a clarity of purpose that allows them to focus their attention outwards, freeing them from the performance anxiety that hounds anyone for whom the quality of their work is stronger in their awareness than the purpose for which the work is offered.

In the chapter that follows I describe how, for the first time, I bring both Viewpoints-derived choreography and *marae*-influenced protocols into a rehearsal and performance process, in productions of *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes*. Both approaches focus on clarity of purpose, giving considerable autonomy to the individual performer within a strongly articulated framework. In interrogating these frameworks side by side I am able to extend my practice further, allowing each to 'speak' to and inform the other. The

relationship between the elements that are fixed and those that are free deepens. The poeticised body, enlivened by purpose, is more clearly evident. I begin to see how the spaces between each fixed moment and the next open up, and that the art lies in pouring the energy of the individual artist through those openings in time and space, without ever losing commitment to exactitude within the structure and to the purpose of the work. Through this I come a little closer to a practice that invites a sense of expectancy, 'alive-li-ness', renewal and danger into precisely articulated work.

Chapter Five

Exploring the Tension between Artistic Structure and Unpredictability in *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes*.

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

(Leonard Cohen: *Anthem*¹)

Introduction

Community, purpose, context, an anchored presence in encountering difference – these are qualities stimulated by *tikanga* Māori frameworks as an approach to theatre. Viewpoints contribute attention to time and space, playfulness, poeticised bodies and ensemble connection. Both value the audience's contribution as an integral part of the work through the immediacy of a real-time meeting, *Kanohi ki te kanohi*.² Previous chapters have explored both approaches. Chapter Two examined the world of improvisation both as a rehearsal methodology and in performance, referencing my production of *Small Lives, Big Dreams*. Chapter Three looked at *tikanga* Māori frameworks and their exploration in the work of Māori directors and theatre companies, in the work of Toi Whakaari, and in my own production of *Troilus & Cressida*. Chapter Four focused on Anne Bogart's work with Viewpoints and my productions of *Betty's Summer Vacation* and *The Glass Menagerie*. My 2010 production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* presents opportunities to explore these frameworks in tandem and test out this hypothesis. Through interweaving these approaches in creating and performing, I intend to demonstrate that the actors, the crew, the audience and indeed all collaborators are empowered to bring a quality of attention to the theatrical moment, enriching the experience for all. In 2011 I build on this with a production of Moira Buffini's

¹ Leonard Cohen 'Anthem', *The Future*, recorded 1992.

² Face to Face.

Welcome to Thebes in which I am able to extend discoveries around the connection with the audience, which in turn affects the quality of both the work and the exchange.

My thinking has developed. I am clearer on how to bring both of these processes to the rehearsal floor, drawing on the work of Teina Moetara in *kōiwi*³ for the former. The production of *Marat/Sade* presents an excellent opportunity since the language of *tikanga* is already strong within this ensemble of second and final year Toi Whakaari students. They worked with Moetara on a devised performance developed through *tikanga* frameworks earlier in the year. They attend the *kōiwi* sessions discussed in Chapter Three and are showing leadership in that context and an ability to use those frameworks to discuss their own artistry. They have seen work developed out of the Viewpoints and are actively curious about the process. The conditions are appropriate to conjoin and collide these two structural and philosophical approaches to performance and investigate the fruits of such juxtaposition. How will the two methodologies ‘talk’ to each other? Will they strengthen each other or just exist in parallel? Will the two languages increase clarity for my collaborators or invite confusion? And how will they work together to lay bare the central questions and enhance the reception of this seminal twentieth century work?

In approaching *Marat/Sade* I begin with the *mātātaki* of collaborative empowerment for every part of the team from the Assistant Stage Manager to the actors playing leading roles. Bogart writes of this creative effect of paying attention: ‘To pay attention changes us and changes the object of our attention.’⁴ In working on this text I set out to pay attention, fiercely and consistently, using the frameworks articulated above to assist me to truly ‘see’. In an earlier chapter I quoted the lines from *King Lear*, ‘See better, Lear’ and approaching Weiss’s 1960s text, with its dense political arguments, its music, its play within a play, all of us in the rehearsal room work to ‘see better’. We particularly seek the moment of change, the immediacy of being affected and affecting, the question that this thesis has been teasing out and testing both on the rehearsal room floor and in performance.

I focus on *Marat/Sade* as a cumulative performative research project, examining process and performance and referencing interviews with cast and creative collaborators, interrogating my proposition that *tikanga* frameworks allied to Viewpoints increases the possibilities of a quality of ‘alive-li-ness’. Through this

³ See Chapter Three.

⁴ Bogart, (2007), 60.

interrogation I seek to articulate and critically analyse the contribution of these frameworks so that other practitioners are able to employ the research in their own efforts to combine the immediate with artistry. *Welcome to Thebes* in the year following *Marat/Sade* is a 'Workshop production' allowing for greater license in the manner of presentation and opening up further discoveries. In writing about this work I am making no claims that these are definitive productions or a fully realised application of either approach. What I am exploring is the extent to which these lenses in conjunction increase the sense of 'alive-li-ness' within the work, the ways in which they assist us to 'open the cracks' so that 'the light gets in'. Both processes, in the way that I am exploring them, value the development of agency as a route to vibrancy in performance. Both require the actors, technicians and indeed all makers, to constantly focus outwards, 'reading the room' and responding to what they read there, rather than what they might imagine a 'character' might see or do. The Cohen lines quoted above are therefore highly apposite, both approaches leaving space for each individual to alter and improvise in the cracks while being held within a strong and artistically structured choreography. Since the discoveries in *Welcome to Thebes* are built out of the work on *Marat/Sade*, I will deal with the two productions sequentially.

Marat/Sade

The full title of *Marat/Sade* is *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum at Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*. It is an iconic twentieth century text by the German playwright, Peter Weiss, structured as a play within a play. The text is highly poetic and includes a considerable number of songs. In the asylum at Charenton the incarcerated de Sade writes a play about the French Revolution which is then performed by the patients for the asylum governor, his family and his guests. The play explores the nature of revolution, individual freedom pitted against collective action, the uses and wielders of power, power's innate temptation to abuse, corruption, and the balancing of means and ends. And it does this through the mouths of the insane, each with their own drives and diseases, juxtaposing history and pathology. In the multiple frames and realities of the text, Margaret Croyden sees the asylum inmates as the link that unites them: 'The lunatics are the link; their role-playing and real roles not only mirror a sane/insane world, but their existences are symptomatic of cruelty-of madness and murder, repression and revolution, politics and psychosis'.⁵ Weiss specifies the disorders of the main characters, with Marat played by a paranoiac, Charlotte Corday by a melancholic also

⁵ Margaret Croyden, *Lunatics, Lovers and Poets: The Contemporary Experimental Theatre*, (New York: Delta, 1974), 236.

suffering from sleeping sickness, Duperret by a sex maniac and Jacques Roux by a de-frocked revolutionary priest. The singers are described as 'bottom drawer' alcoholics out of 'slums and gin cellars'.⁶ The patients are thus a mixture of people with psychological illnesses, neurological conditions and those with politically unacceptable stances. The characters they portray, the people of the French Revolution, give them the opportunity to not only debate the politics of that time but also of their own.

Weiss wrote his play in the 1960s and the events and concerns of that time are part of the engine that drives the thinking and the nature of the play. The 1960s were a time of both collective action and individual liberation across the Western world, with protest movements against the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement in the United States, anti-nuclear, and cold war dichotomies part of the collective action, and the 'hippie' individual freedom, 'flower power', drugs, sex and rock and roll movement focused on the individual. Adam Hart-Davis writes: 'The 1960s witnessed the rise of new forms of entertainment and a new political and social agenda. The changing attitudes on youth, gender, class, place and race challenged the established order'.⁷ Of course both collective action and individual 'dropping out' overlapped in the lives of individuals rebelling against the middle-class values of the establishment and enraged by the slow pace of change. Peter Brook writes of the experience of coming out of *Marat/Sade* in terms of connection to the outside world:

Crime, madness, political violence were there, tapping on the window, pushing open the door.... It was not enough to remain in the second room, on the other side of the threshold. A different involvement was needed. The closed world of the West End theatre, the search for prettiness and charm were dying.... The war in Vietnam was at the other end of the world, but the meaningless massacre seemed infinitely closer to us than formal questions of culture and style'.⁸

Theatre responded to these events both in the content and in the structure of the work, with agit prop performances, happenings and performance art taking place alongside written plays and informing performance styles. It was in this context of rebellion and experimentation that Weiss wrote his play.

⁶ Weiss, 16.

⁷ Adam Hart-Davis (ed.), *History: The Definitive Visual Guide: From the Dawn of Civilization to the Present Day*, (London: Dorling Kindersley Ltd, 2007), 428.

⁸ Peter Brook, *The Threads of Time*, (London: Methuen, 1998), 137-138.

Marat/Sade was first performed in 1964 in West Berlin, directed by Konrad Swinarski. But it was with Peter Brook's English-language production the same year in London that the work became critically hailed internationally for its innovative style and structure. Brook's production was later filmed and both the live event and the filmed version broke new ground stylistically. Croyden comments that Brook 'added his own aesthetic techniques in *visual, concrete metaphors*, [author's italics] and that these metaphors grew not only out of Artaudian theory, but out of the Weiss text'.⁹ The central spine of this play is the philosophical debate between the Marquis de Sade and Jean-Paul Marat around the efficacy of revolution. Albert Hunt writes: 'Dramatically, the play was a debate between the paranoiac Marat ..., prophet of the totalitarian state, and Sade ..., the cold voluptuary, apostle of unbridled individual liberty'.¹⁰ Throughout the play Marat urges collective action, the necessity to intervene:

Against Nature's silence I use action
In the vast indifference I invent a meaning
I don't watch unmoved I intervene ¹¹

The Marquis counters with the necessity for personal, individual freedom from all the psychological, social and habitual inhibitions that regulate behaviour:

Marat
these cells of the inner self
are worse than the deepest stone dungeon
and as long as they are locked
all your revolution remains
only a prison mutiny ¹²

This structure of argument and counter-argument resonates strongly with the flow of debate in encounters at a *hui* and seeing this parallel is useful for cast and crew in identifying the ebb and flow of the play, just as the debate around the return of Helen, described in Chapter Three, resonated in the production of *Troilus & Cressida*. For most of *Marat/Sade* this argument is all that actually happens, the only event in the play-

⁹ Croyden, 237.

¹⁰ J.C Trewin, 'The *Marat/Sade*: An Account', David Williams, (ed.), *Peter Brook: A Theatrical Casebook*, (London: Methuen, 1988), 65.

¹¹ Weiss, 35

¹² Weiss, 99.

within-the-play being the assassination of Marat. It is vital, therefore, that this debate holds urgency and significance for all the patients (and the actors) performing the play much as participants at a significant *hui* avidly follow argument and counter-argument in a process of shifting alignments. Would performing the work on a *marae* increase the sense of urgency?¹³

Peter Brook's 1964 Production of *Marat/Sade*

In staging this play, the Brook production is part of the *whakapapa* (past history) of *Marat/Sade*, an oft-cited seminal production, its shadow looming over all subsequent work, a challenge and provocation that has to be negotiated if the play is to be seen anew. Michael Hallifax writes that '...the production was a sensation, and the Aldwych was full at all its performances'.¹⁴ Reviewers at the time were clear (whether they praised the production or denigrated it) that Brook's production brought a great deal of material to the work, over and above that indicated by the written text. David Williams writes: 'the success of Brook's production ... stems from the actors' liberation of the spirit of the work: a revolution in theatre in terms of stylistic experimentation, challenging sensibilities rather than ideologies'.¹⁵ This lays down a challenge for all subsequent productions. To achieve a similar 'liberation of spirit' in 2010, different tactics need to be employed. The theatrical revolutions of the 1960s are now integrated into contemporary performance vocabulary and rarely have the power to startle audiences into wakefulness and heightened attention. In the Brook production, this quality of 'alive-li-ness' was created by the life of the lunatics confined in the asylum, vividly described by Trewin: 'what most people remembered, shuddering, was the visual impact, the 'debris of souls from some private hell' (Milton Shulman), the chalky clothing, the writhing limbs, the hysteria, the grimacing ... the whirr and thud of the guillotine, the buckets of blood, ... the faces peering from the hidden baths ...'.¹⁶ What will best serve to bring forward this quality of life in Wellington, New Zealand 2010? How can Viewpoints and *tikanga* assist in opening up new channels toward immediacy?

In *tikanga marae* the *whakapapa* of the event, and of those participating in it, is vital in placing it in a context that stretches backwards and forwards in time. The *whakapapa* here includes the performance history of the play, the historical and fictional accounts of the French Revolution, our relationship to

¹³ At the time I did not even think of doing this. But writing this Chapter now I see and regret that omission. We took *Troilus & Cressida* to a *marae*: why not this work? Out of this realization, I took *Welcome to Thebes* to Manutuke *Marae* to test out its reception in that environment. See later in this chapter.

¹⁴ Michael Hallifax, *Let Me Set the Scene: Twenty Years at the heart of British Theatre 1956 to 1976*, (Hanover: Smith and Kraus, 2004), 181.

¹⁵ David Williams, (ed.) *Peter Brook: A Theatrical Casebook*, (London: Methuen, 1988), 62.

¹⁶ Trewin, 65.

illnesses of the mind and our own social context. Moriarty speaks of the power of this connection to the unseen world: ‘... if you do it well, all the ancestors are watching.... So there’s a lot of energy in that room. And ultimately there’s no corners. Where do you run away to and hide? Because there’s nowhere to hide, coz the ancestors are always with us’.¹⁷ The ancestors for this work include not only the actors in Brook’s production and indeed all subsequent productions; they include the revolutionaries of France and all those who have sought to change society, including those from our own history.

The content of this play is significant: the nature of humanity, the means to effect change, the distribution of power. As we employ *tikanga* to focus our exploration of purpose, we consider how the central arguments in *Marat/Sade* speak to us, and how they might speak to our audiences.¹⁸ What is the encounter now? What might we need to relinquish for the greater good? What is the likelihood that communities will act communally to meet these challenges? Do we place the individual above the collective in our own lives and work? On the *marae* purpose is focused on the overall good of the community. At Toi Whakaari we are noticing that strengthening the sense of community seems to generate more interesting art.¹⁹ In Chapter Three I quoted Penny speaking of this focus on service and it is this sense of acting towards a common purpose that we seek to bring to our rehearsals of *Marat/Sade*. Māoridom has a long history of collective action to address grievances, actions such as *hīkoi* (land-marches) and land occupation²⁰ that rarely include violence. These are issues that I explored earlier in *Troilus & Cressida*, issues that remain alive today as our society grapples with processes to find equitable resolutions. Will we be able to usefully relate this to our exploration of this play?

We want to engage with these themes on many levels and the sense of being observed by those who came before helps the company harness this sense of purpose. Bogart writes: ‘Interaction with significant content informs and alters your perception of the world’,²¹ and we are seeking the strongest way of posing these questions to our audiences and to ourselves. This influences decisions around the nature of the illness in the play. Both *tikanga* and Viewpoints ask the performers to look outward rather than inward, to engage in the visible and tangible world. They focus on action rather than psychology. It therefore feels appropriate for us to support these approaches with a focus on neurological rather than psychological

¹⁷ Moriarty, 4.

¹⁸ See chart, Summary, Chapter 4.

¹⁹ See Chapter 3, actor training.

²⁰ For example, Bastion Point, 1978, Moutoa Gardens, 1995.

²¹ Bogart, (2007), 109.

illness for the 'characters' performing the play within the play. It will make the strongest possible link between methodology and condition and provide a testing ground for the combination of *tikanga marae* and Viewpoints-based choreography.

New Zealand Whakapapa

Three prior New Zealand student productions of *Marat/Sade* are worth mentioning here. None of these cast quite the shadow that the Brook production does on our work, the available film version making it present and compelling. Yet all provide a powerful whakapapa and shape the context in which we approach this extraordinary text. In 1970 Mervyn Thompson presented a production at Downstage, originally created with Canterbury University students, revivifying their student drama society, whose members included Sam Neill who went on to be a significant, award-winner international film and television actor:

In Mervyn Thompson's *Marat/Sade*, which was widely seen as the start of a new era for the University Drama Society, Sam found a director who could never be anything other than a wild man from Rununga and who fiercely promoted a regionalist voice in the theatre throughout his career.²²

Thompson looked to fully involve the audience, making it particularly relevant for our own processes. His production was seen as challenging and groundbreaking:

The most exciting and controversial presentation during the period was undoubtedly *Marat/Sade*.... Some members of the audience reacted to the complex political themes, others to the sub-cerebral aura of madness, others simply to the music and spectacle. And every now and then the play would be seen by someone capable of responding on all of these levels and thus becoming what D.H. Lawrence would have called the ideal theatregoer.... Above all else 'total theatre' requires the 'total spectator'. It is that spectator my production sought out and, I hope, rewarded.²³

²² www.nzine.co.nz/features/sam_neil.html. May 24, 2002.

²³ Mervyn Thompson. *All My Lives*, (Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1980), 86.

We are also striving for a total experience for our audiences, battling the same 'tyranny of the prosaic' that Thompson identifies as dominating the theatre of his time. As then, naturalism holds huge sway in our theatres. He writes of the difficulties, in his re-staging of the play in Wellington, of persuading his professional cast, all of whom root their work in character, to work in a larger, more impressionistic mode: 'What I was interested in was not surface plausability or 'psychological realism' but on creating on the stage transcendent experiences of the kind more frequently found in music'²⁴ and what he found was huge resistance, 'bordering on contempt'²⁵.

Having battled a similar, if less vicious resistance in *Small Lives, Big Dreams*, I am inspired by his battle and deeply impressed by the passionate commitment to a larger canvas, a commitment I share. In mounting this production I have a much greater buy-in from my student cast and crew, all of whom are willing to at least explore a very different and less naturalistic way of working than they use habitually. And as part of the process I commit to regular reviews of the work through a series of *hui* so that they know they will have a platform from which to challenge me if needed. In spite of the fact that I am both the director of the production and of the school, I am confident that cast and crew will feel free to question or even block my decisions should they see fit, because challenge and student autonomy has been built into the school *kawa* and reinforced through *kōiwi*.²⁶

Simon Phillips' 1983 production of the play is described by Bill Guest as: '... an excellent vehicle for the students.... The production combined verse, acrobatics, pantomime and masque, allowing them to use many aspects of their training'.²⁷ Memories of this production are still strong among the graduates of the school and I am aware that it sets a highly-prized precedent against which our own work will be judged. More recently, Jonathon Hendry directed the play in 2005 with the students of UNITEC Institute of Technology in Auckland, again to considerable acclaim. The school is housed in what used to be the Oakley Women's Psychiatric Hospital, giving a very particular architectural and historical resonance to the work, a resonance which Hendry exploited in bringing the script to life:

We created a promenade production that had the audience pass through rooms that were returned to how they had looked.... This bought a real sense of the environment and danger associated with

²⁴ Thompson, 135.

²⁵ Thompson, 135.

²⁶ The weekly (sometimes twice weekly) all school meeting, where staff and students learn and make decisions together.

²⁷ Guest, 87.

the play within the play.... The whole event was an immersive experience with patients improvising with guests preshow and some serving refreshments at half time.... We worked with an ex nurse from the institution and she felt that some of the spiritual energy still present in the buildings was unleashed through this...²⁸

At the time of our production Hendry is one of the associate directors at Toi Whakaari and watches our exploration with a keen and knowledgeable eye. These are powerful antecedents that, in different ways, achieved the immediacy we are seeking. Will the working process of Viewpoints-based choreography framed by *tikanga* Māori processes help us to meet the *wero* of making this work anew, keeping it vital and alive for our time and place?

A Neurological Approach

Working with the design team and in discussion with the cast I decide to give the actors tangible and observable physical symptoms to work with rather than inwardly-focused psychoses explored in Brook's production, emphasising an outward gaze. Using this approach the cast will be able to employ kinaesthetic awareness and their improvisational skills to maintain these physical conditions while negotiating text and choreography. It will keep their performances immediate and alive. We hope our audiences feel closer to people affected in this way. As a rugby-loving nation we are very familiar with head injuries. The company is keen to explore how this work will resonate within our own community, where the mentally and neurologically ill are no longer incarcerated but rather abandoned, often ending up living on the streets.²⁹ The rhetoric for bringing patients into the community is all about integration and acceptance of difference but too often this has not been the case, with the infrastructures to support such integration proving inadequate. As Wellingtonians we are aware of those in our city who fall through the cracks in the system; people living on the streets such as 'blanket man'³⁰ give particularity and a human face to living on the margins. New Zealand playwrights and directors have often drawn inspiration from such sources, and as

²⁸ Jonathon Hendry. Email to Annie Ruth, July 1, 2013.

²⁹ As elsewhere in the world, the 1970s saw a change in New Zealand in the way mental illness is treated, with far fewer patients inside institutions and an increase in those in community care. Cost-cutting was a factor. This had led to an increase of the mentally ill living isolated or on the streets and to an increase in mental illness among the prison population. See Michael Madianos. 'Deinstitutionalization (The Political Economy of Deinstitutionalization)', International Encyclopedia of Rehabilitation, 2010. <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/encyclopedia/pdf/en/deinstitutionalization.pdf>

³⁰ A well-known Wellington street person who, clad only in a loin-cloth, sat on a blanket on the corner of Tory Street and Courtney Place in all weathers. He died in 2011.

with James Beaumont's 1985 production, *Wild Cabbage*,³¹ the actors draw inspiration from these marginalised street people.

With these considerations in mind we choose to set the work both literally and imaginatively in the space of the Basement Theatre, Te Whaea, a rough, concrete performance space divided by concrete pillars, that used to be a car park. We frame it thus: the Marquis de Sade (a remand prisoner sentenced to community service) is writing a play about the French Revolution for a group of neurological patients living in the community; the city council is sponsoring the performance and is providing them with a crew of technicians and managers from Toi Whakaari; the work is to be performed for the mayor, city dignitaries and community members in the Basement Theatre, hired by the Council for this purpose. There is a challenge in this: how do we retain the sense of danger in Weiss's work? By localising it, will we dilute it? In the Brook production the danger posed by the insane, the brutality of the staff dealing with them, and the desire for freedom in those incarcerated gave immediacy to the philosophical arguments. This was clearly also evident in Thompson's production, which explored madness both in its physical and psychological manifestations:

I had worked hard on the outward manifestations of madness and also on ensuring that apparently random outbreaks of lunacy among our thirty or so 'madmen' were in fact orchestrated into vocal, visual and intellectual patterns. But while the outward discipline of the production was intense, the real driving force of my *Marat/Sade* was my own subjective encounter with madness. I had seen it at close range in my mother's agonising downward spirals. I had perceived it in society as a whole, particularly in those periodic outbreaks of barbarism that mark the affairs of men.... When the theatre is working at full power, madness of one sort or another is never far away.

In taking a different path the challenge is to evoke a similar immediacy and intensity.

Each actor chooses a neurological condition for their 'character', one that aligns with their actions within the Weiss text. These proposals come from the actors themselves and are based on medical explanations for behaviours resulting from brain damage. From the beginning we work with the idea that each of them is struggling to overcome a condition rather than succumbing to one. This works to keep them connected outwards. For example, the actor playing Marat, chooses to play a man who has suffered damage to his

³¹ James Beaumont, author and director of *Wild Cabbage*, the Depot, 1985. Despite numerous productions the text remains unpublished.

fusiform gyrus, resulting in prosopagnosia (inability to recognize faces).³² This means that the actor is constantly alert to the movement and voices of those around him as a clue to their identity and intentions, improvising out of this hyper-alertness. The intensity of the resulting listening has a different quality to the 'paranoia' suggested by Weiss, though equally filled with fear and doubt. It keeps Marat viscerally connected to the ensemble (and later to the audience) and can be embodied in actions. This is particularly important since the fever he also suffers from keeps him confined, for the most part, to the cooling waters of his bath.

Every cast member has something to contend with. Working to embed these difficulties in their physical actions, the cast is free to improvise within the choreography according to their particular condition, allowing the difficulty to arise, struggling to overcome it, and continuing in the pattern as set. One actor playing a revolutionary has chosen to be in the early stages of motor-neuron disease. His left leg doesn't work well but he has chosen to be highly athletic with the parts of his body he can still control. It is his way of resisting the disease. He sometimes walks, defiantly, on his hands in a constant physical improvisation contrapuntal to his text. Another has chosen a condition that causes her to jump up and down like popcorn in a pan at unforeseen moments to which the cast then respond.³³ She is playing 'Madame Defage' a character I introduced, by splitting Jacques Roux's text into two voices. The actor playing Roux, has chosen Huntingdon's disease³⁴ for this rebel preacher. Huntingdon's leads to issues of balance, a stumbling walk and a slump that increases as his chorea progresses. At the moment it is early days. Embodying a man working with all his intelligence to resist a debilitating condition helps him link in to the resistance of Jacques Roux to the church and aristocracy.

None of the actors ever completely leaves the performance space. When they are not part of the focus they are on the side-lines, close to the audience, contending with their condition as they link into the unfolding action. Given that they continue to work with the underlying 'game' of the timing of the choreography, as outlined in previous chapters, they form a seething sub-text to the story of the French

³² 'Inability to recognize the faces of other people or one's own features in a mirror, due to damage to the underside of both occipital lobes'. Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition. © 2003 by Saunders, an imprint of Elsevier, Inc. <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/prosopagnosia>

³³ Harold L. Klawans, *Newton's Madness: Further Tales of Clinical Neurology*, (London: Bodley Head, 1990), 169. 'The "jumping Frenchman of Maine" was the name given to a neurological disorder that had been described in some French trappers who lived in Maine in the 1880s. Sudden noises caused them to jump'.

³⁴ Klawans, 145. 'The patient is virtually a stage on which numerous uncoordinated muscle movements take place. The patient's gait is often markedly involved. It is made up of jerky, lurching steps that are the result of a combination of voluntary and involuntary movements'.

revolution. Their constant presence reminds us viscerally that the debate between the thinkers has consequences for ordinary people. As with speakers on the *marae*, Marat and de Sade are being observed by their communities, who can move from observation to full participation in a second. The freedom these people seek is to be seen as people rather than as their conditions; to be accepted, not abandoned. This is a different freedom than that sought by the incarcerated at Charenton, but no less vital. And for this cast it is a stronger provocation, having the virtue of immediacy. Working with a clear sense of purpose releases the actors to focus on their explorations through Viewpoints improvisations and choreography without self-consciousness or an undue emphasis on their acting abilities. They are able to harness both methodologies to support the work.

The Immediacy of Encounter

Tikanga marae reminds us that face to face encounters lead to a deeper and more embodied understanding than can be achieved through those mediated through books or screen. Bogart articulates this as key in making theatre: 'While all art concerns the interconnectedness of the universe, the theatre has to do with the interconnectedness of people'.³⁵ Therefore, as part of this investigation into neurology we have a conversation with a man suffering from Parkinson's disease. John Moore,³⁶ long time friend of the school and married to a retired staff member, generously opens up the effects of his illness to the cast. He talks of the difficulty in fulfilling tasks, showing us how much longer it takes him to complete an action. John tells us that Parkinson's sufferers cannot multi-task and this sometimes makes them slow to respond to stimuli. He has good days and bad days and this day is a bad one. His face is immobile as an effect of the disease yet he weeps. His information is invaluable, but on a deeper level, meeting him helps to anchor the sense of purpose in the cast, putting a human, intimate face to the strange effects of damage to the brain, whether by injury or illness. It prompts a determination to deal truthfully and well with the conditions they are portraying. Face to face, encountering Moore's courage, fragility and deep emotion inspires all.

³⁵ Bogart, (2007), 107.

³⁶ Permission is given by the Moores to quote this conversation.

A significant piece of information from Moore is that, for some Parkinson's sufferers, the only medication that eases the condition has a side effect of lifting the sex drive to unbearably high levels: '110% higher'³⁷ says Moore. He tells us of a man currently in prison for multiple rapes who is on this medication. For the actor playing Duperret this information is transformative. Weiss has written the role for a sex-maniac and initially the actor sees only the comedy in the man's actions. I urge him to explore the reality of rape, but it is only when he hears this story that he sees a way forward. He takes the struggle to resist his urges as a focus, and this process of struggle, resistance and failure emerges as the spine of his work. Again this choice is neurological, not psychological; importantly it is something the actor can do. After this meeting we return to the text with a deeper commitment to explore truthfully the effects of neurological disease. The cast speak of seeing the world a little differently, particularly in their responses to 'odd' behaviour on the streets and their presumptions around it. Their strengthened sense of purpose from following *tikanga* values around encounter, and the Viewpoints emphasis on meeting face-to-face, frees them both in and out of rehearsal to see the world anew.

Framing

Theatre can straddle many kinds of time in a single production. From fictional time to real time, subjective time, linear time, nonlinear time, time suspended, time stopped, time sped up, a lifetime in an instant ... each segment requires the appropriate time signature.³⁸

The time-based Viewpoints require particular attention to Tempo and Duration. Given our chosen focus on contemporary neurological patients in Wellington, the production has three time frames: the present moment (Wellington New Zealand, August 2010), 1808 where the play was set by Weiss (fifteen years after the French Revolution), and Paris at the time of the French Revolution for the play-within-the-play, each needing to be rhythmically distinct. The Brook production used only the inner two frames, with the Charenton patients included in the 'Performing Paris 1808' frame. The choice to bring in the present time-frame is not seamless. We are clear from the start that this will present dramaturgical challenges. But we believe that these will be off-set by our increased ability to connect with our audiences and to shed some

³⁷ John Moore speaking to *Marat/Sade* cast, July 30th, 2010.

³⁸ Bogart, (2007), 131-132.

45. Multiple Frames.

light on a small sector of our community even as we grapple with Weiss's central question: does true revolution come from changing society or from changing oneself? These early choices around neurology, adding a contemporary story, mean that we add a further frame to the original. We want all these frames to be visible to the audience. This is reflected in the costume choices, where everyday contemporary clothes form the base, over which are protective pads to minimise the impact of falls, and over these are costumes indicating the time of the French revolution³⁹. The top layer is partial and the underlying clothes can still be seen. We want to meet our audiences on all three layers. We believe that Viewpoints-based choreography and *tikanga marae* will assist us in that. In my early thinking about this I envisage a further frame – one that acknowledges the actors in their own lives, entering this multi-framed performance. I want them to be visible, preparing to perform, donning costumes and make-up, so that their audiences can first encounter them as themselves before they don the layers of fictive personalities.⁴⁰ To this end we create a dressing room out of an adjacent space so that the audience can see the actors as they assemble. I also envisage that they will greet the audience as themselves, actors and technicians preparing to share their work, making the audience welcome in their world and inviting them into this shared experience. This further layer is abandoned, much to my abiding regret. At the time I was not able to articulate clearly its importance and

³⁹ The exception to this is the Marquis, whom we see as almost outside time, a man who has channeled de Sade so completely that he has become his alter ego.

⁴⁰ Arianne Mnouchkine also has her cast visible in preparation for performance. See Adrian Kiernander, *Arianne Mnouchkine and the Theatre du Soleil (Directors in Perspective)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Chapter 1, 9-27.

46. Charlotte Corday Costume design. Designer Stancy Brummer explaining concept.

for the design team it seemed to be adding unnecessary complexity. As soon as the play opens and audiences are encountered, I see that the early instinct to have the extra frame was correct. It would have progressively brought the audience into the world of the actors, then into the world of the patients, and then finally into the world of patients playing French revolutionaries, creating a full and multi-levelled arrival. It would also have embodied more strongly the principle of *whakatau*, of settling our guests, without diluting the shifting and challenging ground onto which we were taking them.

David Carnegie, Professor of Theatre at Victoria University, saw the work and comments on the effects of the framing:

... at the point of arrival ... it wasn't clear whether they were in character or not. Some of them seemed to be and I thought, *Marat/Sade* is a play I know ... if they're in character I'm going to be a bit leery of them, a bit cautious.... But there were also a lot of big smiles and welcomes that seemed a lot more like the actors welcoming us. I suppose the most striking examples of actors welcoming us, and maybe sliding into character, is in Māori theatre, and *Ngā Tāngata Toa*⁴¹ is a good example of that. Because in *Ngā Tāngata Toa*, the actors, if they knew you greeted you by

⁴¹ Hone Kouka, *Ngā Tāngata Toa* (The Warrior People), (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1994).

name and it was clear that they were not fully in character and were primarily greeting you as themselves. With your cast I wasn't quite sure which realm I was in.... And I tried to think about if it was deliberate and if deliberate was it productive? And I didn't actually find it productive and it just left me a little bit uncertain of what the convention of the show was.⁴²

Had we added this extra layer, I believe we would have met Carnegie's objections, served *tikanga* better, prevented this confusion and enhanced the experience for all involved. In omitting this final frame I omitted a time signature that would have clarified all the others. It would have also have allowed a fluid incorporation of *tikanga marae* into the ending. I would get the opportunity to actualize these unfulfilled possibilities in *Welcome to Thebes*, discussed below.

The additional framing would have looked ike this:

47. Additional Frame.

⁴² David Carnegie, Interview with Annie Ruth, March 30, 2011.

The Space

Viewpoints implies a world where nothing is fixed and anything can happen. How does one design a stage space that encourages (rather than inhibits) mutability? A space inspired by Viewpoints is one in which fixed place does not necessarily exist: place changes, transforms, returns, according to what happens inside of it. In this way it is often helpful to think of the space as an *arena* rather than a *set*. Designing a space that cannot change or a space that cannot interact is anathema to Viewpoints.⁴³

Together with the designers I choose the space of the Basement Theatre because its rough-hewn concrete pillars and floors speak to us of the rough space of a community, unused to performance, but creating a work out of their distress and need to be heard. It speaks of the world of the disadvantaged, the disenfranchised. We want to use the space itself and harness its innate potential rather than create an illusionary world within it, allowing the Viewpoints of Relationship to Architecture and Topography to stimulate our thinking. It is a space that speaks of an arena, much as Bogart and Landau articulate above. We seek to amplify its potential for ever-shifting interactions with our audiences.

Working with the set designer, Alex Mann I set up a principle of laying bare the mechanics and devices of the event, so that nothing is 'pretended'. Much as on a *marae* we want every aspect of the actual environment to be available to be 'read' and seen as part of the event. There are no flats, no set built inside the space, just the space itself and some objects from the everyday world. We want the elements we introduce to be mobile and mutable so that the cast and crew can manipulate them to compress and expand the space according to the demands of the work. We therefore put Marat's bath on wheels, have a variety of wheeled platforms of various sizes available, some small wooden cubes and three small A-frame ladders. We attach ropes to the pillars so that the actors can climb upwards and achieve verticality in the space. Initially I had wanted to put the audience on wheeled rostra so they could be moved around the space by cast and crew, giving us the possibility of bringing them close to create 'close-ups' and wheeling them out to the extremities to create enormous 'long-shots'. It would underline the shifting perspectives in the play and create an edge of danger and possibility for them. Practicalities of budget mean that this

⁴³ Bogart and Landau, 204.

particular solution has to be abandoned, but not the underlying choice to effect a space in which the world shifts and seethes and where the audience option of sitting back in the dark to simply observe is not available. We are creating an arena that invites the mutability Bogart describes.

Three days before rehearsals begin the designers and I meet with visiting designer, Jean-Guy Lecat⁴⁴, who coincidentally is giving master-classes at Toi Whakaari. Lecat was for thirty years Peter Brook's theatre space designer, hugely experienced at unlocking the potential of spaces not necessarily designed for theatre. Given the *whakapapa* of Brook's involvement with this text and Lecat's intimate knowledge of Brook's work, we want to take advantage of his visit and test out our thinking with him, particularly the relationship between audience and performance space. Lecat supports our thinking around utilising the 'actual' space and architecture. With myself, the designers and Lecat observing, the actors are invited into the space to play, and test the potential inherent in the space. We can then return to the design and see what might be tweaked or re-orientated in the light of the discoveries they make. Beginning the work with the actors in this way I am giving a strong signal that the work will be collaborative, underlining their agency in the processes I am exploring, both *tikanga marae* and Viewpoints-based choreography. I set them a series of provocations with which to play, utilising the 'composition' methodology of Bogart and Landau, which I have experienced firsthand in working with them in Italy and the United States⁴⁵. It is an approach to creating work, utilising the principles of Viewpoints. Bogart and Landau describe it as:

... a natural extension of Viewpoints training. It is the act of writing as a group, in time and space, using the language of the theatre.... The process of creating compositions is by nature collaborative: within a short amount of time, participants arrive at solutions to certain delineated tasks.⁴⁶

This is the first of many compositional tasks that I thread throughout the rehearsal period, including ones focusing on light and sound, led by the student designers in these areas. For this first composition I give the actors a number of the props – the bath on a wheeled platform, a couple of small trolleys, ropes attached to some pillars and three, free-standing ladders. The tasks are demanding. They have only thirty minutes to create their piece. This time pressure is intentional. Bogart and Landau write, 'The key to

⁴⁴ Lecat is also co-author of *The Open Circle: Theatre Environments*, London: Faber and Faber, 2003.

⁴⁵ Bogart and Landau, 137-197.

⁴⁶ Bogart and Landau, 137.

Composition work is to do a lot in a little time.... what surfaces does not come from analysis or ideas, but from our impulses, our dreams, our emotions'⁴⁷, and for this first composition it is that immediate response that we want to harness, to see what actions and placements bring the space alive. I ask them to consider the Viewpoints of Spatial Relationship, Relationship to Architecture and Topography to inform their composition.

The resulting work uses many different configurations of the space, the most startling and instantly recognisable as 'right' being the use of a hidden door in the wall leading to the earth and foundations of the building in which the Basement Theatre is situated. This door is painted black like the surrounding wall, and is practically invisible when closed. In Mann's initial design choice this door is behind one section of the audience and invisible to them. However, instinctively the actors have harnessed its capacity for surprising, unexpected entrances. By the end of two days of playing and trying possibilities we return to the original seating plan, but this time re-orientate the placement of the audience so that the door can be used.

48. *Discovering the door: Space exploration and composition.* *Jean-Guy Lecat speaks to ensemble.*

The rotation on its axis gives the arena a huge injection of vitality and harnesses the architecture to our combined imaginations. We widen the spaces at the corners of rows where they meet the wall so that the action can flow around and through the gaps. The audience near the wall are moved forward so that there is a space behind them through which the cast can travel. All now have empty space at their backs. The

⁴⁷ Bogart and Landau, 138.

49. *The Space.*

many gaps allow the action to flow through and around, taking advantage of the figure-of-eight floor patterns which emerged during the actors' explorations. Our decision to limit each seating block to only two rows secures proximity to the action for all, so that audience, cast and crew inhabit the same space, are in the 'room' together. Through this exploratory work the space has now come alive in our imaginations. This process of listening to and exploring the space becomes a principle to which we return repeatedly in making the work. It calls on the Viewpoint of response to architecture, discussed in Chapter Four, as well as the *tikanga* Māori practice of making the environment an intrinsic part of the story-telling, discussed in Chapter Three.

The Space in Performance

Brook describes a good space as, '... intimate: it is a room in which the audience sit with the actors and see them in close-up, showing what is true in the acting and revealing mercilessly what is false. Yet a good space is more than that – it is challenging, calling on the actors to go beyond themselves, beyond a

cinematic naturalism.’⁴⁸ The efficacy of our decisions is finally tested with the arrival of our audiences. Theatre critic, Laurie Atkinson comments:

The basement space [was] ideal for the Charenton prison-like setting – bare, cold, untheatrical – pillars used well, Marat’s bath on a trolley gave the production an air of a quickly improvised and assembled show put on by the inmates, whereas in the film version for the setting I was too strongly aware of “a set” and historically exact costumes, whereas in your production there was a much stronger contemporary feel without losing the historical significance.⁴⁹

50. Seating diagrams, traditional *pōwhiri* and *Marat/Sade* staging.

The procession of the audience into the space, following bell-ringer and cast echoes the flow of the *manuhiri* onto a *marae*, which award-winning director and Toi Whakaari graduate, Willem Wassenaar, saw as ‘welcoming me on my chair, appreciating me as an audience member’.⁵⁰ The audience indisputably see the actors in ‘close-up’. Actors and audience are exposed to each other just as participants in a *pōwhiri* are exposed and connected to each other, though again it is the principle of *pōwhiri* that we invoke, rather than a slavish copying of the form. Film maker, Yvonne Mackay commented on the intimacy of the spatial configuration and the effect this had on her as an audience member: ‘I had only ever seen it [*Marat/Sade*] on a stage, a proscenium arch stage situation. I’d never sat at the same level as it. I did feel as if I was in, I was part of the people ... in the town’.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Peter Brook, quoted in Jean-Guy Lecat and Andrew Todd. *The Open Circle: Theatre Environments*, London: Faber and Faber, 2003, 25.

⁴⁹ Laurie Atkinson, *Dominion Post* Theatre Critic. Interview with Annie Ruth, March 18, 2011.

⁵⁰ William Wassenaar. Interview with Annie Ruth, May 1, 2011.

⁵¹ Yvonne Mackay. Interview with Annie Ruth, May 2, 2011.

51. Stage configuration

We had designed the space for this sense of connection and choice and from the first performances I can see this operating. It allows and encourages the audience to choose their focus at any one time, with action taking place both centrally and peripherally. It places a level of responsibility on individuals for orchestrating their own experience of the work. From the moment they choose a seat they are individuating that experience since we have designed the space so that no-one can see the entire performance – at every moment some part of the action will be hidden behind a pillar, except that taking place in the one small space visible to all, as shown in the diagram above.

Wassenaar points out the playfulness he experienced:

So you have a choice. The decision making, the choice making feels very much up to you and your responsibility as an audience member. And when that decision making happens, then of

course your investment, your responsibility, your connection is going to be much stronger than when a curtain opens and here we go.⁵²

52. Polpoch (Te Rina Thompson).

Marats and Simones. Clockwise from Back L. Ana Corbett, Leon Wadham, Elliot Wrightson, Hayley Sproull, Sophie Kendrick, Catherine Croft.

Bogart also eschews a unified experience for the audience:

One trigger [the unified experience] is fascistic, making the respondent feel small and manipulated, closing people down. The other trigger [diverse association, diverse experience] is humanistic, encouraging disparate responses, opening people up.... The way to do this is to set up oppositions rather than answers.... And in the space of this opposition there is room for the audience to dream.⁵³

Weiss has written a play where these oppositions are a core part of its fabric. For the cast and technicians, their focus on purpose helps to keep their interactions focused, individuated, while always connected to the wider narrative they are driving. And the value of *manaakitanga* (hospitality) in its deepest meaning, helps them to remain delicate, never bullying or forcing as they interact with their audiences. Wassenaar describes it in terms of investment and community: 'You could feel a really strong sense of commitment

⁵² Wassenaar (2011).

⁵³ Bogart, (2007), 26-27.

and investment in the here and now. And that's what I really enjoy the sense that, as an audience, as a community watching it ... they are living in that same moment and breathing together'.⁵⁴ Mann and I have indeed created a space in which the mutability described by Bogart is encouraged and thrives.

Tikanga Marae: Karakia - Entering Rehearsals and the Work Together

Following the principles of *tikanga marae*, we begin all sessions with a *karakia*⁵⁵, invoking an alignment of purpose. This ritual is followed throughout the rehearsal process and into performance. We begin and close all rehearsals together, cast and technicians, making space for comments and reflection. Leadership in these moments can and does come from anywhere. From the beginning it is apparent that the technicians are taking huge ownership of the work. Holding them in this ritual process reinforces this and provides a channel to make offers and be heard. I write in my diary: '... a terrific spirit in both cast and crew. Technicians are really up for participating and keen to be given more to do, so I will incorporate them more'.⁵⁶ On day one, I ask, rather tentatively, how they feel about being completely visible as they work. I want to give them a role as 'crew' serving the neurological patients, for their inclusion to be as much a part of performance as it is to the overall process. In the Weiss text the 'patients' are guarded by nuns and warders who threaten and subdue them whenever they get excited or demonstrably political. Quite what the relationship will be in this production we don't yet know, but I need to be sure that the technicians are up for this level of exposure. These 'back-room' practitioners, sound and lighting operators, stage managers and assistants, whose work is traditionally invisible to the audience, will now, if they agree, be an intrinsic and visible element in the audience's experience. Some seem nervous initially, particularly those for whom this will be their first time on a show. But they are excited by the idea and alert to the technical possibilities and challenges this opens up in their work. All are willing to give it a go. Their visible and active presence will add to the alive-li-ness of the work.

The *karakia* we use is the one Moetara, whose work is described in Chapter Three, wrote for Toi Whakaari. Its function is to focus the group, not on their individual work and roles, but on the people for whom they are

⁵⁴ Wassenaar (2011).

⁵⁵ See Chapter Three.

⁵⁶ Annie Ruth, Production Diary, July 7, 2010.

standing, severally and collectively and orientate them towards purpose rather than performance. This is as profound a shift for the performers and technicians as the shift in the audience posited by Christopher Balme who sees Māori theatre as changing the audience reception mode from observation to participation.⁵⁷ It lifts a kind of performance anxiety from the shoulders of the actors and crew and allows them to contextualise their work, with the audience being the final and vital part of that context. It is important to note that *karakia* are not exactly the same as prayers, though they are often translated as such. They are an invocation to the spirit, conditions, precepts and aspirations that we look to, to help us focus on our collective work. They invoke the ancestors, personal and of our art form described by Jim Moriarty, quoted earlier. Māori ki Ōtāgo⁵⁸ defines them as '*prayers or incantations.... generally used to ensure a favourable outcome to important events and undertakings ... Karakia, in their true essence, are ritual chants invoking spiritual guidance and protection*'.⁵⁹ Moetara's *karakia* invites the people gathered to connect to each other and to purpose. From the first rehearsals we are building this relationship to purpose so that when we encounter our audiences this is embedded and un-self-conscious.

This *karakia* is accompanied and sometimes replaced by other words or poems cast and crew bring to frame the work of the particular rehearsal. These perform the same *karakia* function. As time goes on I am seldom leading this ritual beginning – cast and crew own, lead and innovate out of their own performative and learning questions. Every rehearsal begins, standing in a circle, saying a *karakia*. We then bring any issues, questions, thoughts that we want to use in the particular rehearsal to the group. Sometimes this takes seconds. At others, when there are thorny issues to discuss, it takes longer. The practice is particularly useful in weaving the crew into the ensemble. Through the rehearsal process and particularly through these moments of pausing at the beginning and ends of each rehearsal, they have the opportunity to talk through the implications of the choices we make on the floor and offer ideas of their own. When we come into the performance season they are totally committed to participating visibly on stage, their strong presence a fundamental element in the production. Then we clap in unison to signal that we are beginning work. At the end of the day the process is repeated, the unison clap signalling that work is over for the session.

⁵⁷ See the fuller discussion in Chapter Three.

⁵⁸ University of Otago Māori Department.

⁵⁹ <http://Māori.otago.ac.nz/reo-tikanga-treaty/te-reo/karakia>.

The use of the *karakia* goes deeper than simply framing the beginnings and ends of rehearsals. There are embedded precepts we want to incorporate in our work, both in our process and in the structure of performance. It is therefore useful at this point to look at the text of the *karakia* in more detail. The *karakia* begins before a word is spoken, with the *mātātaki*, the stance of those about to speak. This is both the literal stance, open, prepared, energised, but also carries the sense of the individuals within the group, representing all the people and places that have formed them and which now support them. It ties together the collective work and aspirations of the individuals. It acknowledges the ancestors, as Moriarty says, the *whakapapa* of those present and of the work. It opens the possibility of the 'holy theatre' that Brook speaks of in *The Open Space*. Brook describes a moment at Stratford-upon-Avon, in which everyone present was suddenly linked in a profound way, both to each other and to Shakespeare, their ancestor:

At the moment the glasses clinked for not more than a fraction of a second, through the common consciousness of everyone present and all for once concentrating on the same thing passed the notion that four hundred years ago such a man had been, and that this was what we were assembled for. For a breath of time the silence deepened, a touch of meaning was there an instant later it was brushed away and forgotten. If we understood more about rituals, the ritual celebration of an individual to whom we owe so much might have been intentional, not accidental.⁶⁰

In framing our rehearsal process with the *karakia* we are making the conscious and intentional use of ritual as Brook desires, assisting us to link and breathe together. It fosters a depth of connection, taking in past and present, the tangible world and the invisible.

Jane Boston⁶¹, leading British voice teacher and author, commented when being welcomed by a group of students trained in this ethos that she had never experienced singing with such clarity of purpose; purpose which freed the singers from self-consciousness or a focus on perfecting performance, instead linking them to the grace of action and encounter: 'The first impression was of expanse, a spirit in the room that was able to come to the fore and work with what was.... The core elements of enabling spirit and sound were there.... It gave an attentiveness to the engagement that was unusual. Anxiety moves away for the utter

⁶⁰ Brook, (1968), 46-47.

⁶¹ Jane Boston taught a Voice Masterclass at Toi Whakaari, November 2009. Boston is co-editor of *Breath in Action*, (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2009), and HOD Masters in Voice, Central Academy of Dramatic Arts, London. Interview with Annie Ruth, Nov. 21, 2011.

clarity of task. All the holy grail of our theatre training seems to come into its own here'.⁶² Moetara supports this perception: 'When you listen in a particular way to the needs of the group you understand you can affect that with your role, that role has *mana*, so you perform with more of yourself.... The idea is that it is a group improvisation, the group know how to shift and respond according to whatever is offered ... follow what is offered and take the lead from one who knows how to read the situation'.⁶³ In this context, purpose allows improvisation because security in purpose frees you to read the encounter without fear and to respond appropriately. I want the actors and crew to constantly improvise the timing and qualities of the choreography we develop, so a deeply embedded freedom to react and respond without self-consciousness is essential to achieving the quality of 'alive-li-ness' I am chasing. Working through this framework supports this on many levels.

At this point, it is useful to examine in detail the *karakia* we habitually use. Each line of the text has been identified by Moetara as linking to both a *pōwhiri* structure, and the values that underlie that structure. In describing this *karakia* in detail I will also be providing, for those unfamiliar with the form, an introduction to the multi-layered nature of *karakia* composition.

The *Karakia*

'Kia karanga ake ki te taumata I te maurea
Ko te pou tokomanawa o taku tū, ko te aroha.
Kia whai te aroaro ki a Hinetitama
Kia rongō ake i te tangi o te keo
Kia rauika te kawa ki nga pakitara o Te Whaea
Te Kura Toi Whakaari!
Tuturu whaka maua kia tina!
Tina! Haumi e...hui e...Taiki e!

(Bring us closer to our indefinable potential
 An expression of love which is core to my stance

⁶² Boston.

⁶³ Moetara, (2009).

With care, consideration and respect I tread this pathway of enlightenment
 To hear the cry of the eagle from the vales of Tangi-te-Keo
 To be nurtured by the ways of the mother Te Whaea
 We are Toi Whakaari!
 Be true to this, hold fast! Indeed!
 Indeed! We take hold)⁶⁴

The first line acknowledges the spirit, passion and the goals of those present, in Māori terms, their *wairua*⁶⁵, linking it to the *karanga*. *Wairua* invokes a way of travelling forward, summoning our human potential, linking the spirits of all present, invoking past and the future, weaving them into this particular moment in time. This sense of a threshold is strong. Bogart writes, 'A liminal space is ... like the space of a doorway between rooms, it lacks concrete definition because even though it conveys something from its previous stage, it has not yet become the new one. In ritual, religion, and theatre, it is a space in between where symbolic acts are played out'.⁶⁶ She goes on to claim that 'it is this unspoken religious dimension that gives the theatre its depth'.⁶⁷ Reminding us of the moment of *karanga* embodies this sense of a call backwards and forwards in time and the many dimensions of such a call. It evokes the visceral sound of *karakia* and brings to consciousness the transitory passing moment in a context of continuous community. The contextualising of the present moment and invoking both literal and metaphysical time contributes to a sense of purpose that is profound and mundane at once. And it brings the entire person into play – not just the logical left brain, but the right brain perceptions of linkages and oneness.

The second line is linked to the *whakatau*, usually the final words in the *karanga* of the *tangata whenua*, the hosts. Its function is to invite the *manuhiri* to be settled, comfortable. It is deeply connected to *aroha*⁶⁸, opening up the possibilities of human relationships. As the previous line opens up the spirit, this line opens up the heart. It encourages the participants to lean forward into the event, to be curious about the work and the people encountered, fostering alive-li-ness. Literally, the line identifies *aroha* as being the central pole

⁶⁴ Teina Moetara, Wellington, New Zealand: Toi Whakaari, 2009. Both Māori and English translation by Moetara. Note that the English is not a literal translation, the original being more highly metaphoric and multi-layered.

⁶⁵ Spirit

⁶⁶ Bogart, (2007), 72.

⁶⁷ Bogart, (2007), 73.

⁶⁸ Love.

that holds us upright, the 'core of our stance', directing participants to be '*He tangata aroha ki te tangata*',⁶⁹ a person who seeks the good of others. The focus is away from the self and towards encounter. Declan Donnellan notes: '...one of the curses of life is that we are often caught up in a performance....when we see reality more clearly we can "perform" less'⁷⁰. Earlier in the same essay he writes of encouraging actors to see what is outside of themselves, often a difficult feat (even for the characters they are playing) and to focus on that rather than on what they themselves are 'playing': 'When something dangerous happens in our life, when the stakes go up, we try to see what is happening rather than think what our attitude towards it is.'⁷¹ In the same way this line in the *karakia* reminds us to 'see' what and who are before us, to 'be' rather than 'perform' ourselves.

Line three reminds participants of the skills, the practical learning in which they are involved, the *hinengaro*. It connects to *whaikōrero* in the *pōwhiri* – to the exchange of ideas and thoughts, to the debate through which two distinct groups are able to find sufficient common threads to form a community. The English translation speaks of 'care, consideration and respect', qualities necessary as we encounter change and the difficulties inherent in the necessary process of moving from one thing to another. Hinetitama is a character in the Māori creation myth, Goddess of the Dawn and the gateway between night and day. When she realised that her husband was also her father she fled into the underworld and became Hine Nui I Te Po, Goddess of Death, moving from a state of innocence to one of knowledge and responsibility. In evoking her path the *karakia* reminds us of the complexity of knowledge, that dawn and night are inevitably linked and that the present moment stretches in both directions. In acknowledging the inherent challenges in the face of difference and change we are assisted in meeting the complex questions in *Marat/Sade* and bringing immediacy to these philosophical debates.

Waiata is the ritual component summoned by the next line, the call that hangs in the air and is heard. Moetara links this to *tikanga* – deeds shaped by embedded underlying values. We are noticed for what we do. The *karakia* is linking the idea of actions revealing values. Tangi-te-Keo is a peak overlooking the city of Wellington, associated with the legend of the creation of Wellington Harbour. A *taniwha*,⁷² transformed

⁶⁹ Mead, 240.

⁷⁰ Declan Donnellan, 'Declan Donnellan' in *Director/Directing: Conversations on Theatre*, Maria Shevtsova and Christopher Innes, (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 87.

⁷¹ Donnellan, 76.

⁷² Potent spirit.

himself into a bird, crying out for the loss of his mate who died in the process creating the harbour. This line reminds us of the consequences of actions. When a *waiata* is sung in a *pōwhiri* the singers are signalling support for the person and words of the speaker who preceded the song. They are literally 'standing for' and aligning with the speaker, and we will use this concept in shaping our production.

The next line refers to the building within which the School is housed, named *Te Whaea*, the mother. Literally the line talks of the stories and history of the school being embedded in the walls of the building, linking past and present and in some way, containing both. On a *marae* this is very clear, since the woven panels, *tukutuku*, the carvings, paintings, and photographs all reveal the stories of the people of that marae. We are rehearsing in the space in which we will perform and this moment in the *karakia* reminds us that everything in the space will and should be read, linking it to the Viewpoints of Relationship to Architecture and Topography. The space will feed the work if we open ourselves to it. The line also links to the concept of *hongi*, the ritual sharing of breath that ends a *pōwhiri*, where the people from each side press noses in greeting before eating together in the *hāngī*, represented by the final lines. These connect strongly to context and purpose. The quality of our hospitality and our values is shown in every event in which we take part, performance or ritual.

I have taken the time to consider this *karakia* in detail because it is becoming deeply embedded in the training offered at Toi Whakaari and links strongly to a sense of purpose that lifts the focus off the individual performing, whether in ritual or theatre performance, re-focusing them firmly on the people to whom they are relating and the people for whom they stand. The Māori knowledge system is focused on actions and the ethics of actions and the *karakia* brings this to the fore: 'Matauranga'⁷³ Māori is not like an archive of information but rather is like a tool for thinking, organising information, considering the ethics of knowledge, the appropriateness of it all and informing us about our world and our place in it'.⁷⁴ The *karakia* provides the ritual spine for the rehearsal process for *Marat/Sade* and eventually frames and supports the encounter with the audience. It contextualises our engagement with the choreography that emerges from Viewpoints-based concepts and vocabulary. Bogart writes, 'shared actions in small rooms can resonate throughout an

⁷³ Knowledge.

⁷⁴ Mead, 306.

entire culture'⁷⁵ and the values encapsulated in the *karakia* are a potent evocation of those resonances as we take this into performance.

Hui: Negotiating through Difficulty

On the *marae* and in *tikanga* Māori encounter and difference are negotiated as part of the ritual processes. Discussions continue until some basis for consensus is reached, from the minimal and provisional to full alignment of purpose. In Chapter Three I spoke of the *hui* that were an intrinsic part of the *Troilus & Cressida* process and gave us an at least provisional agreement to continue exploring our hotly debated history in the context of Shakespeare's play. In *Marat/Sade* the debates include the area of effective artistic representation along with purpose. Of course, every production experiences decision making and reconsidering as part of the process. What is important here is the framework of *tikanga* which gives all participants a voice and a constant reminder of context and purpose.

Particularly difficult sections of Weiss's play are discussed passionately by all, from the actors in lead roles to the assistant lighting operator. I divided the text into rhythms, as described in Chapter Four; we jointly created a choreography, based on the principles and language of Viewpoints; but there are places where the work continues to stumble, or where not all collaborators are happy with the choices made, where a sense of purpose is lacking or unclear. At these points we stop work, sit in a circle, and return to the question of purpose and *tikanga* to see if these can help us. We will not go forward until all feel there is at least a provisional agreement, respecting the *mana* (personal status) of all. This is very much the process that Jim Moriarty and Helen Pearse-Otene follow in their work with Te Rakau, a practise that is gradually informing theatre-making in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Pearse-Otene comments:

We base our day on the cornerstones of *manaakitanga*, which is hospitality and generosity, and *aroha*, which is respect and love, and *whanaungatanga*, which is relationships. So those are the cornerstones of the work. We stop as soon as there's trouble and we'll all sit down as the group and talk about it. It's very ... the trust and the *kōrero* and the *mamae*⁷⁶ that comes with it.... We

⁷⁵ Bogart, (2007), 117.

⁷⁶ Sorrow.

are all collectively responsible for looking after each other. We need to ensure that everyone leaves the room with their *mana* intact - everyone.⁷⁷

This is very much my process in working on *Marat/Sade*. Questions of how to begin and end the performance are particularly problematic. The Brook production looms in our minds, and only after we have talked through our own approach, not once, but many times, pulling out the implications and listening to technicians, actors, designers and myself are we able to put that powerful precedent aside and discover our own solutions. After some debate I raise the idea of using the *karakia* and the *pōwhiri* as structural frameworks to open the performance itself and suddenly the cast are energized and focused, the crew eager and offering suggestions. We are not seeking to make this opening 'look Māori' but rather to use the principles beneath *tikanga* to make greater sense of the initial moments of encounter. With our *mātātaki* clear we see we need to welcome the audience into the performance space. Originally we intended the audience to enter first with only some crew in the space with them, the patients processing in afterwards. Now we see that this idea was derivative from the Brook production and in our context this is not an effective way to welcome or host. Eventually we decide the cast will draw the audience in, walking backward into the space, echoing a *pōwhiri*. It is a solution that feels *tika*, right for our context.

The *Pōwhiri*, or Welcome

The whole first section of the text is now seen through a *pōwhiri* structure and astonishingly it fits comfortably, almost as though it has been designed with that in mind. As the audiences follow the cast into the space, one of the patients ringing a bell, the cast take them over the threshold from the everyday world into the space of performance. The crew stand around the side like *pou* (roof-support poles in a *whare*⁷⁸) holding the structure secure for patients and audience. The cast, through a process of greeting and conversation, try to take in the individuals in the audience and all that they bring, not only their personas, but their past experiences, their ancestors, their hopes and fears, their *wairua* and their curiosity about this encounter now beginning. As the audience enters further the cast offer seating suggestions, and identify themselves within their roles as neurological patients. Some open up the themes of the text and ask

⁷⁷ Jim Moriarty and Helen Pearce-Otene.

⁷⁸ Meeting House.

opinions of the audience. This echoes the function of *whakatau*, settling the visitors inside the space. Watching them I see that some are more able to achieve this than others but that all are engaged in the attempt to meet these strangers on many levels from the mundane to the spiritual. Wassenaar identifies these varied levels of connection:

The work really lived in a heightened world. What I really enjoy in theatre is getting a sense of the vertical. So like having a sense the bodies or the performers are connected to the gods but also the underworld. A really Greek way of viewing of theatre. And that was something I really felt.⁷⁹

From the first moments cast and crew seek to prepare the audience to be welcome and to bring all of themselves to the encounter. The heightened sense enables them to relate to the performers in more than quotidian ways. Through ritual time is subtly altered and a space made for relationship. Bogart writes that, 'the art experience is an intimate moment caught in the rush of time,'⁸⁰ a quality Moriarty links to the experiences of *pōwhiri* and theatre.⁸¹ Taking time to greet the audience formally with the bell and informally in conversation shifts the relationship.

Once the audience are in and seated the special 'guest', the Mayor of Wellington is invited in, applauded by the patients. The Mayor has replaced the director of Charenton Asylum in Weiss's text, and is the sponsor of the performance and the authority whose agency has made it possible. In the photo below she is drawing attention to the role of the Council in supporting all aspects of the city's life. She reminds the audience that the actors are neurological patients, sponsored by the City Council, and introduces the crew and musical director, Mark Dorrell, accompanying the singing on the piano. On the opening night the actual Mayor of Wellington, Kerry Prendergast, attends adding another frame. Sitting in the audience I can see that others are checking the Prendergast's reactions to her *doppelgänger*, enjoying the irony of her fictional and actual presence, and that they continue to do this throughout the performance. This leads into the *whaikōrero* and revelation of *whakapapa*, identifying those present. As in the text, the Herald introduces each of the patients playing the leading roles and explains their particular malady⁸², and the role they will play in the story of the French Revolution, a sequence that resonates strongly, almost magically

⁷⁹ Wassenaar (2011).

⁸⁰ Bogart, (2007), 127.

⁸¹ See quotation, Chapter 3, 78.

⁸² A re-writing of this section of the Weiss text to accommodate the neurological conditions.

53. Mayor (Hayley Brown) welcoming the audience.

with our *tikanga* framework. Weiss's text has the same density as a *whaikōrero* oration, and the same propensity to slip in a bit of humour:

The lady who is acting as his nurse
 whose touch certainly makes him no worse
 is Simonne Evrard, not Charlotte Corday
 Marat and Evrard united one day
 They shared one vision of the just and true
 and furthermore they shared her money too⁸³

Speeches are followed by *waiata*, another shared feature of Weiss's play and *tikanga marae* protocol. When Corday sings, all the women in the cast mirror her movements, a use of the Viewpoint of Repetition to embody the support function of *waiata*. They have to watch her avidly while maintaining the illusion of independence, as they mirror the timing and quality of her gestures, which vary in every performance. The result is that, as she sings, there is a delicate shifting within the space, a beautiful gestural language

⁸³ Weiss, 15.

echoing her from different kinds of bodies in different positions. In the photo below, only those closest to Corday are visible. In the performance this is happening everywhere in the space. It has a kind of ripple

54. Corday (Lily Greenslade) sings her first waiata, her gestures echoed by the other women.

effect that Associate Director Robin Kerr references when he comments, 'With Marat/Sade, there was something simmering underneath and there wasn't a barrier between the actors and the audience'.⁸⁴ At this moment we have found a deep correspondence between our work with Viewpoints and *tikanga*. The actors are patterning, in action, trusting in their poeticised bodies, instinctively attuned both to each other and to the audience. With Marat stepping into his bath, a shared inhalation and exhalation of breath and the striking of a formal tableau, the introduction is finished and the story of Marat's assassination can proceed.

Hui: The Role of the Crew

Another question arises around the role of the crew. What is their relationship to the patients? In the Weiss play the nuns and warders are authoritarian figures who keep control through whistles, beatings and physical dominance. We explore a similar territory for our own production, the crew wrangling and man-

⁸⁴ Robin Kerr, Interview with Annie Ruth, October 26, 2010.

handling the cast whenever they get out of hand (and the script demands that they do this with increasing frequency and fervour), setting up a strong power relationship between cast and crew. Together they create a series of wonderfully arresting tableaux and motifs. Having seen and been deeply affected by the Brook film I am somewhat wedded to this approach, but it is increasingly clear that it does not make sense in our context. Why are these technicians so willing to abuse neurological patients? Does the error lie in our concept, or have we failed to apply it fully? Will this contribute to a sense of alive-li-ness in performance?

A series of *hui*, followed by experimentations on the floor, finally open up a cast-crew relationship that is consistent, theatrical and thematically aligned to both the concerns of *Marat/Sade* and to the realities of our community. We now see the crew as protecting and restraining the patients, intervening whenever one of them has an 'incident' or endangers either themselves or the audience. The 'authority' and disapproval now rest strongly with the Mayor, with the crew in a more ambivalent position, maintaining safety and order rather than authority, so that occasionally they align with the patients to subtly subvert her heavy-handed authority. They are stern and professional rather than abusive. Marat jumps out of his bath and rushes among cast and audience and is firmly retrieved and replaced in the bath by a crew member, splashing water as he lands. A singer leads the assistant stage manager in a dance across and around the space

55. Karena Letham (crew) adding hot water to Marat's bath.

before he captures and settles her. It is playful and at the same time there is a sense that order is being barely contained. The danger implicit in the text is there and the crew have to be alert at all times as the cast ring the changes, using Viewpoints-based choreography as the pattern but varying the timing and quality of their responses according to the events and changes of the moment. A response to an action in one place leads to a 'neurological incident' in another. They are using the Viewpoints of spatial relationship and kinaesthetic response, playing with timing, and the crew has to really be on their toes. Sometimes it is extremely challenging. But they enter into it joyously. Function and purpose lift much of the self-conscious weight off their shoulders.

Similarly the role of an exchange student within the work is negotiated through hui in the ensemble, taking ownership of the need to anchor her more deeply into the cast. After testing several possibilities, including assigning her to leading the crew, I re-cast her as one of the patients, a nun with neurological issues, who takes particular care of the patient playing Charlotte Corday. From being awkward and unconfident her work becomes strong, making a unique contribution to the performance. The process of realigning her role has grown out of the group, out of the ownership and clarity of purpose that *tikanga* provides.

Viewpoints-based Choreography

With the *karakia* framing rehearsals, we begin each day with free Viewpoints improvisations to wake up the actors' creativity and to continue on-going explorations of the space. It is also an opportunity to explore freely on the floor any ideas or concerns that arise through the discussion and *mihimihi*⁸⁵ time following as part of *karakia*. Crew members watch the improvisations as inspiration for their own areas of artistry, to feed into the sound and light explorations they will lead. The Viewpoints form a shared vocabulary to which we return again and again. In waking up the actors poeticized bodies they are setting a foundation for the choreographic work where actions will be precisely set. It is a big group: eighteen actors, eight crew who will be on stage with them. It is the largest group I have worked with using Viewpoints. It is a large number to hold simultaneously in awareness. The improvisations help build the capacity to do this and remain responsive to the minute shifts as much as to the major actions. The cast are on stage throughout so they

⁸⁵ The *mihimihi* is a process in which the work of others is noted and appreciated.

have to build up stamina, maintaining a high level of kinaesthetic awareness over a considerable time span. Kerr, who has not seen my working process before, comments:

I think that you've integrated a methodology that successfully integrates the Viewpoints. Most of all the almost magical almost arbitrary seven points ... you're building the collective intelligence of the group and then allowing them to employ that knowledge in a way that's much more sophisticated than any one person could ever create... It builds a sort of awareness that anything could happen at any moment. Often in theatre, like at the movies, you slip into that popcorn consumer role where you think you're going to be fed everything.⁸⁶

The work to keep the actors both precise and responsive is built out of both the Viewpoints practice and collectively building the choreography. We follow the process described in Chapter Four, with a set of seven tableaux to each of the rhythms I identified in the text, the underlying 'game' lying in the kinaesthetic response to the timing and quality of this choreography. Some actors are totally attuned to the ensemble and playfully vary their timing to explore or accentuate a moment. Others less so, following their own movements without fully investing in the 'game' of aligning with everyone in the space. Investing in the 'game' around timing means giving up considerable control to the ensemble and some find this very difficult to achieve or do so only intermittently. In some cases this may reflect the level of commitment or work level of the individual actor. For others the amount of 'ask' overwhelms them and they retreat into the known. This choreographic approach is not the norm of their training and some are sceptical of its benefits. I need to keep reminding myself that these are actors in training and ability levels vary.

But enough are committed to give the space a sense of seething and unpredictable life, which is the awareness that Kerr describes. The choice around movements and tableaux rest with the actors, and my interventions are to reinforce rather than dictate. The temptation to make their choices smaller, more naturalistic, easier to incorporate is always with them. But they have seen the results of really staying with the challenges they set themselves. It is precisely those movements that they created instinctively and playfully that stretch the possibilities and surprise, opening up the text and deepening the relationships on stage. Kerr describes a moment with the actor playing the Herald. Tawanda Manyo has chosen a very

⁸⁶ Kerr.

idiosyncratic movement, lifting his leg high in the air. Instead of immediately relinquishing this choice for something simpler, I encourage him to go further, to lift the leg still higher. Kerr describes seeing this moment in rehearsal and returning some days later:

I remember the first time you did it ... I was thinking this just isn't going to work ... we're going to have to come back to it and it bears no relationship to what he's doing, what the scene's trying to convey.... I think the gesture is too far and Tawanda won't be able to come up with a way to integrate it successfully.... And then a week later it's affected the whole way that he stands and all of a sudden he seems in that scene like a roving minstrel because that position has allowed him to get in his body in a way that blocking conventionally wouldn't have allowed him to. It gave him another way of conveying what the playwright wanted, creating engaging performance and just having fun himself on stage.... I was constantly surprised at how sometimes you would create something that was from the subconscious, something abstract.⁸⁷

This process allows Mnyomo to arrive at something that looks like 'character' through his instinctive processes. His responses to such physicality are engaging and, as discussed in Chapter Four, connected in a way that his responses to the idea of his 'character' are not.

Sometimes we set and re-set the choreography to find a pattern that will both hold and liberate the actors. This is particularly true for the actors playing Marat and the Marquis de Sade, who struggle to hold the focus as they debate complex philosophical issues. Their scenes are all exposition rather than action. Awareness of *whaikōrero* assists them, with its complex blend of depth and humour (and helps the rest of the cast too, who must remain responsive like the *manuhiri* at a *pūwhiri*, without taking part verbally). It is only when the actor portraying de Sade commits to playing his choreography off his scene partner, exploring the nuances of his responses that the scene comes alive and the many re-works add a palimpsest of complexity to the work. The first image below shows part of a sequence where the two actors physicalise the power plays within their relationship. In the moment shown the Marquis holds Marat

⁸⁷ Kerr.

56. *De Sade* (Chris Parker) and *Marat's* (Leon Wadham) first debate.

in thrall. A moment later the actor playing Marat has climbed up his fellow actor's tall body, asserting the dominance of his position, as shown in the second image below.

57. *Home Spaces* Marat & de Sade.

De Sade invading Marat's space.

As rehearsals progress their ability increases to hold to the agreed precision, while remaining exquisitely aware of the nuances in timing and quality emerging from their scene partners. Their bodies become increasingly receptive and poeticised, the collective intelligence to which Kerr refers operating at higher and higher levels. The boundary negotiations through which a sense of 'character' is emerging for audience and fellow-players, and the utilization of patterns arrived at in prior scenes combine, adding depth and complexity. This understanding is not intellectual – it is expressed through a state of being in action. In the left-hand image above each speaks from his place of control, a topography identified during Viewpoints improvisations and carried through into the production. For Marat the bath remains his constant place – of both power and affliction, but for the Marquis, as author of the play-within-the-play, greater freedom seems appropriate, including invading Marat's space. Their relationship to architecture is strongly delineated, with Marat constrained and the Marquis able to roam and use every part of the space, vertical and horizontal. The sense of alive-li-ness is growing with their confidence.

Bogart developed the Viewpoints to deal with the exigencies of short rehearsal periods such as our own four weeks and we feel that they are enabling us to make brave and playful choices. Far from restricting the actors, these decisions set them free to work off each other. Leon Wadham, playing Marat, identifies this as one of the gifts of the approach:

I loved working with Viewpoints as a methodology. It really took you away from that thing of going 'how do I make the right choice' and it forced you to make a bold choice. And you can make sense later. And that's what I realised very early on and I just had such a great experience of challenging myself.... I never really got stuck. I'd just go back to what is the situation and what is the relationship what can I offer now given the architecture and given who I'm with.... I really felt that like this blocking freed me later in the process.⁸⁸

The actors are increasingly able to respond instinctually and immediately, to observe and absorb the patterns they are creating even as these form and dissolve. They are holding simultaneously to spontaneity and precision. Victoria Abbott, playing Cocol, one of the singers, describes the performance experience using the Viewpoints based choreography as simultaneously safe and dangerous:

⁸⁸ Leon Wadham, Interview with Annie Ruth, October 19, 2010.

In one way it was really safe. It was like following a score, a musical score. But in another way it was also really dangerous because you knew what was going to happen but you didn't quite know how sometimes. And you didn't know what the response to that particular bit of score ... would be.... So it was a lot more call and response, even with the audience and with your other players than other ways that I've worked in the past.⁸⁹

Watching audiences and cast in performance I can see how the quality of the audience is feeding strongly and directly into the performance. At the dress rehearsal there are a large number of dance students attending and the kinaesthetic nature of the work clearly engages them. Their laughter and appreciation, their gaze following, not just the central narrative, but the tiny vignettes on the side-lines, makes me see how physically alive and demanding the work is. One of them remarks to me afterwards that everywhere he looked something was happening. Our desire to create an entire environment seems to be largely fulfilled.⁹⁰ As I observe these first audience encounters I see considerable life. I see a space in which every movement, every action casts a ripple that affects the whole, often in surprising and wonderful ways. I see a strong sense of play. I see a relationship established in which the audience is aware that they are part of an event, participants, not just observers, an atmosphere that Martyn Wood, then artistic director of Bats Theatre describes as 'already alive as you stepped in'.⁹¹ I am engaged by their ability to maintain a precarious balance between order and chaos⁹², the artistry and the life that comes from harnessing these two gods in tandem. What I see in the performances is that at every point on the stage something is happening, and there is a sense that anything could happen too, of life that is bubbling over and of narratives within narratives.

Marat/Sade is a complex script and the life I see on this stage is a complex and layered life. It is chaotic in places, and the audience is often forced to choose where to focus. This is sometimes a benefit, with individual audience members able to follow where their interest is snagged. At other times it is confusing and detracts from the overall work. For example, there are places where I have over-layered the action, where I need to slow down the pace and give the audience space to breathe and absorb. A major example

⁸⁹ Victoria Abbott, Interview with Annie Ruth, November 14, 2010.

⁹⁰ Production Diary *Marat/Sade*, June-August 2010

⁹¹ Martyn Wood, Interview with Annie Ruth, March 3, 2011.

⁹² See Bogart, quoted in Chapter 1, 14.

of this becomes visible to me at the public dress rehearsal. I have the guillotine scene and one of Marat's speeches overlapping. Instead of creating a rich rainbow of experience, the sequence is chaotic, all the colours blurred and no space left to absorb either the physical or verbal narratives. I am able to re-work this for subsequent performances, and the moment of pause that I insert has the added advantage of varying the overall tempo of the scene. However the abundant life always risks tipping over into incoherence and this is clear to me as one of the flaws in the production. There are performances where the cast are overly excited eroding some of the discipline and attention to detail in the choreography, so that gestures that were once precise and idiosyncratic become generalised and approximate.

One night a more senior audience gives stronger focus to the central debate. The way they lean inwards, as though questioning which of the major protagonists they feel in alignment with, brings a responsive focus from the cast. A more powerful use of silence emerges, a silence all the more striking since it arises out of the swirling chaos of mass action. Parker, playing de Sade, describes one such moment: 'The Viewpoint would encourage me to go further with that [silence] because they as an audience seek truth and I could marry that stillness with these large Viewpoints'.⁹³ The audience's sense of the 'truth' or authenticity of that moment allows the actor to extend it, to be with them in the silence.

The play has a number of 'processional scenes,' places where the entire cast traverse the space. All are strongly supported by music, not just the singers but the entire ensemble taking part both vocally and with instruments, many of which are improvised out of 'found' objects that have been used in other ways on the set. These are huge events in the context of this work and the need for precision is paramount: precision

58. Ensemble choreography.

⁹³ Chris Parker, Interview with Annie Ruth, October 19, 2010.

vocally, in placement and in intent. At the same time they call for a sense of chaos and unpredictable change erupting out of deeply experienced social conditions. *Tikanga*, together with Viewpoints, helps the actors to hold the delicate balance and keep relating to the exchange with the audience. Wassenaar describes the experience:

Visceral, I thought it was very visceral and bold in the use of space and choreography. A real strong sense of choreography I got from that piece. I think what I'm really interested in, in the work that you do, is the relationship between chaos and order. Like in *Marat/Sade*, it could spin out of control and then all of a sudden, in a few seconds, it could be very strict, very controlled. And I think that is where Viewpoints, that you are using to explore the work, does it very well. That non-naturalistic nature of theatre is what we're both interested in. The work really lived in a heightened world.⁹⁴

This balance between chaos and order was also noted by Wood: 'Through the performance it had a real spontaneous feel. Some parts felt really tightly staged and other parts didn't. But a strong feel of spontaneity and aliveness'.⁹⁵ This was never more apparent than in those huge processional scenes. Holding to these two gods, the Dionysian and the Apollonian is a constant challenge and one that, without the help of Viewpoints-based choreography and *tikanga* I do not believe we could have met.

I had worked with Wood in 2006, prior to his role as Artistic Director of Bats Theatre. He acted in *Small Lives*, *Big Dreams*, and I asked him what he saw of this as an audience member in *Marat/Sade*, particularly in terms of energising the space and bringing a sense of alive-li-ness to the work:

Because Annie was directing it I assumed it [Viewpoints-based choreography] would be a part of it. Beforehand I thought about *Small Lives*, *Big Dreams* and remembered both things from that time and discussions about it afterwards. And because as a cast we were so scared and confused and didn't engage with it.... So, watching *Marat/Sade*, I started to see the dynamics of people working together and becoming quite visually dynamic. Also a couple of 'eureka!' moments for me when I

⁹⁴ Wassenaar (2011).

⁹⁵ Wood.

saw the effect of this way of working. I felt, in the audience, that I was a part of the grid, I felt the unification.... Everyone had a fully-formed character, a fully-formed role and a fully-formed purpose. Just exciting'.⁹⁶

Wood's comment about fully-formed characters bears out my contention that audiences will endow the performers with 'character' so long as the actors are fully engaged and connected in the work of the moment. The approach allows us to make choices that take both the actor offering and the one receiving by surprise. And of course the audience also experience this. For some viewers, for whom all action should serve, or at least not be unconnected to, or run counter to the text, this detracts from the effectiveness of the production. Carnegie comments: 'I did feel that there were aspects of the acting (and I was thinking mainly of the choreography and movement), that felt arbitrary. Having looked at it now, this might be because Viewpoints had been carried into the production for their own sake rather than for a particular dramaturgical reason growing out of the text'.⁹⁷ Theatre critic Atkinson was also aware of the choreography but felt it blended seamlessly into the work, much as he had seen in other productions of the same play:

My memory of the movement in your production: low body positions, almost crouching, fast, scrabbling, at times circular movement of whole cast en masse. I was expecting it to be like this so it didn't hit me that something different might have occurred in rehearsal to achieve the results that it did. This, coming to think of it, is a positive statement about the production – obvious strings were not being pulled to create an effect.⁹⁸

The arbitrariness Carnegie identifies certainly existed, in that the movement told a thematic story which did not necessarily correspond to the articulated words. It allowed more than one narrative to be told simultaneously. Kerr describes this as 'cracking open the mirror': 'I think that's something fundamental about what the method is taking you towards. To take something and twist it, that's an extension. You're cracking it open you're exploring the every-day in a way that's more than every-day. By breaking the mirror we're able to see a truer reflection'. This is certainly my intention and there are moments when, to my eye,

⁹⁶ Wood.

⁹⁷ Carnegie, (2001), 2.

⁹⁸ Atkinson, (2011).

the work flies and something human and true is revealed and others when it is less felicitous, depending to some degree on the skill of the student actors and of course on the decisions I have made in rehearsal.

But it is clear that the cast stay alive to each other and to their audiences as Carnegie acknowledges when I ask if he found the work to have a quality of alive-li-ness: 'Yes, of course. We were very close to the actors. The actors were very committed, intense. So, do I agree? Absolutely'.⁹⁹ Film-maker Mackay was aware of this quality of alertness from both actors and audiences, arising out of the choreography:

There were some amazing groupings.... All I can say to you Annie is that I remember a film that I saw once as a child and it was a person holding a bar and walking a tightrope over the Niagara Falls. And that's exactly what you were doing. If you don't keep that tautness, that tension, that tight-rope and that balance of holding that bar, you go that way or that way. Either way it's a failure. And that's what it was like – the tension of that.¹⁰⁰

Her metaphor delights me, evoking as it does the sense of simultaneous danger and achievement. This is precisely the effect we are seeking and I am so pleased that this film maker experiences the work in this way.

Hui: The Challenge of the Ending

Even more problematic than the opening or the questions relating to the crew is the question of the ending. In the Weiss text the patients riot at the end of the play, Duperret raping the wife and daughter of the Asylum Director, the nurses and warders flogging the patients into submission, the audience protected from the chaos only by a steel grill. We have set the work with the audience on three sides allowing no physical separation between cast and audience, the Mayor seated among them. All are in the same 'room'. Having Duperret attack the mayor seems like the perfect solution. Immediately prior to this moment she has been carried by the cast, singing 'Fifteen Glorious Years'. When she is first hoisted on their shoulders the actor, Hayley Brown, explores gratification at being honoured, regally waving to the audience as she approves the

⁹⁹ Carnegie, (2011).

¹⁰⁰ Mackay.

59. *The Mayor carried on the shoulders by patients.*

text of the song: 'each year better than the one before'. But as the procession becomes wilder she panics, shouting and pleading to be put down, until finally they dump her in the bath of water abandoned by Marat who has become part of the procession. After this we intend that Duperret should rape her while the cast run amok in the space. But what are we saying at this moment? That the poor, afflicted and oppressed are dangerous beasts to us 'normal' ones? We stop work and *hui* again and again. As in earlier instances cited, the cast and crew are empowered to challenge my directorial authority. We will not continue until this is resolved to all our satisfactions. As a result the search for a solution becomes not my problem, but the communal problem, with suggestions coming from every corner. However, the problem is not technical but fundamental, a question of purpose. *Hui* is being used to solve a major artistic question.

Different cast and crew members describe the work from their point of view, speaking out of their roles. Suddenly I see that having Duperret rape the mayor is all wrong. It panders to clichés around illness and madness. Seeing a neurological patient transgress reinforces stereotypes that difference is dangerous, the dispossessed violent. Rather, it needs to be the authority figure who transgresses, the trusted figure who is inappropriate, violent. When I suggest this to the ensemble they are unanimously in agreement. As with the solution to the opening, it feels *tika*. So now, when the mayor is dumped in the bath, Duperret calls

out, 'But she's the mayor!' and starts forward, arm extended to assist her to her feet. The mayor, however, misunderstands, as so often the actions of those neurologically ill are misunderstood. Terrified he will rape her, having witnessed his difficulty in controlling himself around Corday, she kicks him in the testicles. Duperret falls, hitting his head on the corner of the bath as he drops. And the mayor, standing, dripping water in the bath, looks down at a neurological patient whom she has assaulted, injured, maybe even killed.

And this publicly, in front of her constituents. At the very least it will be the end of her career. Now the cast run to the periphery, leaving the mayor and the fallen Duperret alone on the stage with the laughing Marquis de Sade. The entire group then return slowly to stand and look silently at the audience, working the Viewpoints of Spatial Relationship and Tempo. The unspoken question hangs in the air, 'What do you presume? When approached by these people from the fringes, do you presume harm? Who do we really experience as harming our society?' These questions are not answered. They are, of course, complex and should never be reduced to simplistic answers. But we hope that the moment will make those watching pause and consider, both in the performance and later in their lives, just as it has made us pause

60. The Mayor looks down on the patient she has knocked out watched by the ensemble.

and consider. This is a powerful moment and audiences are silent, looking at the cast as cast and crew look at them. It is a shared improvisatory moment of suspended time.

***Marat/Sade*: Ongoing Questions**

Every aspect in the first moment of engagement with an audience either deepens or weakens the encounter. Even before an audience enters the space the contract is being drawn, their expectations fulfilled or disrupted, their curiosity sparked or dulled. Just as on the *marae* the carvings and *pou*, the first call of the *karanga* are read for their contribution to the narrative of the encounter, so will every part of our performance be read, consciously or unconsciously by our audiences. Wood describes this moment of entering the space as both acknowledging the artifice of performance and at the same time as stripped of protective artifice:

The first thing is when you walk in, you're really aware of the artifice of it and the script of that play supports this. It was all quite naked, it didn't have the protective artifices of theatre.... So automatically you are in a heightened state.... I was aware that we were stepping into a different kind of space ... the show was already alive.... Walking in, we get a sense that the world we walked into exists all the time in a way that doesn't often happen in theatre.¹⁰¹

The sense of a heightened state and being inside the action is echoed by other audience members. Wassenaar recalls 'a really strong sense of ensemble and community. I remember the space, the garage space as you come in, and the most important design element in the space is really the bodies.... Bodies that are welcoming me on my chair, appreciating me as an audience member, acknowledging me as a part of this event and this experience, giving me a sense of involvement and allowing me to have a way in'.¹⁰² Mackay reinforces this sense of connection: 'I remember some very effective interaction with me. Like the girl students I remember. Really trying to engage with me as an individual. I loved it'.¹⁰³ These comments indicate that feeling truly acknowledged is a vital part of an event opening an audience to a deeper engagement with the performance. It is not entirely comfortable and some audience members dislike or

¹⁰¹ Wood.

¹⁰² Wassenaar (2011).

¹⁰³ Mackay.

resist it, unsure on what level they are being asked to respond. The question for me lies in increasing the clarity about the kind of engagement required. On the *marae* the parameters are always clear though the event can still be charged with uncertainty, even danger. Resistance and questioning have their place and are absorbed into the ritual. Not always comfortably. Some issues in *Te Ao Māori* remain contentious and debated over decades of heated, painful discussion. What the framework does is allow the debate, the conversation to continue. So should it be, I believe, in theatre. I am excited by audiences that are diverse in their reactions, alert to the questions raised by both text and performance, rather than numbed into a collective, manipulated response.

The interweaving of *tikanga* Māori frameworks and Viewpoints-based choreography is proving fruitful and has taken my performance research a step further. Looking back at *Marat/Sade* I see success in community building and holding the entire work within a *tikanga* framework. This is clear in both rehearsals and in the performance season. Audience members speak of the immediacy and visceral nature of the work and the sense that they were truly a part of it, in Boal's language, 'spect-actors' rather than spectators, or as Mackay articulated, 'part of the people in the town'.¹⁰⁴ The combination of the twinned methodologies asks the actors to continually look outside themselves and be prepared to meet the unexpected and even the unwelcome. Viewpoints is the methodology through which we approach the work, the *tikanga* Māori frameworks the way in which the entire process is held. In the way they deal with audiences I see a growing confidence in doing this from all, and in some actors a mature assurance in these encounters unusual in actors so young, both in years and in training.

The *mātātaki* or stance of collaborative empowerment for every part of the team has made them a strong and cohesive unit. When I visit the production mid-season I see they have taken the preparatory rituals for their own and crew and cast come together nightly to re-establish themselves as an ensemble and reaffirm their purpose before going into performance. Both processes value the development of agency as a route to vibrancy in performance and I see the cast and crew constantly reading the room and responding to what is there rather than what they imagine ought to be there. In this they demonstrate that they are not confused by the two methodologies, but using them to reinforce each other. They are exploring the timing of their choreography even as they respond to both the audience and each other, as I note in my production diary. My instinct was correct: the methodologies speak to and reinforce each other. The

¹⁰⁴ Mackay.

Viewpoints-based choreography is WHAT they are executing, while *tikanga* is HOW they are applying it. The sense of purpose in *tikanga* Māori frameworks is kept playful by the game of timing beneath the Viewpoints-based choreography. The *marae* experience, where grief can turn to humour in a nanosecond and profundity is coupled with the everyday, supports them in the changeability invited by this great script, and by the choreographic frameworks to which they are committed. Wassenaar's earlier comment about the many levels he sees in the production, linking it to the Greek gods and the underworld, speaks to this success.¹⁰⁵ I had been seeking a sense of alive-li-ness and this is abundantly achieved.

I also see the omissions, the places in particular where I failed to follow *tikanga* Māori fully, places where I could not, in rehearsal see a way to meaningfully incorporate it, but which now become an evident lack for me in meeting our audiences. I see the potential for more fully utilising the vocal Viewpoints, particularly in combination with the choreography; see how deeply they connect to the quality of response. I see the danger of overly-layering the experience and the places where this detracts from the work as a whole. And I see that the absence of the final frame, the frame in which the actors could first meet the audience as themselves outside the performance space, obscures rather than complicates the encounter. In *tikanga* every aspect of the person is brought into play, nothing left at the door. The omission of this first frame makes it impossible for cast and crew to achieve this, even as it makes it more confusing for some audience members. It is evidence that following through on *tikanga* Māori serves the artistry of the work. Both strengths and weaknesses are valuable data in this research into the application of both Viewpoints and *tikanga* Māori structures, data which I see reinforcing their potential to support the creation of work that is both artistically structured and wildly free; performance that gives the audience encounter that vital ingredient of alive-li-ness.

The ending, while strong and effective dramatically, does not give the audiences a chance to interact with the cast and crew, where they could reflect together on the experience. Nor is normality restored with food and drink as it always would be on the *marae*, the *tapu* or apartness of the ceremony completed by the resumption of *noa*, the everyday, bringing participants back to the world of the body and its needs and the talk that comes from that informal sharing. Nor did I consider testing the work out in a *marae* setting. To complete this part of my on-going performative investigation I need to explore these in a further work, which I do in my 2011 production of *Welcome to Thebes*.

¹⁰⁵ See quotation 228.

Welcome to Thebes: Expanding the Conversation with the Audience

I am writing this in 2011, a year after the production of *Marat/Sade*. Since then New Zealand has experienced a powerful earthquake that has put the value of community and collective and cohesive action into stark visibility¹⁰⁶. At Toi Whakaari we have many students with *whanau*, family or friends in Christchurch, the city affected by the quake. It is many hours before they can discover whether their *whanau* have survived. We are a tiny country. Everyone knows someone who has been affected. With the *kōiwi* structure firmly in place we can quickly bring the school community together and support each other. In the 'earthquake preparedness' information we are advised that the most important action the population can take is to get to know their community, so our community building has suddenly taken on greater significance. It is not just about making art. It is about survival. Bogart writes: 'The truth in art exists in the tension between contrasting realities.... Significant political events always drop a lens between the environment and the perceiver.... Rather than the experience of life as a shard, art can connect and unite the strands of the universe'.¹⁰⁷ Going into rehearsals for *Welcome to Thebes* a week later, the earthquake connects and influences everything. For everyone in the room, our purpose in being there, rather than clearing away liquefaction in Christchurch, has to be negotiated and accepted before we can focus on the work. We have to make sense of making art.

Our production of Moira Buffini's *Welcome to Thebes*¹⁰⁸ is titled a 'workshop production' indicating that there are no technical, management or design students involved; the work will be actor-focused. The cast are at the very beginning of their second year of training so it is clear that their abilities will be uneven as they struggle to embody the process, especially as there are only three weeks to develop it, including performances. Other than that, it is up to me to interpret the 'workshop' element. This can be an advantage. There is energy to be found in something unpolished, as Brook so eloquently writes, describing it as 'a dynamic stab at a certain ideal'.¹⁰⁹ He also notes: 'the impression of freshness is everything'.¹¹⁰ I

¹⁰⁶ February 22, 2011, a 6.3 earthquake hit the city of Christchurch, killing 181 people and devastating the central business district, most of which has had to be demolished, including the iconic cathedral. See <http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/officially-released-quake-victims-names-list-4039929>

¹⁰⁷ Bogart, (2007), 3-5.

¹⁰⁸ First performed at the National Theatre, London, 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Brook, (1968), 80. See also his description of John's Arden's *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*, improvised section, 79.

¹¹⁰ Brook, (1968), 79.

want to work more clearly with the elements of *tikanga* Māori that I was unable to fulfil in *Marat/Sade*, particularly the ending.

With questions of audience involvement and *tikanga* in the forefront of my mind I put it to the cast that we perform the first three acts and then leave the rest of the play to explore a little with the audience, giving them an opportunity for *kōrero* and opening up our processes, finishing with hot drinks, food and informal discussion. The cast endorse this. More than half the group are Māori or Pacific Islanders and their cultural knowledge tells them that this will deepen the level of audience engagement. Audiences left *Marat/Sade* very much as they would after any theatre event. Here we are looking to change the terms of engagement, inspired by *tikanga* Māori frameworks. Moriarty says that 'in the feed is often where that *kōrero* about what really happened to us through the course of the evening is investigated more deeply'¹¹¹ I am also planning to experiment with side-coaching during performance, much as Boal¹¹² with Forum Theatre and Jacob Moreno, founder of psychodrama, did. By 'troubling' their performance delivery I hope to assist them to keep their improvisatory and kinaesthetic response skills alive. However, I want to be sparing in my interventions, cautious to keep the focus on the cast and the story-telling rather than diverting it onto myself. We will use the *hui* that are part of our rehearsal process to discover how to do these things effectively.

The play straddles the two time-signatures of ancient Greece and contemporary Africa just as in *Marat/Sade* the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period that followed were twinned with Wellington 2010 in our production¹¹³. Buffini uses classical characters to create a contemporary political fable in which Thebes is presented as an African country emerging from civil war into democracy. The new president, Eurydice, (drawn from the current president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace prize) has turned to the superpower, Athens, for aid. The play begins when Theseus, first citizen of Athens, arrives in Thebes to assess the situation on the ground. In the scenes that follow, the stories of Antigone, Phaedre and Tiresias are interwoven in a clearly contemporary context, with an emerging nation attempting to counter the chaos of a bloody civil war, even as the internationals see opportunities to advance their economic interests. Paul Taylor, reviewing the production at London's National Theatre,

¹¹¹ Moriarty.

¹¹² See Chapter Two.

¹¹³ My 2003 production of *Troilus & Cressida* twinned Ancient Greece and the New Zealand Wars and *Small Lives, Big Dreams* in 2006 combined Chekhov's time with contemporary Wellington.

writes: 'No charge of opportunistic tourism can be levelled against this play. Evoking a world where the horrors of the past refuse to be tidied away and where economic dependency can lead to sexual blackmail, it takes you deep inside the frazzled nervous system of a nascent third-world democracy'.¹¹⁴ The play is introduced with a prologue in which soldiers deal directly with the audience, briefing them on both the situation and appropriate behaviour in Thebes. Like *Marat/Sade* the play is built around an argument, allowing the cast to reference *whaikōrero* as we build the work. The debate in this play is between the factions in Thebes vying for the backing of Theseus and his economic clout. That the play is built on an intercultural encounter, makes it particularly resonant with *pōwhiri* structures.

In approaching this work, the processes and protocols described in relation to the rehearsals for *Marat/Sade* are continued. The timing, following soon after the second Christchurch earthquake, means that *hui* around purpose are frequent and challenging. The play deals with a world struggling to rebuild itself after the disaster of war. It has reverberations for our own rebuild. But that is not the key issue. More centrally, we are asking questions around the role of the artist in the world. Is making art only for the good times? A significant portion of the cast is from Christchurch so the question is immediate and vital, not academic. The decision to stay with the art is hard won. There are times when I think some of the cast will leave to join the clean-up volunteers. But in the end, all stay, realising that much as they feel the urge to help, bringing extra bodies needing to be fed and housed to their quake-ravaged city is not the best solution. Instead we collect food and blankets and take them to the refugees gathering at the local Pipitea Marae, while keeping on with the work of making art.

In *Welcome to Thebes* the prologue and epilogue provide a structure that echoes *pōwhiri* and *poroporoaki*. I decide to use the prologue to bring the audience into the space of Thebes, using an adjoining room as an ante-chamber. The quality of the encounter will echo the entry onto a *marae*, but be a great deal more confrontational than most contemporary *marae* experiences. The playtext here is brutal, preparing the audience for a war zone. They will not be allowed to sit until they enter the main performance space and the *whakatau*¹¹⁵. In any approach working through Viewpoints the architecture of the space is a vital element. I have chosen spaces in the basement of Te Whaea where the rough architecture assists the story-telling. The only elements we add are some piles of broken concrete, boxes, wood (used for all props)

¹¹⁴ Paul Taylor, *The Independent*, June 24, 2010. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/welcome-to-thebes-national-theatre-london-2008687.html>

¹¹⁵ Settling.

and an oil drum. The space for the prologue is bleak and minimally lit; the audience are told to stand around the walls, the central space being 'dangerous' with unexploded munitions. When they enter the main performance space they step from concrete to wooden floor, raked seating is provided on two sides, the light warmer and the spatial configuration resembling, a little, a village square or the arena invoked by Bogart.¹¹⁶ The roller door to the bleaker first space remains up throughout the performance, reminding the audience that the debates in the square take place in the context of the war zone they can see behind.

61. Prologue Space.

Main Performance Space.

As with *Troilus & Cressida* I have cast roughly according to race, with the blonde haired and pale faced playing the Athenians and the Māori, Pacific Islanders and dark haired playing the Thebans, who all wear headscarves. Costuming is minimal. In the rehearsal photos above I am watching the work as I will in performance, available to intervene if needed and to publicly explore our processes at the end.

Mackay describes the experience of entering the performance:

... when I was put in this ... sort of holding pen type area and I had to stand around the wall and three young characters were ... shouting at me and keeping me, I immediately started to feel very defensive and very uncomfortable. But they were in uniform.... I immediately wanted to resist.... But it set up in me a thing where I was absolutely on my mettle ... I did not do what I would normally do which goes, 'Oh my god, busy day, I'm just sitting here to be entertained, please god this doesn't bore me or anything, that I'm not going to go to sleep and snore' ... I didn't know you

¹¹⁶ See Bogart quotation introducing the section on The Space in *Marat/Sade*, 214.

were going to workshop anything and I didn't know that any questions would be asked afterwards. It was how different the approach had been right at the very beginning.¹¹⁷

The experience of entering a total environment is apparent and a level of confrontation is appropriate for this play and congruent with *tikanga*. I feel that the process is strong even where actors are unable to fully embody it. To reinforce the moment of *whakatau*, once the audience are seated in the second space, one of the actors, Andrew Patterson playing Polykleios, steps out of role. He welcomes them and explains the workshop performance concept, including introducing the cast and me as director, warning them that I may intervene and side-coach from time to time. This layer of speaking to the audience directly as themselves was missing in *Marat/Sade* and including it here more completely fulfils *tikanga* while really settling the audience into the experience. Wassenaar describes his experience of the two environments in physical terms: 'What I felt in that first room with Thebes, I kind of went, shut down, shut down, and then I went into the other room and felt, oh, now I can open up!'¹¹⁸ He clearly moved from the sense of confrontation or *wero* to that of *whakatau* as is the protocol of a *pōwhiri*.

The sense that audiences are participants is established from the beginning and when later they are urged to join the cast in certain responses, such as standing up for a two minutes' silence for the war victims they do so with surprising alacrity:

I fought with grief through the long night
And in your faces I can see its shadow.
I want to remember those we have lost.
Please join me in two minutes' silence¹¹⁹

For audiences as for us, the resonances with Christchurch hang in the air and make the moment powerful and visceral, as several spectators remark in the discussion that follows the performance.

¹¹⁷ Mackay.

¹¹⁸ Wassenaar (2011).

¹¹⁹ Buffini, 35.

The central debate has echoes of the *whaikōrero*. I want to bring these elements strongly into the awareness of the cast as we work on the text, particularly the qualities that emerge from face-to-face encounters. As Ashcroft says:

Kanohi ki te kanohi is the essential thing to both theatre and *tikanga Māori* - to participate and to be in a space to have a say and to be influenced by others. On the *marae* you are allowed to speak on as long as you like.... And also to fall asleep.... The big effort is to get everyone to work with clarity and courage (which arises out of clarity) around purpose and function'¹²⁰.

The centrality of inviting audiences to join the conversation is emphasised, an important addition to my practice. Discussions around the political situation in Liberia, and about the economic and political impact of colonialism in New Zealand, help clarify our purpose. So does working through Viewpoints-based choreography, where the underlying game requires the cast to watch each other like hawks. By the time we reach performance the central protagonists and many in the wider ensemble have managed to hone this quality of watchfulness to a considerable level. I am aware that, in *Marat/Sade*, some of the cast simply went through their own sequence of moves without referencing the subtle changes within the group. So I have focused on timing and reciprocity. As a result these actors are highly poeticised in their kinaesthetic responses to each other and to their audiences; they are more fully 'in action'.

In one performance the actor playing Theseus, enters, surveying the central square in Thebes, while the Athenian diplomat on the ground, Talthybia, struggles to pick up her papers that have fallen in her startled response to the noise of his helicopter. The pattern has been for him to continue forward into the space while Talthybia scrambles her goods together and stammers out a welcome. On this particular evening the actor pauses in the entryway while continuing his text. He is on step two of a seven step choreography. The game does not allow the actor playing Talthybia, or any of the other actors on the stage to move onto the next step in the choreography until Theseus moves forward. She is frozen kneeling on the ground, staring at him. The atmosphere on the stage is electric as they deal with this unexpected change in timing, yet none of them let go of the timing game to continue with their own moves. They wait. And he waits, surveying Talthybia and the audience in front of him for what seems an impossibly long time, until releasing them in a move that speeds up the choreography for the rest of the rhythm. The audience do not know why

¹²⁰ Ashcroft.

the moment is so charged, but they feel the danger the cast are experiencing and this adds to the *mana* and authority that Theseus brings with him into the Theban economic recovery discussions. As a group they are working with the clarity of purpose and understanding of role that grows out of following *tikanga* Māori protocols and they are finding increasing precision and playfulness as they work the Viewpoints-based choreography. We have had less than three weeks to work together so not all are able to turn in polished performances. But all have come on board in the exploration and what the resulting work lacks in polish it seems to me it makes up for in vibrancy and alive-li-ness, qualities identified by film-maker Yvonne Mackay, in her comments on *Welcome to Thebes* as holding the same ‘tight-rope’ balance of tension she saw in *Marat/Sade*¹²¹.

62. Polykleitos (Andrew Patterson) Talthybia (Tai Berdinner-Blades) and Ismene (Awhina-Rose Asby).

There is another sequence where two actors work together, using the Viewpoints of Repetition and Kinaesthetic Response, accompanying text in which Talthybia is recalling Polykleitos's description of the Milky Way. She describes it to Ismene with Polykleitos visible to the audience behind her, as shown in the photographs above. Talthybia cannot see Polykleitos, as her back is to him and he cannot see her movements clearly for the same reason, though both can sense each other and work off their kinaesthetic response to the information they take in aurally. Their complex sequence of actions is completely synchronised and their acute listening is filled with *ihi*, beautifully complementing the text which is filled with wonder at the vastness of the universe. These are examples where the games of timing and listening are working beautifully, whereas in other places the work remained fixed, with consequently less life.

¹²¹ See quotation 241.

Wassenaar clearly observes this: 'A person like Tai¹²² is exceptional because she is so good at listening in the here and now.... When that doesn't work you can see it immediately. With [named another actor] I didn't see anything different, she could not change at all'.¹²³ Invoking concepts from *tikanga* Māori such as *mana* and *ihi*, the first relating to the status of the person and the second to a psychic force that lifts their actions above the quotidian, are useful articulations of qualities needed to meet both text and choreography. Using these qualities lifts their connection with and responsivity to the audience to a greater level and I see the audience lean in towards the stage in response to the feeling of a more powerful energy emanating. It is an example of presence that does not reside in an individual but in the connection between.

63. Pargia (Jacqueline Gwaliasi) and Tydeus (Alex Tarrant).

At the end of the rehearsed performance the cast and I step forward onto the stage to share with the audience the process by which we created the work, laying text over a fixed choreography, built out of the Viewpoints work of Anne Bogart. We want to pave the way for discussion both of what we did and how we did it, so that there can be a fuller encounter with our audiences. We want to deepen the conversation so that it goes beyond commenting on particular moments in the script to an analysis of purpose and the effectiveness, or not, of the choices we have made. In a *hui* there is always room to use performative skills

¹²² Berdinner-Blades.

¹²³ Wassenaar (2011).

to assist the conversation and that is what we are doing here. We are also referencing the *hongī* or sharing breath at the end of a *pōwhiri*. Showing the work raw has all the danger of a sporting event, with no certainty that the actors will achieve creditable or watchable results. The audience's gaze goes from actor to actor, able to see both the physical offer and how effectively it is received and countered. They are also able to appreciate the layering effect of a physical score created independent of the text and the way they complement each other when brought together.

In preparation for this I have asked several of the cast to learn some lines from the last two acts that we have not rehearsed. There, in front of the audience, I title the rhythms and take them through seven tableaux, created on the spot. Each time they create a choreography in front of the audience it is to a different title, one night 'You fucked it up!', the next, 'Unleash the god of uproar!'. Nothing can be planned

64. Tydeus leaps in frenzy, watched by Polykleitos

in advance. This is high risk for the actors playing Tydeus and Pargia, but Alex Tarrant and Jacqueline Gwaliasi are brave and confident performers and their characters are some of the boldest in the piece. They have been playful and inventive throughout rehearsals so I know they can cope with this exposure. Their work in this sequence is always daring, inventive and extremely physical. Tarrant in particular is extremely adept as the photo above shows. Once they have created a choreography I then ask them to speak the text as they perform it, to drape the words over the actions. Audiences are amazed at how

strongly the movement and text combine to create something filled with life, what Mackay, in her comments on *Welcome to Thebes*, describes as ‘a freshness’¹²⁴.

I work similarly with the actors playing Theseus and Eurydice. Their scene is more delicate and sometimes I have to remind them not to compete in physicality with the other couple. Their scene is an opportunity for the audience to see the Viewpoints-based choreography working with complex, nuanced text in a more naturalistic sequence. However the element of surprise and amazement for the audience remains. The titles are loosely linked to the text, from ‘Can men and women ever meet equally?’ to ‘Slithering mistrust’. But how they will come together is always unpredictable.

On one occasion I bring the entire company onto the floor during these demonstrations and re-title a scene in which everyone takes part, the meeting between Theseus and the people of Thebes. The cast look at me in horror. It is one thing to work a scene with two or three people in front of the audience. But to take the whole group and create one from scratch is a huge ask. They remember how hard we struggled in

65. *Theseus* (Thomas Eason) and *Eurydice* (Tameka Sowman).

rehearsals to find these choreographies. But they step up as asked and give it a go. And it is terrible. Three times we try to drape the text over the choreography and three times we fail. They cannot remember

¹²⁴ Mackay

their moves let alone play the timing game with each other. I am ready to give up on this. After all it has demonstrated for the audience the difference between two person and mass scenes in terms of difficulty so it is still a valuable part of the experience. But cast and audience conspire to ask me to give it one more go and finally they pull it off! Not only do they hold to their choreography, but they stay connected to each other and the timing is alive and playful. Suddenly the text is heard in a new and yet appropriate way, the audience applauding wildly. It is a wonderful moment and both groups have a tremendous feeling of celebration as we complete this part of the evening. In the discussions that follow it is invoked again and again as the audience discuss with the actors and myself the surprising and effective juxtapositions achieved through the methodology and the ways in which they allowed them to experience the text differently.

Yvonne Mackay talks about the friend she brought with her and his reaction to the methodology:

The person I brought that night, but who knows very little about theatre, just couldn't stop talking about it afterwards ... just was fascinated with the process. If he'd missed that bit that night just wouldn't have had that excitement in it. In my world, film, it's like 'the making of'. They love them. And that's what it did to that man that night. We had a meal and he just couldn't stop talking about the process and why you did it, and it and what that brought, a freshness. He felt that it was like almost watching a documentary. People seemed to be doing things for the first time. And yet some of them were doing them very, very well. So how was that?¹²⁵

After the demonstration comes the discussion. Post theatre talk sessions can be tricky and need to be led carefully to avoid the triteness of 'How do you remember all those lines?' The discussions following *Welcome to Thebes* are wide-ranging, moving between discussion around the methodology and the content of the play. A frequent topic of conversation is the perceived parallels between ancient Thebes and our contemporary world. People are dismayed at how little has changed in the centuries between, as Mackay observed:

That worked very well, didn't it [the connection with *whaikōrero*] for *Thebes*, because the reactions you got in the debate at the end ... was about the amazement about how women's positions had

¹²⁵ Mackay.

never changed... That that was quite debated and I thought the students answered the questions from the audience very well.¹²⁶

One night our own colonial past comes to the forefront in the discussion. The audience are drawing parallels between Africa, ancient Thebes and New Zealand. And they are using the play to talk about these themes, with the cast and with each other. This speaks to their sense of alive-li-ness in the work. They are not satisfied to clap and go, though that possibility is always offered. But few avail themselves of an early exit and instead lean forward into the discussions. Mackay described the experience as being part of a community¹²⁷ and audiences respond by becoming part of the event. Because we had discussed these issues ourselves the students are able to be articulate and confident with their audiences, never defending a fixed position but interested in what is said. They take the *mātātaki* of receptivity and see the discussion as very much a part of the performance¹²⁸. Seeing this level of engagement I am made very aware of the opportunity we missed in *Troilus & Cressida*, which was openly bi-cultural visually, yet lacked some of the core *tikanga* Māori frameworks in delivery. Audiences did speak back to us then through *mihi* and *haka*, but we did not give them the opportunity for a deeper and more sustained conversation.

Finally we thank the audience and sing for them, a *waiata* to stand beside our work, often reprising one of the songs from the play. Then the tea trolley is wheeled in and the informal discussions begin, often lasting an hour and more as people who were shy to speak in the wider group come forward, and others follow up on the points they want to make. This phase was missing from *Marat/Sade* and I felt the lack of following through on *pōwhiri tikanga*. In *Thebes* I am able to remedy this and follow through further with the methodology. The *pōwhiri* with its *whaikōrero* and *waiata* has given way to *hongi* and *hāngī*. *Tikanga marae* and Viewpoints have combined to create a satisfying event. I am left with further questions. People clearly love seeing the process opened up to them, as Mackay's comments attest. *Tikanga marae* is pointing towards a more vital and inclusive relationship with audiences, shifting them from observers to participants. We need to normalise such interactions. There are clues here to combat performances are

¹²⁶ Mackay.

¹²⁷ Mackay: 'part of the people'.

¹²⁸ See Chapter Three. Discussion on the difference between this and post-show fora in western culture.

too often 'deadly,' to borrow Brook's telling phrase¹²⁹, and bring us closer to the heart of what theatre can be.

Welcome to Thebes at Manutuke Marae

After the success of the Wellington season Moetara and Erikson¹³⁰ invite us to re-mount the work at Whakatau Marae in the tiny rural community of Manutuke, Moetara's home *marae*. This gives me an opportunity to explore the Viewpoints and *tikanga* in a *marae* setting and see how it 'reads' for a Māori audience. It is an opportunity I did not seek for *Marat/Sade* to my abiding regret. We are performing in the *whare kai*.¹³¹ The paintings and carvings talk to the work as they do during *hui* - 'read' as part of the event as described by Meade, quoted in Chapter Three. They bring the qualities of *ihi*, *wehe* and *mana*, visually into the space so that the physical environment is in conversation with the actions of the actors. The cast know their work must match this so that they can truly say '*I puta te ihi*',¹³² 'I bring a quality of brilliance and intense life to the work'.

66. Scud is killed. Eurydice urges Athenians to lay down arms.

Tydeus and Pargeia urge crowd to join their revolt.

We begin the prologue in the paddock and porch outside the *whare*. From there the audience enter the space and are welcomed by Polykleitos as before. It is exciting because here the audience reactions are vocal and visceral. They are happy to cheer for those they identify with or whose performances they

¹²⁹ See Brook, (1968), 11-46. '... they perpetuate the deadly theatre with dull successes, universally praised.... most of what is called theatre anywhere in the world is a travesty of a word once full of sense', 13 & 45.

¹³⁰ Context and Practice tutors at Toi Whakaari, leading the *marae* visit.

¹³¹ Dining hall.

¹³² Mead, 119.

appreciate as they clearly do for Tydeus and Pargeia shown in the second photo above. There is a much wider age demographic than in the audiences we experienced in Wellington, yet at the same time they are more united than a random group of urban theatre-goers. As when we performed *Troilus & Cressida* in Ruatoria, we are encountering a community with its range of ages from young to old. This means that the performance moment is truly one of two communities meeting. In the photo below you can see some of the

67. Audience: Manutuke.

younger audience members sitting on the floor in front of their parents. The demonstration of the working method at the end gets close attention. Performance is part of the life of this *Rongowhakaata* community and their *kapa haka*¹³³ group, *Tū Te Manawa*, are strong contenders in the annual *Matatini Festival* competitions.¹³⁴ The quality of their attention encourages the actors to go further in their explorations in front of the crowd who are vociferous in their applause when they complete the exercise successfully. In later informal discussions I am asked about the application of the technique to *kapa haka* and I intend that this will become a part of my future performance research. Brook states that 'improvisation must be a research activity conducted by someone who is trying to burst out of their own passivity.... In other words

¹³³ Māori cultural performing group.

¹³⁴ Te Matatini National Kapa Haka Festival is held in different parts of the country. See the Rongowhakaata website: 'Rongowhakaata are blessed to have whānau so committed to 'haka's' that they have created, tutored and led a mix of generations, Manutuke Kura, Turanga Wahine Turanga Tane and Tu te Manawa Maurea, to the stage and further. <http://rongowhakaata.com/culture/kapa-haka/>

one must perform in relation to a partner, as in tennis¹³⁵ and this is what both couples are clearly doing in this moment, developing their Viewpoints choreography in front of the audience. Tennis is a great analogy as players send the focus back and forth, both opponents and partners building on the other's offer, each meeting the energy of the other and allowing the audience to see the complexity and difficulty of this as well as the sense of fun. I love the open-mouthed wonder of the young woman to the right in the first image.

68. Actors improvising.

In the discussion that follows there is an interesting and somewhat unexpected moment, where I see the understanding of purpose and role beautifully exemplified by one of the cast. One of the school children asks about the swearing in the play. He wants to know if that is an issue for the cast because he is a Christian and would find that difficult. I am about to speak when one of the cast, Richard Munton steps forward. Richard is a committed Christian and as such can speak to the question with much more authority than I can and he instantly recognises this. Further, he is clear and cogent in his argument. He notes that the play also contains murders, rapes and massacres, issues far more serious than bad language. He says that for him it is a matter of purpose, that the play does not condone these things but that it looks to explore the reasons for such events. The language in the text is the real language of soldiers. Further the play has a focus on reconstruction and the possibility of peace and these are well worth showing. Clarity of purpose means that these things are not an issue for him. A clear ripple of understanding goes through the room.

¹³⁵ Peter Brook, interviewed by Jean Kalman, David Williams (trans.), 'Any Event Stems from Combustion: Actors, Audience and Theatrical Energy', *New Theatre Quarterly* Volume VIII Number 30, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, May 1992), 111.

Another issue that comes to the fore with far more clarity in this environment is economic imperialism. While the current Māori situation does not have the bloodshed experienced in Africa, they draw on their experience of the New Zealand Wars when colonists appropriated Māori land and are able to identify the effects of continuing economic disparities arising out of that appropriation. A lively discussion around this issue develops and continues over into the cup of tea and supper that follow. It is seen by both groups as an intrinsic part of the performance. As in a *pōwhiri* the two groups are now one and the separation that is

69. Director and Cast in discussion with the audience, Manutuke.

part of the liminal space of performance has been erased as the two groups share food and breath. At the end of the night one of the elders of Rongowhakata approaches Moetara, who bridges both groups, being on the staff at Toi Whakaari and a member of the local community. The performance has confirmed the elder's thinking and he offers Moetara the opportunity to make a work exploring the history of the *iwi*, to be performed in their historical *whare*¹³⁶ currently housed in the museum of *Te Papa*¹³⁷ in Wellington. He tells Moetara that it should be political, like this play, and tell the tough stories still unknown and unresolved in the wider world. The house and its history are of enormous significance to the tribe so this is a huge statement. Brecht desired the action from a performance to continue out from the theatre and into the community and the future. I can see that the ripples created by this play are extending out into the life of the

¹³⁶ House.

¹³⁷ New Zealand's National Museum.

Rongowhakata community and beyond. As with the Wellington performances I am struck by how much both the demonstrations and discussion add to the whole experience for the audience. And for the cast.

Summary

At the beginning of this chapter I wrote of community, purpose, context and an anchored presence in encountering difference as qualities stimulated by *tikanga* Māori frameworks and highly appropriate and transferable to work in the theatre. I described Viewpoints as contributing attention to time and space, playfulness, poeticised bodies and ensemble connection in the face to face, *Kanohi ki te kanohi* encounter with audiences. *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes* are my first experiments in interweaving these approaches in creating, performing, and encountering audiences. In these two works I have been testing the contract between performers and audience using these two approaches in tandem, seeking the effect on the quality of alive-li-ness in the resulting work. Comments from film-maker Yvonne Mackay, Theatre Artistic Director Martyn Wood, Theatre Director Willem Wassenaar, Academic David Carnegie and Theatre Critic Laurie Atkinson all indicate that this has been achieved with considerable success. The works are not without flaws as some of the interviewees note. This is an ongoing investigation. But at this point I can safely claim that the two methodologies complement each other and increase the quality of alive-li-ness, immediacy and strength of engagement in the room.

This marks a major step in my performance research practices. There is a huge difference between presenting Māori *tikanga* visually onstage as the subject of the work, as I did in *Troilus & Cressida*, to having *tikanga* principles invisibly supporting and informing all of the process of the work as in *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes*. I began such an exploration with Taylor in *Troilus*, but had insufficient understanding myself to carry it through into all aspects of the production. What I am now discovering is that *tikanga marae* offers a transferable set of principles that can inform any theatre work, work that has no visual or aural connection to *Te Ao Māori*. The ritual elements from *tikanga marae*, as discussed more fully in Chapter Three, change the perceptual framing of the event so that audiences are more inclined to lean forward into work rather than lean back to be entertained. They are, as Mackay describes it, ‘absolutely on [their] mettle’,¹³⁸ or what Wood describes as a heightened state: ‘quite unsettling ... automatically you are in

¹³⁸ Mackay.

a heightened state because you're trying to figure out what's going on ... it heightens the level of curiosity'.¹³⁹ This is intensified by the focus on space and time that Viewpoints-based choreography brings to the work, with the underlying game necessitating a constant reading of every element in the environment. Above all, both methodologies ask actors and crew to look outwards to the encounter rather than focusing on the quality of their performance. As in sporting matches, thinking about quality during the event brings self-consciousness and diminishes quality. These methodologies assist the actors to release themselves into the intense focus of the moment, into being in action, meeting the challenges from their fellow players and the audience, into working for purpose rather than performance.

¹³⁹ Wood.

Chapter Six

The Outward Gaze: Walking the Line between Chaos and Order to Redefine the Performance Dynamic

'Doux présent du présent (Sweet gift of the present)

(Jacques Prévert, 'Alicante'¹)

Concluding my investigation, it is my thesis that abundant and visceral life in theatrical performance can be found reliably and consistently under conditions that support an outward, rather than an inward gaze. Chapter Two examines improvisation in rehearsal and performance and draws out some characteristics that generate a quality of immediacy. Chapter Three focuses on *tikanga* Māori and the influence of frameworks drawn from it in creating a strong and unselfconscious sense of purpose and attentiveness in the performer, while Chapter Four looks at choreography derived from Viewpoints improvisations and the particularity of the watchful responsiveness it engenders. In Chapter Five *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes* bring together both *tikanga* Māori and Viewpoints, their collision developing a framework and a process that promotes a seething sense of life without self-consciousness yet in a state of unusually focused attention.²

Both *tikanga marae* and Viewpoints-based choreography require the actor and other makers to constantly 'read the room' and adjust their response to that reading, sometimes in small, subtle ways, sometimes in major realignments. They set up a situation in which every movement brings out a response, even when the movement is not fully understood. This means the space remains kinaesthetically alive and filled with 'unknowingness' with all the danger that implies. In the context of *tikanga* it also implies that the audience is in dialogue with the performers and is treated in an active way so that engagement rather than observation is sought. Redefining the dynamic between performer and performer, performers and audience lifts the weight of performance anxiety from the shoulders of the actors, releases them from the siren call of memory and the seduction of future planning, and refocuses them on the present actions of others. This kind of 'paying attention' stimulates vivid, intense life as the present is genuinely negotiated.

¹Jacques Prévert, 'Alicante', *Selections from Paroles*, Lawrence Ferlinghetti (trans.), (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1958), 14-15.

²Jane Boston, quoted in Chapter 5, 222.

Prévert, writes of the sweet gift of the present. He is celebrating the simplicity of a moment fully realized that brings not only freshness to his night, but warms his whole life. In that moment, his senses awakened by closeness to his lover, the orange on the table, the dress on the rug, glow with life. He is awake to the fleeting present, paying intense attention to everything around him. Nothing is eliminated by habit or dulled by familiarity:

*Une orange sur la table
Ta robe sur le tapis
Et toi dans mon lit
Doux présent du présent
Fraîcheur de la nuit
Chaleur de ma vie.*³

I first read that poem when I was eighteen and learned it by heart in a language not my own. Long before I engaged in the thinking that has led to this thesis it awoke in me an appreciation of the power, beauty and simplicity of the present, the moment that Jane Goodall describes as 'almost impossible to bring into focus'⁴. As I write this thesis it returns to me as a provocation to pay attention to the world through every sense, to allow it to affect the art I make, and to build into my work conditions that assist my collaborators to stay in that alive, kinaesthetically experienced moment. It is notoriously difficult as Goodall states, yet these conditions can be reliably created through a combination of ritual frameworks based on *tikanga* Māori and the Viewpoints-based choreography, both of which encourage improvisation within structure. The combined approach will not always lead to what Goodall describes as 'a shift in consciousness resulting in break-through to some normally excluded dimension of experience'⁵ - those extraordinary moments can never be guaranteed - but it will ensure a sense of immediacy and a genuine alertness to the multi-faceted sensory input of the moment.

³An orange on the table
Your dress on the rug
And you in my bed
Sweet present of the present
Cool of night
Warmth of my life.

⁴ Goodall, 159.

⁵ Goodall, 159.

The performer's focus is outward, on being in action. *Tikanga marae* and Viewpoints-based choreography offer the gift of placing the emotion away from the self into an action. It is not that the action denies the emotion but rather that it carries it. Nothing needs to be searched for or forced, allowing the actors to feel whatever they feel, emotions arising and disappearing in their own internal weather systems, rather than seeking what they imagine a 'character' might feel. Watching and listening to the underlying game the actors are anchored to the present, not through command or ideology, but through a task: a task that requires them to take note of everything. The approach draws on all the skills identified in Chapter Two as the underlying elements in improvisation, harnessing the creative and poetic abilities of the body in an act of 'body poeticizing' so that responses are instinctive, effectively making use of incoming stimuli in an embodied attentiveness to the entire physical and aural environment.

In this approach creativity does not exist solely inside the individual artist. It draws on another kind of creativity that lives mid-flight, in the spaces between people. It draws on the audience as creative collaborators, participants whose responses help to shape the moment, bringing forth from an attentive performer something that could not otherwise exist. Goodall situates what she is describing as 'presence' in the individual artist: 'The performer with presence brings a heightened level of vital power to the time and space of performance'.⁶ In contrast, the sense of alive-li-ness generated in this approach does not belong to the individual artist but to the simmering life between performers, generating a state of *ihi*, of psychic force, between them. Of course the strength of individual actors will play a part, but the structural underpinning is a collective one. So too is the act of creation. The choreography reflects the choices of each participant working off the ensemble, endowing all with a sense of *mana*, or spiritual power. It is a collective act.

Through the frameworks of *tikanga marae* and the timing-game inherent in Viewpoints-based choreography, an opportunity for reciprocity between ensemble and audience is also created. This re-framing of the act of being an audience creates what Balme, referring specifically to Māori theatre, describes as 'a new kind of perceptual frame'.⁷ A similar re-framing arises here, making the event itself inherently unpredictable in some of its elements. Brad Bird describes the way in which Steve Jobs set up the working space of 'Apple', so that people could not avoid bumping into each other: 'Steve realized that when people

⁶Goodall, 158.

⁷Balme, (1999), 62-63. See Chapter Three for a detailed description.

***Tikanga* Māori Frameworks in Conversation with Viewpoints**

70. Diagram: *Tikanga* Frameworks and Viewpoints

run into each other, when they make eye contact, things happen. So he made it impossible for you not to run into the rest of the company'.⁸ The structures described in this thesis make it impossible for the actors to avoid making contact with each other and the audience: in Bird's parlance, they 'run into each other'.

Of course, creative interactions are a familiar and valued component of most rehearsal rooms and a desired element in performance. In this approach the conversation continues in performance, not because the actors employing this approach desire it more – I take it as a given that actors want to be vibrant and alive on the stage – but because the structures embedded in the process make it impossible for it not to continue. Collaboration is engendered structurally through both Viewpoints and *tikanga marae* frameworks, empowering the individual to stay alive to the present moment and to provide what that present requires. In both *Marat/Sade* in 2010 and *Welcome to Thebes* in 2011 I am able to explore and challenge this re-framing, and to confirm the quality of alive-li-ness it draws forth from the cast, and through them to the audience. As discussed in Chapter Five, I also take the latter work outside of a theatrical context into a *marae* in Manutuke, where the participation of the audience is possibly even more marked than in the Wellington production.

Transferability: *Welcome to Thebes* in India

In 2012 I have the opportunity to test out this approach to 'alive-li-ness' still further, directing a full production of *Welcome to Thebes* at the National School of Drama in New Delhi, India, a very different and complex cultural setting, with the text performed in Hindi. The concepts developed in New Zealand are shown to be transferable, effective tools. The thinking behind the rituals rather than the particularity of the forms is key. Moetara supports this: 'I have no concerns about applying Māori frames within other cultural contexts to achieve similar qualities of outcomes.... The key here is to understand the purpose beneath the framework, and head towards building the purpose of the framework and not the form'.⁹ In Delhi the *karakia*, for example, takes different forms, sometimes an invocation, often a chant in one of the thirteen mother tongues among the nineteen actors in the cast.¹⁰ The function of setting a clear and engaged

⁸Brad Bird, quoted in Jonah Lehrer, *Imagine: How Creativity Works*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2012), 150. Jobs located the only toilets in the building in the central atrium.

⁹Teina Moetara, Email conversation with Annie Ruth, June 14, 2012.

¹⁰Languages in the cast included Malayalam, Assamese, Ao, Sami, Bengali, Manipuri and Tamil, the actors coming from all over India. These very different languages illustrate the breadth and variety of the cultures within the country.

stance from which to begin the work, acknowledging the ancestors and those for whom we stand is important, not the form. My Associate Director, Aditee Biswas, describes the practice, based on *tikanga* Māori, as 'bringing forth the different cultures, traditions and beliefs in the room.... These rituals not only helped us learn something new about each other, their cultures and beliefs everyday, but also helped us remain very transparent and positive in the rehearsal room.'¹¹ Anuradha Kapour¹², author and Director of the National School of Drama, India also comments on the cohesive effect of these ritual elements: 'I found that the rituals generated a sense of reciprocal responsibility among the participants... I discovered that because of this input "character making" had more to do with responding to the co-actor than responding to the particular over-individuated voice of the single actor'.¹³ Using these frameworks we are building community, which we will later extend to our audiences.

It is an approach that empowers all collaborators to provide, as Moetara says, whatever is needed within the environment,¹⁴ and in Delhi I watch the designers take on these principles along with the actors as they search for an environment that promotes participation. Rustom Bharucha asks: 'Can the expressivities of particular performance traditions be divested from the narratives in which they are placed and the emotional registers by which they are perceived?'¹⁵ In this work there is no attempt to introduce the performance traditions and emotional registers of *tikanga* Māori into this Indian context but rather to utilize the frameworks beneath the traditions and see how useful they might be. The empowerment of collaborators means that cast and crew bring their own diverse cultural experiences to the table. They are not asked to leave anything of what they are at the door but rather to make everything a part of their participation. This makes the approach potent in this context and an effective technique generally both for rehearsing and creating performance and in the training of actors and other theatre professionals. Although *tikanga* Māori is culturally specific, I see the frameworks drawn from its rituals as applicable here, and by inference, in a plethora of cultures and contexts, indicating the transferability of the approach.

In this process, action rather than character is the key element. As in improvisation, where identities are created in the liminal space between performers, the sense of the 'character' is something that emerges for

¹¹ Aditee Biswas, Interview with Annie Ruth, May 6, 2012, 1.

¹² Dr Anuradha Kapour has written widely on theatre, including her book, *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods: the Ramilila at Ramnagar*, (Calcutta: Seagull, 1993 & 2004).

¹³ Anuradha Kapour. Emailed Interview with Annie Ruth, June 4, 2012.

¹⁴ See Chapter Three

¹⁵ Rustom Bharucha, 'Somebody's Other: Disorientations in the cultural politics of our times', Parice Parvis (ed.), *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 196-212, 207.

the audience out of the actions of the actors, not something researched and created by the actor in rehearsal and now reproduced in performance. Kapour observes:

While watching the rehearsal of *Welcome to Thebes* I found the students much engaged in processing and reprocessing the relationships established in the playing space between actors and the characters. It was interesting to observe the intersect of actor with character and how this made the students less absorbed with themselves and the psychology they were constructing and more prepared to register the worlds around them.¹⁶

As described in Chapter Four¹⁷, the focus on ‘being in action’, doing, noticing, breathing and responding, leaves no space during a performance for the actors to consider the self as a ‘character’ with all the limitations and preconceptions this involves. Whatever preparation they have done, once on the stage they work off each other as a cauldron of possibilities constantly in flux and changing according to the immediate environment. This allows for the explosion of spontaneity even as text and choreography are set. *Tikanga* Māori-based frameworks, working in tandem with Viewpoints-based choreography, focus the performer’s gaze on all aspects of the external environment and away from the self.

Creating a choreography that is in dialogue with the text rather than subservient to it severs the customary link between word and action, allowing them an independence that is constantly negotiated, constantly changing and surprising, even as the patterns are noticed and the adjustments made. This Viewpoints-based sensitivity to time and place calls into play the intuitive, kinaesthetic response to the moving, changing world, encouraging attention to the nuances of the action rather than to a pre-decided relationship. The ‘game’ inherent in the challenge of timing actions against those of the entire ensemble means that the attention, while strong and focused, stays playful, without rigidity. Because the choreography has been created by the cast, rather than imposed by myself, and because *tikanga* Māori strongly supports the inclusion of the cultural practises of wherever the work is occurring, the actors’ sense of agency enables them bring their own cultures and *matatiki* into play. For example, the actor playing Eurydice uses her understanding of *mudra*, the Hindu-derived system of hand gestures, detailed in the *Natyashastra*, through which energy flows to the brain, to create her gestural vocabulary. She chooses (rightly I believe) not to use specific *mudra* but to create something new that will be specific to Thebes but

¹⁶Kapour.

¹⁷See Chapter Four: The Training.

will build on and reference the tradition. Other actors follow suit and a shared gestural vocabulary among the ministers is developed. Similarly, the actor playing Antigone draws on *rangoli*, Indian decorative folk-art, creating flower patterns on the stage as a kind of meditation while she decides what course to follow, and another, playing Pargeia, uses *Krishna*-like poses to tease and provoke Tydeus into action, as shown in the photos below.

71. Using their cultural heritage: Antigone (Arundhati Kalita) creating a rangoli pattern,

Tydeus (Debashish Mondal) with Pargeia (Bharti Sharma) channelling Krishna.

The connections between the actors flow into their connection with the audience. So often audiences attending productions do not experience the alive-li-ness of theatre but rather see a kind of diluted screen – one without the close ups, vast panoramas or pace cutting from one environment to the next. Sadly theatre can seem to be delivering a product similar to screen but less vital. In this approach the alive-li-ness is everything and the advantage is that it can be consistently delivered. Regardless of the quality of the script or the innate talent of the individual actors, it is possible, using the structures I have described, to deliver performances sizzling with the life of a present viscerally and kinaesthetically experienced. Biswas describes the experience:

As an associate director I also observed the performance from the point of view of the audience and observed that, unlike most other plays that involved a conventional system of blocking, this system ensured that the actor standing right at the back/up-stage remained alive to very moment

being played. This resulted in the performance never having a dull or dead moment and thus helped the audience remain focused and engaged.¹⁸

In embarking on this work in Delhi I keep questioning the process, adapting where necessary. I want to use these frameworks to enable rather than to close down the possibilities for the cast and for the audiences, to release their voices rather than impose mine¹⁹. Conquergood, looking at intercultural performance, states:

One path to genuine understanding of others, and out of this moral morass and ethical minefield of performative plunder, superficial silliness, curiosity-seeking, and nihilism is dialogical performance. This performative stance struggles to bring together different voices, world-views, value systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another. The aim of dialogical performance is to bring self and other together so that they can question, debate, and challenge one another.²⁰

It is clear from the work and from the comments of my Indian collaborators, that the frameworks promote a dialogical environment and form a set of guidelines that are transferable from my native New Zealand to an Indian cultural setting. As Jim Moriarty says²¹ they allow one to 'slow down time and dignify engagement' in both the rehearsal room and in performance.

Using the *pōwhiri* structure to shape the performance ensures that the audience are greeted and made welcome, even as they are challenged and invited to engage. At the end food and conversations are shared and the engagement completed and closed. Of course, sharing food and drink is not unique to these frameworks. Bread and Puppet Theatre and Théâtre du Soleil, for example, have both included sharing food in productions, aware of the connective power of breaking bread together. Here it is an essential and integrated part of the process, serving connectivity and *manakitanga* (hosting) while moving the audience from the formal event (which aligns with the concept of *tapu* or sacred), to the everyday world in which the body reasserts itself - *noa*. In none of these activities is there any reference to the Māori

¹⁸Aditee Biswas, Emailed Interview with Annie Ruth, May 6, 2012.

¹⁹In India I am employed at the same rate as any local director. Nor does the school pay airfares. This reduces the element of special privilege in the exchange.

²⁰Conquergood, 65.

²¹See comments Chapter Five: The Pōwhiri.

culture or appropriation of Māori cultural practices. Yet their frameworks guide the event, changing the audience reception mode from passive to active, from observers to participants, holding the performance in a present collaboration between audience and performers, creating a community.

In Delhi, drawing on the experience of mounting the play in workshop form in New Zealand, I extend the engagement so that every aspect of the production works to create a total environment with the audience as participating guests, even before they enter the performance space. The programme is in the form of a passport²² and the audience queues to pass through immigration before entering the first space, where, as

72. Programme and Security entrance into show, New Delhi.

in the workshop production, they are briefed by the soldiers before entering Thebes proper²³. As they walk from the war zone into the city square members of the cast greet them and assist with seating; the actor playing Polykletos (Prateek Srivastava) welcomes them formally, halting the action to introduce the group. At the end of the performance, following a demonstration of the methodology led by myself, another actor introduces the cast and crew to the audience and invites them to a discussion over chai.

The focus on sharing with the audience is vitally important and structurally embedded in the approach. In doing this I am guided by *tikanga marae*, while never referencing it overtly. No encounter on the *marae* is ever one-sided. Reciprocity is built into the structure, even when the encounter is confrontational. The performance environment, drawing on the *marae ātea*,²⁴ is inclusive and assists the audience to feel a part

²²Created by design student Sarika Pareek.

²³See Chapter Five for plot details.

²⁴The open area where pōwhiri take place.

of the event, the space designed to wrap around them, so that they feel they are sitting in the square in Thebes. To this end the walls behind the audience are painted the same way as those in the space where the actors are performing, drawing on Indian tribal motifs. The space does not look like a *marae*, but the tribal motifs can be read just as the *tukutuku*²⁵ panels can be read in the *wharenui*.²⁶ Every element

73. Set painter drawing Indian tribal motifs.

in the space is part of the conversation, just as it is on a *marae*,²⁷ incorporated into the story being told. As Moetara says: 'These ways of working could be completely hidden as Māori specific frames, but you would still be able to see, hear and build the holistic approach'.²⁸ They are guiding the building of the work, both in rehearsal and performance. The audience is lit throughout so the actors can genuinely see and respond to them. At times their role is very active, such as during the public scenes where they are in the role of Theban citizens, where they join with the cast in applauding speeches and stand together for the three minutes silence marking those who died during the civil war. (I am constantly amazed at their readiness to do this. I attended almost all performances and never was there any sign of reluctance: they seemed to feel that they had a role in the ceremony and were willing to play it.) In other moments they witness private

²⁵Woven lattice-work on the walls of meeting-houses.

²⁶Meeting house.

²⁷See Chapter Three: The Ritual of the Pōwhiri.

²⁸Moetara, (2012).

exchanges conducted in public spaces, much as we observe and overhear such exchanges in city squares around the world.

74. Rehearsal: Fixed choreography with constantly negotiated timing.

This is what the actors are doing, here in Delhi as in the other productions described in this thesis. Kapour finds it 'engaging to watch change/improvisation within a tight choreography';²⁹ she can see both the aesthetically fixed and the improvisationally free coexisting in the work. They are negotiating the present, one hand grasping the certainty of the fixed choreography, the other open to receive and act on the exigencies of the present. Audiences comment on the enormous sense of life within the performances and note that even those most distant from the central action, what one man describes as the 'fourth circle out', are filled with a sense of life and engaged with whatever is happening at the centre. I see them connected, through the game of timing within the choreography, in a continuing kinaesthetic dance of action and response, confirming the effectiveness of the approach. The work is simultaneously structured and free.

During the chai and informal chat afterwards cast and crew mingle with the audience drawing out the ways in which the work resonates with them and listening to their impressions and comments. I move from group to group, guiding the conversation where necessary, at other times simply listening and observing. I notice

²⁹Kapour.

the animated conversations and the way people linger to continue the conversation. Audience members, as in New Zealand, describe their experience in local and personal terms. For example, one man tells me he was moved by the soldier's account of her war experiences in the prologue, noticing particularly my choice to have the actor speak in her native Tamil³⁰, which brought the conflicts in Sri Lanka vividly and painfully into his awareness. On other nights people speak of conflicts in Assam, Kashmir and other parts of India. Of course this endowment of local relevance is not exclusive to this approach. But the opportunity for the audience to share their thoughts and reactions is here woven into the fabric of the production; it is not an addendum. When the cast and crew are introduced at the end I take the opportunity to complete the introductions by introducing and thanking the final group of actors - the audience themselves: for they are truly participants and have experienced themselves as such. Kapour clearly recognized this transformation of audience into participants: 'The *marae*-based events in the structure of the play led the audience into the performance more as participants and less as observers. The audiences' active presence was there through the duration of the play ...'³¹.

75. Soldiers brief audience in prologue.

Megaera (D. Antony Janagi) speaks in Tamil.

Schechner has written of the effects of participation in a community theatre context:

³⁰Translated for the audience into Hindi by her fellow soldier.

³¹Kapour.

Participation voids destiny and fortune, throwing drama back into the original theatrical uncertainty: re-introducing elements of the unrehearsed into the smooth ground of the performance.....The audience is invited to put aside the role of witness and assume other, more active roles.....Participation doesn't eliminate the formalities of theatre – it goes behind them to fetch private elements into the play.³²

Here a similar engagement is effected through the use of frameworks built out of Māori tikanga and Viewpoints-based choreography. The uncertainty Schechner describes arises out of the constantly negotiated elements in the timing and quality of the choreography and the active possibilities for the audience that Kapour observed. The audience have become a part of 'the creative event'³³, a relationship Bogart continues to explore through her own Viewpoints improvisations. In Chapter Three I quoted

76. *Eurydice (Kalyanee Mulay)* using *mudra* as base for gestural vocabulary.

³²Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theatre, Expanded Edition*, (London & New York: Applause, 1994), 78.

³³ Anne Bogart, July Blog siti.groupsite.com/post/july-2012-useful-practice.

Moetara on the invitation on the *marae* to bring every part of the self to the event. In including both demonstration and discussion as part of the fabric of the event this invitation is made active and overt. *Welcome to Thebes* in India represents an important opportunity to test the transferability of the process and confirms my thesis that the integration of Viewpoints-based choreography and frameworks drawn from *tikanga* Māori, anchor the actor to the present moment, to Prévert's '*doux présent du présent*.' They change the dynamic between actor-spectator to collaborators. The effect is a pervasive sense of aliveness, of a space brimming with possibility, with what Goodall describes as 'the uncanny, the magical and the dangerous'.³⁴ It is a memorable experience because of the very 'present-ness' of the event. The charge does not lie in the genius or power of individual actors but in the *ihi* generated by the playful watchfulness between them; it is not mystical any more than the focus and connection between rugby players is mystical; it is a product of frameworks that assist the actors to remain playfully connected to each other and to their participating audience.

Conclusion

Combining *tikanga* Māori frameworks with Viewpoints-based choreography, I have developed a powerful tool for creating performance that is immediate and visceral. The process has proved to be transferable from the New Zealand context, successfully tested in performance in Delhi and subsequently in London, where I conducted a laboratory performance project based on Andre Gregory's *Bone Songs* at the International Centre for Voice,³⁵ again working with Viewpoints within a *tikanga* framework. In the latter the response of the professional cast and from the audience shows that the effectiveness of this process is not confined to actors in training.³⁶ Boston, reflecting on the performance, writes:

As an audience member, I was struck at the outset by the way a song emerged simply from the group in step with one another. A range of different languages sprang very naturally out of this process of group rapport and provided an engaging score and a remarkable sense of vocal ease in the space. The director informed us that we were in the presence of the starting ritual for the group and that it was not the 'performance' as such. This was interesting in itself for the relationship it

³⁴ Goodall, 18.

³⁵ At Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

³⁶ In 2013 I directed a similar laboratory in Bucharest, again with professional actors, working out of the National University for Theatre and Cinematography. Again it proved to be both challenging and productive and the University so valued the performance research in the work that they produced a booklet and DVD of the process.

engendered between performer and audience and for the way it encouraged a contract of easeful engagement and closeness – challenging any preconceived views about the nature of performance itself.... The culture of ease and receptivity in the performers was, to some degree, mirrored in the audience; the capacity to release performance ‘flow’, leading to the visual satisfaction provided by a constantly free moving and enlivened stage picture, seemed to dissolve any tendencies for a distanced spectatorship. This unforced process, giving rise to multiple expressions of physical shapes, the repetition of key phrases from the authored text and their self-authored texts, seemed to simultaneously provide a culture of active audience engagement and pleasure.³⁷

In this approach, the attention of the performer is so firmly anchored to purpose and the present moment that both the seduction of dream and the distraction of memory are eschewed for a keen connection in the present. The acute listening frees the actor from self-consciousness into playing a ‘game’ in which improvisation flows dynamically within artistically structured movement and text. Working with concepts of *ihi* and *mana* brings a sense of potent and unencumbered presence, alive-li-ness simmering between performers, connecting them kinaesthetically to their audiences. The re-framing of the performer-audience dynamic, focusing on the possibilities opened up by *kanohi ki te kanohi* encounters, transforms audiences into creative collaborators whose responses are intrinsic in shaping the event. The spectator-performer divide is replaced by a tangible sense of community, where audiences are able to respond to and debate the work, allowing them ‘simultaneously ... critical distance and compassionate intimacy’.³⁸

Taking a trajectory into the future, as a result of this work I am receiving invitations to continue my research practice in the international arena. I am in pre-production for 2013 directing projects employing this methodology: a professional production in Togo, Africa, a graduation production at Regent’s College, London, and a production at National School of Drama in India, where the school would like to make these frameworks a regular part of their actor training programme. Actors and theatre-makers who have worked with me are already taking the process into their own communities, from London to New York, from India to Togo. I have teaching projects in place at Central School of Speech and Drama and Tamsaha Theatre Company, London, where I intend to continue evolving my practice. A process that began in New Zealand, based on interweaving the indigenous frameworks of *marae* ritual with improvisation and Viewpoints-based

³⁷ Jane Boston, Head of the International Centre for Voice, Peer Review Response, March 11, 2013. In possession of the author.

³⁸ Bogart Blog, October, 2012, siti.groupsite.com/post/October-2012-fact-and-or-fiction.

choreography, is delivering, in completely different contexts, the alive-li-ness and community I am striving for in theatre.

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My collaborators in all the productions cited

All the interviewees

77. Rehearsal, *Bone Songs*: International Centre for Voice, London, 2012 (Amy Ginther and Kyungsun Lee).

Appendix One

Glossary of Māori Terms

Aroha	Love
Haka	Vigorous dance with actions and rhythmically shouted words.
Haka pōwhiri	Chant accompanied by rhythmic movements to bring visitors into the encounter of the <i>pōwhiri</i> .
Hākari	Meal or feast
He Ara Hou	A New Way, sometimes translated as Creative pathways
Hongi	Touching noses in greeting and sharing breath. Mingling of life breath and something of the inner spirit of each person
Hui	Meeting, gathering or conference. Can be used as both noun and verb
Ihi	Essential force, vitality, the intrinsic qualities of a person at their most excellent
I puta te ihi	A phrase describing performances as brilliant and exhilarating
Iwi	Tribe
Kai	Food
Kaikaranga	The woman calling the <i>karanga</i>
Kaiwhakawhiti	Final speaker in a <i>pōwhiri</i> , who links together all that has been said.
Kapa Haka	Loosely translated as Māori action song and dance.
Kaumatua	Elders
Kaupapa	Purpose
Kaupapa Māori	A philosophical stance, incorporating 'knowledge, skills, attitudes and values'. ³⁹
Kanohi ki te kanohi	Face to face

³⁹ Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary

Karakia	An invocation to the spirit, conditions, precepts and aspirations, often translated as prayers, though they are not quite that. Māori ki Otāgo ⁴⁰ defines them as ' <i>prayers or incantations.... generally used to ensure a favourable outcome to important events and undertakings ... Karakia, in their true essence, are ritual chants invoking spiritual guidance and protection</i> '.
Karanga	Calling or summoning and response. Cleave Barlow: ' Its customary meaning relates to the waving of the kawakawa leaves by the women to indicate the pathway by which the spirits of the deceased leave this world and enter the world beyond'. ⁴¹
Kaumātua	Elders
Kawa	<i>Marae</i> protocol, the customs of the <i>marae</i> and the <i>wharehau</i> , particularly those relating to formal activities such as pōwhiri and <i>poroporoaki</i>
Koha	Gift, donation
Koiwi	Bones translated metaphorically in relation to Toi Whakaari as the bones that form the community – all the people of the place
Kōrero	Talk, discussion
Kuia	Older woman
Mamae	Sorrow, distress, pain
Mana	Māori concept of an impersonal force or quality that resides in people, animals, and inanimate objects. Often translated as 'deserving respect'.
Manaaki	Showing respect and hospitality
Manaakitanga	A state of caring, relationship-building, showing respect and hospitality
Mana whenua	Another word for <i>tangata whenua</i> , the people of the place
Manuhiri	Visitors
Marae	The formal space outside the meeting house of a Māori tribe where formal meetings take place, often also used to include the complex of buildings around it Māori tribal meeting place.

⁴⁰ University of Otago Māori Department. <http://Māori.otago.ac.nz/reo-tikanga-treaty/te-reo/karakia>.

⁴¹ Barlow, 99.

Marae ātea	The open space in front of the <i>whare nui</i>
Mātātaki	Stance
Matauranga	Knowledge
Maui	A demi-god in Māori mythology, reputed to have pulled the North Island of NZ up out of the sea, and to have slowed the passage of the sun to allow crops time to ripen. ⁴²
Mihimihi	A process in which the work of others is noted and appreciated.
Ngā Tamatoa	The Warriors
Noa	Everyday, unrestricted by <i>tapu</i>
Paepae	The orators' bench
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent: Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Online Dictionary. Sometimes used for any non-Māori.
Papakāinga	Homeplace, literally place of eating.
Poroporoakī	Leave-taking
Pou	Uprights supporting the structure of the roof
Pōwhiri	Welcome ceremony
Rōpū	Party of people.
Taiaha	Wooden weapon about 5ft long, with polished staff and carved blade
Taki rua	Two strands
Tangata	People
Tangata whenua	People of the place
Tangi	To cry, mourn or weep, commonly used for funerals.
Taniwha	Potent spirit

⁴² history-nz-Māori9.html.

Taonga	Property, treasure, anything prized
Tapu	Roughly translated as ‘sacred’ or ‘apartness’
Te Ao Māori	The Māori World.
Te Arai	Veil, also used for the veil of death
Taua	War party
Te Upoko O Te Ika	‘The Head of the Fish,’ the Māori name for Wellington
Tika	What feels right for the occasion.
Tikanga Māori	Māori Rituals and customs: Everything that is organized according to Māori custom
Tīpuna	Ancestors
Tukutuku	Woven lattice-work panels. They tell stories through their patterns and customarily adorn the walls of the main house on a <i>marae</i> .
Tūrangawaewae	Place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and <i>whakapapa</i> – literally a place to stand.
Tuturu	Classical or heightened Māori
Wahine	Woman
Waiata	Song
Wairua	Spirit
Waka	Canoe, boat
Wana	Sublimity – exciting, thrilling, inspiring awe
Wehi	Fearsomeness
Wero	Challenge
Whaikōrero	Oratory, formal speech making. <i>Whaikōrero</i> is an improvisatory oratorical art form and speakers make use of humour, poetry, aphorisms, gesture and even song.
Whakaeke	Entrance of guests, in various formations, sometimes accompanied by song and dance

Whānau	Family, extended family
Whanaungatanga	Relationships, kinship, family connections
Whakapapa	Genealogy, in the widest interpretation. A traditional whakapapa includes the family and tribal genealogy of the speakers, the mountains and waters of the tribe, the canoe on which their ancestors came to Aotearoa/New Zealand, and mention of a significant ancestor. It may also include significant events or people that shaped the speaker.
Whakatau	Settling
Whakatauakī	Proverbs, 'A poetic form of the Māori language often merging historical events, or holistic perspectives with underlying messages which are extremely influential in Māori society'. ⁴³
Whare	House
Whare kai	Dining Hall
Whare Nui	The meeting house on a <i>marae</i> – literally big house
Whatungarongaro	Taken from the proverb: <i>Whatungarongaro he tangata, toi tu te whenua</i> : The eyes of the people may disappear but land remains

⁴³ <http://www.Māori.cl/Proverbs.htm>

Appendix Two

List of Productions and Timeline of Performance Research

Productions prior to thesis and critically examined in retrospect:

1991	<i>What's Bred in the Bone will out in the Flesh:</i> Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School	Improvised by the Company
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Director: Annie Ruth, Improvisation and Acting Tutor

Cast: Stephen Bain
Nancy Brunning
Joe Conway
Frances Kewene
Sue Morrison
Donna Muir
Allen O'Leary
Andrew Scott
Tim Spite
Erina Toi-Paku
Mairanga White
Stephanie Wilkin

2000	<i>Ophelia Thinks Harder</i>	Jean Betts
	Drama One Studio, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School	

Crew

Director: Annie Ruth, Director of Toi Whakaari
 Technical & Design: Thomas Clarkson
 Vicki Cooksley
 Marc Edwards
 Claire Gilligan
 James Kearney
 Ian Leslie
 Kristan Mulcahy
 Jann Tarrant
 Nigel Edgecombe

Cast

Ophelia:	Dena-Marie Kennedy
The Maid:	Fiona Collins
Hamlet:	Fraser Brown
Horatio:	Peter Rutherford
Polonius	Julian Wilson

The Queen	Ciara Mulholland
Rosencrantz: (& Woman 3)	Lauren Jackson
Guildenstern: (& Ophelia's Mother & Player 3)	Maria (Poppy) James
St Joan: (& Player 2 & Woman 1 & Player Mother)	Biddy O'Donnell
Player 4	Henry Blake (guest youth artist)

2003 *Troilus & Cressida* William Shakespeare
 Te Whaea Theatre, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School and Ruatoria School Marae

Crew

Director:	Annie Ruth, Director of Toi Whakaari
Co-Director:	Rangimoana Taylor
Designer:	Toni De Goldi
Assistant Designer:	Brian King
Composer:	Gareth Farr
Musician:	Murray Hickman
Lighting Design:	Alasdair Watson
Fight Choreographer:	Tony Wolf
Production Manager:	Lynley Hill
Stage Manager:	Sonia Hardie
Dramaturg:	Geoff Pinfield
Translator (Te Reo):	Te Kohe Tuhaka
Assitant SM	Laurie Dean
Lighting Operator:	Wendy Gilchrist
Sound Operator	Shelly Irwin
Props:	Nga Larsen
Production Assistant:	Sarah Lupton
Costume Realisation: (& maker)	Susan Casey
Costume Maker:	Julie Zavala-Ron
Poster Photography:	Nicholas Twist
Poster Design:	Christopher Mitchell

Cast

Priam:	Noa Campbell
Hector:	Andrew Ausage
Paris:	Matu Ngaropo
Deiphobus:	Fran Kora
Troilus:	Louis Sutherland
Margarelon:	Rina Patel
Anaeas:	Erina Daniels

Cassandra:	Nicola Colson
Andromache:	Rina Patel
Cressida:	Rashmi Pilapitiya
Calchas:	Noa Campbell
Pandarus:	James Ashcroft
Agamemnon:	Jodie Hyland
Meneleus:	Geoff Pinfield, directing student, Toi Whakaari & Victoria University Master of Theatre Arts
Helen:	Jean Copland
Achilles:	Timothy Foley
Ajax:	Matu Ngraopo
Ulysses:	Tahi Mapp-Borren
Nestor:	Jean Copland
Patroclus:	Jonny Moffatt
Thersites:	Nick Dunbar
Diomedes:	Paul McLaughlin (Professional Actor, Graduate of Toi Whakaari 1996)
Myrmidons:	Tahi Mapp-Borren, Jean Copland, Jodie Hyland, Jonny Moffatt, Nicola Colson

2006 *Small Lives, Big Dreams* Anne Bogart & SITl Company
 Te Whaea Theatre, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School

Crew

Director:	Annie Ruth, Director of Toi Whakaari
Production Coordinator:	Derek Simpson
Designer:	John Senczuk
Production Manager:	Blair Ryan
Lighting/AV Design:	Paul Evans
Stage Manager:	Bekky Campbell
Design Assistants:	Laura Nicholls Natalia Gwiazdzinski
Sound Design & Op.	Katie Kletcher
SM Assistant:	Helena Coulton
Lighting Operator:	Sam Downes
Props:	Paul Tozer Caroline Frost
Costume Assistant:	Emily Smith

Cast

CO	Laural Devenie
I	Martyn Wood
TS	Arthur Meek
S	James Conway-Law
UV	Brooke Williams

Productions undertaken as part of the thesis performance as research:

2007 *Betty's Summer Vacation* Christopher Durang
Te Whaea Theatre, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School

Crew

Director: Annie Ruth, Director of Toi Whakaari
Assistant Director: Patrick Davies, directing student, Toi Whakaari & Victoria University Master of Theatre Arts
Production Manager: Helena Coulton
Production Coordinator: Kate Robertson
Designers: Leanne Stevenson
 Meggan Frauenstein
Lighting Designer: Nathan McKendry
Sound Designer: Thomas Press
Stage Manager: Alana Tisdall
Costume Manager: Gemma Crouch-Gatehouse
Set Construction: Brad Cunningham

Cast

Betty: Sara Allen
Trudy: Kirsty Peters
Keith: Sam Bunkall
Mrs Siezmagraph: Julia Croft
Mr. Vanislaw Hadleigh Walker
Voice 1: Kristyl Noho
Voice 2: Dawn Cheong
Voice 3: Hadleigh Walker

2008 *The Glass Menagerie* Tennessee Williams
Seeyd Space, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School

Director: Annie Ruth, Director of Toi Whakaari
Cellist: Sebastian Morgan-Lynch, professional musician

Cast

Tom Wingfield: James Kupa
Amanda Wingfield: Kristyl Noho
Laura Wingfield: Esther Green

Culminating Performance Research Productions:

2010 *Marat/Sade* Peter Weiss
 Basement Theatre, Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School

Crew

Director: Annie Ruth, Director of Toi Whakaari
 Musical Director: Mark Dorrell, professional musician and musical director
 (& Musician)
 Composer: Hayley Sproull
 (& Musician)
 Assistant Director: Robin Kerr, directing student, Toi Whakaari & Victoria University Master of Theatre
 Arts in Directing
 Production Manager: Maria Deere
 Set & Props Designer: Alex Mann
 Costume Designer: Stacey Brummer
 Lighting Designer: Sophie Dowson

Sound Designer: Amber Maxwell
 Stage Manager: Jade Turrall
 Deputy SM: Tim Nuttall
 Set Construction Manager: Sean Hawkins
 Props Master: Monique Webster
 Costume Supervisors: Lisa Bass
 Cara-Louise Waretini

Technical Assistants: Jason Longstaff
 Joseph Mahoney
 Nicola Smith
 Karena Letham
 Ashlyn Smith
 Halo Collins
 Tessa Alderton
 Hamish Baxter-Broad
 Roslyn Craig

Cast

Maquis de Sade: Chris Parker
 Marat: Leon Wadham
 Marat 2: Ana Corbett
 Marat 3: Elliot Wrightson
 Simone: Sophie Kendrick
 Simone 2: Catherine Croft
 Simone 3: Ana Corbett
 Corday: Lily Greenslade
 Duperret: Adrian Hooke
 Jacques Roux: Jonno Power
 Madam Defage: Emma Fenton

Coulmier/Mayor:	Hayley Brown
Herald:	Tawanda Manyimo
Kokol:	Victoria Abbott
Rossignol:	Phoebe Hurst
Polpoch:	Te Rina Thompson
Cucuruku:	Jonathon Power
	Adrian Hooke
Patient 1	Catherine Croft
Patient 2	Leroy Lakamu
Patient 3	Ana Corbett
Patient 4	Hayley Sproull
Revolutionary 1	Elliot Wrightson
Revolutionary 2	Leroy Lakamu
Revolutionary 3	Hayley Sproull
Nun:	Eva Dailey (On secondment from CalArts)
Schoolmaster	Leroy Lakamu
Mother	Phoebe Hurst
Father	Elliot Wrightson
Military Rep	Hayley Sproull
Newly Rich	Catherine Croft
Voltaire	Victoria Abbott
Lavoisier	Ana Corbett
Priest	Jonathon Power

2011 *Welcome to Thebes* Moira Buffini
 Seeyd Space and Basement Studio, Toi Whakaari; NZ Drama School & Manutuke Marae

Crew

Director:	Annie Ruth, Director of Toi Whakaari
Stage Manager:	Henrique Ricky Beirao, Professional SM. Graduate of Toi Whakaari Performing Arts Management.
Costumier:	Donna Jefferis

Cast

Eurydice:	Tameka Sowman
Theseus:	Thomas Eason
Tydeus:	Alex Tarrant
Pargeia:	Jacqueline Gwaliasi
Talthybia:	Tai Berdinner-Blades
Ismene:	Awhina Rose-Ashby
Antigone:	Carrie Green
Haemon:	Manuel Solomon
Agalaea:	Alice Canton
Phaeax:	Kenneth Gaffney
Phaeax 2.	Richard Munton

Euphrosyne	Lucinda Hare
Miletus:	Cameron Jones
Eunomia:	Richard Munton
Polykleitus:	Andrew Paterson
Megara:	Deborah Rea
Thalia:	Ria Simmons
Eris:	Deborah Rea
Xenophanes:	Kenneth Gaffney
Harmonia:	Alice Canton
Enyaluius:	Lucinda Hare
Tiresias:	Edward Campbell, Professional Actor. (At Manutuke this role was taken by Tom McCrory, Senior Acting Tutor, Toi Whakaari)
Scud:	Cailin Dale (guest youth artist)

2012 *Welcome to Thebes*
National School of Drama, New Delhi, India

Moira Buffini

Crew

Director:	Annie Ruth, Independent Director
Associate Director:	Aditee Biswas
Translator:	Amitabh Srivastava
Set Design:	Muzamil Hayat Bhawani
Costume Design:	Bimal Subedi
Poster & Programme Design & Publicity:	Sarika Pareek
Lighting Design & Op.	Jeetrai Hansda
Design Supervisor:	Aditee Biswas
Stage Management:	Prateek Srivastava
Lighting Design Supervisor:	Parag Sarmah
Music:	Prakriti Dutta Mukherjee
Bendang Temsu Walling Raju Roy	

Cast

Eurydice:	Kalyanee Mulay
Theseus:	Sanal Aman
Tydeus:	Debashish Mondal
Pargeia:	Bharti Sharma
Talthybia:	Prakriti Dutta Mukherjee
Ismene:	Amanjeet Ammu
Antigone:	Arundhati Kalita
Tiresias:	Bendang Temsu Walling
Haemon:	Mrigendra N. Konwar
Agalaea:	Raju Roy
Helia:	Thoudam Victor Singh

Euphrosyne:	Hardik Shah
Eunomia:	D. Antony Janagi
Polykleitus:	Prateek Srivastava
Eris:	Prashant Kumar
Xenophanes:	Himanshu Kohil
Phaeax:	Thoudam Victor Singh
Phaeax 2:	Himanshu Kohli
Miletus:	Nareshpal Sing Chouhan
Megara:	D. Antony Janagi
Thalia:	V. Uto Chishi
Harmonia:	Prashant Kumar
Scud:	Prashant Abi (guest youth artist)

Appendix Three

List of Interviewees

Abbott, Victoria. Actor playing Cocol in *Marat/Sade*. Interview with Annie Ruth, November 14, 2010.

Ashcroft, James. (Ngāti Kahu/Ngā Puhī), Creative Producer of Taki Rua Productions, New Zealand's longest-running Māori theatre company, and a graduate of Toi Whakaari. Interview with Annie Ruth, October 1, 2010. The name Taki Rua is a weaving pattern and means to go in twos-signifying the bicultural nature of the theatre.

Atkinson, Laurie. Evening Post Theatre Critic. Saw *Marat/Sade*. Emailed Interview with Annie Ruth, March 18, 2011.

Biswas, Aditee. Designer and Director, New Delhi. Collaborator on *Welcome to Thebes*. Interview with Annie Ruth, May 6, 2012.

Boston, Jane. HOD Post-Graduate Voice, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Head of the International Centre for Voice, co-author of *Breath in Action: The Art of Breath in Vocal and Holistic Practice*. Interview with Annie Ruth, Nov. 21, 2011.

Carnegie, David. Academic, author and critic. Professor of Theatre at Victoria University of Wellington. Saw *Marat/Sade*. Interview with Annie Ruth, March 30, 2011.

Kapour, Anuradha. Director of National School of Drama, New Delhi, India. Director and academic. Author of *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods: the Ramilila at Ramnagar*. Interview with Annie Ruth, June 4, 2012.

Kerr, Robin. Assistant Director for *Marat/Sade*, directing student, Toi Whakaari & Victoria University Master of Theatre Arts in Directing. Interview with Annie Ruth, October 26, 2010.

Mackay, Yvonne. Film and television director. Director/Producer of 'The Production Shed'. Numerous awards including 2011 Aotearoa Film and Television Awards Best Children's/Youth Programme: *Kaitangata Twitch*, 2010 WorldFest Houston International Film Festival Platinum Remi Award (top award in

Family/Children TV Series section): also for *Kaitangata Twitch*. Saw *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes*. Interview with Annie Ruth, May 2, 2011.

Moetara, Teina. (Rongowhakaata), Actor, Singer, Director. Context & Practice Senior Tutor, Toi Whakaari, Artistic Director Tu Te Manawa Maurea Kapa Haka Group. Interviews with Annie Ruth, December 3, 2009 & October 1, 2010. Email discussion with Annie Ruth, June 14, 2012.

Moriarty, Jim. (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Koata and Ngāti Kohangungu), Actor, Director and Educator. Artistic Director of Te Rakau O Te Wao Tapu Trust. Interview (together with Helen Pearse-Otene) with Annie Ruth, November 22, 2010.

Parker, Chris. Actor playing de Sade in *Marat/Sade*. Interview with Annie Ruth, October 19, 2010.

Pearse-Otene, Helen. Actor and Playwright. Graduate of Toi Whakaari acting course. Writer and actor for Te Rakau O Te Wao Tapu Trust. Interview (together with Jim Moriarty) with Annie Ruth, November 22, 2010.

Penny, Christian. Director. Director, Toi Whakaari NZ Drama School, HOD Directing at Toi Whakaari at the time of the interview. Interview with Annie Ruth, June 9, 2010.

Peters, Leo Gene. Director and graduate of Toi Whakaari & Victoria University Master of Theatre Arts in Directing. Interview with Annie Ruth, November 28, 2010.

Pōiki, Roma. (Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri, Ngāti Rangitihī). Director and administrator. Author of *Whatungarongaro* together with and He Ara Hou. Interviews with Annie Ruth, March 4, 2010 and April 27, 2011.

Robb, Andrew. Supporter of He Ara Hou. Currently Press Secretary to Dr Pita Sharples, Minister for Māori Affairs. Interview with Annie Ruth, September 7, 2010.

Taylor, Rangimoana. (Ngāti Porou) Actor and Director. Graduate of Toi Whakaari acting course. Interviews with Annie Ruth, January 27 and May 13, 2010.

Wadham, Leon. Actor playing Marat in *Marat/Sade*. Interview with Annie Ruth, October 19, 2010.

Wassenaar, William. Director and graduate of Toi Whakaari & Victoria University Master of Theatre Arts in Directing. Artistic Director of 'Long Cloud' Youth Theatre Company. Saw *Small Lives*, *Big Dreams*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes*. Interview with Annie Ruth, May 1, 2011.

Wood, Martyn. Actor and director, graduate of Toi Whakaari acting course. Actor in *Small Lives*, *Big Dreams*. Artistic Director, 'Bats' Theatre Company. Saw *Marat/Sade*. Interview with Annie Ruth, March 3, 2011.

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