Towards a New Pacific Theatre

Practice-led enquiry into a model of theatre making that relates to the geography, cultures and spiritual values of Aotearoa/New Zealand

by

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**A thesis
submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Theatre**

Victoria University of Wellington

November 2010

Abstract:

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This practice-led research enquiry sets out to develop and test a model of theatre practice that relates to the unique geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of Aotearoa/New Zealand. In this practice, actors are connected with their body and the earth (they have feet), archetypal qualities inherent in nature and culture are incorporated into training and performance (return of the gods), a sense of adventure and risk-taking is emphasized, and the practice relates to the multiple cultures and communities of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Presence, defined as the ability to be sensorially alive in the moment, and site-specific performance, a creative response to locality, emerged as two of the key strategies to connect with self, other and the environment.

By investigating selected principles, strategies and values from the indigenous, pre-European, Māori performing arts (*whare tapere*), devised theatre, the Michael Chekhov technique, and Japanese Noh theatre, an intercultural approach to site-specific theatre evolved that interweaves the four pathways of collaboration, connection, exploration and transformation and their corresponding values. After considering the political and ethical issues of intercultural performance a number of principles to guide the process of intercultural exchange were formulated and tested.

A vital component of this study was the creative development and performance of *Ex_isle of Strangers* – a site-specific work developed in response to the tangible and intangible dimensions of Matiu/Somes Island. The research generated moments of practice that investigated the creative potential of residential devising processes and the transformative value of audience mobility in performances that involve physical and metaphorical journeying. These moments provided the participants (performers and spectators) time, space and opportunity to interact with one another and with the site they occupied, thus significantly increasing their level of physical and mental engagement with the work.

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Chapter One: Research Methodology

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> A performance begins when the actor's feet touch the ground, a wooden floor, a surface, when he first has the sensation of putting down roots; it begins in another sense when he lifts himself lightly from that spot. The performer indeed proves with his feet that he _is_ an actor.
>
> Tadashi Suzuki in _The Way of Acting_

Introduction

This research project sprang out of a conviction that it is vital for theatre to connect with our land and its people. One way to achieve this is for theatre to reflect the qualities of our natural and urban environments and relate to the cultural identities of its participants (performers and spectators). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the natural environment is breathtakingly dynamic, and our people a rich mixture of Māori, European, Pacific Island and Asian cultures. This, however, is not reflected in much of our current theatre practice.

Suzuki (1986) maintains that in traditional Japanese performing arts the performers balance between 'height and depth, sky and earth' (p. 10). They establish an intimate relationship with the earth through the symbolic gesture of dragging the feet or by rhythmically pounding the ground. The consistent desire to strike a rhythm with the feet is also prevalent in traditional Māori and Pacific Island performing arts. In _haka_ (dance), _waiata-ā-ringa_ (action song) and _poi_ (little ball attached to string) the rhythmical stamping of the bare feet on the ground is known as _takahi_. I agree with Suzuki when he asserts that modern, western theatre 'does nothing to promote the expressiveness of the feet; the feet are merely used as they are in ordinary life' (pp. 7-8). The western actor has, in a manner of speaking, no feet. Allain (2002) explains that, in addition to giving his actors feet, Suzuki also aims 'to bring the gods (_kami_) back into Japanese theatre culture' (p. 4). His gods are 'not culturally specific or anthropologically modeled, but energetic and physiological' (p. 5). I interpret this to mean that they are the essential qualities and energies inherent in nature. Such an

approach to the gods, as we shall see in chapter two, has affinity to the Michael Chekhov concept of archetypal qualities. Connecting with the gods, or the archetypal dimensions of the phenomena in life, places the actor's body in a sacred or spiritual space. This constitutes for Suzuki 'a transformation from the personal to the universal' (p. 90). The rigorous training that enables a performer to embody such archetypal qualities will take the performer on a pathway of self-fulfillment and self-discovery. It is of interest and relevance for this thesis to note that Allain (2002) observes a certain connection between the Suzuki method and the Michael Chekhov technique:

> The growth of interest in approaches to acting, such as Michael Chekhov's, that offer alternatives to Stanislavski has meant that Suzuki's method no longer stands as isolated as it did […] (p. 54)

Returning to the starting point of this research project – but by adopting some of Suzuki's notions and placing these in the context of my own experience as an Aotearoa/New Zealand theatre practitioner – I contend that in the current, predominantly western-based, New Zealand theatre practice:

- Actors have no feet;
- Gods are missing;
- Sense of adventure and risk-taking is not prominent;
- A limited section of our communities are engaged.

This research sets out to address these perceived limitations by developing a model of theatre making – called a *New Pacific Theatre* – that connects strongly with the geography, culture and spirit of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I envisage this New Pacific Theatre to be cutting-edge, experimental, embracing contemporary theatre practices and technologies, located within the Pacific region, and deeply rooted within the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Pacific tradition. In its practice, the actors have a strong connection with their body and the earth (they have feet), the archetypal dimensions of culture and nature are incorporated into training and performance (return of the gods), a sense of adventure and experimentation is prominent, and the diversity of our cultures and communities, particularly Māori, Pacific Island, European and Asian, is reflected. To reflect, or resonate with, the multiple cultures of

Aotearoa/New Zealand a New Pacific Theatre will incorporate elements and principles from the theatre practices of these cultures. However, the scope and timeframe of this PhD research makes it necessary to limit the field of my enquiry to *a definite number* of practices from *selected* cultures. In section 1.2 of this chapter I will explain and justify the choice of the title 'Towards a New Pacific Theatre', identify the selected sources and elaborate on the reasons for their inclusion. A major component of this project involved testing selected elements and principles in practice, through the creation and presentation of a first exemplar of the New Pacific Theatre: *Ex_isle of Strangers.* This work was a devised site-specific performance, developed over a two-year period through various workshops, laboratories and rehearsals, and performed on Matiu/Somes Island (in the Wellington Harbour) in April 2010.

1.1   Research Overview

By placing my own experience and practice as a theatre director and actor trainer at the heart of my enquiries, this project adopts a practice-led research methodology. Haseman (2006) suggests that in practice-led research the process of enquiry may start with a strong passion, and that the actual research questions could emerge through the practice:

> [M]any practice-led researchers do not commence a research project with a sense of 'a problem'. Indeed they may be led by what is best described as 'an enthusiasm of practice': something, which is exciting, something, which may be unruly, or indeed something, which may be just becoming possible as new technology or networks allow (but of which they cannot be certain). Practice-led researchers construct experiential starting points from which practice follows. They tend to 'dive in', to commence practicing to see what emerges (pp. 100-101).

The starting point of my research was definitely 'an enthusiasm of practice' and a strong desire to contribute to Aotearoa/New Zealand theatre by creating a model of theatre making that addresses certain perceived gaps in its practice. In the course of my research the following questions emerged:

i.   Which artistic principles and practices of Māori, Contemporary European and Asian performance can be incorporated in this model?

ii. What are the core strategies of a New Pacific Theatre practice?

iii. What are the emerging issues and conclusions when applying these principles, practices and ingredients into a first performance exemplar?

Chapter two addresses the first research question, while the second question is addressed in chapter three (Presence) and chapter four (Site-Specific Performance) through outlining two of the core strategies that make up New Pacific Theatre practice. Chapters five and six describe the process of testing the selected principles, practices and strategies during the creation (chapter five) and presentation (chapter six) of the first performance exemplar of a New Pacific Theatre: *Ex_isle of Strangers*, while chapter seven identifies and analyses the emerging issues and conclusions, thus addressing the third research question. The final chapter is an attempt to synthesise the various conclusions and discoveries into a coherent New Pacific Theatre model by interweaving its four pathways and their corresponding values. But first I define the field of my enquiry (1.2), articulate the worldviews that underpin my research (1.3), frame this project within a Performative Research Paradigm (1.4), outline my research strategies (1.5), and explain content and weight of the three tangible research outputs of performance, exegesis and DVD (1.6)

1.2 Field of Enquiry

In developing a model of theatre practice that relates to the geography, culture and spirit of Aotearoa/New Zealand I maintain that it is vital to locate Aotearoa/New Zealand within the Pacific region. From a geographic and cultural perspective the Pacific is a continent of islands and islanders, distinct from one another, yet connected through the Pacific Ocean (*Te Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa*). The physical connection in the Pacific was recently demonstrated when a massive earthquake in Japan sent tsunami waves rippling through the entire region. As islanders there is a shared collective experience of journeying over sea. We all have, at some stage or another, come from somewhere (a home-land), travelled over sea (by boat or plane), often in search of a better life. In chapter five I will explain how this collective experience formed one of the main points of departure for *Ex_isle of Strangers*. The title of my research project 'Towards a New Pacific Theatre' intends to highlight a view of the

world that places the Pacific Ocean at its centre and Aotearoa/New Zealand at the top, thus adding a distinct Pacific dimension to the prevailing, Eurocentric, 'East - West' paradigm of intercultural performance. McArthur's *Corrective Map of the World* (fig. 1.1) provides a visual representation of such a perspective of the world.
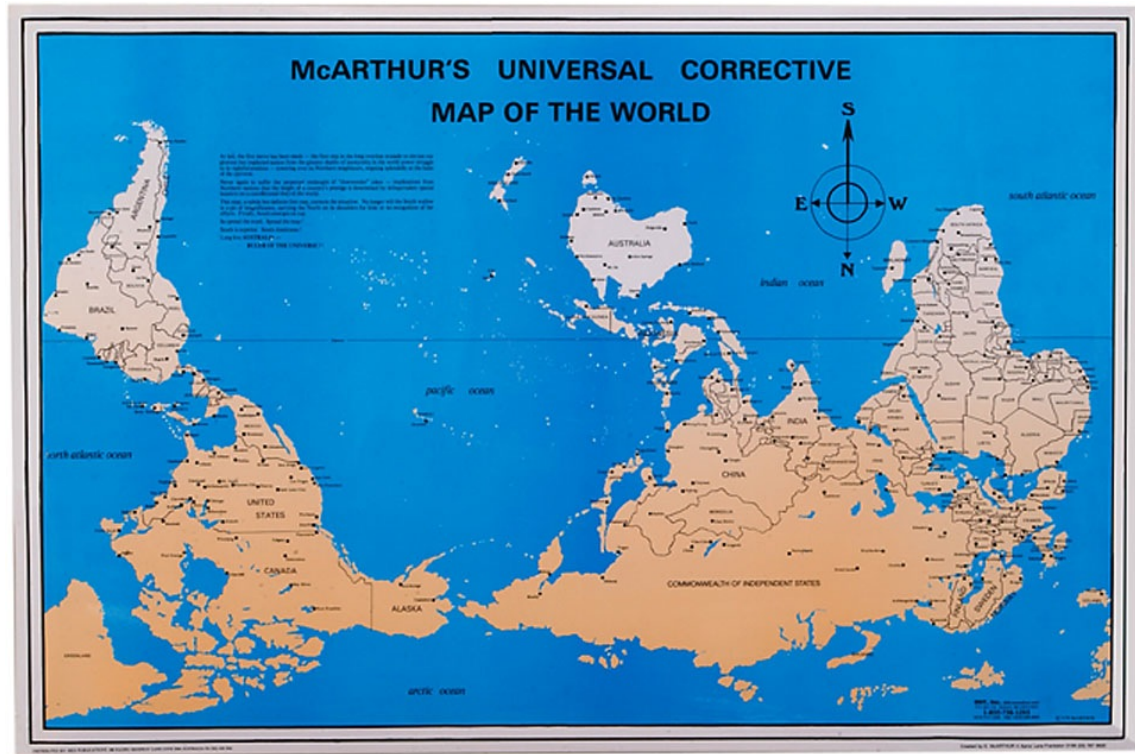
Fig. 1.1: McArthur's map[1]: a Pacific perspective

The term *Pacific* has geographic and cultural, as well as spiritual connotations, and the Chambers Concise Dictionary (Schwarz, 1991) lists 'inclining towards peace' as one of the meanings of the word *pacific*, thus pointing at one of the transformative or spiritual intentions of the model that I set out to develop. Therefore, 'Towards a New Pacific Theatre' is an attempt to express the emergent nature of my research and incorporate its geographic, cultural and spiritual implications in the title.

With Māori, European, Pacific Island and Asian making up the four main population groups in Aotearoa/New Zealand I initially envisaged investigating performance practices drawn from each of these cultures. However, the scope and timeframe of this project made it necessary to narrow the field of enquiry to a *definite* number of genres from *selected* artistic and cultural practices. This selection process was guided

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[1] Retrieved from http://www.flourish.org/upsidedownmap/ (1 Oct 2010)

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by a number of philosophical and practical considerations. In acknowledgement of the New Zealand *tangata whenua* (indigenous people) it was essential to include the Māori performing arts, whereas the choice of contemporary European theatre practice reflected my own professional background.   The sheer volume of Asian and Pacific Island practices made it a lot harder to decide which of those to include. Brandon (1993) asserts that there are 'perhaps 25,000 theatre troupes' and 'as many as 700-800 distinct forms or genres' in Asia and Oceania (pp. 1-11). Considering the fact that Japan is part of the Pacific, and having access to the theoretical and experimental work of a number of Aotearoa/New Zealand theatre experts with forms of Japanese theatre, I decided to focus in my research on Japanese theatre. Initially, I intended to also include a number of Pacific Island practices in my investigations, particularly the genres of the Hawaiian Hula, the Samoan Fale Aitu, and the Tahitian Arioi as examples of indigenous, pre-European, Pacific performance practice. However, a meaningful investigation of such practices would require me to spend extended periods of time in their countries of origin, and I lacked the necessary funds and time resources to do so. Although relevant, valuable and of interest for the development of a New Pacific Theatre, for the time being I have to postpone the investigation of such practices for future research endeavours.

In the following section I will further define and justify the selected genres within each of the three chosen fields.

Within the field of **Māori Performing Arts** I am concentrating on the *whare tapere* (pre-European Māori performing arts). The reasons for this are three-fold:

1. To circumvent the complex issue of colonialism that has influenced current Māori theatre practice in ways that makes it hard to establish what is essentially Māori, and what is Pākehā[2] based or influenced.

2. Having access to the in-depth research on the *whare tapere* by Dr Charles Royal (1998), undertaken in the context of his PhD research at VUW.

3. A strong personal and professional attraction to the value-base and performance principles of the *whare tapere*.

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[2] Pākehā is the Māori term for the non-Māori settlers or immigrants in New Zealand

It was of invaluable benefit to have Dr Charles Royal involved in this research – as a participant in the early workshops and as a cultural advisor to the project. His participation, obviously, facilitated an immediate and direct input of knowledge and expertise relating to the *whare tapere* to inform and guide my research.

In the domain of **Contemporary European Performance** I have focused on Devised Theatre, the Michael Chekhov Technique, and Intercultural Performance. These practices form three of the main pillars of my own expertise as a performer, director and actor trainer, and as such provided robust guidance and substance to the practical components of my research. At the same time this project allowed me to extend my knowledge by exploring new links between these practices, and contextualizing them through critical literature review.

Devised Theatre is included because the collaborative nature of the devising process makes it one of the most effective strategies to deal with the ethical, political, and spiritual complexities of intercultural performance. It offers a number of ways for cultural identities and environmental qualities to inform the creative process – particularly through its genre of Site-specific Performance. Furthermore, devised theatre encourages risk-taking, and provides effective techniques to apply and integrate the multiple vocabularies of body, space, voice, text, objects and light.

After studying and training in a number of European acting methodologies, such as Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Copeau, Grotowski, Barba and Pardo, it was only by chance that I came across the *Michael Chekhov Technique* (hereafter MC technique) in 1999. I was struck by the clarity and beauty in which the MC technique enables a performer to draw from their body and imagination to create intention, feeling and quality of being (character). Michael Chekhov's writings affirmed my own concerns about emotional and sensory memory as ineffective, and in fact unhealthy, tools for the actor. During the last decade the MC technique has become one of the core strands in my practice as a theatre director and actor trainer, and in 2004 I attended the annual International Michael Chekhov Workshop and Festival in Croatia, organized by MICHA[3], in order to connect with a global network of Michael Chekhov practitioners. I

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[3] MICHA is the international Michael Chekhov Association. See for further information: http://www.michaelchekhov.org/

have been immensely impressed with the versatility of this technique in its application to a wide range of acting and performance styles, ranging from acting for stage, film and TV to devised theatre, musical theatre, opera, dance and song. This versatility is of particular relevance for an Aotearoa/New Zealand theatre practice in which actors are required to adapt to a wide range of styles and genres. The MC technique offers, in my experience, one of the most effective Western-based techniques to balance the demands of Form and Content in theatrical expression.

A New Pacific Theatre, in its aim of bringing together a number of theatre practices from various cultural ancestries, needs to address the ethical and political issues of *Intercultural Performance*. In Aotearoa/New Zealand the unique relationship between Māori and Pākehā has crystallized the intercultural performance debate on issues of bi-cultural theatre. In the next chapter I will discuss the key issues of intercultural performance, and subsequently articulate a number of principles to guide the process of intercultural performance and exchange.

Within the rich and diverse field of **Japanese Theatre** I initially focussed on the contrasting genres of ancient Noh and contemporary Butoh. However, it became clear that to do justice to the depth and complexity of each genre, further selection was required. Although I have experience in Butoh through working with Butoh master Min Tanaka in the eighties, I decided to use this research project to further my knowledge and understanding of Noh and investigate the possible application of Noh within the context of a New Pacific Theatre.

Noh theatre is one of the oldest and most remarkable theatre genres in the world that has survived many centuries in more or less the same form. Currently it is still possible to observe authentic Noh training and performance in action. The Noh philosophy and practice are well documented in the English language, and a number of Aotearoa/New Zealand theatre practitioners have incorporated elements of Noh in their work. I have a particular interest in the Māori Noh productions of John Davies (founder of the New Zealand Noh Theatre) and was able to observe the final rehearsal stages of his play *The Blue Shawl* (2008). I persuaded John to offer me guidance in my Noh explorations, particularly by providing dramaturgical assistance during the writing of the Kim Lee Noh Play (see chapter five for more details on this process).

Linking artistic values and practices from the pre-European *whare tapere*, Michael Chekhov technique, devised theatre practices and Noh theatre into an inter-cultural model of site-specific theatre is, as far as I know, breaking new ground and constitutes a main part of making an original contribution to knowledge through my research.

1.3   Underpinning Worldviews

Rather than eliminating or ignoring the values that guide my life, and therefore my research, it is essential to state them explicitly at the start, as they affect every thought I assume, every word I proclaim and every action I display. I strongly believe that the creation of knowledge should aim to enhance the quality of life and living. Both academic research and theatre practice should adopt missions that benefit our communities and safeguard our planet. There are two key value or belief systems that shape my view of the world and guide me in this research endeavour:

> a.   Humanistic-Buddhist Worldview
>
> b.   Kaupapa Māori Approach to Creating Knowledge

a. Humanistic-Buddhist Worldview:

As a practising Buddhist of more than twenty years, within the context of the Soka Gakkai International[4], I dedicate myself to the achievement of *kosen-rufu.* This Buddhist concept involves striving for world peace and the happiness of all beings:

> The Japanese phrase *kosen-rufu* expresses a centrally important concept for members of the SGI. It is often used synonymously with world peace and has been informally defined as "world peace through individual happiness". More broadly, it could be understood as a vision of social peace brought about by the widespread acceptance of core values such as unfailing respect for the dignity of human life. (FOCUS[5] issue 250: 20)

Kosen-rufu implies an approach to Buddhist practice that involves a deep engagement with the affairs of society and the world. Even before the time I became a practising

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[4] See for further information: http://www.sgi.org/
[5] *Focus* is the monthly magazine of Soka Gakkai International of New Zealand

Buddhist I was a committed pacifist with a strong aversion to violence and destruction. This led me to become a conscientious objector when it was my time to join the army in the Netherlands. After gruelling and humiliating interviews I was forced to do 'civil service' as a psychologist for one and a half times the period of military service, but for minimal wages! This experience gave rise to a conviction that there was something fundamentally wrong with society and, when I encountered Buddhism, it provided the philosophy and practice to address such issues. It goes beyond the purpose of this thesis to detail the Buddhist beliefs, except in relation to some of the core values of the *whare tapere* that correspond with these beliefs and certain Buddhist concepts and aspects of the Noh Theatre, which determine its relevance for a New Pacific Theatre.

Kaupapa Māori Approach to Creating Knowledge:

A New Pacific Theatre, in its mission to develop a model of theatre that reflects the unique qualities of Aotearoa/New Zealand, needs to pursue an approach to research and knowledge creation that acknowledges and incorporates the values of Māori epistemologies and cosmologies. Bishop (2005) claims that:

> Researchers in Aotearoa / New Zealand have developed a tradition of research that has perpetuated colonial power imbalances, thereby undervaluing and belittling Māori knowledge and learning practices in order to enhance those of the colonizers and adherents of colonial paradigms. (p. 110)

Kaupapa Māori Research follows a collective orientation, intended to benefit *all* research participants. For this purpose Bishop establishes a number of core values and strategies, particularly those of *whakawhanaungatanga*[6], somatic knowing, participant-driven, and spiral discourse (pp. 117-122). A recurring theme hereby is that of 'connected knowing', which Bishop relates to the concept of *whanaungatanga*:

> This concept is one of the most fundamental ideas within Māori culture, both as a value and as a social process. Whanaungatanga literally consists of kin relationships between ourselves and others, and it is constituted in ways determined by the Māori cultural context. (p. 118)

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[6] *Whakawhanaungatanga*: the art of relatedness.

Whanaungatanga highlights a sense of connection rather than emphasizing our separateness. It does this through *whakapapa* (genealogies) and *raranga kōrero* – stories that link us to all other animate and inanimate organisms. Connectedness is an embodied knowledge, or, as Bishop describes it, 'a somatic acknowledgement of our connectedness with and commitment to our surroundings, human and nonhuman' (p. 119). This particular connectedness I will define, in chapter three, as *Presence*. One of the implications of embracing *whanaungatanga* in research is that the process becomes 'participatory as well as *participant driven* in the sense that the concerns, and preferences of the *whānau* are what guide and drive the research process' (p. 120). Such a process places great value on self-emancipation as one of the research outcomes. This corresponds with the Buddhist mission of bringing out the best (the Buddha) in self and others.

Bishop (2005) identifies the process of *spiral discourse* as a fundamental strategy of Kaupapa Māori Research. He explains it as the process of seeking 'a collaboratively constructed story' through means of 'culturally constructed discursive practices' associated with a *hui* or meeting (p. 122). Such practices are, according to him, steeped in spiritual and metaphoric meanings, and richly abstract allusions that refer to stories and incidents of the past, and dreams and aspirations for the future.

> The aim of a hui is to reach a consensus, to arrive at a jointly constructed meaning. This takes time, days if need be, or sometimes a series of hui will be held in order that the elders, monitoring proceedings, can tell when a constructed 'voice' has been found. (p. 122)

Royal (2006) cautions that Kaupapa Māori does not necessarily involve the use of *Te Ao Mārama*[7] values and worldview. He prefers the use of the terms '*Mātauranga Māori*', referring to a pre-contact body of Polynesian knowledge that 'is not merely concerned with ethnic pride and cultural revitalisation but its deeper call relates to [...] how we can improve the way in which humankind exists and lives in the world [...] rekindling kinship between people and between people and the natural world'. Regardless of the overall terms, the values and strategies of *collaboration* and *connection* resonate deeply with the mission and pathways of a New Pacific Theatre.

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[7] *Te Ao Mārama* philosophy will be explained in the section on the *whare tapere* in chapter two.

1.4   Performative Research

In *A Manifesto for Performative Research* Haseman (2006) presents a strong argument to acknowledge Performative Research as an autonomous third research paradigm, a methodology with its own approaches to designing, conducting and reporting research, distinct from Quantitative and Qualitative Research. Haseman claims that we are at a pivotal moment in the development of research in which 'the approved approaches [of Qualitative and Quantitative research] fail to meet the needs of an increasing number of practice-led researchers, especially in the arts, media and design' (p. 99).

The Performative Research paradigm heralds a radical shift from research *on* practice (practice as an object of study) to practice *as* (a method of) research. According to Schön (1983) a central aspect to the world of practice is a sense of 'complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts' (p. 14).

Practice-based research strategies include: the artist journal (embracing reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action); participant research; participatory research; collaborative inquiry, and action research. Haseman (2006) claims that such strategies reinterpret what is meant by the general PhD requirement of making an original contribution to knowledge:

> Rather than contribute to the intellectual or conceptual architecture of a discipline, these research enterprises are concerned with *the improvement of practice*, and new epistemologies of practice distilled from the insider's understandings of action in context (p. 100, my italics).

Haseman identifies two major departures that Performative Research takes in relation to traditional approaches of quantitative and qualitative research, relating to its *starting point* and its *research output*.

1.4.1   Starting Point

As noted on page 3 of this chapter, many practice-led researchers do not start a research project with clearly formulated research questions. Instead they may be

driven by what is best described as a passion. This passion may lead them to begin practicing and see what emerges. As such practice-led researchers tend to avoid the constraints of narrow problem setting and rigid methodological requirements at the outset of a project. I note that such an approach to research and knowledge creation corresponds with one of the characteristics of the devising process: you know where you are coming from (a strong passion) but you don't know where it will lead you (new knowledge and understandings). The point of departure for my PhD project was a strong desire to contribute to Aotearoa/New Zealand theatre practice by developing a model of theatre making that strongly connects with our land and its people, without predetermining the framework or outcomes, and allowing the process of practice to establish what emerges.

1.4.2   Research Output

A second point of difference relates to the research output. In practice-led research outputs and claims to knowing must be made through *symbolic* language and forms of practice. Haseman (2006) claims that practice-led researchers 'have little interest in trying to translate their findings and understandings into numbers (quantitative) and words (qualitative) as preferred by traditional paradigms' (p. 102), and instead consider the entire range of communicative and artistic expressions for their research presentation: dance, drama, singing, video, multimedia, graphic arts, and so on. He designed the following chart to summarize the key differences between the three research paradigms:

Quantitative Research	Qualitative Research	Performative Research
'The activity or operation of expressing something as a quantity or amount—for example, in numbers, graphs or formulas' (Schwandt 2001: 215).	'All forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data…i.e., nonnumeric data in the form of words' (Schwandt 2001: 213)	Expressed in non-numeric data, but in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code.
The scientific method	Multi-method	Multi-method led by practice

Table 1.1: Key differences between three research paradigms (Haseman 2006:104)

I argue that, in addition to the symbolic but still tangible research outputs as established by Haseman, a significant part of the performative research output can be the transformative value of the creative practice, as was the case with the creation and presentation of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. This transformative value took the form of embodied knowledge and increased presence, skills and understanding in the collaborating artists, myself, and to a certain extent in our audiences as well. The contribution of this 'original knowledge' is difficult to measure and is bound to manifest itself in years to come through an evolution of practice and the appreciation thereof. In terms of the *measurable* outputs of my research: it is presented in the form of a performance (50%), a written thesis (40%), and three DVDs (10%).

1.5 Research Strategies

By combining practice-led research strategies, such as *collaborative action research, autobiographical reflections*, and *creative journal analysis*, with *critical written analysis* I have established a vigorous exchange between action and reflection, creating knowledge that weaves together *understanding*, *doing* and *being*. In this section I will detail and elaborate on each of the main research strategies employed.

1.5.1 Collaborative Action Research

Theatre is a collaborative activity. In order to stretch understanding and embodied knowledge beyond the limitations of a singular body (my own), I conducted various intercultural laboratories and devising workshops[8]. The participation of human beings during such research activities required ethical approval from the VUW Human Ethics Committee. This was obtained on September 10, 2008.

Activity	Timeframe	Participants
Intercultural Performance Laboratory I *Whitireia Performing Arts Program*	Oct – Dec 2007 100 hrs	7
Intercultural Performance Laboratory II *Whitireia Performing Arts Program*	Feb – June 2008 100 hrs	10

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[8] See Chapter 6 for information on the core collaborators

Wānanga Matiu Island # 1 *New Pacific Theatre Ensemble*	Feb 2009 3-day Residential	14
Intercultural Performance Laboratory III *Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts*	Feb – May 2009 30 hrs	6
Intercultural Performance Laboratory IV *Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School*	July 2009 5 days	7
Light & New Pacific Theatre Workshop *New Pacific Theatre Ensemble*	Aug 2009 1 weekend	16
Wānanga Matiu Island # 2 *New Pacific Theatre Ensemble*	March 2010 3-day Residential	26
2-Week Residency Matiu Island *New Pacific Theatre Ensemble*	April 2010 15-day Residential	26
Performance Ex_isle of Strangers *New Pacific Theatre Ensemble*	April 15 - 18	40 Performers 200 Audience

Table 1.2: Overview of the participatory action/collaborative inquiry activities

Table 1.2 presents an overview of the participatory action/collaborative inquiry activities, detailing the activity and context, its timeframe and the number of people involved. The four Intercultural Performance Laboratories provided an opportunity to survey the field of enquiry in practical ways parallel to my literature review. By working with groups of Māori and Pacific Island students (Whitireia), Chinese students (Hong Kong), and mixed Māori, Pacific Island and Pākehā students (Toi Whakaari) the Laboratories provided a fertile ground to experiment with trans-cultural performance strategies, as well as a testing platform to explore the application of devising strategies and the Michael Chekhov Technique when working with students from various cultural backgrounds. Above all, the Laboratories clarified the issues, concerns, questions and pathways that guided and informed the workshops, *wānanga*, residency and presentation of *Ex_isle of Strangers*.

It is essential to value the activities in table 1.2 not only as practical ways to further understanding and knowledge of the issues at hand, but also in their aim and orientation to engage with the world. The extensive network of relationships (*whanaungatanga*), understandings and embodied experiences that evolved through

these activities formed a core strategy in itself to influence and further Aotearoa/New Zealand theatre practice in developing a stronger connection with our land and its people.

1.5.2 Autobiographical reflections

Creative knowledge is foremost an embodied knowledge. It is located in and expressed through the bodies of the artists. However, in theatre practice, there is another party involved, the audience. They create meaning in response to the artist's actions. The meaning thus created is of another dimension than the creative embodied knowledge of the artist. Kershaw (2009) proposes that theatre and performance operate 'in a continuum with natural phenomena, such as seashores and forest perimeters' (p. 107). Although the sea and the shore each have their own unique qualities, where they meet there is a continuous mutual influence, a flux, always the same but never the same. In order to accumulate and share creative knowledge and meaning it is important that the creative artist (and researcher) assumes the role of an audience, or outsider, and reflects on his or her actions.

David Fenton (2007) establishes that there is reflection-on-action, which 'is done before or after an event of practice', but also reflection-in-action that 'can happen inside the event' (p. 54). The act of reflection allows us time and space to consider our experiences, feelings, and understandings. This could lead to questioning the assumptions of our practice or directing our practice in new and adjusted ways. From my own experience as a practitioner I know that it is important to acknowledge my intuitive as well as my cognitive faculties. Sometimes I have a strong inclination to lead my actions in a certain direction without being able to justify this or to fully comprehend the reasons why. It is a valid strategy to follow this intuition, and the process of reflection – *in* or *on* action – presents an evaluating or guiding mechanism to establish the benefits of intuitive actions, or lack there of.

1.5.3 Creative Journal

Of particular value in the process of reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action is the tool of the artist journal. Throughout this research project I kept a detailed

creative journal of my reflections, responses and associations relating to the various activities, including laboratories, workshops, rehearsal and performance processes, dialogue with colleagues and collaborators, and so on. This journal formed a leading guide in the writing of this thesis. In addition, I also asked the core group of collaborators to keep an artist journal. On completion of *Ex_isle of Strangers* I asked them to share specific entries with me in response to a questionnaire[9]. The journal also formed an important tool in guiding the devising process, editing of the DVD components, and addressing the various stumbling blocks that occurred during the creative process.

1.6   Reporting

Haseman (2009) asserts that 'practice-led research outcomes are essentially reported in two forms – the creative work and the exegetical, linguistic accompaniment to that work' (p. 216). For me choices in reporting not only relate to matters of practice-led research, but they also penetrate the heart of what theatre is. I maintain that the language of theatre is similar to the language of dreams. It uses a vocabulary of images, feelings and sensations. Words are only a fragment of this lexis. To present the results of research relating to theatre only, mainly, or predominantly in written format is per definition inadequate as words are unable to accurately capture and communicate the nuances and subtleties of imagery, feeling or sensation. Therefore, to share both verbal and non-verbal, tangible and intangible aspects of my research in a meaningful way, it is necessary to present the core of my research in the form of a performance, and to experiment in this exegesis with new ways of reportage that include a significant number of images and subjective responses from performers and audience members, intertwined with analytical reflections and attempts to conceptualize the emerging themes and understandings.

1.6.1   Performance (50%)

The creation and presentation of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, based on the geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of Matiu/Somes Island and created in collaboration with an intercultural ensemble of Māori and Pākehā performers, formed a major

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[9] See appendix 3.2 Questionnaire Performers

component of my research outputs. During its creative development the core principles, values and practices of a New Pacific Theatre model of theatre making were investigated and tested. *Ex_isle of Strangers* was a 4-hour long site-specific odyssey, performed on April 15, 16, 17 & 18 for a total of 200 spectators. It was constructed and presented following the dramatic structure of a journey: leaving familiar territory (Departure), venturing on a journey over sea (Journey), arriving at a new territory (Arrival), to be delighted, surprised and challenged by a variety of theatrical experiences (Exploration), sharing a meal with cast and crew (Whakanoa[10]), and boarding the vessel to return home (Return).

1.6.2   Exegesis (40%)

This exegesis is written with a readership in mind of theatre practitioners and scholars. I have purposefully endeavored to avoid jargon that is too specialized, or that could alienate practitioners, and made an effort to incorporate images to illustrate or provide a visual point of reference wherever appropriate and available. Chapter two presents an overview of the five sources of inspiration Māori Whare Tapere, Devised Theatre, Michael Chekhov Technique, Intercultural Performance, and Noh Theatre, detailing the selected principles and elements that will be incorporated in a New Pacific Theatre model. Next I conduct an analysis of presence (chapter three) and an examination of site-specific performance (chapter four), two of the core strategies of a New Pacific Theatre. Chapter five analyses the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, and chapter six presents an overview of *Ex_isle of Strangers* by weaving together descriptions, reflections, images and responses from audience and performers. Chapter seven identifies and discusses the emerging themes and issues, while chapter eight integrates the major conclusions and findings into a coherent model that weaves together the four pathways of CONNECTION, COLLABORATION, EXPLORATION and TRANSFORMATION with their corresponding values.

1.6.3   DVDs (10%)

There are three DVDs included as appendices of this exegesis. The first DVD offers an overview of the first *wānanga* on Matiu/Somes Island (Jan 2009), the second DVD

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[10] *Whakanoa:* to make common, to break the tapu of a sacred event.

documents the Light and a New Pacific Theatre workshop (Aug 2009) and the third DVD is an audio-visual record of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. Early on in my research I envisaged the film component to become an autonomous work of art and knowledge creation, along side the performance of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, but in the course of my PhD project I realized that I did not have the cinematographic expertise, or the resources, to extend this aspect in the direction first imagined.

Conclusion

This practice-led enquiry, guided by Humanistic-Buddhist and Kaupapa Māori worldviews, is developing a New Pacific Theatre model of theatre making that strongly connects with the unique geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of Aotearoa/New Zealand. It grew out of a strong desire to contribute to New Zealand theatre practice by offering strategies that enable its actors to connect with body and earth (They Have Feet); incorporate the archetypal dimensions of culture and nature (Return of the Gods); encourage a sense of risk-taking; and reflect the diversity of our cultures and communities. By weaving together selected principles, values and expertise from the pre-European *whare tapere*, Contemporary European performance, particularly Devised Theatre, Michael Chekhov technique and Intercultural Performance, and Japanese Noh theatre a model of site-specific theatre practice is emerging that integrates the strands of CONNECTION, COLLABORATION, EXPLORATION and TRANSFORMATION.

Chapter Two: Mapping the Field

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Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of the five strands of my inquiries, Whare Tapere, Devised Theatre, Michael Chekhov Technique, Intercultural Performance, and Noh Theatre, by surveying their historical context, establishing issues of interest and interconnectedness, and selecting principles and elements to be incorporated in a New Pacific Theatre.

2.1   The Whare Tapere

Introduction

A New Pacific Theatre that aims to be deeply rooted in the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Pacific tradition needs to consider and incorporate (elements of) indigenous performance practice: in Aotearoa/New Zealand this means the Māori performing arts. The last three decades has seen an enormous effort by contemporary Māori performing arts practitioners and companies, such as Hone Kouka, Roma Potiki, Tānemahuta Gray, Briar Grace-Smith, Taki Rua Productions, Te Ohu Whakaari, Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu (Jim Moriarty) and Atamira, in developing and exploring works, created by Māori artists, exploring Māori stories and themes, and incorporating _tikanga Māori[1]_, _te reo_ and Māori physical and vocal expressions. However, in order to circumvent the effects that colonialism has had on current manifestations of Māori performing arts I am focusing my investigations on the pre-European form of the _whare tapere_. I owe much of my understanding hereby to the thorough and inspiring research of Dr Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (1998) in the context of his PhD research _Te Whare Tapere: Towards a Model for Māori Performing Arts_. I was fortunate enough to have Dr Royal involved in my research project as a cultural advisor, and as a participant in the first three workshops/_wānanga_ (see table 1.2).

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[1] The term _tikanga Māori_ refers to cultural practices according to Māori protocol.

In his thesis Royal (1998) explains that the *whare tapere*, rather than referring to a specific building as is suggested by its name, is a generic term for those activities and traditions in which performers and audiences gathered for the purpose of entertainment and amusement. These activities could take place indoor as well as outdoors.

> [The] whare tapere refers to a set of activities, which took place in a particular social setting and whose intent might be said to be pleasurable, amusing and entertaining. The physical locality need not have been a defining characteristic; rather it was the collectivity and the set of activities that took place, which determined the existence of the whare tapere. And like all Māori activities, this set of activities took place under the aegis of a presiding deity, which, one could say, was ultimately the defining characteristic of the whare tapere. (p. 164)

Royal (1998) identifies six performing arts activities and themes as part of the *whare tapere*: dance (*haka*), oratory and storytelling (*whaikōrero*), song (*waiata*), the use of musical instruments (*ngā taonga puoro*), games (*tākaro*), and the art of adorning oneself (*ngā taonga o wharawhara*) (pp. 163-171). Therefore, it could be seen as a form of interdisciplinary theatre that employs and interweaves the various vocabularies of body, space, language, sounds and objects, similar in this respect to many of the Asian theatre genres, including the Japanese Noh theatre.

The arrival of the Pākehā, and their subsequent effort to eliminate all traces of a traditional Māori worldview, has posed an enormous threat to the *whare tapere*. This threat was so severe that, according to Royal, there are currently no longer any actual manifestations of the historical *whare tapere* in existence (p. 99). Recently, there has been a growing interest in, and increased research activity focusing on, the cultural recovery of pre-contact Māori performing arts. In his essay "Ōrotokare: Towards a New Model for Indigenous Theatre" Royal (2007) cites, for example, the work of Hirini Melbourne and Richard Nunns in 'securing a revival in the performance of *taonga puoro* (traditional music instruments)', and also the establishment of his own *Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion*[2], a non-profit organization 'dedicated to indigenous theatre and performing arts' (p. 195). Part of the work of Ōrotokare is concerned with

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[2] For further information on Ōrotokare see: http://www.orotokare.org.nz/

rebalancing the masculine and the feminine in haka-dance today, using elements of the natural world as models for dance, and developing a haka that turns inward. This last goal Royal explains as 'a movement from *form* (the outward projection upon the marae) to content, what is contained within the person to be released' (pp. 206-207). Of significant interest is the recent presentation of *Te Kārohirohi: The Light Dances[3]* (Feb 2010) as part of the *whare tapere* at Waimangō, Wharekawa, Hauraki. This work was developed in collaboration between Louise Pōtiki-Bryant (Atamira Dance Collective) and Dr Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, and constitutes an important step in the development of a *contemporary* model of the *whare tapere*.

2.1.1 Te Ao Mārama

In order to fully grasp the *whare tapere*, and its role as a platform to express the Māori worldview, it is important to consider the essence of this worldview. The way a particular culture views the world is expressed through the myths and traditions concerning the creation of the world. It presents a perspective on how all phenomena have come into existence, referring to both the tangible (natural phenomena) and intangible realities (values, qualities and levels of consciousness). Royal (1998) explains that Māori epistemology, and cosmology for that matter, are contained in the concept of *Te Ao Mārama*.

> [The] Māori knowledge system, which includes whakapapa, karakia, technology and so on, in their totality, can be referred to as the Te Ao Mārama worldview and philosophy. (p. 23)

Whakapapa, which literally means 'to create a base, a foundation', encapsulates two kinds of knowledge: *tātai* (the word for genealogy) and *kōrero* (the stories and narratives that discuss those items noted in the genealogy). Thus, *whakapapa* 'refers to the act of creating a foundation or base through the recitation of genealogies and stories' (Royal 2010). It communicates both the genealogy of phenomena and the genealogy of people. The genealogy of phenomena details the order of the coming into existence, from the immaterial to the material aspects of our reality, whereas the genealogy of people details the lineage of *whānau* (family), *hapū* (sub-tribe) and *iwi*

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[3] Go to http://www.orotokare.org.nz/Default.aspx?page=3247 for further details and a video clip.

(tribe). The Māori *whakapapa* of phenomena is complex and specific. It develops logically from the Root Cause (*Io*), the primordial beginnings of the Void (*Te Kore*) and the Night (*Te Po*), to the more specialised objects of the natural world. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to present a comprehensive overview of these causal relationships, it is note-worthy to see, as an example, that in this *whakapapa Te Wānanga* (Learning) begets *Te Hauora* (Well-being). Royal (1998) interprets this to mean 'that well-being is the outcome of learning and education [...] and that a process cannot be called educative if well-being is not the outcome' (p. 55).

Of central importance to Māori cosmology is the separation of *Ranginui* (Sky Father) and *Papatūānuku* (Mother Earth), which marked the emergence of *Te Ao Mārama* (pp. 47- 51). This event symbolises the separation of male and female principles - giving space to each. It not only created space but also introduced light, necessary for the development of their offspring and the natural world. Light in this context refers to the natural phenomenon, as well as the metaphorical sense of enlightenment or growing understanding of how things are. Royal (1998) suggests that the carved ancestral meetinghouse (*wharenui*) is perhaps the best-known symbol of *Te Ao Mārama*. The roof symbolises *Ranginui*, the floor *Papatūānuku*, and the pillars, upholding the roof, represent the posts used by *Tāne* to lift his father, thus separating his parents. Above the doorway is a carving of *Hinenui-i-te-pō* - the Māori goddess who guards the passage between life and death - thus making the doorway the symbolical transition from *Te Pō* to *Te Ao Mārama* (pp. 59-60).

In *The Woven Universe,* the selected writings of Rev. Māori Marsden (Ed. Royal, 2003), Marsden suggests that 'the Māori had a three-world view, of potential being symbolised by Te Korekore, the world of becoming portrayed by Te Pō, and the world of being, Te Ao Mārama' (p. 20).

> The word 'kore' means 'not, negative, nothing'. When the root of a word is doubled in Māori, it intensifies in meaning. [...] How is it possible to intensify that which is already absolute? By means of a thorough-going negativity, that which is negative proceeds beyond its limits and assumes the characteristics of the positive. [...] Thus Te Korekore is the realm between non-being and being: that is, the realm of potential being. (p. 20)

One possible way of grasping this process is to compare it with the cultivation of a seed. The seed (*Te Korekore*) contains the potential of a full-grown plant or tree, the process of cultivation (*Te Pō*) is what brings out the potential, and the result of a successful process of cultivation is the coming into existence of the plant or tree (*Te Ao Mārama*). This three-fold process of creation, as we shall see later in this chapter, can be linked with the three stages of the devising process, whereby the point of departure is the potential or the seed, the devising process the becoming or the process of cultivation, and the performance the world of being or the fruition.

2.1.2 Core Values

Royal (1998) proposes that a new *whare tapere* will give form and expression to the *Te Ao Mārama* philosophy through the exploration and encouragement of six fundamental values or concepts: *manaakitanga*, *rangatiratanga*, *whanaungatanga*, *tohungatanga*, *ūkaipō*, and *kotahitanga* (pp. 215-216). In this section I shall discuss the meaning and interpretation of each of these six values and propose to adopt and incorporate these values in the training and performance practice of a New Pacific Theatre. This discussion is based on the keynote address of Dr Charles Royal (2009) during the first *wānanga* on Matiu/Somes Island (see Appendix 1).

Manaakitanga:

Mana is the core concept in *manaakitanga* – it is the essence or the reality of a being. It is not the same as power, as so many people seem to think. *Mana* relates to the spiritual essence, whereas *mauri* relates to the physical or body essence. *Mana aki* is 'to uplift mana'. The word *tanga* is 'the art of'. Therefore, *manaakitanga* is the art of uplifting *mana*. It is the mutual uplifting of one another's spiritual essence.

Rangatiratanga:

Ranga means 'to weave' and *tira* refers to a group with a certain purpose. Therefore *rangatiratanga* is the art of weaving together groups of people who share a certain purpose. Charles used in this context the image of a school of fish, or a flock of birds. They are united by a desire to act in unison. There is a strong sense of goodwill: they want to be together. Another aspect of this image is that each member of the group

can influence the direction the group takes and as such there is a sense of shared leadership or collaboration. The value or concept of *rangatiratanga* corresponds strongly with the collaborative nature of devising theatre, but adds a poetic image and specific Māori dimension to it. Collaboration and the value of *rangatiratanga* form one of the four core pathways of a New Pacific Theatre (see chapter eight).

Whanaungatanga:

Whānau literally means birth. All life is birthed. *Whānau* then is a group of individuals who share in the one life, facilitating one another. *Whanaunga* is a relative and it is important to understand that for Māori the whole world is one *whānau*. Therefore, *whanaungatanga* is the art of relating and relationship. In this context life is understood through relationships, and everything is in a state of interconnectedness. We saw in chapter one, that Bishop (2005) identified *whanaungatanga* as a core value of Kaupapa Māori Research. The concept of interconnectedness is not uniquely Māori. It is, for example, also a core notion of Buddhist philosophy, and expressed in the notion of the oneness of self and the environment. *Whanaungatanga* became a core focus and strategy during the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, and will be adopted as one of the supporting pillars of a New Pacific Theatre practice.

Tohungatanga:

Tohu literally means symbol. Metaphorically speaking it describes the arrival of *mana* in a physical vessel. The Māori proverb '*Ka tohungia tēnei tangata'* refers to the circumstance that this particular person is anointed. In other words *mana* (the spiritual essence) has arrived. A *tohunga* then is a person who is a vessel of *mana*, and subsequently is able to see things in a new way (illumination), and call to action. Therefore, *tohungatanga* is the art of bringing about *mana* in physical vessels. In theatre this could be seen to correspond with the process of filling the vessel of physical and vocal actions with feeling, intention or imagery. In other words, it is the process of giving quality to the form, thus lifting the actions into an artistic realm.

Ūkaipō:

The word *ū* means 'breast milk', the word *kai* is 'to consume', and *pō* relates to darkness. Therefore, *ūkaipō* is 'breast-milk consuming the darkness'. It refers to

physical places in which we are renewed, healed, nourished, and brought back to life (*Te Ao Mārama*). These places are different for everybody. Charles (2009) quoted the Māori proverb *'E hoki koe ki tō ūkaipō; kia purea koe i ngā hau o Tāwhirimātea'*. This proverb, or *whakatauākī*, means: return to your *ūkaipō*, to be cleansed by the winds of *Tāwhirimātea*. *Ūkaipō* refers to a special place, or activity, that nurtures the soul. This place or activity is unique and different for each one of us. For some it could be walking down the beach, for others to be at home, listen to beautiful music, or to go out to dance or sing, and so on. It is one of the central functions of the *whare tapere*, and I maintain for all theatre, to provide spiritual nourishment to its participants (performers and spectators).

Kotahitanga:

We live in a world of duality and separateness: good/bad, darkness/light, etc. *Kotahitanga* is about overcoming separateness, building wholeness in a world of divisions. Although the strong focus on division may disguise our connectedness, the reality is that we don't live in isolation, but instead are part of an interwoven web of being in the world. The value of *kotahitanga* aims to foreground the equality and oneness of all being, a mission that is also at the heart of Buddhist practice. Daisaku Ikeda (1982) explains that when Shakyamuni, the original Buddha, attained enlightenment under the *bodhi* (fig) tree more than 2500 years ago, he discovered 'the wonderful truth that all phenomena and human lives are mutually related, influential and permeating' (p. 84). It is a delusion to regard our existence as separate and independent from all phenomena and the laws of nature. This delusion causes us to experience birth, old age, illness and death as sufferings. When this attitude 'is abandoned in favour of the belief that the individual life is closely connected with the great universal life-force', our unity in diversity becomes apparent (p. 85). *Kotahitanga* provides a strong and meaningful guide to overcome separateness, supporting the mission of a New Pacific Theatre to connect.

2.1.3 Kapa Haka

Many New Zealanders, both Pākehā and Māori, think of *kapa haka* as the traditional Māori performing arts. However, Royal (2007) clarifies that the *kapa haka*, or Māori

concert party, evolved in the late nineteenth century, as 'an important vehicle for the expression of tribal identity and the maintenance of community cohesion'; as 'an important way by which monies were raised for various community projects'; and 'as a way to keep various grievances alive concerning alienation of tribal lands' (p. 193). Although *kapa haka* contains traces of pre-European Māori performing arts (*whare tapere*), it borrowed heavily from introduced melodies and song forms, even to the point of adopting the guitar as the preferred instrument of accompaniment. Royal (2007) asserts that contemporary *kapa haka* draws its inspiration from encounter:

> Fundamentally, the spirit and the language of contemporary haka is [sic] sourced in the haka of the marae ātea (open encounter space in front of carved meetings houses) where groups in a pōwhiri ritual encounter one another. The experience and tension of encounter dominates the contemporary kapa haka, an idea that is reinforced further in kapa haka competitions. This can be contrasted with performances located inside the whare (carved meeting house). The most well known contemporary example of whare located dance and performance are songs performed by the 'cooks' at a hui, welcoming a group into the whare kai. Here, tensions have been released, identities have been established and an atmosphere of celebration and enjoyment comes of the group. (p. 207)

During several personal conversations Charles Royal shared with me his perception, that it is important for the *haka* to explore the full spectrum of colours, for example by exploring *haka* that is performed in the domain of *Rongomaraeroa*: the God of Peace. This *haka* could be soft, whispered, gentle, flowing, feminine, uplifting, thus contrasting the prevailing *haka* of the marae of conflict, which tends to be vigorous, masculine, and assertive.

2.1.4 Whakaahua

During his keynote address at the first *wānanga* on Matiu Island Royal (2009) shared with us his thoughts around the process of *whakaahua*[4]. *Whakaahua* refers to a process of transformation in which the performer becomes the deity they embody. The saying: 'You are Hineruhi, the bringer of the Dawn' does not mean 'you are like

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[4] *Whakaahua* is made up of the two components *whaka* and *ahua*, meaning coming to form or coming to be.

Hineruhi' or 'you are similar to Hineruhi', but it, in fact, implies 'you are Hineruhi'. For such transformation to happen, Royal maintains that something needs to be liberated. He further explained that the process of *whakaahua*, or transformation, is achieved or realised through a number of practices or strategies, such as for example the practice of *nohopuku* (meditation), to dwell inwardly (toward one's *puku*), and *whakatiki* (fasting). It involved a process of silencing the mind, of harnessing other resources. Royal warned that the process of *whakaahua* requires a strong, grounded personality, and that forces called upon are not without danger. Royal (2007) also mentions a process of 'transformation of the individual dancer into a bird, a fish, into light, into an animal and so on' (p. 206), suggesting perhaps that the process of *whakaahua* can be extended from the realm of deities into the realm of the natural world. The process of *whakaahua* has strong relevance for the New Pacific Theatre mission to 'Return the Gods' by connecting with the archetypal dimensions of Aotearoa/New Zealand through a process of transformation.

Conclusions The Whare Tapere

As a Dutch-New Zealander, with only an outsider's perspective on Māori culture and performance practice and a beginner's ability in speaking and understanding *te reo* (Māori language), it would be impossible and inappropriate to present or stage anything that claims to be authentic *whare tapere*. Nonetheless, there are certain elements of the *whare tapere*, specifically the six core values of the new *whare tapere*, and the particular process of *whakaahua* or transformation, that can add a necessary and unique Māori dimension to the New Pacific Theatre, and contribute to and inform its training and practice. To facilitate an ethical process of inclusion and application of these aspects, it is vital to be guided by Dr Charles Royal and other Māori experts in the field, such as Rawiri Hindle (Ngā Toi expert), Tānemahuta Gray (theatre director and expert in Māori movement) and Hone Hurihanganui (composer and songwriter), *and* to ensure collaboration with a significant number of Māori performers and participants in the activities of a New Pacific Theatre, encouraging and inviting them to take charge of the application and incorporation of appropriate Māori artistic principles, views and values (*Te Ao Mārama*) and cultural practices (*tikanga Māori*) in the context of a New Pacific Theatre practice.

2.2   Devised Theatre

The devising process is one of the most effective strategies to deal with the ethical, political, and spiritual complexities of intercultural performance. It also offers a number of ways for cultural identities and environmental qualities to inform the creative process:

- Firstly, the collaborative nature of the devising process will allow an ensemble, made up of artists from various cultural backgrounds, to incorporate ideas, values and modes of expression that are culturally formed (in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Māori, Pacific Island, European and Asian);

- Secondly, devisers aim to create performances that are *current*; this implies that the performance material is somehow reflective of, and connected to, the people and their environment – it is of *here and now*;

- Thirdly, devisers are committed to exploration, experimenting with a wide range of possible locations in the natural or urban environments as a site for performance.

In a previous publication (van Dijk 2006) I established that, on the world stage, *Devised Theatre* is rapidly emerging as one of the most popular genres in current theatre practice. This is not only reflected in the growing number of international theatre companies successfully devising and touring original works and the large proportion of devised works at international arts festivals, but also in a dramatic shift in current actor training.

2.2.1 Historical Context

From a historical point of view Devised Theatre evolved out of the 'Experimental Theatre' movement, a reaction against naturalism and a text dominated practice, driven by a need to experiment, and determined to present an alternative to a theatre dominated by playwrights and directors.

While surveying the history of the avant-garde in theatre, James Roose-Evans (1989) situates the genesis of this movement in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century with artists like Tolstoy, Chekhov, Tchaikovsky, Diaghilev, Nijinsky, Stanislavsky and

Meyerhold. Following the Russian innovations the wave of experimentation rippled through the rest of Europe, with visionaries like Craig, Appia, Copeau, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski, Barba, Brook, and Roy Hart, and eventually made its way across the Atlantic where an array of American artists, such as Martha Graham, Robert Wilson, Julian Beck, Merce Cunningham, and Anne Bogart, contributed with new approaches and perspectives in dance and theatre.

Roose-Evans asserts that the common thread amongst this diverse range of artists was a strong desire to stretch the artistic imagination and 'to make foray into the unknown' (p. 1). To know where you are coming from, but to not know where you are heading accurately describes the inherent creative nature of the devising process. It is one of the most thrilling and terrifying creative acts to resist fixing outcomes, and linger instead in the territory of the unknown. The movement of Experimental Theatre paved the way for a wide spectrum of theatre practices that explored non-verbal, non-naturalistic, and imaginatively rather than psychologically inspired modes of theatrical expression. The authority of the playwright was challenged, and throughout Europe experimental ensemble-based companies were formed, often around a charismatic leader, for example: Odin Teatret (Eugenio Barba), Roy Hart Theatre (Roy Hart), and Théâtre du Soleil (Ariane Mnouchkine).

2.2.2 Missing the Boat: Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand

A number of British theatre directors with a strong affinity to these developments (such as Gordon Craig, Peter Brook and Roy Hart) felt compelled to leave the UK and settle in Europe, where their creative ventures were financially more supported and artistically more appreciated. Perhaps England was burdened by a lingering Victorian fear of the body and its physicality, or perhaps a self-imposed isolation from Europe was a contributing factor. Whatever the reason, the movement of Experimental Theatre seemed to have had little effect on British theatre training and practice. Oddey (1994) observes that 'British post-war theatre has almost always been text-led, originating with the playwright and emphasizing the written word' (p. 4), while Heddon and Milling (2006) note that 'a brief glance at the theatrical landscape of Britain in 2004 shows that the literary play-text remains central stage' (p. 6).

Mainstream theatres in Aotearoa/New Zealand reflect the British practice of staging mostly text-based plays, although in recent years more devised works appear to be included in its programs. It is interesting to note that, in contrast, a significant portion of the offerings at the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts are devised works by companies such as Les Ballets C de la B, Robert le Page, Vis à Vis, Swedish troupe Inside Out, and in 2010 even many of the Aotearoa/New Zealand offerings were devised works, such as *The Arrival*, *Apollo 13: Mission Control* and *Ship Songs*. This confirms a rise in popularity of devised theatre on the international festival circuits.

2.2.3 Collaboration

The move away from a text-based approach to theatre heralded a move towards *collaboration*. The artistic visions of playwright and director were no longer considered the leading authorities, and each and every participant (performer, director, designer, composer, etc.) was encouraged and expected to contribute, collectively and collaboratively, to the development and emergence of the artistic vision through a process of exploration and improvisation. This shift was also reflected in change of terminology, and Heddon & Milling (2006) observe that: 'British and Australian companies tend to use the term 'devising' to describe their practice, whereas in the USA the synonymous activity is referred to most often as *collaborative* [my italics] creation' (p. 2). In Europe devising and collaborative strategies are so ingrained in the main theatre practice that it has become superfluous to refer to this practice as anything other than theatre. In placing value on the individual contributions of all participants, collaboration is an effective strategy to address the ethical challenges of intercultural performance, as it facilitates the inclusion of cultural expressions and practices guided by the representatives of that culture.

2.2.4 Site-specificity: From Theatre to Performance

Govan, Nicholson and Normington (2007) assert that devisers instigated a shift from theatre to performance (pp. 7-9). Whereas *theatre* takes place in a conventional theatre-space, *performance* can take place in- or outside theatre buildings, indoor or

outdoors. This development led to the emergence of the genre of site-specific performance, a practice where 'interacting with the space provide[s] a springboard for creative ideas' (pp. 103-104). In the course of my research this genre emerged as one of the core strategies of a New Pacific Theatre and will be discussed in detail in chapter four. The exploration and emergence of performance events outside conventional theatre buildings also put the spotlight on certain performative aspects of everyday life and to paratheatrical activities, such as, for example, the carnivalesque atmosphere surrounding the Rugby Sevens tournaments in Wellington. Every year when this competition hits town it is an interesting phenomenon to see Wellington's central district transformed into a street party of sorts. The generally macho-inclined Kiwi male suddenly feels free to appear cross-dressed in public, prancing around in wig, bra and with fake breasts, or exposing their buttocks in cheek-revealing outfits.

2.2.5 Matters of Actor Training

The emergence of devising practice in the second half of the 20th century created a major shift in the role of the actor, from being a puppet in the hands of a director to becoming a co-creator in the process of theatre making. This had a dramatic impact on training requirements for a contemporary actor.

Govan, Nicholson and Normington (2007) note that Brecht, Grotowski and Artaud all stressed the significance of the actor's self in performance making, a development that followed the genesis of the discipline of Psychology at the beginning of the 20th century (p. 29). Actor training and performance began to incorporate concepts of self-exploration and self-expression. The performer was positioned both as subject and object of the creative process, and subsequently directors and actor trainers started to include games, improvisation and other playful activities in workshop and the rehearsal room. The use of various forms of play appealed to devisers because of its emphasis on process and improvisation rather than textual analysis and technique. Nonetheless, even play involves a certain set of skills, which therefore requires training (pp. 29-35).

Eugenio Barba (1995), after years of following a Grotowski-based training's regime with his Odin Teatret actors, came to the conclusion that this model of actor training was actually ineffective. He realised something that was rather shocking in its simplicity: every actor is different, and therefore has different needs and requirements. There is no logic or sense to the practice of everybody doing the same thing at the same time. Instead, each actor needs to establish their own unique training program, addressing personal needs and goals, and finding individual ways of addressing the requirements of the ensemble. After articulating this new approach to actor training, Barba encouraged his actors to go out into the world 'in search of stimuli which might help them shatter the crystallization of behaviour which tends to form in every individual or group' (p. 6).

Inspired by Barba's discoveries, I have, in the course of the last 10 years or so, experimented extensively with the notion of actor training as a self-directed platform for actors to address the ongoing requirements of developing their craft, and to prepare body, voice and imagination for the daily requirements of workshop and rehearsal. These experiments correspond with the work of Tom McCrory on 'Training' at Toi Whakaari (Tweddle 2008: pp. 69-87).

The mission of developing an original model of actor training that serves the specific needs and aims of a New Pacific Theatre warrants a study in itself. Although, obviously, issues of training emerged and were addressed in an ad hoc way, a systematic enquiry of this field was beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I have focused on the singular topic of training presence as a principal tool to connect with self, other and the environment (chapter three).

2.2.6 My Own Devising Practice

As part of a practice-led enquiry it is crucial to elaborate on the characteristics of my own devising practice. My formation as a theatre practitioner was strongly influenced by the Experimental European Theatre movement, particularly by working in ensembles with direct lineage to Grotowski (Gronies Theater) and Decroux (Northern Dutch Mime Ensemble, Animate Theatre), and through training and apprenticeships with Eugenio Barba, the Roy Hart Theatre, and, most influential of all, Enrique Pardo,

with whom I collaborated, on and off, from 1987 to 2002. During the last decade the Michael Chekhov technique has become a core strand in my acting and devising practice.

In an effort to review and document my own devising methodology I wrote two eBooks: *Devised Theatre* (2006) and *Practical Exercises for Devisers* (2007). To create order and clarity in the wide range of my devising experiences I articulated the following definition of devised theatre (van Dijk 2006):

> Devised theatre is a process of theatre making in which all the artists involved develop a specific, well-defined point of departure (POD) - through collective exploration - into a performance that is original, current and full of surprise. (p. 5)

This definition describes a process in which you know where you are coming from (the point of departure) but you don't know where you end up. In other words, the artistic vision is not defined at the beginning; rather, it evolves as the result of collective or collaborative explorations. This process of exploration involves a high degree of risk-taking and adventure, and demands great courage and a high tolerance of failure and mistakes from all its participants. I maintain that is essential for any creative process to avoid predetermining its outcome, and to consider failure and accidents as opportunities through which new possibilities arise. Unfortunately, most of our funding processes require the applicants to present a detailed outline of the creative outcomes, thus working against the nature of the devising process.

The point of departure of a devised work can be anything from an image, to an object, a location, a piece of music, a character or group of characters, a myth or fairy tale, a historical event, an issue, an oxymoron, a proverb, a piece of poetry, a story, a play or section of a play, and so on. When using a play as the point of departure, devisers like myself, tend to choose a play that has no copyright restrictions (for example *The Greeks* 2000, *Salomé* 2001, *Othello* 2003, *Agamemnon* 2006), thus allowing for a deconstruction or adaptation of the script. Alternatively, it is possible to invite a playwright as a collaborator in the devising process, and develop the script in mutual exchange during the creative development.

Rejecting the dominance of text, narrative structure, playwright, or director, does not infer a total exclusion of text, characters or dramaturgy. Rather, it leads to an inter-disciplinary theatre approach in which the vocabularies of body, space, sound, text, objects and light, are valued as equal and autonomous components in the process of theatre making. Therefore, the devising process can include scripting, composition, choreography, design, and object animation, as long as the creation is the result of collective exploration in which the outcome is flexible and unforeseen.

As we shall see in chapter five, during the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers* a variety of departure points and a range of devising strategies were utilized. The Kim Lee Noh Play, for example, was inspired by the historical events surrounding Kim Lee's exile, a site-specific improvisation, and the actual rescue of an unfortunate swimmer. Although the text was scripted, and the chorus music was composed, the interwoven fabric of words, actions, choreography and sounds was the result of improvisation and collective exploration.

Conclusions Devised Theatre:

A New Pacific Theatre will adopt the devising practice of developing original performances, that use the vocabularies of body, space, text, sound, objects and light as equal components in the process of theatre making, in response to a variety of points of departure that can include location, story, issues, themes, objects, images, poetry, script, historical events, and so on. It will incorporate particularly the genre of site-specific performance, and the strategies of collaboration (the collective development of the artistic vision) and exploration (allowing the outcomes to emerge through a process of risk-taking and adventure) as two core strands of its practice.

2.3   Michael Chekhov Technique

Introduction

The value of Michael Chekhov's approach to acting is based on an implicit faith in the actor's natural instinct and creativity, and his or her ability to fully engage body, voice and imagination. Callow (2002) asserts that the Michael Chekhov technique offers 'a

direct route to the actor's creativity by the simplest of means' (p. xxiii). It has a strong spiritual element and purpose to it, and throughout his lifetime Michael Chekhov was concerned with establishing a theatre that not only provided entertainment, but also would bring a positive, healing enlightenment to our world. In the last decade the Michael Chekhov technique has become one of the main pillars in my own praxis as a theatre director and actor trainer.

2.3.1 Historical Context

Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), a nephew of the dramatist Antonin Chekhov, started his professional career as an actor at the Maly Theatre in St Petersburg. He subsequently joined Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre, where he attracted attention through various performances of startling originality. Callow (2002) claims that 'Stanislavsky unreservedly acknowledged him as the most gifted actor with whom he had ever worked' (p. xvi), even though they had very different personalities. While Stanislavsky was careful, cautious, controlling, serious, and ultimately did not trust actors or their impulses, Chekhov was intuitive, daring, versatile, with an ability to transform himself into any shape or state of being he desired, and with a strong belief that acting and directing should be based on trust. Callow asserts that for Chekhov the imagination was the key to acting, and in fact all arts.

> Acting, [Chekhov] said, should never be autobiographical; constant recourse to one's own experience would lead [...] to 'degeneration of talent'. The imagination, once engaged, never lost its freshness and power, but the limited pool of individual experience quickly stagnated. The actor's work on himself should focus on encouraging and liberating his imagination, by consciously inventing and fantasizing, rather than by dredging the subconscious. (p. xix)

The spiritual and mystical dimensions that entered Chekhov's work caused strong opposition, both from the actors with whom he worked, as well as the Russian state authorities. Chekhov was denounced and forced to leave Russia, which led him to move from Riga to Berlin, Paris, Dartington, Connecticut, New York, finally ending up in Hollywood. Here he taught and influenced a number of well-known film actors, such as Gary Cooper, Gregory Peck, Yul Brynner, Marilyn Monroe, Anthony Hopkins, Clint Eastwood, Jack Nicholson and Helen Hunt (Powers 2002).

2.3.2 Exercising the Will

Chamberlain (2004) noted that for Chekhov both imagination and body should be under the control of the actor, and that '[this] interrelationship is at the core of Chekhov's training' (p. 61). At times the body does not follow our commands, while we may be able to imagine what we want to do or express, our bodies might resist, feel flat, or lack energy and interest. To overcome those situations 'we need a way of activating our will, a technique, [...] which will get our energy moving in an appropriate way' (p. 62). In its most basic form exercising the will involves: say (or decide), do and repeat. It is vital hereby that even the smallest movements 'reverberate energetically throughout our whole body' (p. 62). However, we need to do this with a sense of ease. By rendering their actions voluntary, that is bring them within the domain of the will, the actor creates solid vessels that subsequently can be filled with content or quality. Chekhov invented an exciting range of physical-psychological exercises that enable an actor to give feeling, intention or imagery to their actions (pp. 113-145).

2.3.3 Four Brothers

Michael Chekhov (2002) claims that 'in every true, great piece of art you will always find four qualities, which the artist has put into his creation: *Ease, Form, Beauty,* and *Entirety*' (p. 13). In order to progress their artistry actors need to develop these qualities in their physical and vocal actions. Since the actor's body is the only instrument an actor has available on the stage, the body needs to acquire these qualities, which Chekhov began to refer to as "the four brothers" of ease, form, beauty and wholeness. In this section I will briefly introduce each brother and explain the artistic qualities that they represent.

Ease

Chekhov (2002) maintains that 'heaviness in an artist is an uncreative power' (p. 13). Heavy movements and inflexible speech have a tendency of depressing, or even repulsing an audience. Heaviness can exist as a theme or content of a performance, but should be avoided as a way of performing. In other words, the issues being dealt with, or the character that is portrayed, can be heavy, but the performer, as an artist,

should always use lightness and ease as a strategy of expression. Chekhov emphasizes the importance hereby 'to distinguish between *what* you act (the theme, the character), and *how* you act (the way, the manner of acting)' (p.14). Inviting the brother of ease helps the performer to relax their body and their spirit and to let go of any unnecessary tension. The quality of ease is best achieved through exercises that work on 'flying' (as if moving through air, or as if throwing a stone to the moon) and 'radiating' (as if one is the source of light or heat, radiating energy, light, or heat, in all directions).

Form

The second brother is the brother of form. It refers to the performer's ability to perform with a sense of clarity of form in the physical and vocal actions they create. Even when playing a sloppy, vague or slack character, an actor needs to portray or express the sloppiness, vagueness or slackness with clarity and specificity of form. Chekhov argues that the ability to create clear-cut forms is an ability that artists in all crafts must develop to a high degree. Exercises that employ the quality of moulding (moving as if through clay) facilitate a command of form.

Beauty

Beauty is a quality that has positive and negative sides. Examples of the negative side of beauty are: sentimentality, showing off, sweetness, self-love and vanity. For Chekhov (2002) true beauty has its roots inside a human being, whereas false beauty is only on the outside. By applying the distinction between the 'what' and the 'how' in acting, he asserts that beauty is the ability to perform something well, to apply beautiful means of expression, no matter whether the actions, feelings or intentions are aesthetically pleasing, or ugly and unpleasant. Through this approach Chekhov has managed to transcend the quality of beauty from an aesthetic value that resides on the surface or in appearance, to 'fathom it deep within' oneself (p. 17).

Wholeness

The brother of wholeness relates to the ability of a performer to consider the entirety of their performance in all its parts, taking into account what has gone before, what is happening now and what will happen in the scenes to follow. Failing to consider the

way the individual parts relate to the wholeness of the performance may render it incomprehensible or inharmonious to the audience. Chekhov (2002) suggests that a performer will be able to see the wholeness of their part or performance, by having a vision of the final scenes at the beginning and by remembering the first scenes when playing the very last scenes. This creates something like a bird's eye perspective of the entirety of the performance. By considering the beginning, middle and end of each performance, each scene, and each action, Chekhov maintains that the performer 'will intuitively stress *essentials* in [their] character and follow the *main line* of events, thus holding firmly the attention of the audience' (p. 17). This will enable the performer to grasp their character, making their performance more powerful. We will see in the section on Noh theatre (p. 55) that the brother of wholeness has similarities with the principle of *jo-ha-kyū*.

2.3.4   Atmosphere and Psychophysical Sensation

Based on my training as a Social & Clinical Psychologist I have persistently questioned the (early) Stanislavsky technique of emotional memory, the strategy of using personal emotions and memories, as a way to feed an actor's character in rehearsal or on stage. I maintain that it is psychologically unhealthy to keep digging up one's past to summon up and re-stimulate emotions that should best be left alone, or expressed within the context of a therapy room, but definitely not in front of a paying audience. As a spectator I feel cheated when I witness an actor on stage going through some sort of emotional catharsis, with private and personal undertones, even if these emotions are relevant for the character they are playing.

Chamberlain (2004) observed that Chekhov identified a number of problems with the emotional memory approach:

> First, it is a long and involved approach, which, while it might produce results in the rehearsal situation, is too complex to be an effective means of awakening our feelings in performance. [...] Second, the actor might get stuck in the relived feelings, which will stay around like 'ghosts'. [...] Third, and connected to the second point, there is the possibility that, by digging up our memories, we might be overwhelmed by the feelings and lose our 'mental balance'. (p. 58)

In *Lessons for the Professional Actor* Chekhov (1985) asserts that an actor has to be able to conjure up feelings without relying on emotional memory or psychological justification:

> The actor must be able to cry without any reason, simply because he is an actor. If he has to recall the death of his father [...] then he is not an actor. If I can be angry without any reason, then I am an actor, but if I have to think of Himmler, whom I hate, before I can be angry, then I am not an actor. (p. 30)

Chekhov developed two distinct strategies to evoke feelings without reverting to the use of emotional memory: atmosphere and psychophysical sensation. Through the creation of atmosphere, the tangible mood in the air, 'objective' feelings are raised in both actors and audiences. His atmosphere work is based on the observation and acknowledgement that there is a certain quality or feeling to space, and surrounding events and situations, that we call atmosphere. It affects our state of being and feelings when we perceive and open up to this dimension. It is a central aspect of Chekhov's work for actors to be sensitive to atmospheres and to develop an ability to create them in rehearsal and on stage. Chamberlain (2004) noted that for Chekhov atmosphere is 'the "soul" or the "heart" of the performance, it is a feeling dimension which links everything together and forges a connection between actor and audience' (p. 53).

Atmospheres exist in endless varieties and can be found everywhere. Chekhov (2002) notes that 'every landscape, every street, house, room; a library, a hospital, a cathedral, a noisy restaurant, a museum; morning, noon, twilight, night; spring, summer, fall, winter – every phenomenon and event has its own particular atmospheres' (p. 48) and he emphasizes the interactivity of atmospheres:

> A compelling performance arises out of the *reciprocal action* between the actor and the spectator. If the actors, director, author, set designer and, often, the musicians have truly created the atmosphere for the performance, the spectator will not be able to remain aloof from it but will respond with inspiring waves of love and confidence. (p. 48)

Atmosphere and presence go hand in hand, and Chekhov asserts that if you open yourself and 'yield' to the atmosphere, in other words become fully present to it, the atmosphere will 'always support and arouse in you new feelings and fresh creative impulses' (p. 50). Atmosphere, like presence, provides a pivotal tool to keep a performance fresh and alive, no matter how many times it is repeated.

The second strategy to generate feelings without referring to emotional memory is labeled by Chekhov as 'psychophysical sensation' (p. 59). By using the will to create physical actions (the vessel) the actor can subsequently perform these actions with certain qualities. Performing actions with a certain quality will transform the action from being a mere physical action to acquiring a certain psychological nuance. By subsequently moving the entire body in harmony with that quality it will be filled with a certain sensation that affects the state of being and feelings of an actor.

> Sensation is the vessel into which your genuine artistic feelings pour easily and by themselves; it is a kind of magnet which draws to it feelings and emotions akin to whatever quality you have chosen for your movement. (p. 59)

Not only can you infuse any physical and vocal action with qualities that will cause certain psychophysical sensations, thus generating feelings, you can also apply this strategy to any *static* bodily position. After creating a stationary position, such as stand, sit or lie, you fill that vessel with a quality of your choice – 'the reaction will come immediately, calling up from within your soul a kaleidoscope of feelings' (p. 60).

2.3.5   Archetypal Gesture

The technique of Archetypal Gesture has two distinct applications. Firstly, it is a technique to explore, develop and strengthen the essential qualities of a character or role, and secondly, it offers a key instrument to develop and explore the totality of 'our wants, wishes, desires, longings, lusts, yearnings or cravings' (p. 63), in other words, our objectives. There are two components to the term: 'archetypal' and 'gesture'. Archetypal refers to the biggest, purest manifestation of something (character, objective or quality) and as such provides a generic or universal model from which the variations are derived. When applied to the exploration and expression of the archetypal dimensions inherent in culture or nature, in other words

the gods, it provides a tool or strategy for the New Pacific Theatre mission to 'return the gods'. The 'gesture' aspect relates to the manifestation of this dimension in one single gesture that has a beginning, middle and end. The physical dimension of archetypal gestures renders the essence of a character, or a specific objective, from a conceptual state into a fully embodied sensation or experience. This is a crucial diversion from the practice of analysing a text and writing lists of verbs or actions, which basically remain in the realm of the intellect. The Archetypal Gesture creates a physical experience and sensation that transforms the qualities and wants into embodied realities that affect the actor on multiple levels.

Character

Chekhov (2002) explains that, in order to create an Archetypal Gesture for a certain character, the actor will start by identifying some of character's essential characteristics, based on the actor's first general impressions. Has the character a strong and unbending, a weak, faltering, or perhaps a fiery will? Is the character possessed by dominating, despotic desires, or obsessed by the desire to receive divine inspirations? Is the character filled with hatred and disgust, love, a sense of self-sacrifice, or feelings of loneliness? The actor will try to find a suitable over-all gesture that expresses all the identified qualities. Chekhov (2002) encourages the actor to use their creative intuition rather than their analytical mind to penetrate and discover the characters they are going to play:

> You can do this [the investigation of a character] either by using your analytical mind or by applying the [archetypal gesture]. In the former case you choose a long and laborious way because the reasoning mind, generally speaking, is not imaginative enough, is too cold and abstract to be able to fulfil the artistic work. You may have noticed that the more your mind 'knows' about the character, the less you are able to perform it. (p. 66)

Thus, Chekhov does away with laborious strategy of making endless lists of circumstances and details of the life of the character in favour of simple, but profound, fully embodied archetypal gestures that offer the actor an intuitive, physical and imaginative way to explore and experience the essential qualities of the character. The technique of Archetypal Gesture can be applied to the entire character,

but can also be used for any segment of a role, for separate scenes, speeches, beats, sentences, or vital moments. As the essence of the character the overall Archetypal Gesture will of its own accord influence all derived archetypal gestures. Chekhov stresses that it is up to the creative artist to determine whether the Archetypal Gesture is the right one.

> It is your own free creation, through which your individuality expresses itself. It is right if it satisfies you as an artist. However, the director is entitled to suggest alterations to the Archetypal Gesture you have found. (p. 69)

Chekhov's technique of internalizing the Archetypal Gesture, in other words to fully execute the gesture in one's imagination but to express physically only part of it, extends the application of this technique across a wide range of genres from text-based acting for stage, film, and TV to opera, musical theatre, dance, physical theatre and the entire range of devised performance. The technique of full inner action and resisted outer action corresponds with the 7/10th Principle of Noh, which will be discussed later in this chapter. However, in Chekhov's application a 100% inner action can be combined with an outer action that ranges from 0 – 100%.

Intentions

The subcategory of archetypal gestures that expresses intention, warrants a special mention, as a significant amount of acting qualities is concerned with wants, wishes, desires, longings, lusts, yearnings or craving. Joanne Merlin (2004), one of the leading Michael Chekhov teachers and actors, has furthered the application of Archetypal Gesture in relation to objectives or intentions, by identifying a 'family of basic gestures'. They include: to open, to close, to lift, to pull, to push, to embrace, to wring, to tear, to smash, to throw and to penetrate. This 'family' forms a collection of archetypal intentions, presenting models from which variations can be derived.

2.3.6   Imaginary Body

For Chekhov (2002) transformation 'is what the actor's nature, consciously or sub-consciously, longs for' (p. 77). It is the key strategy to offer the audience new revelations, meanings and insights. He is adamant that the actor should avoid playing

variations of themselves, as every art serves 'the purpose of discovering and revealing new horizons of life and new facets in human beings' (p. 77). Rather than looking for similarities between the actor and the character they play, Chekhov encourages the actor to go in search of the differences, and suggests that 'the shortest, most artistic (and amusing) approach is *to find an imaginary body for your character*' (p. 78). By considering the physical features and qualities of the character an actor wants to play, he or she can imagine the imaginary body of their character as occupying space next to the space their own bodies occupy. By stepping into this imaginary body the actor's imagination activates a process of transformation that can significantly alter the impression the actor's body has on the onlooker or audience. This process of transformation will have an affect on the feelings, the will, and the psychology of the actor, thus changing his state of being as well as his appearance. After working with an imaginary body it is important for the actor to step out of the imaginary body, and return into their own body again, thus avoiding carrying any remnants or traces of their character with them in their every day life.

Conclusions Michael Chekhov

The Michael Chekhov techniques of exercising the will, the four brothers, atmosphere and psychophysical sensations, archetypal gestures and the use of imaginary body have demonstrated to be of great benefit, for novice and experienced performers alike, across the disciplines of dance, acting, singing and music, and across the spectrum of cultural genres, particularly in the way they bridge heaven (imagination) and earth (body), provide tools to realise and express the archetypal dimensions of life and the world (return of the gods), and pursue the transformation of performers and audiences. For these reasons these strategies will be incorporated in a New Pacific Theatre practice.

2.4   Intercultural Performance

By bringing together theatre strands from various cultural ancestries, a New Pacific Theatre needs to address the ethical and political issues of intercultural performance. I have reviewed a number of theorists, each providing a unique perspective on this matter. Rustom Bharucha (1993) sharply criticizes a number of my Experimental

European sources of inspiration, particularly Brook, Barba, and Grotowski; Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) presents a strong argument to preserve the culturally specific; Christopher Balme (2007) investigates a Pacific perspective on the performing arts; and Janinka Greenwood (2002) maps the terrain of bi-cultural theatre from a Pākehā point of view. In an effort to distill the common threads amongst these multiple perspectives I have identified the following issues:

1. Globalization and Diaspora;

2. The relationship between tangible and intangible aspects of cultural expressions;

3. The appropriation of cultural material;

4. Mutuality in the process of intercultural relationships.

In this section I present a discussion of each issue, and subsequently formulate a number of principles to guide the process of intercultural performance and exchange.

2.4.1 Globalization and Diaspora

In her article "Researching the Native Māori" Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) observes that current globalization carries in it a danger of losing the culturally specific.

> For indigenous communities, the 'something lost' has been defined as indigenous knowledge and culture. In biological terms, it is our diversity; in sociolinguistics, it is the diversity of minority languages; culturally, it is our uniqueness of stories and experiences and how they are expressed. (p. 95)

Across the globe our cities are starting to look more and more the same, containing similar food and drinking outlets, manifesting 'a sameness' in architecture, and using English as the main language. For some people it is comforting to know that, no matter where you are in the world, you can get your latté, your Big Mac, or your favorite Italian food. Others deeply regret and resent these homogenizing developments, and long for authentic cultural encounters when traveling.

In the mid 90s I created a solo performance, directed by Enrique Pardo. For the title of this show I invented a new word: *XENOPHORIA* - fusing the linguistic roots of *xeno* (foreigner) and *euphoria* (ecstasy) into: the ecstatic love of all things foreign.
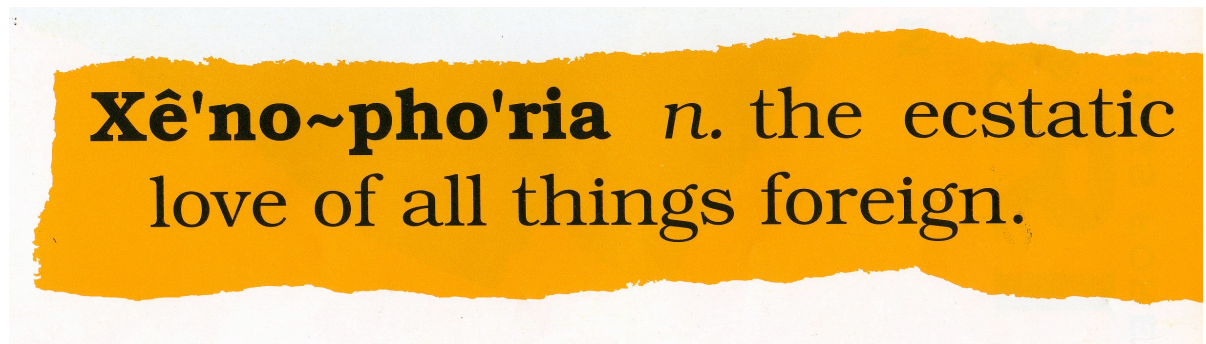
Fig. 2.1: Invention of the word *Xenophoria*

Some people respond to things foreign with a feeling of fear or terror, while others are attracted and fascinated, perhaps even obsessed by the 'other'. For me, my attraction to foreignness is what drives me to travel, to engage with people, cultures, and practices, different from my own. This engagement expands my horizons, and deepens my understanding of how people and communities operate and express themselves.

The increased mobility of people across geographic borders also presents an opportunity for people to connect across cultural differences, and to learn from, and appreciate, these differences. Intercultural Performance can play a significant role in the appreciation of cultural differences, and assist in the survival of the culturally specific through the incorporation of languages, cultural expressions, and values that are under threat. It can enrich the palette of our artistic experiences.

On the other hand, the dislocation of people away from their homeland can cause loneliness, and can cause people to experience racism and discrimination. In a recent Dominion Post article "Racist? Not us, mate" (Michael Fox B1), it was reported that, in the coming decade, an enormous increase of Asian population in Wellington is projected. In this article Kenneth Leong, director of cross-cultural consultancy company Euro-Asia, is quoted as saying: '[There] is a "level of suspicion" between Kiwis and immigrants and a reluctance to integrate from both sides'. Statistics appear to back the view that Asians are the most discriminated against, and Wellington

Chinese Association spokesman Steven Young maintains that 'racism towards Asian migrants usually happens when migrants refuse to adopt a submissive posture, which the mainstream has come to expect of migrants'.

Displacement can, however, also lead to certain creative outcomes. In his book *Pacific Performances*, Christopher Balme (2007) identifies Diaspora as a creative catalyst when he asserts that the most significant Pacific theatre forms (such as works from Pacific Underground, MAU, and the Laughing Samoans) developed in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is a theatre of the displaced, of remembering, focused on rediscovering cultural roots in order to fashion new and sometimes multiple or split identities (with the European culture superimposed onto the traditional one). Pacific Theatre follows a general trend towards syncretism in postcolonial theatre whereby indigenous cultural texts (and codes) are placed within a framework of European theatre in order to achieve a bi- or multi-cultural communication situation (p. 216). Such syncretism is also apparent in current Māori theatre, with the work of writers such as Hone Kouka, Briar Grace-Smith, David Geary and Willy Craig Fransen, where Māori stories are presented in the western style of naturalism, using linear narrative, and superimposing Māori elements such as *reo* (Māori language), *haka* (dance), *karanga* (calling) and *waiata* (song).

2.4.2 Tangible and Intangible Aspects

The discussion around the appreciation of tangible and intangible aspects of cultural expression, particularly the issue of universality versus the culturally and historically specific, is rather complex and, at times, distorted by personal or professional bias. In her monograph *History of Bicultural Theatre* Janinka Greenwood (2002) observes that the theatre of cultural exchange, as explored by Brook, Barba and Grotowski, is more concerned with theatrical form than with the complex meanings those forms carry in their original contexts. She notes that:

> [Bharucha's writings] have problematised practices of intercultural borrowing and the understanding of both theatre and culture that underlie them. At the base of Bharucha's critique is an insistence that 'bios' cannot be separated from 'ethos';

that stories and forms cannot be separated from the meanings they hold for their own people, without doing violence to both the forms and the people. (p. 8)

'Bios' relates hereby to the tangible aspects and 'ethos' to the intangible aspects of performance and cultural expression. It appears that Bharucha (1993) is more interested in the culturally specific than in the universal when he declares:

There are no universal values in theatre. There are only personal needs, which get transformed into social and political actions, rooted in the individual histories of theatre. (p. 67)

In a world with a growing mobility of people and performances across borders, there is an increased exposure to performances based on cultural expressions and codes different from our own. Many spectators enjoy this cultural variety, and I argue that it is the universal or archetypal dimensions of those performances that enable spectators to relate, appreciate or enjoy them. Theatre contains and reflects universal values, *as well as* the socially, politically and historically specific. In terms of training, it is crucial for an actor to develop the ability to shape physical and vocal actions beyond cultural conditioning. It would be extremely limiting if an actor were only able to express the culturally specific, unable to achieve some kind of neutrality or universality, from which to transform into any chosen quality or state of being.

2.4.3 Cultural Appropriation

My initial response to Peter Brook's production of the *Mahabharata* is an example of how easy it is to overlook a certain negative impact of cultural appropriation. When I first saw this production in Paris (1986) I enjoyed the visual spectacle of this 8-hour long production, its stunning use of costumes, fire, water, fight scenes, and imagery. As I was unfamiliar with the source material, the intrinsic meanings and context of the Indian stories went over my head. After reading Bharucha's (1993) statement that this performance was 'one of the most blatant and accomplished appropriations of Indian culture in recent years' (p. 68), I realized that I had been rather naïve in my original response. In fact, I had to admit that I agreed with Bharucha's arguments that Brook's production was unethical in a number of ways.

Bharucha compares the tour of Brook's Mahabharata in India with the process of commercial textile exploitation:

i. Raw materials (the story) were taken from India;

ii. These materials were transformed into commodities (costumes, props, a text de-contextualized from its history in order to sell);

iii. Sold (forcibly) to India.

He explains that 'the Mahabharata is not merely a great poem – it is the fundamental source of knowledge, literature, dance, painting, sculpture, theology, statecraft, sociology, economy – in short it is our (Indian) history in all its detail and density.' (p. 70). Brook failed to absorb some of the fundamental principles underlying traditional narrative in India, which according to Bharucha '… is not to tell a story from beginning to end but to dwell on specific moments in the story, so that its minutest detail can evoke a world of sensations and truths' (p. 74). The production of the Mahabharata raises issues of ethics, not just the ethics of representations or appropriation, but also the ethics of interacting with people (particularly indigenous people) in the process of creating an intercultural work. Bharucha asks: 'What is the point of an international ensemble, when most of the actors' voices have been homogenized within a Western structure of action, and where they have to speak in a language foreign to them?' (p. 81).

2.4.4 Mutuality in Relationships During Intercultural Exchange

At the heart of Bharucha's critique on intercultural performance practice is his observation that there is often a lack of mutuality in relationship during the process of cultural exchange, particularly in the context of colonialism. Colonialism does not operate through exchange: rather it appropriates, de-contextualizes, and represents the 'other' culture, often with the complicity of its colonial subjects.

Guiding Principles for Intercultural Exchange

In response to the issues debated above I propose a number of principles to guide the process of intercultural performance and exchange:

1. Consider and absorb the original cultural and historical context of the material or stories that are used as the point of departure;

2. Ensure that the working relationships are mutually beneficial, and that there is equal pay amongst the collaborating artists;

3. When working with an international or intercultural ensemble of actors allow the performers to use their first language, and their native performance codes and cultural expressions;

4. Through the use of devising and collaborative strategies allow each artist a voice in the exploration and generation of performance material, and encourage them to include their own cultural practices, whenever and wherever appropriate.

The Blue Shawl

The Māori Noh play, *The Blue Shawl* (2008), produced by the New Zealand Noh Theatre, and written and directed by John Davies, represents a local example of an intercultural performance, based on the Māori perspective of an actual historical event, wrapped in a poetic narrative. The play was based on the remarkable journey of a blue shawl – gifted by indigenous Cree Indian leader Old Woman Bear to a Māori woman, who subsequently passed it on to Tuaiwa (Eva) Rickard. The shawl became a symbol of friendship, support and protection in the struggle of indigenous rights - such as the courageous actions, led by Eva Rickard, on 12 Feb 1978 to occupy and reclaim the Raglan golf course, land that was unlawfully confiscated from her people. The play was presented within the structure and staging conventions of a Noh Play, incorporating *kapa haka* idiom, with a mixed cast of Māori, Japanese and Pākehā performers, and accompanied by *taonga puoro*, small *taiko* drum, and *nōkan* (Japanese flute). Rather than detailing the content of this performance, I would like to check how *The Blue Shawl* adhered to the guidelines for intercultural exchange, as a way of testing their applicability.

The primary historical incidents were considered and absorbed within their cultural context by writer/director John Davies. Permission to tell this story was obtained

beforehand, and the performance material was developed in ongoing partnership and consultation with a close relative of the protagonist of the original story. Throughout the writing and rehearsal process John consulted the appropriate *kaumatua* (Māori elders) in matters of *te reo* (Māori language) and *tikanga Māori* (Māori protocol).

All the artists involved in this project, participated on a voluntary basis, some motivated mainly by a commitment to tell this particular story, others by a strong desire to work with the director. The Māori performers were able to use *te reo* as well as English and were encouraged to incorporate Māori codes and expressions, such as *takahi* (Māori footwork), *wiriwiri* (fluttering of the hands), *pūkana* (strong facial animation), *waiata* (song), *haka* (dance), and so on.

Fig. 2.2a: Director John Davies - deeply in thought   Fig. 2.2b: Use of a *kapa haka* Chorus

Fig. 2.2: Images from *The Blue Shawl* (July 2008). Photography: Bert van Dijk

Fig. 2.2c: SHITE and a *kapa haka* Chorus member   Fig. 2.2d: WAKI, KYŌGEN, and CHORUS

The director created an atmosphere that encouraged the performers to contribute to the creative process, allowing hereby plenty of room for experimentation and error.

He employed, to a certain degree, devising strategies that gave each participating artist 'a voice' in the ultimate performance.

As a significant Aotearoa/New Zealand example of intercultural performance in which Māori and Japanese Noh elements were brought together, *The Blue Shawl* did adhere to the guidelines of intercultural exchange, and they provided a useful tool in assessing the quality of this exchange. Therefore, the guidelines for intercultural exchange will be adopted as part of a New Pacific Theatre practice.

2.5 Noh Theatre:

Introduction

With a lifespan of more than six centuries, there is much to say about Noh training and performance. In the context of this study I limit myself to present a synopsis of Noh, elaborate on selected Noh aspects and aesthetic principles to be incorporated in the New Pacific Theatre practice, and address a number of issues relating to Noh in a contemporary world.

2.5.1 Synopsis

The Noh Theatre of Japan is one of the most remarkable and refined dramatic arts in the world. Its history goes back to Zeami Motokiyo (1363 – 1443) who, by building on the insights and experience of his father Kan'ami Kiyotsugu (1333 – 1384), transformed a folk art with religious overtones into a splendid total theatrical experience in which, according to Rimer (1984), 'mime, dance, poetry, and song were combined […] in order to produce for its audiences an experience of profundity and almost religious exhilaration' (p. xvii). Not only did Zeami synthesize various performance elements (drawn from religious rituals and folklore, such as *sarugaku* and *dengaku*), he also formulated a specific aesthetic, created numerous works that followed that aesthetic, and established a foundation that allowed the art of Noh to continue beyond his lifetime.

Zeami wrote sixteen treatises, intended exclusively for the immediate members of his family, to preserve the mystique and secret art of the Noh actor. In his essay *The*

Background of Zeami's Treatises Rimer (1984) observes that the treatises fulfill two distinct functions. On the one hand they contain much valuable information for a performer on how to integrate the vocabularies of acting, music, and movement. On the other hand the treatises give us insights and information on the early developments of Noh and medieval Japanese culture in general. The secrecy surrounding these treatises meant that the authentic texts by Zeami remained in private hands and were not published until the first half of the twentieth century. Both Zeami and his father were devout Buddhists, and much of the writing of Zeami is Buddhist in tone and metaphor, particularly, as Rimer notes, Zeami's concept of 'the Way (*michi*) of Noh', which suggests 'commitment, constant practice, and a genuine humility on the part of one who is sincere in seeking a true path toward enlightenment or excellence' (p. xxi).

It is beyond the scope of this study to detail the complex elements and functions of the Noh stage, except to highlight two of its fundamental characteristics, described by Komparu (1983) as 'the sanctity of the stage space, inherited from the ritual nature of Dengaku (field performance)' (p. 3), and the stage as 'a symbolic space' that has 'embodied in both structure and function the principle of creating drama with the intangible participation of the audience' (p. 109). Of particular importance is the inclusion of a bridge, the *hashigakari*, emphasizing 'the time-transcending journeys between this world and the other world of ghosts and spirits' (p. 124). Because 'the stage is decorated only with the painted pine on the back wall' Brazell (1998) asserts that 'costumes and masks provide most of the color and visual beauty' (p. 118), however, Komparu argues that 'the unique beauty of each mask or robe is realized only when it is given life on the body of the performer, its mission fulfilled as it moves about the stage' (p. 10).

Figure 2.2 depicts the ancient Noh stage (built in 1680) on sacred Miyajima Island. A Japanese audience member of *Ex_isle of Strangers* (which included the Kim Lee Noh Play) commented on the similarities between Noh and a New Pacific Theatre in staging performances with a strong spiritual dimension on an island, that requires a journey towards the location:

Noh is played in the shrine on the island, Miyajima, touring to that location - it's very sacred - with audiences craving to see the performance, even with the far distance.

<div align="center">
Matiu Somes Island ⇔ Miyajima Island

Barracks ⇔ Shrine
</div>

Many things in common! This seems revolutionary - a breakthrough in the history of theatre in NZ? It's not typical, not as going to the theatre to see the play. Something like it is with spiritual method. (Aud. #61)

Fig 2.3 Noh stage on Miyajima Island

Artistic Principles

Zeami articulated a number of artistic or aesthetic principles or concepts in his work. One of them revolves around the symbol of *hana*, which literally translates as flower, but is used figuratively to compare the aura of an actor with the fragrance of a flower. Chappell (1984) suggests that in using the word flower 'perhaps what Zeami is talking about is what we speak of today as stage presence' (p. x). In chapter three I will present an effort to turn presence into an operational strategy and argue that it is one of the critical factors in the effectiveness of all performance and a core ingredient of New Pacific Theatre training and practice. The concept of *hana* is used as a measure for the highest achievement in physical, vocal and spiritual technique. The

image of a flower in its various stages of transformation, from bud, to opening, to maturity, is a brilliant metaphor for the development of a performer. Zeami further applies the concept of *hana* to emphasize the need for an actor to surprise, to create novelty, to offer striking and unexpected insights in human behavior. In conclusion, hana is an expression of the pursuit of excellence in art. Komparu (1983) explains that Zeami is saying 'that for expression, acting to one's physical limits surpasses conceptual beauty, and that is hana' (p. 11), whereas Chappell notes that the highest form of artistry, which Zeami defines as the 'art of the mysterious flower', is a state in which the spirit of the actor and the manifestation of that spirit or power are indivisible (p. xii). In other words, it is a process in which the intangible dimensions (qualities, feelings, spirit, or content) of performance, and the tangible dimensions (the totality of physical and vocal actions) are no longer separate aspects but have united in a process in which the whole transcends the sum of its parts. This process of transformation corresponds, as we saw in the section on the *whare tapere*, with the Māori concept of *whakaahua*. Zeami understood that certain artistic principles cannot be explained, or communicated, through words but instead required the use of an image or metaphor, such as that of the flower.

A second aesthetic principle relates to the dance of opposition, which I defined in a previous publication (van Dijk 2006) as 'the ability to keep two opposing forces or qualities alive at the same time' (p. 52). Brandon (1997) observes that the 'physicality of [Noh] performance is based on the tension between opposites, which can be traced to the *in-yō* (yin yang) concept of the harmony of dark-light, hard-soft, female-male' (p. 4). Physical obstacles are placed in the path of the actor to restrict his actions, for example a mask to prevent facial expression, enveloping robes to inhibit expressive gestures of limbs, and a minimalist style of vocal and mimetic characterization. The purpose of this is to develop a powerful technique and tremendous concentration that is based on working against a certain resistance. Brendon (p. 4) identifies three specific manifestations of physical resistance in the acting style of Noh: *kamae* (at ready position with bend legs), *suri ashi* (the sliding steps), *kata* (the formalized stylized gestures). The voice, according to Komparu (1983), is 'always produced with diaphragmatic breathing, reverberating through the chest and head, and resonating within the oral cavity' (p. 170). This is achieved by working with resistance: a pushing

out from the lower abdomen while simultaneously contracting the abdominal muscles. In Noh, this exertion of opposing forces is further enhanced through the use of belts or sashes tightly tied around the actor's abdomen.

A third aesthetic principle is the aim for Noh actors (and for the Noh performance as a whole) to achieve the quality of *yūgen*. *Yūgen* is an esoteric concept that is interpreted in different ways by different scholars. Brandon (1997) describes it as 'that quality of subdued beauty tinged by sadness' (p. 6), whereas Rimer translates yūgen simply as grace, explaining further that it is 'a sense of [the] beauty that lies behind and beyond the [...] surface' (1984: xxiii). The quality of *yūgen* will be discussed in more depth in section 2.5.2.

A final artistic principle of Noh, mentioned here but to be discussed in more depth in the next section, relates to Zeami's application of the fundamental rhythmic pattern of *jo* (introduction), *ha* (breakthrough), and *kyu* (rapid): a gradual increase in speed from slow to fast. In response to the question 'why is jo-ha-kyū not simply beginning-middle-end, slow-medium-fast, or Part I-Part II-PartIII?' Komparu (1983) explains:

> *Jo* means beginning, as in beginning-middle-end. It refers to position and thus is a spatial element.
> *Ha* means break or ruin. It suggests destruction of an existing state and thus is a disordering element.
> *Kyū* means fast, as in kankyū (tempo) or slow-medium-fast. It refers to speed and thus is a temporal element. (p. 25)

It is a concept that unifies 'the contradiction of the essentially opposing concepts of space and time, binding them with a breaking element' and Komparu asserts further that the principle of *jo-ha-kyū* is employed as 'an ordering principle in the program of plays, composing each play, categorizing the parts of the performance space, and determining the basic rhythms within each Noh' (pp. 25-26). Although the *jo-ha-kyū* principle is a lot more complex and layered, it does correspond in a number of ways with Michael Chekhov's Brother of Wholeness: the effort to give each action, beat, scene, and the performance as a whole a beginning, middle and end.

There are a number of identifiable roles assigned in Noh. The *shite* (or doer) is the main character and facilitates the given sequence. He often fulfills the role of stage director as well. The *waki* is the supporting actor, the representative of the audience and has an important role in creating a reason for the shite to appear and perform. Komparu (1983) explains that the *waki* 'evokes […] the thoughts, feelings, and pleas of the main character' (p. 158). Both *shite* and *waki* have at times attendants, which are called *tsure shite* or *tsure waki* respectively. The *kōken* are the stagehands or assistants. The word *kōken* actually means 'watching from the rear' (p. 163). It is interesting to note that the *kōken*, as an anchoring presence on stage, are master *shite* performers often with more seniority than the actor playing the *shite* in a particular performance. Their role is to deliver and remove stage props and devices, and to take over the performance if the original actor for some reason is unable to continue.

Komparu (1983) describes in detail the music of Noh that is made up of *hayashi*, the instrumental music, and the *utai*, the chanted or spoken vocal music (pp. 168-213). A Noh orchestra consists of a stick drum, a shoulder drum, a hip drum, and a flute. The chorus is called *jiutai* and usually has 6 – 10 singers, who are all shite performers. In Zeami's days a much larger chorus was used to facilitate the projection of vocal sounds in large or outdoor locations and to bigger crowds. All Noh music is composed and performed according the rhythmic principle of *jo-ha-kyū*.

Nowadays the chorus always chants in unison, but Komparu suggests that in the early days Noh may have been chanted like the Buddhist sutras whereby 'each chanter proceeds at his own pitch and tempo, producing an eerie harmony believed to have some magical force' (p. 162). During the composition of the Kim Lee Noh chorus I tried to incorporate sections that would use such 'eerie harmonies'.

2.5.2 Selected Noh Elements and Principles

There are a number of Noh elements and principles that are aligned with the values and aims of a New Pacific Theatre, could be incorporated in its practice, and were tested during the creation and performance of *Ex_isle of Strangers*: the actor's feet, the quality of *yūgen*, the principle of *jo-ha-kyū*, and the 7/10th principle.

The Actor's Feet

The one aspect of Noh that is particularly relevant for a New Pacific Theatre is its expertise in developing the actor's ability to connect with their body and the earth – in other words: to give the actor feet. Tadashi Suzuki (1986) observes that Noh Theatre is often defined as the art of walking.

> The basic use made of the feet in the Noh consists of a shuffling motion. The actor walks by dragging the feet, turns around in a shuffle-like motion, and strikes a rhythm with his feet in the same way. The upper parts of his body are practically immobile; even the movements of the hands are extremely limited. Whether the actor is standing still or in motion, his feet are the centre of interest. (p. 6)

The arrival of modern (i.e. Western) theatre in Japan has meant that the artistic use of foot movements has not continued to develop. Suzuki claims that one reason why modern theatre is so tedious to watch is 'because it has no feet' (p. 7). By wearing shoes the movements of the actors' feet are hidden and limited, stamping, sliding, and various articulations of feet and toes are practically impossible, or cause blistering and other injuries. The importance of the connection that our feet create with the earth is also apparent in *takahi:* the rhythmic stamping in Māori performing arts. Through my own vocal training and work as a voice teacher, I established that the connection with one's feet directly determines strength and nuance of the voice.

> The expertise of Noh Theatre in developing the actor's ability to connect with their body and the earth is of particular relevance for the mission of a New Pacific Theatre 'to give the actor feet'.

The Quality of Yūgen

As discussed above *yūgen* is the Noh concept of natural grace or beauty. It is a quality that ripens with age, and is described by Zeami in various terms of 'flowering'. Quin (2005) proposes that the ultimate source of *yūgen* is the 'informing, embodied intelligence [of the actor] that mediates all stage technique' (p. 10). In other words, it is that magical moment when all training is so profoundly incorporated that it allows the actor to transform "doing" into "being". After years and years of internalizing the

strict forms and conventions of Noh a superior actor finds a state of no-mind, 'when the mind thus "becomes nothing", then "it freely expresses all beings, all that has a form"' (p. 282). The resulting freedom and grace enables him to sense the opportune moment, thus subtly adjusting the timing and quality of his expressions in response to the ever-changing moment and situation.

Thornhill (1984) explains, in his chapter "Yūgen after Zeami", that the term *yūgen* is drawn from the ancient Japanese art of linked verse, known as *renga*. It creates 'an atmosphere that hovers in the background of the poem, generating emotional overtones that the words only hint at' (p. 38). He cites a poem by Kokinshū as an example of a work that has *yūgen*:

> *Tsuki ya aranu*
>
> Is there no moon?
> Is this spring
> Not the spring of old?
> Only I myself
> Remain the same as before   (Kokinshū, 747)

Yūgen is a compound of two Chinese characters: *yū* which can be interpreted as 'faint' or 'distant', and *gen*, meaning 'dark' with overtones of 'mysterious'. Thornhill explains:

> [Gen] represents the dark, mysterious aspect of the Tao – the nameless, formless realm antecedent to the differentiated world of light and the primordial nature to which all things return. (p. 36)

The concept of *yūgen* is drawn from a Buddhist doctrine that considers *darkness* as 'difficult' or 'obscure' in the sense of profound, distant, and indescribable, not in the negative sense of ignorant or evil. In Buddhist philosophy it is through encountering darkness and obstacles that we bring out the Buddha nature in our lives, therefore the quality of *yūgen* can be interpreted as the revelation of our Buddha nature, which is assumed to be intrinsic in *all* beings. Thornhill suggests that yūgen, as a complex artistic concept, 'must in some fashion embody a light/dark dialectic' (p. 40). When relating *yūgen* to *monomane* (the representation of character in Noh) it becomes an

expression of the inner life of a character. Rather than illustrating or pretending to be 'other' the actor transforms into a different state of being. As such *yūgen* resonates with the aim and outcome of *whakaahua* – the process of transformation in which a person elevates him or herself into a higher state of being through the integration of form and content.

Zeami states that *yūgen* is a quality of beauty found in the appearance of Court ladies and handsome men '…who exhibit grace like the flowers in the natural world' (p. 43). This demonstrates that the quality of *yūgen* is strongly aligned with the concept of hana. Komparu (1983) identifies three stages of beauty in Noh: *hana* (apparent beauty), *yūgen* (invisible beauty), and *rōjaku* (quiet beauty) (pp. 10-15). He explains that according to Zeami 'acting to one's physical limits surpasses conceptual beauty, and that is hana' (p. 11). This is aligned with Michael Chekhov's third brother, the Brother of Beauty. Chekhov considers the application of this brother as the actor's intention to perform with a feeling of it being well done, in other words, to go to one's physical limits. In this sense beauty is not an aesthetic value, but rather it relates to the process of doing something well, whereby this 'something' could be aesthetically pleasing, or not. It could be ugly, dark, raw, volatile, as well as good or beautiful. To do something well indicates the performer's ability to lift or transcend form into the realm of being and quality. This is what I understand the process of *trans*-formation to be. If we follow the metaphor of the flower, actor training is the process of cultivating the flower, and *yūgen* is the fragrance and beauty that is the result of a successful cultivation. The concepts of *yūgen* and *hana* can also be seen as the manifestation of the actor's presence. As such I propose that hana relates to the rigorous and successful application of strategies to enhance presence (see chapter three) and *yūgen* to that indescribable quality that an audience perceives when a performer is radiating presence as the result of having integrated, balanced and polished all six senses to the highest level.

> As a measure of transformation, beauty and presence, *yūgen* is a useful concept to be incorporated in New Pacific Theatre training and practice.

The Principle of Jo-Ha-Kyū

Quin (2005) describes the principle of *jo-ha-kyū* as 'the grammar of expression in Noh' (p. 127). It relates to the overarching sense of timing in which the parts, as well as the whole, are structured, and is applied to the arrangement of plays in a Noh program, the scenes within a play, as well as all to all elements of a performance. *Jo* is the beginning, the preparation or introduction. It is straightforward and unadorned and is set in a slow rhythm. *Ha* is the developmental phase; there is a break, a breaking down of, or breaking through, the *jo* section. It is more varied and detailed than the jo. *Kyū* is upbeat and moves rapidly to a close that is fitting for the finale. When applying the principle of *jo-ha-kyū* to the process of initiating vocal expression Quin explains that Zeami identified *jo* with the ability to listen to the tone, *ha* to gather the universal creative force of *ki* (or *chi*) that is responsible for the production of all phenomena, and *kyū* with the actual vocal expression (p. 214). *Jo-ha-kyū* can also be applied to three stages in the process of actor training: *jo* is the stage of nurturing, *ha* is the stage of flowering, and *kyū* is the stage of fruition, of bearing fruit, or achieving *yūgen*. Michael Chekhov has articulated the Brother of Wholeness as the actor's ability to give their performances a beginning, middle and end. Similarly to Zeami's *jo-ha-kyū*, the Brother of Wholeness needs to be applied to each action, each beat, each scene, and to the play or performance as a whole.

> The principle of *jo-ha-kyū* provides the New Pacific Theatre performer with a vital tool to balance the ability to be present in the ever-changing moment, with the ability to consider and give variety to the overall arch of each action, beat, scene and the performance as a whole.

The 7 / 10th Principle

In his treatise "A Mirror Held to the Flower" Zeami (1984) explains the principle: what is felt in the heart is ten; what appears in movement is seven. A beginner in the study of Noh will use all his energies when performing in the way he is instructed by his teacher. Later, as he becomes more accomplished, he will learn to move to a lesser degree than his emotions suggest. If the action is more restrained than the emotion

behind it, Zeami suggests that 'the body becomes the Substance and the emotion its Function, thus moving the audience' (p. 75). To hold back much of his potential and inner life, and perform with a sense of ease, so that only seven-tenths of his art is visible is an indication of the true artistry of a Noh actor. Zeami warns that if a beginner tries to perform in this manner, without the foundation of proper training and practice, 'he will only imitate what he can observe, and so his spirit and performance cannot reach beyond that seven-tenths he can grasp' (p. 87). This will ultimately block his progress and Zeami insists that in teaching a student who is learning his craft a Noh master must at first demonstrate how to fully use both body and mind. After such lessons have been absorbed, students will gradually learn how to hold a certain amount of physical energy in reserve without losing the full extent of feelings that is the inner life behind these actions (p. 87).

To generate a strong *inner action* while simultaneously resisting the *outer action* creates a dynamic tension that is a powerful tool in captivating and maintaining the interest of an audience. Through the application of a resisted outer action the audience is provided with a metaphysical space to imagine, and to add personal interpretation and identification. The 7/10th principle of Noh employs the dance of opposition, whereby the inner action and the resistance to the physical manifestation of it are the two opposing forces or qualities that are kept alive at the same time.

It has its equivalence in Michael Chekhov's technique of the actor *imagining* performing the outer action fully, but minimizing the actual manifestation of this outer action. Initially the actor is encouraged to first fully express form and content, action and quality of action. Once body and imagination are fully engaged and integrated the actor is asked to vary the extent of outer action. As discussed previously, Michael Chekhov does not restrict the proportion of outer action against inner action to a seven-tenths ratio. In his approach any equation (from 1/100 – 100/100) can have a function or place in training and performance, depending on variables such as dramatic context, audience response, artistic taste of actor or director, and so on. The principle of resisted outer action is applied in training exercises, such as the six directions and to the strategy of archetypal gestures.

2.5.3 Noh in a Contemporary World

Currently negative attitudes towards change in Noh seem to be prevalent, but Tom Hare (1997) asserts that Zeami 'repeatedly mentions the need to adapt to the times' (p. 127). Zeami was fascinated with innovation and the freedom involved in the creative process, and he was thoroughly committed to pleasing and surprising his audiences by creating novelty through the combination of the traditional with the unexpected. Komparu (1983) notes that:

> When Noh was first performed in Europe the many contemporary composers and dramatists assembled for the event reacted in a chorus of utter surprise. [...] They seemed to be astonished and a bit unhappy to have it illustrated to them in such a vivid form that the concept of "modern" for which they were groping had long since been anticipated and realized in the Noh drama. (p. xviii)

The modernity that Komparu is referring to relates to concepts of: an empty space; total or interdisciplinary theatre that integrates the elements of voice, music, poetry, physical theatre techniques, dance elements, fine arts (robes, masks, instruments and props), architecture (Noh stage), time (the mode of production), and space (the unified space of stage and audience); as well a movement away from realism and naturalism towards symbolism and stylization. Komparu compares Noh with avant-garde music in its intention to release music 'from the spell of simply reproducing an existing score and to return to music the elements of improvisation and chance'. The discipline and restrictions that are so apparent in Noh ultimately serve to liberate the performer to achieve a high level of presence and spontaneity. The *utai-bon*, or chant book, is simultaneously script and score for actors, singers and musicians, and contains a complete system of performance rules that guide all acting, singing and playing. I have argued (van Dijk, 2006:26) that it is one of the challenges for devisers today to develop creative ways to notate or score their performances effectively by doing justice to all the vocabularies employed (body, voice, space, text, objects and light), and not just the scripting of dialogue. The *utai-bon* may offer devisers a practical and useful model in this endeavor.

The Noh stage is both a multipurpose and a universal space, qualities that Komparu (who has extensive experience as a professional Noh performer *and* as an architectural critic) identifies as 'being valued in modern architecture' (p. xx). Noh theatre is an event that needs to be experienced as an exchange, an encounter from the heart of the performer to the heart of each spectator. It is not 'a panorama like opera or Kabuki, aimed at a large group of spectators in a one-way process' (p. xxi). The emphasis in Noh is on evoking human emotions, rather than on portraying narrative, and it is doing this through an act of collaboration between all the performers (actors, singers and musicians), without focusing hereby on individual actors. Noh does not adhere to a star system, or, as Komparu claims:

> A Noh play is given life only through a sharing of the wills of all performers, each anonymous. [...] The only real stars are the characters born on the stage (p. xxii).

Noh theatre appeals primarily to the imagination of the spectator. In his essay *Contemporary Audiences and the Pilgrimage to Nō* Rimer (1997) investigates the value of Noh as a source of inspiration for current playwrights, directors, and performers, around the world thus reaching contemporary audiences (pp. 183-201). He concludes by saying: 'As long as there are men and women active in the performing arts who have a real vision of how theatrical experience can unify and inform on a level that transcends the individual [...] the nō will continue to serve as an exciting, if sometimes elusive model of what a true transcendent and poetic theatre can be' (p. 200)

> Noh theatre shares a number of aims and characteristics with the movement of Experimental European theatre. It is collaborative, inter-disciplinary, imaginative and symbolic theatre, concerned with engaging the audience through the creation of novelty. It also takes place on an empty, multi-purpose stage.

2.6   Conclusions

This chapter does not claim to offer a complete and in-depth overview of each of the five sources of my enquiry. Rather, it contextualizes each field within its historical context, identifies some of its leading practitioners or theorists, and frames selected

elements and principles within the context of the mission of a New Pacific Theatre: to connect with our land and its people.

Devised theatre, one of the core pillars in my own practice, is an approach to theatre making that is *collaborative* and *explorative*. The explorative nature provides a New Pacific Theatre with ways of incorporating risk-taking and experimentation in its practice, whereas the subcategory of site-specific performance offers a comprehensive set of strategies to connect with the tangible and intangible dimension of specific locations in the natural or urban environment. This will be investigated in more detail in chapter four.

The Michael Chekhov technique (core strand of my own practice), *whare tapere* (pre-European Māori performing arts), and Japanese Noh theatre, provide a wide range of *aesthetic principles* and *values*, that guide the process of combining form with content in ways that cause the *transformation* of the actor, and increase the transformative value of performance for its participants (including the spectators) thus serving both artistic and spiritual ambitions of a New Pacific Theatre.

Lastly, by considering the political and ethical implications of intercultural performance, I have re-examined and re-evaluated my own responses to, and applications of, intercultural practice. This led me to articulate a number of principles to guide the process of intercultural performance and exchange, including the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers* and any future activities of the New Pacific Theatre.

Chapter Three: Presence

A Gateway to Connect

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Introduction

The New Pacific Theatre intention to relate to the geography, culture and spiritual dimensions of our environment can be broken down into two components: 'to connect' and 'the geography, culture and spiritual dimensions of our environment'. This chapter focuses on the first component and presents a critical investigation of how the concept of *Presence* can be turned into an operational device to connect, whereas the next chapter offers an investigation of *site-specific performance* as a theatre methodology to connect with, and respond to, the geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of a particular environment.

Firstly, by reflecting on presence (3.1) I establish the human faculties involved in forging a connection between self and environment. In acknowledging the tangible as well as the intangible dimensions of our world I contend that it is through the six senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell and intuition that we connect with the phenomena in and around us. I subsequently highlight the shift in psychological thinking from a pre-occupation with the past to a concern with the present. To lead the discussion into the arena of performance praxis I discuss two particular theatre experiences that ignited my interest in presence for the performer.

The following section takes a closer look at the role of presence in contemporary actor training (3.2). I point to a shift in actor training, corresponding to the one in psychological thinking, away from the past (sensory and emotional memory) towards the present (physical actions and psychophysical sensations). Despite an increasing appreciation and acknowledgment of presence in the actor's craft, I observe a lack of succinct definition (of the concept of presence) and the absence of a coherent effort to turn presence into an operational tool.

In response to these perceived gaps I formulate a definition of presence (3.3) and maintain that presence is a critical factor in the effectiveness of *all* training and performance, and a key tool in creating a connection between self and environment. Therefore, developing presence constitutes the main pathway to realise the New Pacific Theatre core strand of CONNECTION. By investigating and incorporating Māori perspectives on presence (3.4), a unique Aotearoa/New Zealand way of being connected with self, other and environment is emerging. Subsequently, I offer a number of strategies (3.5) and practical exercises (3.6) to facilitate the training of presence. These strategies and exercises have been explored and tested within my own praxis. To complete this chapter, I discuss the particular concern and need for actors to enhance presence and simultaneously keep an imaginary reality alive (3.7).

3.1 Reflecting on Presence

It is through the five senses that we perceive the distinction between, and subsequently develop an awareness of, self and other, thus connecting with, and responding to, the phenomena around us. We see, hear, smell, taste and touch the various elements in our environment. However, our environment contains intangible as well as tangible aspects. It is interesting to note how Jaworski (1998) cites Bohm in relation to the linguistic roots of the word 'measure' – pointing at a difference in the perception of reality between East and West. According to Bohm the western word 'measure' and the Sanskrit word 'maya' share the same root, yet 'maya' is the most ancient Sanskrit word for 'illusion'. This is an expression of the eastern belief that structures or forms, as they present themselves to us, can be seen as a veil, covering up the essence of reality. The true reality in itself is immeasurable, 'we cannot perceive it with our senses' and of which 'nothing can be said or thought' (p. 192).

In contrast, western worldview and epistemology focus predominantly on the measurable. Our educational systems, for example, measure effective learning primarily against the achievement of pre-determined learning outcomes. This leads unfortunately to the vast majority of classroom effort being dedicated to the teaching of content that manifests itself in measurable effects i.e. information, formulae and assessable skills. Less and less attention is given to matters that cannot easily be measured: matters of the heart, the soul, the imagination, matters of value, such as

compassion, kindness, integrity, vitality, beauty, etc. A New Pacific Theatre values intangible as well as tangible aspects of our reality. Since intuition, or the sixth sense, is a vital faculty to connect with the intangible or immeasurable phenomena in our environment, I argue that presence involves all our six senses.

Today we have access to a wide range of technologies that allow us to communicate with practically anyone, any time, anywhere. On the surface this may seem a positive feature but, on closer inspection, it rather leads us away from connecting with our immediate environment. Increasingly more of the sensations we choose to experience are no longer produced in the 'here and now': we cover our ears with headphones, listening to our iPods, and we increasingly communicate with people we cannot see, touch, smell or taste, on our mobile phones or in virtual spaces such as Facebook, Twitter, Jabber, and so on. It is not difficult to see how people in general, and actors in particular, may benefit from a refreshing course in sensory perception, particularly relating to senses of touch, smell, taste and intuition.

3.1.1 A Shift From Past to Present

Thorn (2006) establishes that in the 60s and 70s the American psychologist Carl Rogers formulated an approach to psychology that became known as humanistic psychology (pp. 24-44). A prime concern for him was the mission, to help people fully realise themselves. In contrast to the Freudian approach of digging deep into the dirt of our past, Rogers suggested that we can produce a sense of well-being by enhancing our ability to live in the 'here and now'. Later in this chapter I will point out a similar shift from past to present in the realm of acting and actor training.

3.1.2 Outstanding Presence in Performance

After graduating at the University of Groningen as an Andragologist (comparable with the combined disciplines of Social & Clinical Psychology) and working several years mainly within the field of humanistic psychology, I decided in the early 80s to become a professional performing artist. I initially trained as an actor in the Netherlands but subsequently moved to the UK to extend my craft as a dancer, mime artist and

director. Here, my interest in presence was sparked off by two extraordinary performances that I saw in London and which affected me profoundly.

The first performance was a Butoh performance by Kazuo Ohno[1] and his son Yoshito at The Place Theatre (1987). Kazuo Ohno, then in his early eighties, performed 'Admiring La Argentina' – a tribute to the legendary dancer Argentina. It was bizarre and fascinating to see an old man dressed as a woman, complete with smudged make-up, thickly caked powder on his face, a huge flower in his thinning hair, wriggling half-naked on stage. At some time during the performance, his son entered the stage, walked slowly across and disappeared at the other side. It probably took him 30 minutes to do so, although I had lost all sense of time. His simple walk was one of the most powerful performances I have ever seen, and I was completely engaged and mesmerized. This man filled the whole theatre with an electrifying presence. I was intrigued: how could he do so little and yet command so much attention? What technique, what methodology, what imagination lay behind his ability to be alive in every single moment of his performance?

The second performance was also in London (1989) by the Spanish company La Fura dels Baus[2]. The audience was asked to gather outside the ICA theatre where we boarded buses and were transported to an unknown destination in the Docklands, East London. Upon entering a warehouse, we were 'bombarded' by very loud live rock music and people running around frantically wielding switched-on chain saws. At one stage during the show, two men took just a few minutes to demolish a car with claw hammers and other tools. Never in my life have I witnessed such an explosion of fury. At another point, performers, who were suspended from the rafters like giant spiders, flung themselves vigorously against a wall, which we then realized, had been covered with big plastic bags each filled with different color paint. The force of their impact burst the paint bags, thus dramatically creating a live visual work of art of enormous proportions. Everything in the show was extreme, affecting the core of my being. I have never been so surprised, terrified, shocked, overwhelmed and moved.

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[1] Kazuo Ohno (born October 27, 1906 – died June 1 2010) was a Japanese dancer who became an inspirational figure in the modern Japanese dance form known as Butoh.
[2] La Fura dels Baus is a Catalan theatre ensemble founded in 1979 in Barcelona. They are known for their use of unusual settings and blurring the boundaries between audience and performers.

In both of these performances presence played a major role: in the first, it was the presence of the performer (Yoshito) that made such an impact; in the second I felt fully alive, and aware of my own presence, as never before.

3.2   Presence in Actor Training

Before articulating my own interpretation and understanding of presence, it is important to survey and critique approaches by some of the prominent actor trainers of the twentieth century and outline Māori concepts in relation to presence. Hodge (2000) in her collection of articles on *Twentieth Century Actor Training* observes:

> Presence is a rather abstract term often referred to within this book in different contexts of actor training. It is important to recognize that the understanding and interpretation of the actor's presence is wide ranging in training. (p. 7)

It is clear from Hodge's overview that most of the prominent twentieth century theatre practitioners acknowledge presence as an important component of actor training but surprisingly – for people concerned with training - no one has attempted to define the concept in concrete or practical terms. In the following section I will present a critical examination of selected concepts from influential actor trainers relating to presence.

Stanislavsky[3] stated that 'psychophysical concentration begins with sharpening the senses through observation' (in Carnicke, 2000:18). The concept of 'psychophysical concentration' relates closely to the concept of presence, as I will come to define it later in this chapter. However, I contend that observation, as opposed to perception, involves a process of reflection, and a labeling of sensations in words or mental constructs. This tends to create a time gap between the actual sensation, and the observation or reflection thereof, rendering the observer in a near or distant past. On the other hand, Stanislavsky's suggestion to 'further train concentration through *circles of attention* that can be *small*, *medium*, or *large*' (p. 20) provides, from my experience, an effective and practical tool to develop presence, and on page 77 I will

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[3] Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938): Russian actor, director and acting teacher who developed and articulated principles of actor training that have been extremely influential in western approaches to actor training.

explain how I have incorporated this concept in the strategy 'Extending the Circle of Presence'.

Meyerhold[4] developed an approach to actor training, based on a series of exercises that he referred to as "biomechanics".

> Biomechanics is not arbitrary. It requires of the actor, and it trains: (1) balance (physical control); (2) rhythmic awareness, both spatial and temporal; and (3) responsiveness to the partner, to the audience, to other external stimuli, especially *through the ability to observe, to listen and to react* [my italics] (in Leach 2000:43).

It is this responsiveness to external stimuli through (some of) the senses that indicates Meyerhold's concern with presence.

The French theatre director, actor and dramatist Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) was, according to Rudlin (2000), 'fed up and alarmed' (p. 58) by what he perceived to be the actor's insincerity. He sought to address this shortcoming by encouraging his actors to 'put oneself in a state of readiness' (p. 71), thus creating a sense of repose, of calm, of relaxation or de-contraction, of silence or simplicity. This state of neutrality, or presence as I would call it, is, according to Copeau, achieved by eliminating all thoughts, judgments and concerns that get in the way.

Although Michael Chekhov (1891-1955) does not explicitly mention presence as one of the components to his actor training, we get certain clues based on his strong rejection of Stanislavsky's emphasis on memory. Chamberlain (2000) notes that Chekhov saw sensory and affective memory as a pre-occupation with the past; instead he encouraged 'the actor to develop a sensitive, responsive body with a flexible imagination' (p. 87). I believe that this 'sensitive' and 'responsive' body relates to a heightened sensory perceptiveness and an ability to physically respond to the sensations perceived. Of particular relevance is Chekhov's use of atmosphere and psychophysical sensations as strategies to generate feelings in the *here and now*. In the previous chapter these approaches have been explained in more detail.

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[4] Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940): Russian actor, theatre director and producer, widely considered to be one of the forefathers of modern theatre through his focus on symbolic representation in performance and the physical foundation for actor training.

Lee Strasberg[5] claimed that 'an actor who masters the technique of affective memory begins to be more alive in the present' (in Krasner, 2000:137). I personally find it hard to see how recalling old feelings will enable an actor to be more alive in the moment. As a trained psychologist I know that unresolved emotional business of the past plays tricks with one's memory, and the effort to summon up old emotions activates behavioral patterns that aim to resolve (i.e. discharge) the distress of the past. Affective memory relies on *unresolved* emotional business as resolved emotional business does not produce, or reproduce, emotional charge. Recalling emotions of the past may bring about strong emotions in the present, this however does not equate to being alive in the present. A large portion of the actor's attention is occupied by the effort to remember and many of the resulting physical responses are anchored in the past - leaving the actor with less freedom to be alive (i.e. aware and responsive) in the moment. Therefore, emotional memory is an unreliable source for the actor as well as being, mentally and spiritually, an unhealthy procedure unless for the specific purpose of healing, which would bring into question the ethics of using emotional memory for a *paying* audience.

With regards to incorporating presence in actor training, Marshall and Williams (2000) note that, English-born but French-based, theatre director Peter Brook (b. 1943) uses the two rather sophisticated concepts of (1) transparency – a state of openness and immediacy in which the actor is 'alive and present in every molecule of their being, they have the capacity to listen through the body', and (2) 'the invisible network' – a state of connectedness and responsiveness (pp. 177-178). Both concepts correspond closely to presence, as I will come to define it. Similar to Meyerhold and Stanislavsky, Brook encourages his performers to develop, and exercise, responsiveness to self, partner, ensemble, and audience, which can be seen as a manifestation of extending the circle of presence.

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[5] Lee Strasberg (1901-1982): American acting teacher, director and actor, who is know for having developed "the Method" – an approach to acting and actor training based on an earlier version of the Stanislavsky method.

For Grotowski[6] it was 'the living presence of the actor' that distinguishes theatre from film (in Wolford, 2000:196). His road towards presence is a 'via negativa' – a process of elimination: 'to take away from the actor all that obstructed him or her in regard to movement, breathing, and human contact' (p. 199). Grotowski robustly rejected formulating a methodology of actor training, perhaps fearing that this could get in the way of the living presence of both actor and director/trainer. Therefore, what we know of his approach to training or developing presence is philosophical and anecdotal rather than systematic or practical.

To find out why one actor holds interest and the other none at all, Eugenio Barba (b. 1936) looked at Asian theatre practice. According to Hodge (2000) Barba realized that 'the control of actor's presence was a common performance principle in many Oriental traditions' (p. 7). He concluded that Asian performers achieve interest through the application of two so-called extra-daily techniques: 1) the physical techniques that break the actor's daily responses, and 2) the codification that regulates the use of energy during performance.

Barba is using the term presence in a way that, in my view, confuses *presence* with *energy*. Although the two often go hand-in-hand, they relate to two distinct processes or abilities. I put forward that it is more accurate to say that the physical techniques and codification of energy *enable* the performer a higher level of presence. In many ways Barba's latter distinction of, and focus on, the 'pre-expressivity' of the actor (a state of readiness and openness that precede physical or vocal actions) relates more to what I will come to define as presence.

> Although none of the key players in the Twentieth Century Actor Training come up with a clear and succinct definition of presence, many of them, with the notable exception of Lee Strasberg, refer to presence as a physical state of openness and readiness (sometimes explicitly acknowledging the role that our senses play hereby), a state of responsiveness to one's environment (fellow actor, audience, external stimuli), or a combination of both.

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[6] Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999): Polish theatre director who introduced the concepts of "poor theatre" and "theatre laboratory" to contemporary theatre practice.

3.3   Defining Presence

Through 25 years of experience as a dancer, actor, director and actor trainer, it occurred to me that presence is a critical factor in the effectiveness of *all* training and performance. Following this insight, I began to investigate practical ways of accessing and enhancing presence. In order to transform presence from an abstract and elusive concept into an operational device I considered it necessary to come up with a definition that is both succinct and pragmatic.

While reading *The Invisible Actor* (1997) I was intrigued by Yoshi Oida's description of the ancient Indian Buddhist concept of *Samadhi*:

> [Samadhi] ... refers to a particular level of deep concentration. In a sense it is quite simple. When you read a book, you just concentrate on reading the book. When you go fishing, you just focus on the movements and quivers of the line itself. When you clean the floor, that's all you do. (p. 2)

I interpret this to relate to a state of being in which a person is totally immersed in what they do, avoiding their mind to focus on anything but the ever-changing sensations of their activity.

Sometimes it is thought in the performing arts that presence is a matter of having the magical X-factor. You are either born with it or you have missed the boat and nothing can be done about that. Such a belief puts presence outside our control. On closer inspection though, it is more accurate to state that a lack of presence relates specifically to actors' ears that do not hear all the sounds made in the studio or theatre, feet that fail to sense the textures of the floor, skin insensitive to the quality of the air, a sense of smell that is numb, intuition that is dormant, etc.

With this in mind I have come up with the following definition:

Presence is the ability to be sensorially alive in the moment

It is an ability, or skill, that can be trained and developed; and the skill is one of being, of having all *six* senses (hearing, sight, taste, smell, touch and intuition) animated and available in the ever-changing moment. Presence is not a state of being that is

switched on or off – rather, it is a quality of being that manifests itself by degrees, much like fitness and health. And, like fitness and health, it can be improved.

3.4   Māori Approach to Presence: Aroaro

For a New Pacific perspective on presence in actor training it is vital to consider and include Māori approaches to sensory perception. In his essay "Exploring Indigenous Knowledge" Charles Royal (2005) relates the concept of *aroaro* to a way of sensual connecting with the world that leads to 'three-dimensional and spherical consciousness [or] awareness' (p. 15). He extends traditional understandings of *aroaro*, prescribed by sight and located 'immediately in front of a person', to 'omni-directional' awareness that engages the five senses.   This is similar to my understanding of presence, although I incorporate the sixth sense of intuition as well.

Royal suggests that oral cultures encourage a spherical '*aroaro*', whereas cultures that use 'texts and screens as repositories of knowledge' (p. 16) lead the '*aroaro*' to become sharp, focused and one-directional. There is an underlying difference in worldview and epistemology: one that sees knowledge as 'external', existing outside the human body, in texts and screen images, concerned with quantities, and '… the view that knowledge resides within a human person' (p. 16), mediated through the physical, and concerned with qualities. Royal concludes that: 'the aroaro concept challenges us to think about how the whole body encounters the world and how this might influence our ideas about knowledge, memory and experience' (p. 16). Here Māori worldview and epistemology embrace tangible and intangible aspects of knowledge and reality, in ways similar to Noh theatre and Michael Chekhov.

3.5   Strategies to Enhance Presence

While experimenting with practical strategies to enhance presence I have identified four particular channels of access:

1. Balancing the Senses;

2. Extending the Circle of Presence;

3. Developing Non-specific Focus;

4. Eliminating what Gets in the Way of Presence.

3.5.1 Balancing the Senses

We live in a world that focuses on visual perception. Our sense of seeing can often overwhelm all other senses. For example, when people close their eyes for a few minutes and concentrate on listening, it is amazing how quickly the detail of audio perception increases. At first most people only perceive the sounds in their environment and do not register their inner sounds. Only when attention is directed towards the inner sounds, people start to hear saliva clicking, the soft rumbling in their stomach, the rush of blood through veins, etc.

Tin order to balance our senses, we need a sensory refresher course. Theatre offers a wonderful array of exercises and games that help animate the various neglected senses. Simply putting on a blindfold will take away our reliance on sight, thus invigorating all the other senses. If our task is to walk across a particular space, we will listen more acutely and try to sense the surfaces we are walking on. If we are in close company, we might smell people's perfume, after-shave or body odour. Eating a meal without seeing provides an experience that heightens the sense of taste.

3.5.2 Extending the Circle of Presence

Where Stanislavski refers to 'circles of attention' and Royal (2005:16) suggests 'three-dimensional spheres of sensory awareness', I have come to employ the term 'circle of presence'. It is not difficult to imagine a circle, or sphere, of presence that could extend further and further out into space: to incorporate a sense of self, other, the studio, the theatre, the neighbourhood, the city, the region, the island, the continent, the world, and ultimately the entire universe.

Extending the circle of presence involves a two-way process, of receiving and sending out. Michael Chekhov talks about radiating, which he describes as a process 'to give, to send out' (2002:19). In addition to enhancing sensory receptiveness, actors need to also develop their ability to radiate energy and presence in all directions, as if they are the source of light or heat. Therefore, presence is an interactive skill. Initially, when people begin to deliberately explore presence, they often assume that their current radius in presence is all there is to it. But gradually people realise just how

much there is of which they are not aware. This realisation actually heralds the beginning of the process of expanding one's circle of presence.

3.5.3 Developing Non-specific Focus

A third way of improving the quality of our presence relates to the practice of developing, and maintaining, a 'non-specific focus' in each of the senses. I have identified two particular strategies of accessing 'non-specific focus' that enhance the development of presence. The first relates to the ability to integrate foreground and background focus, the second combines radiating with being directional, thus creating 'multiple-directionality' in perception.

Integrating Foreground and Background: A New Look at the Narcissus Story

In 2001 I attended, with the support of a Creative New Zealand study grant, the 20th Anniversary Symposium of Pantheatre in Malérargues, France. During this Symposium Enrique Pardo, co-artistic director of Pantheatre, invited the French avant-garde dancer and choreographer Dominique Dupuy[7] to lead a weekend workshop. Dupuy has developed various exercises to enhance presence by integrating foreground and background perception. He argues that it is crucial for a performer to have, and display, a sense of narcissism – that is: a sense of self-love and self-appreciation. Rather than assuming currently prevailing negative connotations to narcissism, Dupuy presented us with a fresh and original view on the Narcissus myth. He challenged the supposition that Narcissus only gazed at his own reflection in the pool – instead he suggested that Narcissus tried to grasp the source of the well, as well as appreciate his own reflection. This rich and symbolic interpretation inspired me to explore various exercises that integrate foreground and background focus.

Multi-directionality:

Michael Chekhov invented an exercise, the six directions, in which the actor sequentially moves to the right, left, forward, backward, upward and downward – always returning to neutral in between. This exercise provides an effective template that can be utilized to practice the application of a great variety of artistic principles

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[7] Dominique Dupuy (born in 1930 in Paris) is a French dancer and choreographer of modern dance.

and qualities, including presence, and was used as one of the core exercises during the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. By going in the six directions while radiating, the actor practices the ability to integrate being directional and at the same time sending out energy and presence in *all* directions, thus developing multi-directionality of focus and perception.

3.5.4 Eliminating What Gets in the Way of Presence

It appears that the mind has developed various patterns or habitual ways of interfering with or responding to sensations that get in the way of presence. Some of these are pretty obvious, but others may come as a surprise:

- Pre-occupation with the future: an obsessive concern or worry about goals and plans, thus ignoring or not realizing the ever changing now.

- Judgment: an inability to perceive things as they are because of a persistent habit, sometimes an addiction, of adding judgment and value to the experience. Instead of experiencing our sensations as sensations, we are compelled to label them as good or bad, right or wrong, positive or negative. Sometimes we even label according to how we think others would want us to label in order to 'look good' and to be seen doing the right thing.

- Emotions: emotions can severely distort or restrict our perception of the world around us as it. Fear can make a shadow look like a dangerous criminal or ferocious animal, self-doubt can misinterpret somebody's twitching nose as a serious rejection, etc.

- Tastes: our likes and dislikes can affect the way we perceive our sensations.

- Focus: when we focus on a detail or a particular sensation we are very present to that one detail or sensation, but less aware of the bigger picture, the whole.

- Memories: sensations can spark memories that lead us away from the present moment on a trail of associations.

- Awareness: when we have a sensation, we may realize what it is, but by reflecting on it, we linger in the past, whereas the stream of sensations has moved on – changing continuously.

The elimination of patterns and processes that get in the way of being sensorially alive in the moment, will enhance presence, and provides a strategy that corresponds with Grotowski's 'via negativa' that was mentioned in section 3.2 (p. 74).

3.6   Practical Exercises

It would go too far in the context of this chapter to detail every single exercise relating to each of the four channels of developing presence. However, it is relevant to summarise the guiding principles, and outline two exercises that most directly address the New Pacific Theatre missions 'to give the actor feet' and 'to connect with the tangible and intangible dimensions of the environment'.

By weaving together my professional discoveries, with observations and feedback from a number of New Pacific Theatre Laboratories, I have distilled a number of guidelines that have a beneficial effect on the training of presence:

a. The more the sense of sight is dimmed or blocked (through the application of blindfold or non-specific gaze), the more the other senses are revitalized;

b. The more skin an actor exposes, particularly of the feet (i.e. working bare feet), the more the sense of touch is stimulated;

c. Exercises in which a fellow actor (or the activity itself) determines the sensations to occur are more beneficial in improving the quality of presence than exercises in which it is the actor's choice or will that decides the sensations to be experienced;

d. In the development of intuition it is necessary for the actor to distinguish between *intuitive feeling* and *emotion* (i.e. a 'feeling' that is, often unconsciously, evoked by or attached to an experience from the past);

e. Unconditional *surrender* to the ever-changing sensations in the moment has proven to be the most effective way of interrupting the ongoing mind chatter.

3.6.1 The Presence Walk

One of the core exercises in enhancing presence, that simultaneously creates an immediate connection with one's environment, is inspired by Yoshi Oida's (1997) description of the Japanese traditional practice of cleaning the working space:

> [...] This cleansing is not done in a haphazard way, simply to get rid of dirt, using detergent or even machines. All of the [Japanese] traditional disciplines employ a particular style of floor washing, using cold water and a cotton cloth, a conscious awareness, and a specific body position. [...] The knees are not on the floor, only the hands and feet. In this position your hips are strong, and you work the body as well as cleaning the floor. While doing this exercise, you should think only about pushing the cloth, and carefully cleaning. (p. 1)

When working with more than six students or actors in a single studio space the actual cleaning of the floor is not practical. There simply is not enough floor space to be cleaned! Therefore, I began to experiment with walking around the studio space a specific number of times, equally dividing between clockwise and anti-clockwise directions.

Initially participants can display a tendency of boredom when 'only walking'. This can lead them to introduce walking backwards, running, touching the wall, and numerous other creative ways that to divert from the simple act of walking. I realised that these introduced variations actually defied the purpose of enhancing presence, as the participants were directing and selecting their sensations rather than allowing the sensations to come to them, thus being focused and future-driven. In order to provide participants with a wide range of sensory stimulation, I began to locate the 'Presence Walk' on trajectories that included a variety of surfaces, such as wood, concrete, grass, grit, earth, and passing through a variety of environments and atmospheres – both indoors and outdoors. Walking outdoors brings the entire range of weather phenomena into play, as at times it can be rainy, windy, sunny, cloudy, or even snowy.

Fig. 3.1: Images of Presence Walk (*Wānanga* Feb 2009) Photography: Andrew Chappell

The Presence Walk has demonstrated to be a very effective strategy in helping actors to balance the senses, extend the circle of presence, achieve a non-specific focus in all six senses, and eliminate habitual processes that get in the way of presence. It facilitates the actor to connect with body and earth, thus 'giving them feet'.

3.6.2 Sensational Journey

As a strategy to enhance the quality of presence, I have re-contextualized an exercise to polish neglected senses and connect with the tangible and intangible dimensions of our environment. I named this exercise "sensational journey". In it the participants work in pairs. One partner closes their eyes, or is blindfolded, while the other leads them on a physical journey that stimulates the senses of touch, smell, taste and hearing. Ample time is taken before the partners swap roles. The exercise requires great trust in one's partner, and it is essential to stress that the guide is totally

responsible for the safety of their non-seeing partner. Most people experience a heightened sense of presence as a feeling of supreme well-being or bliss – a physical and spiritual connectedness to the universe. Charles Royal (2009) relates such feeling of connection to the value of *kotahitanga*. Therefore, developing presence serves the realization of this value*.*

3.7   Presence & Imagination

While presence is a critical ingredient in the effectiveness of *all* training and performance, it is by no means the only skill an actor needs to train. Of particular interest for NPT actor training is the actor's ability to enhance presence while at the same time bringing an imaginary reality to life. In the same way that an actor who indulges in emotional memory holds little interest for me as an audience member, it is also true that an actor who is totally absorbed in his or her imaginative world no longer connects or communicates with an audience. Presence is the bridge that connects performer with audience while conveying an imaginary reality. Without a strong sense of presence, no matter how inventive and original the imaginative life of the actor, his or her performance will come across as self-indulgent and private. But presence in itself is not enough. The ability in question delves deep into matters of form and content in performance.

Barba (1986) noted that in Asian theatre traditions the application of 'extra-daily techniques' and 'a rigid codification of personal expression' establish 'a pre-expressive mode in which the actor's energies are engaged prior to personal expression' (pp. 119-120). In other words: the extra-daily techniques keep an actor solidly anchored in the present moment, while rigorous training in the artistic codes of a genre allow the actor freedom for imagination, presence and expression. The rigid codification systems of traditional Asian theatre training do not exist in Western actor training or theatre practice, although it can be found in western performing arts forms such as corporeal mime, classical ballet, modern dance and opera. For western actors it is impractical, inappropriate and even impossible to imitate or take on the codified training of Asian forms. And yet, they still need to address the tension between tangible and intangible aspects in training and performance. The purpose of actor training is to incorporate and integrate form (body) and content (imagination)

to such an extent that the actor is free to be present, connecting with and responding to the ever-changing moment.

3.8 Conclusion

Presence is the human faculty that establishes our connection with self, other and the environment. It is a critical factor in the effectiveness of all training and performance. In order to turn the concept of presence from an abstract concept into an operational strategy I have come to define it as: the ability to be sensorially alive in the moment. Subsequently I have formulated a number of strategies and exercises to enhance presence. By incorporating Māori perspectives on presence a unique Pacific approach to connecting with the geography, culture and spiritual dimensions of Aotearoa/New Zealand is emerging. Of particular importance hereby is the need to balance presence with a vivid imagination. As such presence serves the New Pacific Theatre core strand of CONNECTION and its corresponding value of *kotahitanga*.

Chapter Four: Site-Specific Performance

A Creative Response to Locality
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Introduction

It does not require a great stretch of the imagination to grasp why, in the search for an effective strategy to connect with the geography, culture and spiritual qualities of Aotearoa/New Zealand, we end up in the arena of site-specific performance. As part of an exploding interest in issues of site, place and space a great number of articles, papers and journals have been devoted to issues of site-specific performance. In her article "Palimpsest or Potential Space? Finding a Vocabulary for Site-Specific Performance" Cathy Turner (2004) notes that the 'preoccupation with space and place has drawn together theorists and workers in a wide range of disciplines, including human geographers, archaeologists, architects, cartographers, psychoanalysts, sociologists, poets, novelists – and theatre practitioners' (p. 373). A notable result of such interdisciplinary collaborations has been the borrowing of certain terms from other disciplines and words like 'mapping', 'landscape', 'layering', 'traces', 'cartography', for example, have now become established terms, not only in site-specific performance, but within theatre and performance practice in general.

Space is a fundamental element of performance, since it frames and contains the theatrical activities. This chapter is concerned with site-specific performance, a genre of theatre making in which the artistic work is developed in response to a specific site or location. In an earlier publication (van Dijk 2006) I defined devised theatre as 'a process of theatre-making in which all the artists involved develop a specific and well-defined point of departure (POD) – through collective exploration – into a performance that is original, current and full of surprise' (p. 5). For the purpose of this thesis I will consider site-specific performance to be devised theatre, as defined above, in which the point of departure is a particular site or location. As such, it is a collaborative, creative response to the features and dimensions of a certain site.

There are no restrictions with regards to the choice of site for this practice: it can be any natural or man-made, indoor or outdoor, small or large location, including the space of a conventional theatre itself. It is the particularity of aim and process that defines whether a work is site-specific or not. In recent years a nuance is emerging between the terms *site-specific* and *site-based* practice. Gay McAuley (2007) contends that site-specific performance can be understood as a *sub-category* of site-based performance. She identifies three categories of site-based practice: 1) work that has been developed before a site is found and then seeks a non-traditional site that has the physical features and aesthetic dimensions to serve that work, 2) performance that emerges from an engagement with a particular community, and therefore relates to the place or places that are significant to that community, and 3) work that emerges from a particular place, engages intensively with the history and politics of that place, and with resonance of these in the present - it cannot travel and exists only in the site that it is produced by. It is the last category, referred to by McAuley as *site-specific* performance (pp. 8-9), that will be adopted for the creation of *Ex_isle of Strangers*.

Govan, Nicholson and Normington (2007) identify a number of distinct strategies within the practice of site-specific performance (p. 104):

a. Creating performance environments within theatre buildings;
b. Transforming a non-theatrical place into a theatrical space;
c. Taking up residency within a place to create performance relating to that place;
d. Working with the realities of a site but 'over-writing' it with a fabricated narrative.

This chapter will survey the Historical Context (4.1) that gave rise to the genre of site-specific performance; review selected examples of this practice in New Zealand (4.2); present an analysis of, and terminology for, the tangible, intangible and artistic dimensions of site-specific performance: the Host, the Ghost and the Guest (4.3); and finish with a discussion of issues relating to Audience Mobility (4.4).

4.1 Historical Context

Site-based performance, as a particular strand of devised theatre, evolved as part of the movement of Experimental Theatre. We discussed, in chapter two, that this movement was foremost a reaction against naturalism and a text dominated theatre practice. Some of the experiments that took place related to the exploration of different performer-audience configurations within existing theatre venues. Erika Fischer-Lichte (2009), while deliberating the state of 'in-between-ness' (p. 391), observes how, in the early twentieth century, exposure to the use of the *hanamichi* (the pathway in Kabuki that connects the auditorium with the stage – used for entrances, exits and heightened moments within a Kabuki play) changed prevalent concepts of body, space and modes of perception. According to her, this constituted a vital step in the development of modern theatre:

> The *hanamichi* […] transferred the actors into the midst of the spectators, who could touch the actors simply by reaching out. […] Different audience members observed a single actor from the front, back, left, and right. The actor might come so close to some spectators that they could hear him breathe, smell his sweat, touch the seam of his costume, or discern his make-up. (p. 395)

Spatial arrangements within western theatre convention had become fixed within a proscenium arch model – a model in which an invisible 'fourth wall' keeps spectators and performers separate and at a distance. Many exponents of the experimental theatre movement (Copeau, Craig, Artaud, Meyerhold, Brecht, Grotowski, Brook, Barba, and others) undertook to break down the fourth wall and experiment with different ways of staging performance, placing the spectators close to, at times even *inside* the theatre action. This clearly increased the level of engagement with the performance from a spectators' point of view. The state of 'in-between-ness' that Fischer-Lichte refers to not only relates to the physical space between performers and spectators, it also relates to a state of being 'in between co-determining the course of a performance and being determined by it' (p. 392) and as such considerably affects the transformative value of performance.

A second strand of experimentation that led to the evolution of site-specific performance related to the effort of taking theatre out of its conventional venues. Govan, Nicholson and Normington (2007) observe that, under the influence of Dadaism[1] and the neo-avant-garde Happenings[2], widespread experimentation took place with regards to the site of performance. These experiments purposefully aimed at blurring and challenging the distinctions between life and art. Happenings were of significant importance for the establishment of site-specific performance as they managed to theatricalise the audience - allowing them to become 'their own spectacle as they observed each other within the event' (p. 26). Performing in public spaces, particularly outdoor spaces, requires a highly visual style of theatre inspired by popular genres such as commedia dell'arte, vaudeville, clowning, melodrama and cabaret. These genres have a broad appeal and include the use of satire and comedy 'to disrupt the audiences' expectations and awaken their political consciousness' (p. 51). They involve a significant amount of improvisation to enable the performer to respond ad lib to the unforeseen circumstances that occur when audience responses and real live events intersect and interfere with the performance act.

Performance was not only taken to public spaces. In his book *The Empty Space* (1996) Peter Brook argues that any empty space can be used as an arena for performance and that it was the combined effort of theatrical actions by the performers and the imagination of the spectators that would make up the specifics of that space – thus allowing the imagined place of action to change in a second. Dorita Hannah (2003) maintains that 'the black-box was born out of theatrical revolution and perceptual shifts at the end of the nineteenth century' (p. 24). She relates the emergence of 'the empty space' and 'the black-box theatre' to the conceptual contributions of, amongst others, Craig and Appia in 'an appropriation of the womb as a space of creation' (p. 26). Although Brook's empty space and the black-box theatre are two distinct concepts, Hannah suggests the following inter-relatedness:

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[1] *Dadaism* is a post-World War I cultural movement that rejected the way in which art was defined and appreciated. From: http://wwar.com/masters/movements/dadaism.html
[2] *Happenings* refer to events, presented as art. They could take place anywhere, involved audience participation, and were often multi-disciplinary (Govan, et al., 2007: pp. 41-42).

> The black-box came to represent the void, an immaterial space out of which performance materialised. Its emptiness as a spatio-temporal phenomenon was the interval, the pause, silence and suspension. Within its emptiness shadows did not represent a lack, but rather the void; an overwhelming excess of meaning. (p. 27)

The simple and singular requirement of an empty space to host performance opened the possibility of using empty spaces outside theatres as sites for performance. However, the practice of site-based performance went much further, to consider in fact *any* space, whether empty or not, as a potential site for performance.

While discussing 'Places and Spaces' Govan, Nicholson and Normington (2007) reflect on the practice of creating performance environments *within* theatre buildings, making works *outside* theatre buildings, and the *cultural ramifications* of spatial performance practices (pp. 106-153). They argue that creating a sense of environment inside a theatre or performance building refers to the practice of 'transforming a fixed place into a malleable space' by reconstructing the relationship between performers, audience and the performance space. Govan et al. mention the work of Richard Schechner in the 1960s as an example of this so-called 'environmental theatre': '[The] space is cluttered and erratic: there is no division between actors and audience, and no regularity with which they are seated' (p. 107).

I am particularly interested in the strategy of transforming a performance space into a haptic space (i.e. a space that appeals to the senses), for example by introducing objects or materials from the outside to the inside. In my own practice I have on numerous occasions introduced particular materials to cover the performance floor, for example: sawdust in *Tūngoungou/Metamorphosis* (1993), crushed pumice in *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* (1998), black earth in *The Greeks* (2000), and white sand in *Othello* (2003). It will be obvious to the reader that working on different surfaces effects the physicality of the actor, particularly if the actor is working bare footed so that the sense of touch through the soles of the feet is stimulated and intensified. In addition, different materials create different moods, different sounds, and different smells when disturbed by vigorous movement. Therefore, to cover the floor area with particular substances is an effective device to enhance the presence of both

performers and spectators, and it facilitates the transformation of a theatre space into an environment.

Leading New Zealand performance designer Dorita Hannah believes all her work is site-specific, even when working inside a traditional theatre building:

> In each project I consider the existing space as a found-space and work with its features to establish a 'performance landscape' for the work, integrating existing architecture with the fictive space of the performance. In this way the work becomes environmental and the architecture refuses to disappear but plays an active role in performance. (2010)

Although perhaps all set designers claim to respond to spatial features in some way or another, it is the extent to which the designer allows the features of a particular space to speak for themselves (as opposed to forcing foreign design elements onto them) that is a measure of their site-specificity. Furthermore, site-specific work, as part of the devising genre, requires the designer, director and performers to *collaborate* in their site-specific explorations.

The choice to create performance *outside* theatre buildings has also given rise to a variety of practices and works that travel through an environment, use encounter as a form of social agitation or as a way to establish a new community, or employ site as a literal or metaphorical gathering to invite a meeting. *Ex_isle of Strangers* used the site-specific strategies of travel, encounter and gathering, as we shall see in the next chapter.

During my own formation as a theatre practitioner in the 1980s in the Netherlands I have been strongly influenced by the work of BEWTH[3] and DOGTROEP[4] – two Dutch theatre ensembles who, for several decades, created multi-disciplinary performances in non-theatrical spaces such as: church, warehouse, railway station, factory, building site, shipping dock, even on trains. Their productions opened my eyes to consider any

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[3] BEWTH – Stichting Bewegings Theater: an innovative site-specific mime troupe founded in 1967 in Amsterdam (http://www.davidhaneke.com/dh_english/performance/index.html for further information & images)

[4] Dogtroep (1975 – 2008): Site-specific interdisciplinary Dutch theatre ensemble. For more information: http://www.dogtroep.nl/eng/index3.html

location anywhere as a possible site for performance, and it exposed me for the first time in my life to the experience of performance as a physical and metaphysical journey.

Of particular relevance for a New Pacific Theatre is the evolution of site-specific performance practices that have cultural ramifications to them. Govan et al. (2007) observe that metaphors of place and space, such as borders, margins, mappings, translocation, and dislocation, are frequently used as 'a critical device to explain how ideas of community and selfhood are experienced and understood' (p. 136).

> Recognising that it is possible to have emotional attachments and a sense of belonging to more than one place at once, contemporary devisers have sought to develop performative practices that invite audiences to re-envision and re-imagine familiar places and recognise the multiplicity of meanings they carry. [...] All places of performance, therefore, are multiply inscribed with cultural memories and variously significant to both performers and audiences. (pp. 138-139)

Site-specific practices provide a theatrical arena to explore issues of cultural identity and Diaspora, in a world increasingly characterised by globalisation and cultural homogenisation, particularly by investigating the interplay of the artistic and the every day, space and place, the local and the global, the factual and the fictional, location and identity.

In creating performance outside the conventional theatre environments, site-based performance practice has opened the possibility for any conceivable location to be used as a site for performance, thus liberating and extending contemporary theatre practice.

4.2 Site-specific Performance in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Aotearoa/New Zealand is a country that it is blessed with a dynamic and dramatic landscape that lends itself well for site-specific performance. Dorita Hannah (2010) suggests that there is a certain inherent darkness to our country, and quotes as an

example Colin McCahon's[5] description of Aotearoa as 'A landscape with too few lovers'.

Fig. 4.1: *The Tempest* (YMCA Tepid Baths Auckland, 1998) Photography: Sam Trubridge

Over the last two decades a considerable number of site-specific works have been produced in Aotearoa/New Zealand by a wide range of companies, such as Inside Out (*The Holy Sinner,* 1990, see Fig: 4.2), Theatre-at-Large, Trouble, Jealous, MAU, SEEyD Company, The Open Book Company, Pantheatre Pōneke, and artists such as Dorita Hannah, Sam Trubridge (*The Tempest*, 1998, see Fig: 4.1), Paul McLaughlin, Lisa Warrington (*Lines of Fire*, 2006, see Fig: 4.3), Olive Bieringa, and Warwick Broadhead

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[5] Colin McCahon (1919-87) is a prominent New Zealand visual artist. The quoted text is on one of his Northland panels: http://www.mccahonhouse.org.nz/fifties/5360northpanwake.asp

– to name but a few. As part of my own practice I have devised and directed eight site-specific works in New Zealand: *Labyrinth or Runes of the Soul* (Punakaiki, 1990); *Out of Space* (Wellington, 1994); *The Wild Man* (derelict swimming pool Wellington College, 1996); *Dancing the Lagoon* (Wellington Lagoon, 1997); *Te Ngararahuarau* (Golden Bay, 2001, see Fig: 4.6); *Animating Sites* (Christchurch Arts Centre, 2002); *Othello[6]* (Amphitheatre Studio 77, 2003); and *Baba Yaga* (Coromandel, 2007).

An exhaustive survey of site-specific practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand is beyond the scope of this project. The following discussion uses important New Zealand productions to present some of the issues of site-specific practice, particularly those that also arose during the creation of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, and that will be discussed in more detail in chapters five, six and seven.

The Holy Sinner:

After training and performing in London the co-directors of Inside Out Productions, Marie Adams and Mike Mizrahi, settled in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the mid 80s and subsequently created a number of works that, according to Dorita Hannah (2010) 'always reacted to the space it was in'. Their production of *The Holy Sinner* (1990, 1994, 2006) in particular was seen as 'a really important work with regards to site-specifity and NZ theatre in general' (Sam Trubridge, 2010). Based on a novel of the same title by Thomas Mann the work was first performed (1990) in a warehouse in Auckland. Subsequently, it was revived for the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts (1994) in Wellington (performed in Shed 5 in a production in which I played the role of Duke of Burgundy), and again in 2006, this time at the St James Theatre, once more as part of the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts.

The production used a minimum of dialogue and a maximum of physicality and special effects, including welding equipment, marching girls and a yodelling Linda Topp (of New Zealand's Topp Twins). The first two productions were performed in two-sided audience configuration and utilized all levels, crannies and nooks of the

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[6] *Othello* was a devised deconstructed version of the Shakespeare text - incorporating the features and dimensions of the area in and around the amphitheatre of Studio 77 (Wellington) and as such site-specific in nature.

warehouse spaces in some way or another, whereas the final production was performed in a conventional theatre space.

Fig. 4.2: *The Holy Sinner* (1990). Photography: Mike Mizrahi & Marie Adams

This example of an Aotearoa/New Zealand site-specific work raises issues of transposition, particular the question: can a work that was created in response to the specific features, atmospheres and dimensions of a warehouse be successfully transferred to a conventional theatre? I maintain that it was a mistake to stage *The Holy Sinner* in the St James Theatre. The protected heritage theatre could not deliver on the rough smells and warehouse atmosphere that the production required, and the proscenium arch set up did not allow the audience, through proximity, to deeply engage with the performance actions. With a star-studded cast of well-known movie stars it seemed to me that the directors had in some ways sacrificed the heart of their original work to the demands of commerce. The original, first production of *The Holy Sinner* was an example of McAuley's (2007) third category, a work that was devised in response to the features of a specific site (a warehouse) and as such 'cannot travel' (p. 9). For its second production it was successfully relocated it to a 'non-traditional site' with the 'physical features and aesthetic dimensions' to serve that work, making it an example of her first category (p. 8). However, the relocation of the third production to a traditional and commercial venue, such as the St James, compromised the integrity of the work and did not serve the production.

Lines of Fire:

In 'Playing With Fire. Staging *Lines of Fire*: a Site-Specific Project' Lisa Warrington (2007) discusses *Lines of Fire*, a newly commissioned work by New Zealand playwright Gary Henderson and directed by Lisa Warrington, to 'be presented as a site-specific performance that could only be performed at the [Dunedin Railway] Station' (p. 133). Rail traffic at the station has since 2002 been limited to a daily tourist train and a number of goods trains, which pass through on their way to and from Port Chalmers. However, because of its architectural significance, the station is open to tourists, thus making it a public space in which people (other than the performers and audience of *Lines of Fire*) come and go and thus may intersect with the performance events.
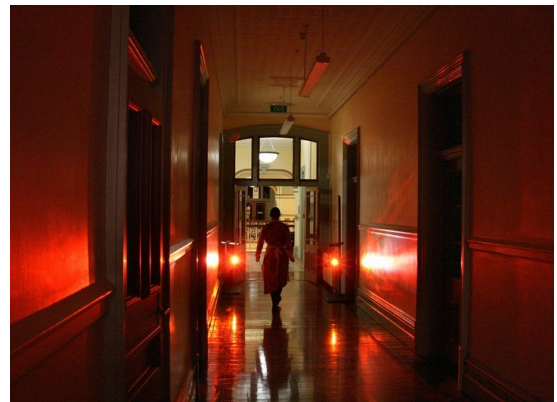
Fig. 4.3: *Lines of Fire* (Dunedin Railway Station, 2006) Photography: Reg Graham

The performance was constructed as a guided tour in which the audience had to follow instructions from pre-recorded tapes – moving from a gathering point outside the station (Fig. 4.3 first image), via the foyer (third image) and upper balcony, down a long corridor (second image) to a room on the upper level, back down to the foyer, then onwards to the platform (fourth image), on to a train, to finish in the foyer again. The work played with the tourism aspect of the venue, and, as Warrington explained, the spectators 'are simultaneously placed in the environment and distanced from it' (p. 137). In the beginning of the performance the audience was subjected to the restricted experience of organised and contained points of view, associated with the superficial experience of tourism, but gradually the spirit and humanity (or the intangible dimensions of the site that I will define as 'the Ghost' in section 4.3) of the space as contained in its memories and stories find expression through the characters, particularly the character of Josephine, who is the embodiment of the spirit of the building. Warrington introduces a filmic frame of reference in relation to the spectator's points of view:

> [The use of a filmic frame of reference] is one of the natural advantages of a promenade production, in which revelations and changes of perspective are made simply by moving the audience through space rather than presenting them with physical, emotional and technical re-alignments. One can thus consider and describe the performance – both literally and metaphorically – in terms of long shot, mid shot, close up, pan, dolly, framing the image, and strongly marked changes of perspective and point of view. (p. 141)

Warrington concludes that site-specific performance 'should celebrate the environment, and not attempt to disguise it as something else', and asserts that it is important hereby to suppress the desire to impose ourselves as actors and director upon the space, but instead 'let the space dictate us' (p. 145). In other words: it is the responsibility of the collaborators in site-specific performance to allow the space to speak for itself. As such *Lines of Fire* is an example of the third category of McAuley's taxonomy, emerging in response to the historical and political features of a particular place and as such can only exist in that place.

The production *Lines of Fire* highlights issues of audience mobility, and the intervention of unintentional spectators, people, who happened to visit the Station as a tourist attraction and by accident came upon the performance. During *Ex_isle of Strangers* Matiu/Somes Island remained open for the general public and, on a number of occasions, unintentional public crossed the pathways of performers and spectators.

Absolutely Positively Walking!

Jo Randerson and Thomas LaHood combined forces under the umbrella of Barbarian Productions to create a couple of theatrical promenade walks: *Barry's Bush Trails* and *Ye Olde Horrore Tour* (2006). With a core cast of 5 performers and guest appearances by about 10 performers, a tour guide – depending on the walk this would be Barry or Grimmy (The Grim Reaper) – took the audience on a guided tour and narrated the journey in direct address. Both guides stayed in character throughout the 'performance' but the other actors took on multiple roles as required and had to sprint between locations, rapidly change costumes and secure props in cars.

There were staged interruptions by actors posing as passersby, leading to loose improvisations between guide and actors. For example, on *Barry's Bush Trails* a yeti-like creature came out from under a log and ate pellets, fed to her by Barry. The creature then followed them into the main street, where she rummaged in garbage cans. At other times real passersby would interact and get involved. It was not always clear for the audience, which elements were rehearsed and which were spontaneous, for example, when Barry led his group onto a private property and was subsequently chased out by an angry housewife (an actor). These interactions were deliberately employed to confuse, or blur, the line between performance and real life events. The walks were created to give a sense of journeying. Characters from the different walks at times crossed over, for example, Grimmy appeared in the Bush Trails, and Barry appeared in the Horror Tour. There were no songs or dances incorporated, and Jo Randerson (2010) explained that the piece was mostly conjured up 'around the kitchen table as we nutted out the logistics of how to make things work'. Subsequently ideas were tried out in space, and adapted if necessary.

Fig. 4.4: *Barry's Bush Trails* & *Ye Olde Horrore Tour* (2006). Photography: Thomas LaHood
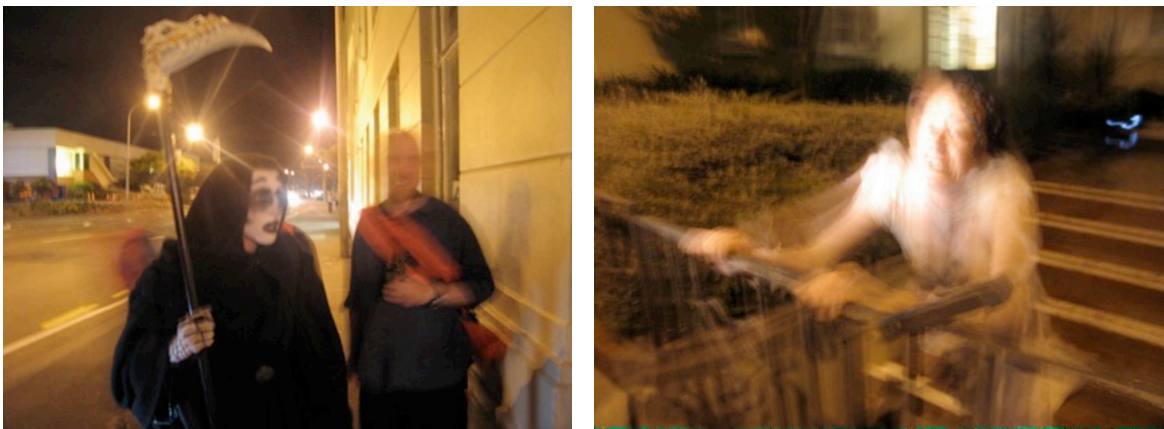
Absolutely Positively Walking explored a number of issues, and used a number of strategies similar to those in *Ex_isle of Strangers*. Audience mobility was employed to deliberately evoke a sense of journeying. The performance was set in a public space, and therefore opened itself to the possible interventions of unintentional spectators. Lastly, performance included the use of interactions between actors and spectators, leading to improvisations in which the outcomes were, to a certain extent, unknown.

Te Ngararahuarau:

To finish this section on site-specific performance in New Zealand I will discuss an example of my own work, which was created as a three-fold response to Wainui Bay, a stunning area in the Golden Bay, bordering Abel Tasman National Park. The performance *Te Ngararahuarau* (2001) was devised *on* site, *in response to* the site, and *using a legend* that offered a mythical explanation of the coming into existence of

certain landmarks of that site. Foremost, it was a community theatre project, created in collaboration with a group of Golden Bay artists (visual artists, singer-composers, choreographer, performers) over a period of 12 months time. As such it is an example of McAuley's second category: a work that is developed through an engagement with a particular community, and performed at and inspired by certain locations that are significant to that community. During the preparatory year the core group of artists developed performance material inspired by a local legend that related how the *taniwha* Te Ngararahuarau, through a cunning device, was captured by the Whakatū tribe. When almost burnt to death, the *taniwha* broke free and escaped from Nelson over the Takaka Hill to Wainui Bay – causing some of the area's landmarks, such as Howard's Hole, before dying in front of his cave in Wainui Bay. The performance material included a huge puppet design (*taniwha*), a number of songs, choreographies, and costume designs.

In January 2001 about 70 people (aged 5 to 72) gathered for a week in a tree field near the estuary of Wainui Bay. The field was converted to enable large groups of people to live and work together, containing cooking, washing and toilet facilities, large marquees, various campsites, and so on. During the 7-day residency the participants familiarised themselves with the story and signed up to areas of interest. Some people wanted to make puppets, others sing, dance, act, make music or costumes, or learn how to juggle fire staffs. Everyone was involved in the cooking, cleaning, and other communal tasks. On the day of the performance, the local Māori *kaumatua* (elders) arrived to bless the performance and offer the appropriate *karakia*, and around 250 Golden Bay residents turned up to watch the enactment of this significant local story. The main purpose of the project was participation and the enactment was a one-off event. Therefore, on its completion, in line with the story of Te Ngararahuarau, all props, puppets and costumes were ritualistically burnt in a huge fire on the beach in front of the taniwha's cave – thus eliminating all physical remnants of the performance and leaving only the memories in the participant's minds.

Fig. 4.5: *Te Ngararahuarau* (Golden Bay, 2001). Photography: Susan Jesse

One of the young participants wrote the following feedback:

> My experience of being involved in Te Ngararahuarau was great. It was choice to
> see everyone working together to make puppets, help construct the fire staff, and
> help set up the food. The thing was that it was just so much fun. We got to sleep by
> the fire and learn about the legend of Te Ngararahuarau and to go swimming in the
> estuary. But the most fun thing was the actual performance. Being a part of helping
> to make the legend come true for one night was totally memorable. The part I
> didn't like much was that the showers were ice cold, we had to go to the toilet out
> in the open and we had to eat what we got served but apart from that I know that
> that week will have been the most heart touching week of my life. Lewis Karaitiana
> - aged 11 (Jan 2001)

The project was successful in forging connections between local artists, between Māori and non-Māori communities, and facilitating collaboration and connection between people from various backgrounds and ages. It also had an educational aspect to it, as it animated a story that contained important cultural knowledge of the region, but that was largely unknown to a currently predominant Pākehā Golden Bay community. Some participants learnt the art of paper making from the *harakeke* (flax plant) and subsequently used this paper to create beautiful and sculptural costumes; others learnt the skills of fire juggling, puppet making, singing, and flax rope platting.

A vital aspect of the project was the residential and communal living in which young and old were cooking, eating, sleeping and working together as one large extended family under rather primitive circumstance including the use of toilet 'out in the open'. As a point of contrast with the previous examples of Aotearoa/New Zealand site-specific work *Te Ngararahuarau* was created in collaboration with a local community, forged a strong sense of connection between its participants through a residential working process, and developed links between various sections of the community.

The last twenty years has seen a significant number of site-specific works by Aotearoa/New Zealand artists and theatre collectives devised in response to a wide range of indoor and outdoor, urban and rural locations. Many of these works involved certain degrees of audience mobility, evoking a sense of journeying. The majority of works presented here have been examples of site-specific performance, the third category of McAuley's taxonomy, with the exception of *Te Ngararahuarau*, which was a work that emerged from an engagement with a certain community, and as such is an example of her second category.

4.3   The Host, the Ghost and the Guest

Contemporary performance theorists emphasise the subjective and inter-subjective experience of space. This is particularly evident in the assumed meanings or interpretations of the words place and space. However, as Cathy Turner (2004) contends, there is no absolute consistency in the use of the terms 'place' and 'space'

within theoretical discourse. Michel de Certeau (1984) defines space as 'a practiced place' (p. 117). In other words, each activity in, or occupation of, or journey through space, constitutes a reinterpretation or reviewing of it. Turner observes that 'space is often envisaged as an aggregation of layered writings – a palimpsest' (p. 373). And Hannah Davies (2004), in her consideration of the relationship between space, place and site, argues that 'site is the construction of place through the purification of space' (p. 1), thus suggesting that space is the actual or original geography or architecture, site the constructed meaning in a space, and place the resulting, subjective experience of that space. Whatever the terminology we use, it is important for the analysis of site-specific performance to distinguish between a) the tangible aspects of a certain location, including its geographic and architectural features, b) the intangible aspects of that location, such as the atmospheres, cultural and spiritual dimensions, the meanings attached, or envisaged as relating, to that site, and c) the artistic work (including its participants: performers and spectators) temporarily displayed at, and affecting, that site. This section will take a closer look at these three aspects of site-specific performance.

Turner (2004), in considering the distinctions between 'the site itself and the ephemeral architectures that may be built within it', refers to the work of Mike Pearson and Cliff McLucas as directors of Welsh performance company Brith Gof who coined the terms 'host' and 'ghost' to describe the relationship between place and performance event. Turner quotes McLucas as suggesting that:

> The host site is haunted for a time by a ghost that the theatre-makers create. Like all ghosts it is transparent and the host can be seen through the ghost. Add into this a third term – the witness, i.e., the audience – and we have a kind of trinity that constitutes the work. (pp. 373-374)

Pearson and McLucas employ the term 'ghost' in reference to both the introduced architectural structures and objects, and the (intangible) events, narratives and performances that take place within these structures. Although the transparent quality of a ghost concept is a stimulating image in considering the co-existence of site and performance event, I argue that it is fundamentally a flawed proposition as it fails to consider, or confuses, the distinction between tangible and intangible

dimensions of both site and performance event. Turner notes that the 'host' is already a layered space 'formed by lived experience, so that the site-specific performance comprise not only the machinery of "place", but also the patina it has acquired with past use' (p. 374). When creating a site-specific performance, such as *Ex_isle of Strangers*, it is vital that the collaborating artists take into consideration both the tangible features of the site, i.e. its geographic and architectural characteristics, and the intangible features, i.e. its cultural and spiritual characteristics.

The distinction between the tangible and intangible dimensions of a site echoes tensions between objectivity and subjectivity in lived experience and approaches to knowledge. It is interesting to note that, since leaving Brith Gof in 1997, Pearson has continued to develop his own performance work in collaboration with archaeologist Michael Shanks, exploring the intersection of site-specific performance and archaeology in ways that go beyond mere analogy. Turner cites Shanks as claiming that archaeology is concerned with 'the things left of the past translated through the cultural and political interests of the present' (p. 376). It is not just about digging up fragments of the past, it is as much about interpreting and contextualising these fragments through the lenses of contemporality – thus allowing the past to illuminate, or cross fade into, the present. In Zen Buddhism certain wisdoms can only be expressed in a paradoxical manner of speech. To use such a paradox in this context, I suggest that the tangible and intangible aspects of a site are separate *and* not separate. It is for this reason that I propose to reserve the word 'host' for the tangible features, the geographic and architectural structures, and apply the word 'ghost' to the intangible features, the histories, atmospheres, and feelings, of a particular site that, as a transposition, are both part of and separate from these structures. This of course brings up the question what term to use in reference to the performance event presented at that site. To emphasise the temporality of the presented work, including the visiting presence of its participants (performers and spectators), I suggest the word 'Guest'. Although it is useful to develop taxonomy that facilitates the analysis of site-specific performance practice, it is important to keep in mind that the distinguished dimensions inform, affect and influence one another, and that any artistic work after its temporary presence (Guest) becomes part of the intangible fabric of memories and histories (Ghost) of that place. *Ex_isle of Strangers*, as a

creative response to the tangible and intangible features of Matiu Island, became, through its process and outcome, part of the intangible dimensions of the island. This was identified by one of the *tangata whenua* (indigenous owners of the island) in her audience feedback:

> The *Whenua* [the land], its people and animals, past/present/future all responded and will continue to respond to the *aroha* [love] and beauty you imparted. [...] You have made me think about the island history in a completely different way, I feel so uplifted – what a great *taonga* [treasure] we have been given. You have brought something so special, so profound, to the island that you have become part of it and it of you. This work and you are now forever part of the fabric of the island. (Aud. #68)

The Host, the Ghost and the Guest present a terminology in reference to the tangible, intangible, and artistic dimensions of site-specific performance that can guide and progress our understanding and practice of this genre.

4.4   Audience Mobility

Many site-specific performance creators produce works that move *through* space rather than occupying an enclosed or framed performance arena. Turner (2004) perceives this as a 'sensitivity that hesitates to appropriate space, [by] making a distinction between what is "of" the place and what is brought "to" the place' (p. 377) and Fiona Wilkie (2007) observes 'a growing field of walking practice' (p. 27). This section will look at issues and practices of site-specific performance in which there is a significant element of audience mobility incorporated in the performance design and experience.

Moving through space uses *performance as journey*: a process that, as the result of exposure to a variety of environments and circumstances, is significantly influenced by chance. Although Fisher-Lichte's (2009) discussion of 'a state of in-between-ness' focuses on intercultural performance, her identification of an interactive loop between performers and spectators (p. 392) is of particular relevance for performance as journey. When journeying through space, in a mixture of

performance and non-performance activity, there is in fact both a spatial manifestation of 'being in between', as well as a metaphysical state of in-between-ness. Such a performance structure marks a huge diversion from creating performance in the context of a tightly controlled and secure location or environment. The experience of journey emphasises the malleable dimensions of both site and performance, or, as Turner (2004) puts it: 'neither site nor performance is fixed or graspable, yet both seem to be glimpsed in passing' (p. 377). By borrowing the term 'potential space' from psychoanalysis Turner creates an effective framework to investigate the particular aim of site-specific performance that invites surprises and unforeseen incidents to occur. The 'potential space' offers an arena in which to enquire what is self and what is other, what is real and what is unreal. Site-specific performance blurs the line between the play-world and reality, sometimes the two worlds clash, and sometimes they appear in amazing synchronicity. Turner cites the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas in his examination of the effect of chance:

> [Instead], we are played upon by the inspiring arrival of the unselected, which often yields a very special type of pleasure – that of surprise. It opens us up, liberates an area, like a key fitting a lock. (p. 382)

As we saw in a number of the Aotearoa/New Zealand examples of site-specific performance (*Lines of Fire*, *Absolutely Positively Walking*) and as we shall see in *Ex_isle of Strangers*, the influence of chance is very apparent in site-specific performance that takes place in public spaces. Locating the performance event in the context of a 'potential space' (in which chance events affect the experience and outcome of the performance) highlights the dynamic tension between expectation and surprise that provides such fertile ground for transformation and creativity for its participants (performers and spectators).

It is worthwhile to take a brief look at the increased occurrence of 'non-place' in contemporary public spaces. Augé (1995) observes that modern airports, railway stations, hotel chains, large retail stores and leisure parks, as examples of 'non-place', promote a sense of solitude rather than of social relationships. He notes a particular prevalence for commercial space within modern cities to leave little room for non-economic social interaction. Within a climate of people travelling through a landscape

or urban environment rather than inhabiting it, Augé (1995) argues that it comes as no surprise that people experience an increased sense of separation and disconnection with one another and their environment (p. 79).

By adopting the core value of *kotahitanga* (to overcome separateness and isolation through emphasizing our connectedness) a New pacific Theatre focuses in its practice on creating a sense of community and connection. As such, this mission intends to counteract the growing isolation that is the result of an increased emergence of non-places in our society.

4.5   Conclusion

It is a vital part of the mission of a New Pacific Theatre to create works that enable performers and audiences to develop a strong connection with the tangible and intangible dimensions of our land and with one another, as fellow travellers on a journey, thus helping to overcome the isolation and separation that is so widespread in our time. Site-specific performance provides an effective tool to realize this mission, particularly through the strategy of Audience Mobility, employing a sense of physical and metaphorical journeying that allows time and space for performers and audiences to interact (or simply be) with one another and the space they occupy. In proposing the terminology of Host, Ghost and Guest, in reference to the tangible, intangible and artistic dimensions of site-specific performance, I have developed an analytical framework to guide and progress our understanding and practice of this genre.

Chapter Five: Creative Development

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Introduction

Ex_isle of Strangers exemplifies the effort to transmit the mission of this study into performance. It was presented on Matiu/Somes Island in April 2010 – creating and testing the prototype of a New Pacific Theatre. This chapter charts and analyses the creative process of this site-specific odyssey – drawing hereby to a great extent from:

- The multiple-perspectives of my own experience as particiant-performer-scholar-director-producer-composer-administrator, through observation, and as reported-on-reflection in my artist journal.

- The experiences of the performers during the creative process, again through observation and also as reported-on-reflection in the participants' written responses to a questionnaire[1].

After encountering an avalanche of, at times seemingly unsurmountable, challenges and obstacles in the preparatory stages, the final months leading up to the presentation of *Ex_isle of Strangers* were surprisingly *blessed*[2]. Whatever may have been the case, the members of the ensemble felt 'in the zone', the creative work flowed, and we encountered numerous incidents of what C. G. Jung so beautifully described as synchronicity – '[the] *meaningful coincidence* of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved' (in Campbell, 1976:505).

Like others who engage in the process of practice-led-research (Robson 2004; Haseman and Mafe 2009; Fenton 2007) or performance-as-research (Riley and

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[1] See Appendix 3.2 'Questionnaire Performers'
[2] I deliberately employ a word here drawn from a spiritual ontology to describe a shared sense among the collaborators that we were uplifted and carried through, perhaps for a purpose that stretched beyond our individual and collective efforts.

Hunter 2009) I have been wrestling with the issue of how to write about creative processes in ways that reflect the multi-layering and plural perspectives that are inherent in such practices. In "Acquiring Know-How" Brad Haseman and Daniel Mafe (2009) observe:

> Issues of translation of meaning from one medium [performance] to another [linguistic] are immediately encountered. How to speak in a way that complements that work? What is it to speak of the work? Are we explaining it? Defining it, amplifying it? Finally, where exactly do research findings lie? (p. 216)

Theatre is first and foremost a medium that communicates through the vocabularies of imagery, feelings, and sensations, and to a lesser degree through the lexis of words or chronological events. In questioning the authority of the text, Artaud (1958) puts forward the challenge that:

> [As] an independent and autonomous art, [theatre] must, in order to revive or simply to live, realize what differentiates it from text, pure speech, literature, and all other fixed and written means. (p. 106)

In response to this call I propose that what differentiates theatre is a language that is more akin to that of dreams: a language of images in which perspectives, timeframes, and locations shift and leap, often without any apparent reason. Komparu (1983) recommends that spectators need to reach a state between dreaming and reality to enter 'the territory of time and space where the non-realistic consciousness of Noh dwells' (p. xxiv). In a previous publication, I established that patterns and events in dreams are anchored in the realm of sub- or unconsciousness (van Dijk 1978). They do not adhere to the common sense of narrative or linear causality, but instead follow the design of fantasy, feeling, subjective experience, association, and imagination. Trying to describe, reflect or report on dream or theatre experiences through the medium of the written word often feels like a process of reduction, of reducing the complexity and richness of the original experience, particularly its intangible aspects of atmospheres, feelings, intuitions, spirituality, and the subjective, multi-layered experiences of performers and audience members, into a singularity of thought or reason. It is interesting to observe that when I am engaged in a creative process, the

integrated physical, mental and imaginative effort gives a wholeness and flow to my actions, whereas, sitting behind my desk, trying to find the right words to communicate my experiences and understandings, I feel awkward, stilted, ill at ease, as a fish out of the water, or, as if speaking in a foreign language. Julie Robson (2004) observes that 'to speak in two tongues – as practitioner and theorist/academic – [is] a bilingual skill, a cross-disciplinary act.' (p. 99)

In proposing that theatre employs a language of images, similar to dreams, it becomes vital for me to incorporate photographic and cinematographic images in the reporting of a theatrical venture. Robson (2004) asserts: 'Beyond a decorative function, and more than an anecdotal approach to philosophy, images provide "affective resonance" integral to discourse' (p. 104). While 'a picture speaks a thousand words', it is also important to highlight certain limitations of photographic or cinematic representations of performance moments, particularly in the way they reduce the three-dimensionality of theatrical image or experience into a two-dimensionality that is lacking depth of field. It is interesting to note recent developments in 3-D technology, for both film and TV, that aim to surmount this particular limitation. The documentation of a live theatrical event through the medium of digital video recording not only limits the visual dimensions, but it also diminishes all sensory aspects of a performance, including the quality of sound through the elimination of the very high and very low frequencies. Subsequently, digitally recorded sounds do not vibrate in the body of the listener in the same way live voices or musical instruments do. Also, in recorded footage the point of view of the original live event is predetermined by the camera, and does not allow for individual choice. The actual creation, performance and experience of *Ex_isle of Strangers* can, therefore, only be referred to in limited, and ultimately unsatisfactory, ways within the context of a written and recorded thesis such as this. Having pointed out some of these limitations, I propose that the most meaningful way to write about, and reflect on, the creative process of *Ex_isle of Strangers* is by weaving together analytical language, subjective and poetic responses, and photographic/cinematographic images, thus conveying some of its complexity. This chapter focuses on selected aspects of the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers*: its Point of Departure (5.1), Permission, Funding and Weighting Issues (5.2), the Collaborators (5.3), selected aspects from the

Devising Workshops (5.4) and last but not least, the 2-week Residency on Matiu/Somes Island (5.5) leading up to the performance season.

5.1   Point of Departure

When creating a performance that aims 'to be strongly connected to the unique geographic, cultural and spiritual qualities of Aotearoa/New Zealand' the first question that came to my mind was: where to situate such a performance? There are numerous sites to choose from and many motivations to inform such a choice. For pragmatic reasons it made sense to look for a site in or near Wellington. I didn't want to present the first exemplar of a New Pacific Theatre in a traditional theatre space as it was important to avoid causing a barrier for those, who perceive such spaces to be the domain of an elite white 'cultured' middle class, and as such feel uncomfortable entering these.

I have for a long time been drawn to the idea of *islands*, isolated places surrounded by sea. Being Dutch, our collective psyche is filled with stories of travelling the seas in search of paradise, trade, new scenery and exotica. Such stories of escape, adventure and unusual encounters certainly sparked off my imagination and instilled a strong interest in far-off islands. Later, my romantic notion of freedom and paradise was offset by histories of exile and imprisonment, on islands such as Alcatraz and Robben Island.

Since moving to Wellington in 1992 I have passed Matiu/Somes Island several times on the ferry to Days Bay. Although not exactly a tropical paradise, I observed that it was a substantial island with various buildings on it. I asked myself: are there people living on this island? Is it farmland? Is it an outpost for the military? Is it government owned land or Māori land? What are the stories and histories of the island?

In May 2008 I visited the island for the first time – together with Dr Charles Royal. Charles and I had engaged in several conversations about the intersection of a New Pacific Theatre and the *whare tapere* and were considering the idea of co-devising a performance together – perhaps on Matiu/Somes Island. During this visit we noted

that the island provided an exciting range of possible locations for performance, some of which were ultimately used in *Ex_isle of Strangers* (see Fig. 5.1).

Fig. 5.1a: The barracks (site for the Kim Lee Noh Play)

Fig. 5.1b: The pig pen (site for Miki Seifert's Butoh piece)

Fig. 5.1: Possible performance sites on Matiu/Somes Island (May 2008). Photography: Bert van Dijk

Fig. 5.1c: Section of quarantine centre (site for the Q2 piece)

Fig. 5.1d: The wharf (site for the Arrival Scenes)

On closer inspection, Matiu/Somes Island provided all the ingredients needed to create a prototype of a New Pacific Theatre performance: it was steeped in rich Māori and Pākehā history; it presented an amazing array of geographically and architecturally interesting sites; it had been given a sadness (by an extended history of human and animal quarantine, and related suffering) that seemed to cry out for some spiritual amendments. It also contained accommodation to enable residential *wānanga* and was reasonably accessible by ferry. I began to imagine how the ferry trip in itself, as part of an eventual performance experience, could alter and enhance the audience's state of presence and perception, thus increasing the transformative value of the performance. All the early signs indicated that the time was ripe for the

island to host its first public performance. Subsequently Matiu/Somes Island was chosen as the point of departure for the creation of *Ex_isle of Strangers*.

When using a site as the point of departure it is essential to engage with the site in a relationship of mutuality. Rather than using the space purely for one's own purposes and benefits, it is a process of 'allowing the space to speak for itself' and 'making the space look good'[3], meaning 'looking good' in a dramatic rather than an aesthetic way. By allowing the tangible and intangible dimensions (in other words the geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions) of the island to express themselves in our work, we assumed a more subservient role as creators. One of the participants observed:

> I have become more aware of the idea of letting the space speak for itself. When performing in a space with such heaviness [referring to the Quarantine Centre], it can be good to bring lightness to the performance, to not state the obvious. Not in an attempt to create irony and thereby put the focus on the gap between the heaviness of the place and the lightness of the performance, but rather a genuine lightness must/had to be brought about to lift the space into a realm of lightness. Through this comes a form of healing of the space. (Smith 2010)

During our residential workshops on the island we related to Matiu as a good friend, someone we listened to, played with, sang to, tickled, challenged, cared for, and came to love and appreciate deeply.

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[3] This particular terminology is drawn from Enrique Pardo's work on Alchemical Theatre, Object Metaphor and Choreographic Image. Enrique Pardo is a member of the Roy Hart Centre and co-director of Pantheatre (http://www.pantheatre.com/). Much of Enrique Pardo's theatre research is concerned with the effort for actors to lose or loosen their ego - enabling them to serve the imagery or opportunities that lay hidden underneath the surface of spatial and choreographic interaction. The work is skilled and complex, as well as intuitive, and is anchored in a corporeal approach to metaphor - derived from the Greek words *'phoros'* (to bear, to carry) and *'meta'* (across) - i.e. carrying 'meaning' across as an independent entity from the carrier.

5.2   Permission, Funding and Weighting Issues

Preparation for this project embroiled the author in two complex bureaucratic processes: 1) seeking permission to use Matiu/Somes Island as a site, and 2) obtaining academic clarification on the weighting of the components of a practice-led PhD.

Matiu/Somes Island opened to the public as a Department of Conservation scientific and historic reserve in 1995. In 2009 it was included in the Treaty of Waitangi cultural redress for *Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko-o-te-Ika-a-Māui*, which returned ownership of the three harbour islands to the iwi, as represented by the Wellington Tenths Trust[4]. While still protected by reserve status, a joint governance board, composed of iwi, community and DOC, direct its future. In practical terms this meant that the process of obtaining permission to perform and film on the island was a complex one, involving consultation with representatives of the Wellington Tenths Trust, the island rangers, DOC headquarters, and other stakeholders.

As the first person to engage in a Performance-as-Research doctorate at the Theatre Programme of VUW I encountered a system that privileges the written word in its PhD research, presentation and examination. Little clarity and guidance exists as yet with regards to the criteria and requirements that determine the weight or value of the various practical components of a practice-led PhD. It became obvious that the specific allocation of weight in percentages is a direct function of the amount of funds raised, my expertise in the media of theatre (ample) and film (limited), and the available resources within VUW such as space, equipment, support, expertise, and finance. Since the outcome of various funding applications was an unknown factor in this process, it was crucial that the academy exercised flexibility with regards to the relative assessment weighting of the various components of this practice-led research – which they did. During the fundraising the evaluative weighting of the practical components shifted several times. However, in the end I managed to raise the funds needed to realise *Ex_isle of Strangers* even beyond the scope and scale as originally envisaged.

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[4] Retrieved from https://tenths.maori.nz/ (26 March 2010)

5.3   Collaborators

Riley & Hunter (2009) observe that collaboration is one of the main 'research methods in Performance as Research' (p. xix). As a devised work *Ex_isle of Strangers* was created in a collaborative effort, and my role a complex composite of participant-artist-researcher-teacher-producer-composer-director-administrator-facilitator. This unique, multi-faceted role stretched me in all possible directions and allowed me – sometimes forced me – to consider new approaches to leadership. At the start of my research I invited a large group of potential collaborators from various Māori and Pākehā theatre and arts backgrounds. As I was not in a position to offer people payment for their involvement, the eventual collaborators were the result of a process of self-selection.

In order to reflect the cultural diversity of Aotearoa/New Zealand, a wide spectrum of people, communities and skills needed to be represented in the collaborative process, thus allowing the work to draw from a rich palette of experiences, expressions and values. This was certainly achieved, as cast and crew of *Ex_isle of Strangers* ranged in age from eleven to fifty-seven, consisted of Māori and Pākehā, male and female, gay and straight, from Wellington, Hamilton, Hastings, Kapiti Coast and Paris, and involved experienced artists and novices, performers, musicians, designers, scholars, visual artists, educators, and directors.

As explained in chapter two, it was considered vital to have a significant number of Māori artists on board, to lead and monitor the process of infusing our creative development with the core values of the *whare tapere* and matters of *tikanga Māori*[5], such as the appropriate use of *karakia* (prayers) and spiritual practices, before dinner, when working with *harakeke* (New Zealand flax), during *pōwhiri* or *whakatau* (Māori welcome rituals), and at the start of our performances. This particular requirement was realised by having a 50% Māori and 50% Pākehā representation in the core group (see table 5.1).

In acknowledgement of their invaluable contributions to the creation of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, the various collaborators are listed below. A distinction is made between

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[5] The term *tikanga Māori* refers to cultural practices based on Māori protocol.

the *Core Group*, who participated in all devising workshops and took on several main roles in the performance, and the *Supporting Artists*, who only participated in parts of the devising workshops and took on fewer, minor or supporting roles.

Core Group

Name:	Background:	Roles:	Profile:
Rawiri Hindle	Educator, researcher, performer. Lecturer Faculty of Education, VUW. MA thesis: "The Importance of Being in the Māori Arts Education"	- Māori Queen - Child-like Being Q3 - Noh Chorus	Age: 51 Māori Plimmerton
Will Moffatt	BA Theatre & Classical Studies, VUW Shakespeare Globe Participant	- Dog - Security Warden Q2 - Ghost of Kim Lee	Age: 22 Pākehā Wellington
Te Kahurangi Maioha	Dip. Whitireia Performing Arts Dancer Student Māori Visual Arts Hastings	- Ring Master - Performer Q3 - Kōken in Noh Play	Age: 38 Māori Hastings
Madeline McNamara	Graduate MTA Directing, VUW / TW Performer, Director, Social Activist Founder Magdalena Aotearoa	- Dog - Peggy in Q2 - Spirit of Matiu	Age: 54 Pākehā Wellington
Moko Smith	BA Theatre Studies Waikato Performer *The Blue Shawl* Technical Assistant *Theatre du Soleil*	- Hanz [Cabaret] - Performer Q2 - Jin Cao Lee	Age: 23 Māori Paris
Whetu Silver	BA Theatre Studies, Waikato Performer *The Blue Shawl* Youth Facilitator	- Dog - Performer Q3 - Ranger: Anna	Age: 22 Māori Hamilton
Jacob Ennis	BA Theatre & Film, VUW	- Musician - Performer Q2	Age: 21 Pākehā Wellington
Tristan Stibbards	UCOL Theatre School Musician Artistic Entrepreneur	- Musical Director - Performer Q3 - Musician	Age: 29 Pākehā Wellington

Table 5.1: Core performers *Ex_isle of Strangers*

Supporting Artists

Name:	Role / Contribution:	Name:	Role / Contribution:
Dr Charles Royal	Cultural Advisor / Workshop participant	William Franco	Cameraman
Mike Potton	Production Assistant	Ian Harman	Costume Design / Maker
Nicole Simons	Photography	Janet Dunn	Costume Assistance
Pam Hughes	Cabaret Performer Noh Chorus	Belinda Davis	Cabaret Performer Noh Chorus
Jasmine Toynbee	Guide Noh Chorus	Robin Owen	Guide Noh Chorus
Rosie Moxey	Musician	Alistair Fraser	Taonga Puoro
Stephanie Pohe	Tāmairangi	Paihere Aperahama	Te Kekerengu
Ruia Aperahama	Te Rangihaeata	Miki Seifert	Butoh Dancer Q1
Simon Haren	Performer ASM / APM	MUMUKE	14 Taiko Drummers [aged 11 – 17] led by Erola Whitcombe

Table 5.2: Supporting team *Ex_isle of Strangers*

With the number of participants during the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers* expanding to more than 40 collaborators, the artistic and administrative process gradually became a complex web of roles, areas of responsibility and lines of communication. Despite this complexity and the diversity of the participants, the ensemble was united in its purpose and shared the common values of love, respect, mutual support and care, thus moving in union to a successful realisation of our mission. Core artist Will Moffatt expressed this as follows:

> I was surprised how such a diverse group of people – with different backgrounds, beliefs, ages, and experiences - could live together and develop such intense and deep connections in two weeks. We became different parts to one giant mechanism, with every component completely focused on the whole. Not once did I hear someone complaining about someone else in the company or saying anything negative about anyone – in my experience in theatre, but also in life this is pretty much unheard of. And not only were we working together but living together as well, and yet this only furthered our connections and strengthened the mechanism. (2010)

5.4   Devising Workshops

Introduction

The creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, from defining the point of departure (May 2008) to the public performances (April 2010), took place in the form of various residential and non-residential *wānanga* (workshops), devising laboratories and rehearsal sessions. It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to present a comprehensive analysis of each and every session. Instead I will highlight critical moments, issues and aspects of the devising process that had a strong impact on the mission of this research project.

The first residential *wānanga* (5.4.1) on Matiu/Somes Island (Feb 2009) was significant in its entirety as it prepared the ground and seeded many of the crops that would be cultivated into the ultimate performance of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. It also created the right circumstance for the participants to connect strongly with one another as *whānau* (this concept has been discussed in chapter two).

The second workshop focused on 'Presence and Light' and 'Archetypal Qualities and Light' (Aug 2009), and was co-directed by lighting designer Lisa Maule and myself. Although it was creatively very stimulating to enter the arena of archetypal light and explore the theatrical possibilities of light in relation to essential qualities of selected Māori *Atua* [Gods], this field of enquiry warrants a complete PhD thesis in itself. The limited electricity supply on the island, combined with issues of access, made it impractical to take our investigations into the performance context of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. Readers interested in the intersection of lighting design, the theatre techniques of Michael Chekhov, and the Māori gods, can refer to the DVD of this workshop (Appendix 6.2).

The third workshop consisted of a 2-week period in Hamilton to complete the first draft of the Kim Lee Noh Play. It was guided by John Davies, senior lecturer in Performing and Screen Arts, UNITEC, Auckland, director of the New Zealand Noh Theatre Company, and pioneer in the application of Noh principles within a New

Zealand theatrical context[6]. In this chapter I will present an analysis of the process of writing a localised Noh play, based on a New Zealand story, employing selected Noh conventions and principles, incorporating Māori elements, and adopting a New Pacific Theatre frame of reference (5.4.2).

During February and March 2010 a number of workshops and rehearsals were held to score and stage the Kim Lee Noh play. During this process, a number of issues emerged relating to costume and mask design, music and choral composition, and various acting choices. These are discussed in this chapter (5.4.3).

The second *wānanga* on Matiu/Somes Island (5.4.4) turned out to be a stumbling block. The accumulation of pressure, insecurities, confusion, tiredness, and disconnectedness led to tensions. It is part of my Buddhist philosophy and practice to consider obstacles and struggles as opportunities for learning and transformation. The disconcerted feeling at the end of the *wānanga* prompted me to reflect on issues of *whanaungatanga* and *rangatiratanga* (see chapter two) and to modify aspects in my leadership and collaboration approaches.

5.4.1 First Matiu Wānanga

The first *wānanga* was a 3-day residential workshop on the island in January 2009. Staying on an island, with no Internet access, no TV, no cafes, and only a sporadic ferry service to the city, intensified the residential experience.

During this *wānanga* [7] there were keynote addresses and workshops by participants in areas of their expertise: *whare tapere* (Charles Royal); Michael Chekhov techniques, Devising strategies and Presence work (Bert van Dijk); *Kōrari* workshop (Tanemahuta Gray); and Light & Lighting Design (Lisa Maule). In addition participants mapped the island, began site-specific explorations of certain performance locations, and discussed existing research relating to the island.

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[6] John Davies has presented / directed a number of New Zealand Noh Plays: *Rakiura* (1993), *Te Tapua – The Goblin* (2001), and more recently *The Blue Shawl* (2008)
[7] See: Appendix 6.1 'DVD Matiu Wānanga 2009' for a visual diary of this first workshop.

Fig. 5.2: Photographic impressions of Matiu *wānanga* #1 (Feb 2009). Photography: Nicole Simons

In the following section I elaborate on two particular areas of research that ignited, inspired, and guided a significant part of the devising work for *Ex_isle of Strangers*. The first one relates to selected research on Matiu Island, undertaken by others and considered by us, particularly *Island of Secrets* (McGill, 2001) and *Constructing Ex_isle* (Davies, 2004); the second is an analysis of 'Mapping the Island', spiritually, geographically, and culturally.

Island of Secrets

Of all the stories, incidents and historical anecdotes collected by David McGill, the stories of *Tāmairangi* and *Kim Lee* interested me the most. The story of Tāmairangi is a tribute to the power of art and song in its ability to change one's destiny for the better. Tāmairangi was a chieftainess of Ngāti Ira and Ngāi Tara descent, two of the

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tribes with historical connections to Matiu Island (McGill, 2001:20). In the 1820s the chiefs Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata led Ngāti Toa in the invasion of Porirua and Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington Harbour). Tāmairangi and her son Te Kekerengu took refuge on Taputeranga, the small island in Island Bay, but were subsequently driven off the island and captured by Ngati Mutunga. When Tāmairangi expected to die she asked permission to sing a *waiata tangi* (lament) to 'farewell her land and people' (p. 21). The beauty and nostalgia of this song deeply touched the heart of Te Rangihaeata who subsequently took Tāmairangi and her son under his protection. In order to stage this story I asked Hone Hurihanganui (with whom I collaborated on a number of productions in the past) to compose an original song to be used as Tāmairangi's *waiata*. Memories of historical events can be like faded photographs: the detail of image is lost but the essence or feeling is still present. I began to envisage the staging of this scene at a site, away from any buildings and with the landmarks of harbour and city out of view. I wanted to create a fragile impression of fragments and faded memories, like the whispering of the leaves in the trees, hinting at what would have been, rather than a realistic representation.

The story of the Chinese immigrant Kim Lee, in contrast, tells the tragic experience and cruel treatment of a foreigner, a stranger, to our shores. Kim Lee arrived by boat from Canton, and as a result of having a badly scarred face, was suspected of suffering leprosy. According to David McGill (2001) he was at first put into quarantine on Matiu/Somes Island but as 'those in quarantine there objected to this dread disease' (p. 41) he was exiled to Ngā Mokopuna, an islet off Matiu/Somes Island that subsequently became known as Leper Island. With only a cave for shelter, Kim Lee spent three months in unimaginable isolation before his death in 1904. On examination of Lee's records McGill suggests that he may not have suffered from leprosy, but that his symptoms were more consistent with tuberculosis or an autoimmune disease, suggesting that the way Kim Lee was treated by government and quarantine officials originated from the strong anti-Chinese feeling in New Zealand at that time (p. 42).

Constructing Ex_isle:

Hannah Davies (2004) traces the word 'island' back to the Greek *isola*, which means isolation – '[...] it is defined as a "watery place" delineated by its geographic disconnection, its complete encapsulation by the horizon' (p. 3). The disconnection from a mainland has given rise to the use of islands as 'bounded place[s], situated on the limit, on the edge, on the threshold', places to discard unwanted elements of society. Davies argues that there is a subliminal association of the sea with madness, and that the expulsion of the mad and insane on vessels and islands served the dual function of 'cleansing the city of insanity and the insane of their disease' (p. 4).

The act of journeying across the sea also relates to the physical and metaphysical crossing of borders or boundaries. Similarly, the inclusion of journeying in the design and creation of *Ex_isle of Strangers* fulfils the dual function of transporting the audience to another place *and* opening their mind, allowing them to enter another mental and spiritual realm: the opening of boundaries.

As a result of their bordered or bounded location, islands were often inhabited by:

- The Prisoner;

- The Madman;

- The Exile (artist or politician regarded as a threat to society or the state).

The particular acts of *quarantine* and *exile* usually involved a process of cleansing and purification, often with the use of huge quantities of water. The act of purification assumes the presence of dirt, which needs to be removed. The rangers on Matiu/Somes Island mention in their bio-security talk that in the past, quarantined people, on arrival on the island, were doused with sulphur, and that later in history it was realised that this actually did more harm than good.

Like other islands in similar locations, Matiu/Somes Island has been characterized by its borders, as adjacent to, but isolated from a city, and used for the exclusion of 'moral filth' (prisoners) and 'physical filth' (contagious diseases). As such it marks the separation of Island from City or Homeland. Border control and border maintenance are a crucial and integral part to the safeguarding of city and homeland from infection

and pollution by dirt. The question arises: what is dirt, and according to whose judgment?

Mapping the Island

Davies (2004) defines map as 'a site of knowledge' and suggests that mapping is 'an act of interpretation' (p.1). During the first *wānanga* we experimented with *mapping* as a subjective act of interpretation and engagement – a strategy to explore the spiritual, geographical, and cultural dimensions of Matiu/Somes Island. The group was divided into three, each focusing on one of the three dimensions. I asked the groups to physically survey the island in relation to the dimension of their choice; reflect on possible meanings and interpretations; represent their conclusions in the form of oil pastel drawings; and at the end report back to the other groups. This activity constituted an *experimental* investigation, through the use of an *original* strategy, to explore and connect physically, mentally and imaginatively with the island. As a core research strategy it is relevant to present an overview of the particular findings of each group.

i. *Spiritual Mapping:*

To map the spiritual dimensions of the island, this group set out to get a feeling of the inherent energy of selected areas on the island. They sensed quite a sad energy relating to the suffering of souls who spent time and/or died on Matiu. The group perceived that the island came across as being blocked in the middle.

To access the intangible dimensions of the island, the group decided to lie down on the land and ask her questions, such as: How are you now? What do you need? The strategy of *imagined dialogue* appeared to bring up answers originating from a spiritual or imaginative realm (is there a difference I wonder?) rather than being brought on by reason. Some of the answers that returned were: the island seemed thirsty, she wanted us to hongi her, she was happy for us to be there, and so on. The group also reflected on the presence of the qualities of the *kākāriki* (native New Zealand parakeet): chatty, colourful, light, alive, and full of promise – a distinct contrast to the darker feelings of suffering that was interpreted by the group as expressing a need to be healed (i.e. to be made whole again).

ii. Geographic Mapping:

Initially, this group asked themselves the question: how did the island come into existence? They discussed the story of the two taniwha: Whataitai and Ngāke[8]. After drawing an outline of the island the group added drawings of exceptional landmarks they came across, such as: the huge totara tree, a *tuatara* (native lizard), and so on. The group also made a profile map of the island, which highlighted a clear split of the island in two: a green half and a yellow half. This showed that the deforested part of the island is much more exposed to sun and wind. The group noticed the existence of forbidden tracks and, though more relevant to the issue of spiritual mapping, a general atmosphere of secrets (military, hospital, Auschwitz).

iii. Cultural Mapping:

This group decided that the cultural and historical dimensions of the island are so intertwined that both needed to be considered in their mapping. They pondered on the origin of the name Matiu, and Charles Royal explained that the three harbour islands (Matiu, Makaro and Ngā Mokopuna) were named by Kupe as an expression of love for his daughters (or nieces) – and as such can be seen as *Gifts of Love*. The timeline[9] I created in preparation of the *wānanga* showed that the island was used as a place of quarantine and exile – a site where aliens were ostracised. The group suggested that the experience of Kim Lee could be seen as the manifestation of xenophobic, in his case, anti-Chinese feelings. While wandering the island the group came across the bunkers and contemplated how a fear of Germany gave rise to paranoia that led to the internment of various people with a German connection, however vague or irrelevant. It was noted that more recently a generosity towards nature prevailed, and in an effort to regenerate Matiu/Somes Island humans began to play a subservient role, the role of caretaker. Now Matiu/Somes Island is a sanctuary for *tuatara*, *wētā*, *kākāriki*, blue penguins, and so on. The group summarised their findings by observing that, roughly speaking, the island has gone through three stages or transformations:

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[8] Whataitai and Ngake are the two mythical *taniwha* (sea monsters) that played a defining role in the creation of some of the landmarks in and around the Wellington harbour.
[9] See Appendix 2: Timeline Matiu/Somes Island

LOVE

⬇

PARANOIA

⬇

RECONCILIATION / CONNECTION / NATURE
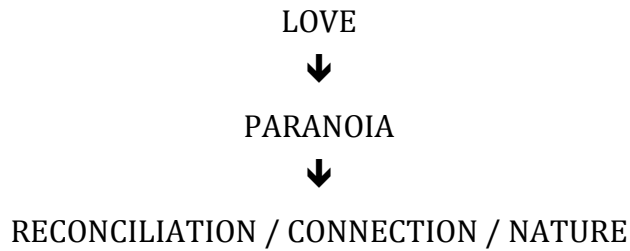
On Reflection

The act of mapping unfolded as a sensory and affective engagement with the site of enquiry. The participants connected physically, mentally and imaginatively with the island by listening, looking, smelling, touching, tasting, intuiting, responding and discussing. This contributed to the evolution of an emotional relationship or attachment with the site of enquiry. It also produced a fertile mix of facts and fantasies. By encouraging the participants to draw from information they had read, seen or heard somewhere, as well as employing imagining, interpreting, feeling and fantasising as valid points of reference, a collection of multiple perspectives was accumulated – including imagery, objects, descriptions, information, feelings and sensations.

The geographic, cultural and spiritual Mapping, as a physical, mental and imaginative engagement with the site of enquiry, produced an abundance of material to devise from, and contributed to the development of an affective attachment to the site, confirming it as one of the key strategies of a New Pacific Theatre.

5.4.2 Writing the Kim Lee Noh Play[10]

During the first *wānanga* one of the groups took the Kim Lee story as their point of departure to devise a short piece in one of the pens inside the Quarantine Centre. The slow shuffling by one of the actors in the role of Kim Lee reminded me of the Noh walk. I began to contemplate the idea of writing a short Noh play based on the Kim Lee story. This would present a practical way to further my understanding of Noh, and investigate the possibility of transferring and applying certain Noh principles and conventions within a local, New Pacific Theatre context. While having identified Noh

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[10] See Appendix 5.1 for a complete script of the Kim Lee Noh Play

as one of the sources of inspiration for a New Pacific Theatre I, initially, envisaged incorporating only selected artistic principles, rather than an entire Noh play. During the devising process, however, I began to imagine the Ghost of Kim Lee, angry and bitter, attached to his cave, unable to move on. Deeply rooted in Buddhist values, Noh plays often portray a transformation or reconciliation in response to some act of wrongdoing or suffering from the past – as for example in: *Aoi No Uye*, *Hagoromo*, *Hanakatami*, (Waley 1976), and *Izutsu*, *Miidera*, *Shunkan*, *Dōjōji*, and *Yamamba* (Brazell 1998). A further motive to write and include a Noh play in *Ex_isle of Strangers* was the strong urge I felt to give the Spirit of Matiu a voice to express herself. The masked characters of Noh are well suited to portray ghosts and spirits. Although I am aware that the choice to portray the experience of a Chinese immigrant through the theatrical form of Japanese Noh could be perceived as problematic, I felt justified to do so for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to tell the story of Kim Lee from a New Zealand – and particularly from a Matiu/Somes Island – perspective, highlighting the effect of his maltreatment, not only on Kim Lee himself, but, especially, in relation to Matiu, calling for an act of reconciliation. Although I investigated, and included, a number of Chinese elements, such as certain sentences in Cantonese and a number of Chinese proverbs, this was not the focus. Secondly, it was not my intention to create an *authentic* Japanese Noh play. Instead, my aim was to experiment with selected elements from Noh in the context of a New Pacific Theatre, including Māori, European and Japanese aspects. Therefore, I maintain that it was appropriate to use the theatrical convention of stylised masked performance, in this case Japanese Noh, to dramatise the spiritual dimensions of a story of human suffering, including the landscape it took place in, and to investigate its potential in furthering the New Pacific Theatre's mission to connect with the *geography* and *spirituality* of our land exemplified by Matiu/Somes Island.

Furthermore, my combined practice as a Buddhist *and* director of total theatre ignited a strong affinity and appreciation for the ancient form of Noh theatre – particularly in the way it bridges art, beauty and spirituality through its use of multiple vocabularies. Murray Edmond, in the prologue to his book *Nō Business* (Edmond, 2005), describes this inter-disciplinary feature of Noh as follows:

> Nō is [...] a rich and long-lived and complex weave of interlocking art forms –
> vocal and instrumental music, dance, poetry, acting, mask-making, architecture,
> costuming – with its distant roots in agricultural seasonal ritual and its
> sustaining spiritual life in Buddhism. (p. 9)

He quotes Paul Claudel as saying 'In the Western drama something happens, in Noh someone arrives' (p. 16). I interpret this to mean that Noh theatre, rather than focusing on a dramatic narrative, highlights the various intangible qualities of our existence, particularly the transformations in certain states of being. Building on the Noh-inspired work of New Zealand theatre practitioners Edmonds and Davies, I planned to use the process of writing and staging the Kim Lee Noh Play to investigate the questions: which elements and conventions of the Noh are suitable and appropriate to apply and adapt in order to create an approach to theatre that is of *this* land and for *our* people?

John Davies, who agreed to offer me dramaturgical coaching over a 2-week period in November 2009, suggested that in preparation of our time together I read as many Noh plays as possible – to familiarise myself with the various genres, the dramatic structures, the use of poetic language, and the multiple functions of a Noh chorus. I subsequently read a total of 27 English translations of Noh plays (Pound & Fenollosa 1959; Waley 1976; Brazell 1998). John Davies (2009) urged me to keep in mind the basic structure of many Noh plays, conveyed by him as:

- A Journey

- A Surprise Meeting

- A Revelation

- A Disappearance from the Surprise Meeting

- An Interlude of Explanation

- A Reappearance in Transformed State

- A Dance

(See also Keene 1970: 5-15; Tyler 1992: 7-11).

There were three elements that I wanted to weave together in the Kim Lee Noh Play. Firstly, I postulated that the ghost of Kim Lee had become attached to 'his' cave on Ngā Mokopuna as a result of the cruel and inhumane treatment of being forced to spend the last months of his life in agonising loneliness and unbearable discomfort. This ghost was consumed by anger and resentment, looking for an opportunity to take revenge and strike back at those responsible for his suffering. Secondly, as mentioned before, I had a strong desire to give voice to the spirit of Matiu/Somes Island. I imagined a masked character - old, tired and scarred from 'having to host and witness | act upon act | of exile, paranoia and cruelty …' (Kim Lee Noh Play: p. 9) - eager to facilitate some spiritual reconciliation. The third element related to the peculiar incident of a man who went swimming in Petone on the Saturday of our first *wānanga*, got pulled out into the harbour, and was washed ashore on the beach in front of Kim Lee's cave on Ngā Mokopuna. This incident was reported in the Dominion Post[11]. Contemplating this incident I was struck by the coincidence of this man washing ashore in front of Kim Lee's cave. I wondered: what if he would have been the great grandson of Kim Lee, having just arrived in New Zealand to find out what happened to his ancestor after the family did not hear from him again after his departure from China. And what if the great granddaughter of the warden who had exiled Kim Lee to Mokopuna Island would rescue him? That would certainly make up a powerful act of karmic reconciliation that would set the ghost of Kim Lee free.

Once I had sorted the dramatic structure and elements of the play, the writing of the dialogue itself occurred unexpectedly smoothly. I noted that in almost every Noh play I read, the playwright used metaphors of weather and natural phenomena to symbolise the underlying emotions and transformations. Drawing on this principle, I used for the first Chorus song the image of a typical stormy Wellington night – in combination with the presence of the energetic pressure of the fault line – as an image for the unresolved suffering, and the tension underneath the surface:

> The waves of the Harbour: crashing…
> This island – trembling on the fault line –
> Disturbed by the violence of an unresolved past…   (p. 2)

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[11] See Appendix 4: News article in Dominion Post (3 Feb, 2009)

In the third chorus – when Anna attempts to cross the channel between Matiu and Mokopuna Island in order to rescue Jin Cao after he has washed ashore – I used the idea of a spiritual force guiding and strengthening somebody to go beyond their limitations to resolve an incident of wrongdoing carried through several generations. This time the sea is an agent to express the build-up anger and resentment of (the Ghost of) Kim Lee:

> In the darkness of the night,
> Her little boat is tossed this way and that way –
> It appears the sea is lashing at her
> With a century of pent up fury …
>
> How can she succeed to cross that raging channel -
> But with a strength that comes to her
> From a source beyond her comprehension …
>
> It is as if her great grandfather
> Urges her to save the life
> Of this unfortunate stranger.   (pp. 5-6)

In the fourth chorus I played with the idea that the howling sounds of the wind can sometimes lead you to believe that there are voices calling. I imagined that the actual names of people, who had a strong historical or spiritual connection with Matiu/Somes Island, were being called. By layering the sounds of singing, with the chanting of names, and one or two voices creating the broken, howling sounds of wind – produced by a compression of the vocal chords – I wanted to evoke a strong feeling and image of the intense suffering and loneliness of mankind intertwined with the forces of nature.

> Mingled with the raging wind on this moonless night   Aa!
> You can hear the names
> Of ancient chiefs and drowned sailors,
> Of women and children - perished by a sickness of the flesh,
> And the resentful cry of an abandoned soul
> In the loneliness of this dark cave:
>
>   Whatonga, Tara, Tautoki,

> Honiana, Te Wharepouri,
>
> Gustave, Wilhelm, Fritz,
>
> Anna, Anna, Albert, Marion,
>
> John, James, Alice, Alice, Alice.

> And among these – always that name: Kim Lee – Kim Lee – Kim
> Lee!

<div align="right">(pp. 6-7)</div>

John encouraged me to incorporate a number of Māori, Chinese and Buddhist proverbs and sayings of wisdom. I recruited the help of some of my Hong Kong friends and former colleagues to source Chinese proverbs, offer translations and send me recordings of accurate pronunciation of the various Cantonese expressions. The Māori participants helped me, and coached the Pākehā actors, on appropriate and accurate use of *whakatauākī* (proverbs) and *karakia* (prayers) and Jim Wallace (General Director of SGINZ[12]) assisted with the inclusion of appropriate Buddhist sayings and references.

5.4.3 Staging the Kim Lee Noh Play

Mask Making:

I decided to follow the Noh convention of having both supernatural characters – Ghost of Kim Lee and Spirit of Matiu Island – use masks to heighten the expression of their extraordinary being. Although the plot tells the story of Kim Lee and therefore his character is the *Shite*, by introducing Matiu Island as a Spirit and emphasizing her perspective and role in the reconciliation, she became a second *Shite* character. John assured me that, although unusual, Noh provided enough flexibility for this to happen.

In order to give the mask maker Luke Devery some examples as inspiration for the carving of two original masks, John and I sourced a number of traditional Noh masks for this purpose (see Fig. 5.3). The process of finalising the design and construction of the masks took place through photographic email exchanges and feedback. This posed a certain risk, as photographic images do not always provide an accurate representation of the actual dimensions and colours of the masks.

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[12] SGINZ: Soka Gakkai International New Zealand – the Buddhist organization I belong to.

Fig. 5.3a: Exemplar mask 'Ghost of Kim Lee'   Fig. 5.3b: Exemplar mask 'Spirit of Matiu'

Figure 5.4 shows the various stages in the process of mask making – the final image in each sequence shows the mask in performance – complete with wig.

Fig. 5.4: Stages in the mask making process (2010). Photography: Luke Devery & Nicole Simons

When I received the two masks by mail, they were larger than the actor's face, whereas the common attribute of Noh masks is that they are smaller than the actor's face. Initially, I had concerns how well they would work in performance as their features seemed to me too exaggerated, almost grotesque, but at this stage nothing could be done and I simply had to attempt to make the masks work through the rehearsal process and with assistance of the costume design and added hair pieces. In the end the masks didn't pose a problem, as they were proportionate to the large, baggy kimono/costume the actors wore in performance.

Costume Design:

I planned to highlight the supernatural dimensions of the two masked characters of KIM LEE and MATIU by applying the acting techniques of Archetypal Gesture and Imaginary Body in combination with the use of elaborate costuming – using rich materials and multiple layers of kimonos. I asked Ian Harman (with whom I had collaborated successfully in the past on a number of productions at the UCOL Theatre School[13] in Palmerston North) to design and create the costumes for the Noh characters. Based on his preliminary research, Ian proposed to dress KIM LEE and MATIU (See Fig 5.5a & 5.5b) in 12 layers of kimonos, to give them bulk and presence in accordance with their supernatural dimensions.

Initially, I envisaged that ANNA and JIN CAO would move, speak and dress in more naturalistic ways with perhaps just a hint of Noh to them. Therefore, Ian's initial designs for Anna and Jin Cao were realistic (see Fig. 5.5c & 5.5d). When, during the early Noh rehearsals, we tried to combine stylised acting with naturalistic speech and movement, it soon became obvious that this was not working. It looked, felt and sounded clumsy and wrong. As soon as we began to work with a heightened way of moving, lowering the point of gravity, bending the knees, holding the arms with energy, and employing various degrees of resistance, the energy of the actors lifted and their actions became alive. Subsequently, Ian changed his eventual costume designs for ANNA and JIN CAO into two layers of kimono for ANNA (see Fig. 6:19), and a single kimono over a bathing costume for JIN CAO.

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[13] Sondheim's *Company* (2000) and Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (2001), Director Bert van Dijk

Fig. 5.5a: Costume design Ghost of KIM LEE'   Fig. 5.5b: Costume design Spirit of MATIU

Fig. 5.5: Initial costume designs by Ian Harman for the four Noh characters (March 2010)

Fig. 5.5c: Costume design ANNA the Ranger   Fig. 5.5d: Costume design JIN CAO LEE

Vocal production in Noh is heightened and specific – physical and muscular – requiring a resonance that comes from an ability to generate vigorous physical energy while the body is still or moving slowly. Komparu (1983) explains that:

> [The] voice is always produced with diaphragmatic breathing, reverberating through the chest and head, and resonating within the oral cavity, so it seems intense and 'swallowed' in comparison to the clear, 'projected' voice of Western singing. (p. 170)

The high level of vocal muscularity is matched by an equally profound spiritual and imaginative engagement. From my experience – as a teacher and director at various drama schools and theatre departments around Aotearoa/New Zealand and as an audience member in our theatres – voice training appears to be focused on 'freeing the voice' (Linklater's 1976 terminology) and connecting the voice with emotional impulses to achieve a sense of truth, rather than using the energetic 'extended voice'[14] work, or the more vigorous approaches to the voice from Asian or Polynesian practices. In addition, during their training most Aotearoa/New Zealand actors only work in small studios and studio theatres and subsequently do not learn how to adjust their voice to the demands of large or outdoor performance spaces. The lack of vocal muscularity is further exacerbated by the circumstance that many Aotearoa/New Zealand actors work extensively in film and TV, as well as in theatre. Vocal work in film and TV relies heavily on the use of microphones for amplification, and as such does not contribute to vocal fitness. It was a slow and at times challenging process to match the heightened movement vocabulary with a heightened use of voice – particularly relating to elongation of vowels, percussiveness of consonants, increased resonance and finding an appropriate vocal rhythm. Through persistence and ongoing encouragement the actors did, in general, achieve a strong and poetic use of the voice, and when it came to performance the actors were able to articulate and project well and infuse their voices with quality, intention and feeling.

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[14] 'Extended Voice' is a term employed by the Roy Hart Centre to describe their work on welcoming every possible sound a human can make: the beauty and beast, the soothing and the raw, the delicate sigh and the raunchy roar.

Noh Music & Chorus:

In order to provide some direction for the musical component of the Noh Play I needed to find out more about traditional Noh music. Two articles were particularly useful: "Japanese *Nō* Music" by Tatsuo Minagawa (1957) and "Insights from a Master Japanese Teacher" by J. Larry Stockton (1987). The use of musical and vocal accompaniment in Noh is incredibly detailed and structured. It is an art form in itself and beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt a comprehensive overview. However, it was useful for me to take note of Minagawa's distinctions of the 'Stylistic Components of the Instrumental-Music Sections: A) Entrance and exit music; B) Dramatic Acting to instrumental accompaniment; and C) Dance'. (p. 182)

By analysing and simplifying the elaborate tables (pp. 182-185) that detail the moments within a Noh play that require either Vocal-Music or Instrumental-Music, I was able to design a schedule[15] to guide our musicians in the composition and orchestration of their music. Traditionally, a Noh orchestra is composed of four musicians who play the stick drum, hip drum, shoulder drum and flute (Brazell 1998). In accordance with the sources of a New Pacific Theatre I experimented with the fusion of Japanese, Māori and European musical influences and arranged our Noh orchestra to include: one drummer, one flute player/drummer, one cellist and one *taonga puoro*[16] player. Our *taonga puoro* player Alistair Fraser used a total of 10 traditional Māori instruments during the Kim Lee Noh Play, some of which are illustrated in Fig. 5.6:

From left to right:
Purerehua
Tumu tumu koiwi upokohue
Pahu pakohe
Putorino
Putatara
Koauau koiwi toroa
Koauaua ponga ihu

Fig. 5.6: Some of the *taonga puoro* used during Kim Lee Noh Play (Photography: Nicole Simons)

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[15] See Appendix 5.2: Kim Lee Play Music Table
[16] Traditional Māori musical instruments

I decided to compose the music for the chorus sections myself and I will reflect here on some of the challenges that this presented. Firstly, there are certain significant linguistic differences between English and Japanese. Most words in the Japanese language finish on a vowel, enabling a Noh chorus to employ a resonant rising or cascading of the voice while chanting or singing. In contrast, most words in the English language finish on a consonant, causing an abrupt stop. This leads to a very different rhythm and resonance of singing or chanting. Secondly, singing and chanting in traditional Noh is mostly done in unison, whereas polyphony is very much part of western, Māori and Pacific vocal music practices. Taking these two differences into consideration and acknowledging the limitations in time, skills and talents of myself and the Noh Chorus singers I came to the conclusion that it would be more suitable for a chorus that chants and sings mostly in the English language to try to express the intangible qualities of mood and feeling through the use of harmonic and discordant intervals. Although I am an experienced choirmaster – having conducted A Capella Vocal Ensemble WOSOSI (World Song Singers) for almost 10 years – I have no skills in notating music. I therefore used a 4-track high quality audio recorder to compose the chorus music. I utilized hereby the Japanese scales of *chû*, *ge* and *ryo* (Minagawa: p. 185). In addition I incorporated Māori vocal uses, such as *karanga*, *haka* or 2-note chanting, as an additional layer to the polyphony of song. For example, in the last chorus section the lyrical 3-part song ends in unison when the chorus repeats the Māori proverb '*Toka Tū Moana*'[17] in haka style:

> Pure white wings beating the air,
> And in the trees the cheerful chatter of Kākāriki,
> Mending the strings of a once-broken heart.
>
> Feet caressing the earth,
> No longer strangers in a far-off place!
>
> This island: 'Toka Tū Moana' ...   (p. 12)

I aimed to give the overall chorus compositions the arc of *jo-ha-kyū*: from a gradual increase of tension and emotion, to a climax – when the Ghost of Kim Lee burst onto

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[17] Literally: *Steadfast Rock in the Sea* – referring to a person of enduring spirit – someone who can withstand the challenges and storms of life.

the scene – followed by a musical *and* spiritual resolution, then ending with a strong but lyrical finale.

The Importance of Presence in Noh:

During the Noh rehearsals I focused on weaving movement, music, song, text and design into a wholeness. As an ensemble, we began to understand and embody what it means to truly *integrate* these different vocabularies, as opposed to *illustrate* one another. We realised – mentally, physically and spiritually – the extraordinary level of *presence* that is required to keep the ball in the air between actors, musicians and singers. At one of the earlier Noh rehearsals (19 – 21 March, 2010) a particular exercise – the 'Dramatic Journey' – resulted in a significant shift in presence among the actors. I asked the actors to go through the entire play, without using their choreographed actions or memorised dialogue, but instead expressing in their own words the underlying meanings, feelings, responses, thoughts, and intentions – not only in relation to their own reality but also in response to every action of their fellow actors, the chorus and the musicians. Moko Smith expressed his breakthrough as follows:

> During one of our 'dramatic journey' exercises for the Noh play, I was too intellectually engaged and began by reporting what I thought the character would be thinking, rather than immersing myself in the experiences of the character and engaging on an imaginative level, reacting according to the experiences. The first approach is an outside commentary; the latter is a 'getting inside the skin' of the character, resulting in the expression of an internal dialogue and a far deeper connection to the character. (2010)

This exercise enabled the actors to significantly shift their level of connection and their performance with presence, feeling and quality of being. It is therefore worthwhile to illustrate this point further with two specific examples.

Example 1: Will Moffatt, who played the Ghost of Kim Lee, sat on stage in stillness until it was his cue to slowly get up, turn around, and burst into rage. Up till this exercise he tended to enter a state of non-presence, his senses switched off, not connected. During his 'dramatic journey' Will became aware of the possibility to 'listen' and 'see' with his back, to truly connect and be affected by everything that is

going on. Thereafter, by the time it was his cue to turn around, he was fully alive, engaged, present and eager to express the turmoil of emotions and intentions that had arisen.

Example 2: Through her 'dramatic journey' Madeline McNamara, who played the Spirit of Matiu, came to realise that her character was in fact the instigator of *all* actions and interactions in the play. At times events and feelings would unfold in accordance with her plans and guidance; at other times what eventuated was in opposition to her wishes and determinations. This realisation affected Madeline on a real and deep level and subsequently she began to engage, connect, and respond – even while offstage – making her entrance more powerful and alive, filled with feeling, intention and, most of all, urgency.

It was particularly interesting to apply this 'responsiveness' to the music and invest each beat on the drum, and every sound played, with quality and meaning. Drummer Jacob Ennis observed:

> […] I also had a real challenge to contend with. It was impossible to actually replicate Noh musical scores without probably years of rehearsal. Instead we created something in which sound actually became representations of the worlds and themes, extensions of the characters and maybe even a character in itself. I was constantly wilfully aware of everything occurring around me, I had a huge emotional investment in each of the characters and things like a tap of the drum had multiple layers of physical and spiritual intention behind them. A beat may represent a physical wave slapping the boat, on another level the sound was there to warn Anna of the grave danger she was in, finally on an even higher level the sound was a cry from my character to the gods to watch over my friends. (2010)

Conclusion

The process of writing and staging the Kim Lee Noh Play provided me with an opportunity to explore and test the application of selected Noh elements within the context of a New Pacific Theatre. By incorporating Māori elements (such as *te reo*, *whakatauākī*, *taonga puoro*), devising strategies, and Michael Chekhov's techniques of Archetypal Gesture and Imaginary Body, a new form emerged that was Noh and not

Noh. Throughout this process the compatibility and alignment of *whare tapere* core values with the Buddhist values of Noh was evident. Furthermore, presence turned out to be a critical tool for actors, musicians, singers and director to interweave the vocabularies of movement, music, song, text and design.

5.4.4   Second Matiu Wānanga

In my experience, every creative and devising process goes through moments of stagnation, hitting a wall, or collective loss of confidence in the possibility of a quality outcome within the existing timeframe. The more complex the devising process, and the more risks taken, the harder you hit the wall. For a number of reasons we stumbled during our second *wānanga* on Matiu Island.

In this section I identify the reasons that led to this stumbling as well as outline the opportunity that this presented to refresh our commitment to the two *whare tapere* core values of: *whanaungatanga* (relatedness/collaboration) and *rangatiratanga* (shared leadership). More than a year after our first *wānanga* on the island the creative process had moved from the joys and excitement of initial explorations and enquiry – without the pressures of time and looming outcomes – to a stage where we had only 5 weeks left to get ready to present a significant artistic work to a paying audience. As the artistic director, it was my responsibility to ensure that all the devising works were completed, and that all the performers were confident and ready to perform a predetermined score with quality; as scholar researcher I was going to be examined on the quality of the performance-as-research, and therefore had to make sure that what we delivered was of sufficient academic and artistic standards; as the producer I was dealing with the logistics of managing 40 performers and over 200 audience members within a very limited budget under extremely complicated circumstances.

There were further complications relating to the loss of some core collaborators (Amanda Maclean, Tanemahuta Gray and Lisa Maule) and the recruitment of a number of new collaborators (Will Moffatt, Jacob Ennis, Alistair Fraser, Rosie Moxey, Simon Haren, and others) with whom I had had limited experience of working. This meant that the new members were, relatively speaking, unfamiliar with the Michael

Chekhov work, my particular model of devising, or the presence work that is the foundation of a New Pacific Theatre. Therefore, in addition to completing the various artistic works to a performance standard, I also needed to include a significant amount of training in the various strategies, methodologies and values that underpin the New Pacific Theatre. As a result of limited financial resources I could only afford to rent one cottage, therefore the supporting cast were only called to come in for one day – either on Saturday or Sunday – thus missing out on the creative potential of residential work and the pleasures of hanging out together. The coming and going of people over the course of the workshop created a rather unsettling atmosphere.

As the performance dates came closer, the rangers became anxious and requested several meetings with me during this weekend to clarify locations, go over safety regulations, outline audience information, and so on. In my multiple role of producer/director/facilitator people bombarded me with problems to solve, from urgent and relevant matters to trivialities, such as: Are there any chairs? Where is the coffee? Do I need make-up? Are we allowed to open the window? I began to feel overwhelmed. With a continuous changing group composition, there seemed to be an expectation that I would look after everybody, introduce and acknowledge him or her, and, at times, I felt an unspoken criticism for not allowing enough time for *whanaungatanga*.

Despite the pressures, we did manage a lot of work and by the end of the weekend we had a clear picture of what still needed to be done, but without the excitement of the previous *wānanga* and I assumed that people blamed me for not giving them "a terrific time". This feeling led me to engage in several conversations with some of the core members (Madeline, Whetu and Rawiri) whom I deeply trust and respect. It emerged that the complexity of this project required me to delegate specific areas of responsibility, making sure that my main focus concerned the artistic and research components. I subsequently asked Whetu Silver to take responsibility for the area of *whanaungatanga* in ways that would serve the needs of our ensemble while working within our time constraints. This worked out extremely well. The conversations I had allowed me to share my burden, overcome my feelings of isolation, and at the same time involve people in taking responsibilities for the well-being and well-functioning

of the ensemble as a whole – including myself. This contributed to a developed sense of *rangatiratanga*, an approach to leadership in which the group moves as one and whereby everybody takes responsibility for our pathways together. This outcome was a manifestation of the Buddhist aim to turn poison into medicine, to learn from the accidents or mistakes that occur and turn them into opportunities of growth.

> The sense of community, of *Whanaungatanga* and *Kotahitanga* that was achieved and continues to grow, came out of Bert's leadership, his recognition of the leadership skills of others, and his ability to hand some of that over to the group. (McNamara 2010)

5.5   Residency

After the pressure, hardship and exhaustion of the second *wānanga* the 2-week Residency on Matiu/Somes Island, leading up to the performances of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, turned into one of the most amazingly beautiful, stimulating, inspiring, loving, fulfilling, and blessed experiences of my life. While engaged in intensive, disciplined and vigorous creative work, the New Pacific Theatre ensemble worked and lived together as a smooth flowing, caring, respectful and fun-loving *whānau*. Many of the performers reported on how the residential/communal situation enabled joy, love and connection to evolve, and enhanced and facilitated the various personal and artistic transformations that occurred during our time on the island:

> One of the greatest aspects of this experience that I enjoyed was the communal living, and the total immersion in the work. I feel that this contributed to our 'oneness' on stage, our deep trust in each other in our work, and our comfort and ease in performance. (Smith 2010)

> He aha te mea nui? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata [...] Coming back to the house after long hours of rehearsal and being in the company of such talented and generous people was a real highlight for me [...] The love I experienced on Matiu. After the manic [second] wānanga on Matiu I was not looking forward to returning. The heaviness of the buildings I was to perform in and the darkness I perceived in the performance role which I acquired really distressed me. I didn't feel connected to the group and the Island struck me as a suffocating sad place. So the most surprising thing for me was how much I fell in love with the people and the place

itself. I think whakawhanaungatanga was a concept that this group utterly embraced and in doing so we provided each other with the emotional/spiritual support to work through some incredibly struggling roles […]. (Ennis 2010)

The sense of community and whānau made the whole experience incredibly rich. I have never felt such a heightened sense of connection with a group of people. The zone for this strong connection was created over time with such aroha [...] People so wanted this project to succeed that we all went beyond our boundaries and exemplified an extraordinary level of commitment to fulfil on the intentions. We exemplified *Rangatiratanga* – moving together in unison and with synchronicity to achieve a common purpose. The sense and manifestation of whanaungatanga (art of relationship) was profound. […] What surprised me most was connecting to the wairua and those intangible aspects of the island. I never expected that I would experience this connection with what I interpreted as the release of souls through tangi hotuhotu. It was both very moving to discover that I/we have the capacity to do this and very honouring to be part of such a cleansing process. It was as if I was feeling their grief and experiencing this also as my own grief. (Hindle 2010)

The experience on the island was transformative for me and confirmed the power of community and the power of people making art together. It generated enormous physical and mental courage in me, and restored some missing ingredients in my life force. It renewed my commitment to my role as an actor and to the experimental and self-devised pathways and traditions, and it confirmed in a very deep way the power of theatre as a spiritual and healing force. (McNamara 2010)

The incorporation of certain social, cultural and spiritual practices (5.5.1) facilitated the process of honouring the core values of the *whare tapere*, such as *ūkaipō*, *whanaungatanga*, and *kotahitanga*. During the residency there were three particular, and influential, occurrences of connecting with space/nature that require special mention and elaboration in this section. The first one (5.5.2) relates to the process of preparing the performance space known as 'the barracks' for the Kim Lee Noh Play. The great care invested in the cleaning and preparation of this building for performance and the subsequent use of the space for various special activities (such as for example the Noh in the Dark) preceding the performance season lifted the level of artistic performance and emotional, imaginative and spiritual engagement of the

performers during the Noh performances. The second one (5.5.3) was a particularly effective Presence Walk on top of the hill and surrounding areas. This exercise raised an already strong level of presence to new, unimagined heights, enabling the performers to regard their entire time on the island as an opportunity to train and enhance 'sensory perceptiveness' and 'connectedness with the environment'. This was later on successfully transferred into a performance context, confirming the supposition that presence is a core ingredient of a New Pacific Theatre model. The third (5.5.4) was the occurrence of a number of incidents in which nature informed and inspired the required artistic qualities of certain actions or states of being that were part of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. It demonstrates how residential immersion in nature can have a profound enhancing effect on the artistic qualities of the creative work produced.

5.5.1 Incorporating Social, Cultural and Spiritual Practices

The residential situation gave rise to certain spiritual and social practices and as such enabled us to incorporate the core value of *ūkaipō* (i.e. spiritual nourishment) in our practice during the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. When, during the first weekend of our residency a group of 12 supporting performers joined us for rehearsals, Whetu and Rawiri facilitated a *whakatau*[18] ceremony. A *whakatau* is similar to a *pōwhiri*: a ritual for the purpose of uniting two groups of people – the hosts (*tangata whenua*) and the visitors (*manuhiri*) – but it is less formal and regulated. Our ritual started in front of the barracks with Te Kahurangi doing the *karanga* on behalf of the hosts. The *kaikaranga*[19] of the *manuhiri* (Stephanie Pohe) responded to this. Both voices were strong and full of feeling as they mingled and intertwined, sending shivers up and down our spines. The *manuhiri* were then invited to enter the barracks and join the hosts in a circle. This is different from a formal Pōwhiri where hosts and *manuhiri* remain outdoors on the Marae (the domain of Tūmatauenga: god of war), in two separate groups facing one another, until the speeches and hongi are completed. In the circle Rawiri delivered the *whaikōrero* (art

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[18] *Whakatau*: to bring together, to unite; the term is used to describe a welcomes ritual that is less formal than that of a *Pōwhiri*.
[19] *Kaikaranga*: the woman who does the calling (the *karanga*)

of speech making) on behalf of the hosts, and Ranea Aperahama replied to this on behalf of the *manuhiri*.

> The Pōwhiri [Whakatau] was awesome. It very much connected and balanced form and content with incredible finesse. I loved the way the two bodies (Tangata Whenua and Manuhiri) joined in a circle to become one. It was like the re-uniting of one family. The karanga was heart felt and lifted the whole experience to another dimension. The whaikōrero was rich and the waiata was sung with such depth and passion. (Hindle 2010)

Whetu then led a 'theatrical *Mihi*' in which each participant called out their name and their role in the performance, accompanied by a gesture, which was then repeated by everyone else. The ceremony was concluded with everyone sharing a hongi with everyone else, not the customary *hongi* between hosts and *manuhiri* only, thus uniting our breath and reaffirming our purpose together. It was a most effective ritual to bring us together as one and at the same time a great way of 'baptising' the space as our Noh rehearsal and performance venue.

Most of the participants joined in the early morning practice of Gongyo – one of the core rituals of Nichiren Buddhism as practiced by members of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). Soka Gakkai is Japanese for 'Value Creating Society' and the purpose of the SGI is to achieve world peace and the happiness of all[20]. We saw previously that the values of Buddhism are harmonious to the values of the *whare tapere* and Buddhist values and philosophies form an integral part of Noh theatre (chapter two). Starting each day with the Buddhist practice of chanting added a spiritual dimension to our creative practice, and our photographer Nicole Simons noted:

> I also felt that our chanting really touched a part of me that had been waiting to be unlocked. I have always felt that Buddhism connects with me, but in terms of transformation – I now have the tools and practice, to embark on this path as an individual and to be confident in what I am doing. Providing more focus, and direction in my life. (2010)

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[20] For more information on the SGI visit: http://www.gakkaionline.net/

We also incorporated into our daily activities the ritual of 'checking in' with one another. Every morning during breakfast we took time for everyone at the table to share their feelings, thoughts, and responses to the work, and bring up any matters that needed addressing. This practice served the core values of *whanaungatanga* (relatedness), *manaakitanga* (mutual respect and support), and incurred a strong element of *ūkaipō* to it, a nourishing and refreshing of the spirit, before venturing in the artistic labour. Several of the core performers mentioned this practice as one of the highlights of our residency:

> The highlight within [the Matiu residency] was the way in which the foundations to our everyday success were laid. This was achieved through prayerfulness; chanting; gratitude for life; healthy Kai [food], and our shared personal expressions of where we were at as individuals in the process of our work. (Maioha 2010)

The daily ritual of sharing also provided an opportunity for those, who tended not to take the limelight, to be seen and heard – often surprising the others with some beautiful and poetic observations.

5.5.2   The Barracks

Initially the plan was to perform the Noh play in the Recreation Centre, a cold, concrete and dirty space that was crowded with materials, tools and rubbish. The acoustics of this space were excellent but it seemed impossible to create the warmth and intimacy needed for the Noh play to come across well. During my first visit to the island (May 2008) I had a look at the barracks – an old wooden structure with plenty of windows on both latitude sides. The century-old building was originally used as temporary accommodation for quarantine people. Made entirely of native timber it gives off a warm special atmosphere. The ceilings are covered with the remains of disintegrated insulation material, creating an interesting sculptural effect (see Fig. 5.1a). When I discussed the possibility of using the barracks for the Noh play, the rangers informed me that extensive renovation work was scheduled at the time of our residency. This would involve substantial painting, possibly indoors. If so, we would not be able to use it, as the paint fumes would cause a health hazard for performers and audiences.

Fig. 5.7: Cleaning and preparing the barracks 'as if for a lover'. Photography: Nicole Simons

One week before the start of our residency, we were told that we could use the barracks for the Noh performance. As the space had collected decades of dirt, dust and rubbish – on the floor and in every crack, crevice and corner – it needed thorough (and daily) sweeping, vacuum cleaning and mopping.

This act of cleaning was not just hard physical and dirty work. It was the ritualistic preparation of the space for a special occasion (see Fig. 5.7). Or, as Madeline reflected: 'Making the space beautiful, as if for a lover, or some kind of seduction.' (McNamara 2010). After marking the stage area with wooden beams and short pillars (the *bashira*

– to help the masked actors orientate themselves in space), we set up chairs and mattresses for an audience, created a 'green room' by hanging a huge *tapa* cloth from the ceiling, devised a curtain as entrance for the main actors, and placed three *harakeke* in woven baskets at similar locations to the three pines that line the *hashigakari* bridgeway on a traditional Noh stage. In order to add scent to the space we sprayed daily with lavender water and oiled the pillars and wooden beams. Komparu (1983) explains that 'the place where Noh is performed cannot be thought of without considering the sanctification of space' (p. 6). Gods arrive and depart in Noh, and in addition there is a sacred and spiritual quality that runs deep and continuously in the plays, dances that have grown out of ancient rituals, the cries of the drummers that sound like invocations, and the stamping feet that echo the divine vibrations of the sacred spirit itself.

By investing our space with much effort, love and care, it became a special, sacred space, like a church or a *wharenui*[21], that required it to be filled with the best possible qualities of beauty, feeling, sound and expression. This lifted the artistic level of the performers to a new level. As such I have come to the conclusion that:

> It is extremely beneficial for the artistic quality of the creative process and its outcomes to have participants take care of the spaces in which they work and perform, through cleaning, beautifying and inhabiting the space with valuable experiences and memories.

Noh in the Dark:

The barracks had no artificial light. One day Moko suggested that we do a run of the Noh Play after dinner in the barracks, in full costume and in the dark. This turned into a unique experience that enormously heightened our senses of listening and intuiting, producing a profound appreciation of the intricate tapestry of music, poetry and dialogue, independent of sight. It was a collective 'Balancing the Senses' – one of the core strategies to enhance presence as we saw in chapter four. I noted in my artist journal that 'the darkness cemented the various elements of the Noh play together.'

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[21] *Wharenui* is the Māori meeting house - a sacred place that falls under the domain of Rongo-Marae-Roa, the God of Peace.

As a member of the Noh chorus I transferred this experience into performance by no longer letting my eyes roam and dominate but adapting a non-specific focus at all times that allowed me to 'see' and listen with my ears and heart.

5.5.3 Presence

Participants' reports confirmed that a heightened sense of presence, combined with the circumstance of residential living, provided a potent tool in the mission 'to connect with land and people'.

Fig. 5.8: Presence exercise during residency. Photography: Nicole Simons

Although presence work has been an ongoing point of reference during all our devising and rehearsal sessions, as an ensemble we had not engaged in an explicit presence exercise since the first *wānanga* on the island. This time, I decided to try out

a new approach. Rather than walking a predetermined trajectory, I took the core group to the bottom of the hill in the middle of the island, reminded them of the strategies to increase presence ('balancing the senses' and 'extending the circle of presence') and instructed them to walk to the top of the hill, explore the various sites and areas, and return to this starting point – while enhancing their sense of presence. It was a stunningly, clear, cloudless day that intoxicated the senses.

Many members of the core group mentioned in their reports that through this exercise they achieved a level of presence as never experienced before, resulting in a feeling of bliss and aliveness:

> The presence walk up the hill was profound. I felt incredibly connected to the different energies of the universe and loved this experience to the point where I could have gone on playing and connecting for a lot longer. The more I got into it the more I was able to abandon any sense of self-consciousness and surrender to the flow of the universe. I haven't roly-poly'd down a hill since when I was a child. To let go and totally enjoy this experience was so freeing. (Hindle 2010)

> What I liked about this walk was considering our geographical position in relation to the 'mainland'. Standing on the island at its highest point we commanded a view of the entire Wellington harbour. We were a dot in the centre of a circle. This sense of being centred while supposedly off shore, exiled was a paradox. I/we were the centre of our own universe. We were the creators of a performance and the outside world was going to come to us. Being at the centre of ones own world is a very strong place to be however small or geographically isolated one might be. This might have some metaphorical implications especially for future design. (McNamara 2010)

> [...] presence is a big one for me. I've been through a few months military training in Waiouru with the Reserves. Once you've spent a few days in the bush constantly needing to keep watch to see an enemy party before they see you, you are very sensorally alive in the moment. Visually but also in smell and in sound. By applying that sort of feeling to performance and life generally it's incredible how much more I enjoy performing and how much more open I feel to the audience and to other performers. It's such an important direction but one which

I had not previously had before. It completely changes how I think about performing. (Ennis 2010)

Following this experience, participants were able to transfer this high level of sensory perceptiveness and connection in subsequent rehearsals and performances, resulting in a significant individual and collective increase in presence.

5.5.4 Nature Inspiring Performance Qualities

In this section I want to put forwards how certain experiences relating to natural phenomena can enhance and inspire performance qualities. The residential situation, in an isolated environment with plenty of natural phenomena abound, enabled several of such experiences to occur. Two examples in particular demonstrate this process well.

In her role as the Spirit of Matiu, Madeline McNamara used *kōrari*[22] choreography to evoke the Ghost of Kim Lee. While rehearsing this choreography Madeline struggled with the application of the *jo-ha-kyū* rhythm. I wanted her to perform the preparatory stage of circling the *kōrari* on either side of her body with the dynamic of *jo* (with resisted slowness), the movement towards Kim Lee with *ha* (a gradual speeding up), and the final stage of *kyū* (the sudden stop of holding the *kōrari* on a diagonal upwards) while radiating pure intention. Whatever approach we tried, somehow Madeline was unable to apply the particular rhythms and dynamics I felt were required. One day she was practising her *kōrari* choreography in the field outside the barracks. With a strong wind blowing, she needed all her strength to move the *kōrari* – against the wind – in a loop backwards, then, in the movement forwards, the wind seemed to carry and lift the *kōrari*, gradually speeding it up, and at its completion Madeline needed to use all her strength to hold the stick in place. The presence of a powerful wind caused a natural occurrence of *jo-ha-kyū*, enabling Madeline to perform the choreography with the required rhythm and dynamic. She subsequently transferred this into performance.

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[22] The *kōrari* is the stem of the *harakeke* or native New Zealand flax flower. During our first Matiu *wānanga* Tanemahuta Gray shared with us some of the *kōrari* work he has developed. See Kōrari Chapter in the DVD 'Matiu Wānanga 2009' (Appendix 6.1)

On another occasion, at night, Rawiri went for a swim, and while he was in the sea, fluorescent algae caused explosions of illumination whenever he moved through the water:

> When I swirled my arms in the water the swirling movement was magnified through the fluorescent creatures in the sea. This helped to create my movement as the Māori queen and I came up with the following phrase to help give quality to both my characters: "I am the bossy queen from Alice in Wonderland and the ethereal fairy godmother dancing in the chaos. I am the child-like being that exists above the suffering - bringing lightness to life. From the inner depths of my soul I emit love out into the universe – waves and vibrations – shapes and shades as diverse as the multitudes of colours seen and unseen – emotions felt and unfelt – ebbing, flowing and welling – *radiating fluorescent light from my finger tips out into the universe* [my italics]. (Hindle 2010)

The fully embodied experience of connecting with certain phenomena in nature can profoundly inspire and enhance artistic and imaginative qualities of vocal and physical actions in performance, including the state of being of character or role.

Conclusion

Residency, the combined act of living and working together over an extended period of time in a relatively isolated environment, is a fruitful strategy during the creative development of a site-specific work and as such should form a crucial part of a New Pacific Theatre model. It provides a fertile environment to incorporate the core values of *whanaungatanga* (relatedness), *manaakitanga* (mutual respect), *kotahitanga* (connection), *ūkaipō* (spiritual nourishment) and *rangatiratanga* (collaborative leadership). It is beneficial for the artistic quality of the creative process and its outcomes to have participants take care of the spaces they work and perform in – through cleaning, beautifying and inhabiting the space with valuable experiences and memories. Being immersed in nature provided the opportunity for the fully embodied experiences of certain phenomena in nature to inspire and enhance artistic and imaginative qualities of vocal and physical actions in performance.

Chapter Six: *Ex_isle of Strangers*

A Site-Specific Odyssey

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Introduction

Ex_isle of Strangers is the performance component of my research project – representing the first exemplar of a New Pacific Theatre in its endeavour to create and test an approach to theatre that reflects the tangible and intangible qualities of Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was performed from 15 – 18 April 2010 on Matiu/Somes Island for approximately 200 spectators.

> If we have to reinvent a language that can present our experiences from the performance world, we have to do it in a language that we must invent … It's something that is going to take many years, maybe decades, maybe a century, to find this language with which we can communicate. (Julia Varley quoted in Julie Robson 2004:101)

Responding to Varley's challenge to invent a new language that communicates performance experiences I experiment in this chapter on *Ex_isle of Strangers* with the concept of weaving or *raranga*. Erenora Puketapu (1989) asserts that 'weaving is more than just a product of manual skills. [It] is endowed with the very essence of the spiritual values of Māori people.' (p. 2) The *kete*, or woven basket, is an established Māori symbol as the container of knowledge and wisdom – relating to the story of Tāne-te-Wānanga who obtained the three kete of knowledge from Io, the supreme spiritual power[1]. Weaving is an act of bringing together various strands that each maintain their own integrity but together form a unity in which the value of the total is more than the sum of its parts. Another aspect of weaving, comparable to the creative process of writing an exegesis, relates to bringing together strands that make up an intricate pattern of foreground and background. The strands that I use to weave the kete of *Ex_isle of Strangers* are made up of descriptive writing [plain black/Cambria font],

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[1] Retrieved from the website: http://maaori.com/misc/raranga.htm (10 June, 2010)

analytical and reflective commentary [blue italic/Microsoft Sans Serif font], photographs (by Nicole Simons) and cinematographic stills (by William Franco), and the subjective and reflective responses from performers and audiences [purple/Times New Roman font - performers are identified by full name, and audience members by Aud. plus an allocated number]. Somehow I want to give the reader a certain freedom to roam the content of this section as they please or randomly – similar to the way the audience of *Ex_isle of Strangers* was given a certain freedom in deciding their viewing point.

As explained earlier *Ex_isle of Strangers* was structured as a journey. This was as much a physical journey (over sea and over land), as it was a metaphysical journey, opening the mind to connect in new and original ways with the land and the people (performers and audiences). To guide the process of weaving I have identified the following 12 stages:

Stage 1:   Actors' Preparation / Audience Departure

Stage 2:   The Journey over Sea

Stage 3:   The Arrival

Stage 4:   Welcome

Stage 5:   In Between #1:

Stage 6:   He Tangi nā Tāmairangi

Stage 7:   In Between #2:

Stage 8:   Quarantine Pieces (Q1, Q2, Q3)

Stage 9:   In Between # 3:

Stage 10:   The Kim Lee Noh Play

Stage 11:   Whakanoa & Farewell

Stage 12:   Return Home

These stages correspond with the chapters of the performance DVD[2]. When watching this DVD it is important to keep in mind my previous cautionary remarks that video footage reduces the multi-dimensionality of human experience into a 2-dimensionality, the cameraman determines a singular POV, sound quality is diminished, and most of the sensual and spiritual qualities of the performance experience are lost in transition.

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[2] See Appendix 6.3: DVD *Ex_isle of Strangers*

Performance Stage 1: Actors' Preparation / Audience Departure

Actor's preparation involved setting up props, checking the spaces and doing a physical, vocal and acting warm-up of Zumba (Latin dance work out), *Kori Tinana* (Māori movement vocabulary), Roy Hart vocal warm-up and Michael Chekhov Acting exercises. After getting into costume and applying make-up we gathered at 1PM for *karakia*, *sansho*[3] and, in general, creating a sense of togetherness. Ranea Aperahama, as our *kaikarakia*, led us in a beautiful prayer that contained elements of ancient Māori, Ratana and *mahikari*[4]. Then everybody took up his or her starting position.

During the dress rehearsal I noticed a manic energy among the members of our ensemble in preparation of the performance: people chatting nervously, going over text and choreographies in manic ways, trying to introduce last minute changes, and so on. The performance vessel was not empty, the body not present, qualities could not arrive in this clutter. I strongly recommended that - from openings day on - the performers commit to an hour of absolute silence in preparation for the performance.

Fig 6.1a: Zumba session led by Will Moffatt

6.1b: Archetypal gestures   6.1c: Vocal warm-up

THE RITUAL OF OBSERVING SILENCE

Silence helps to empty the mind from all unnecessary clutter, attachments to the past or preoccupations with the future, thus paving the way for presence and its sensory connection with the environment and one's fellow travellers. Silence before a performance helps to create the atmosphere of specialness and sacredness that will lift a performance out of the ordinary into the extraordinary realm. It is like a deep sustained prayer that needs no words. (Bert van Dijk, artist journal, 2010)

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[3] *Sansho*: Buddhist practice of chanting three times *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* – the title of the Lotus Sutra – the meaning of which is complex and profound and its explanation would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

[4] *Mahikari* is a Japanese spiritual practice. Further information can be obtained from: http://www.sukyomahikari.org/

I found that the ritual of one-hour silence before the performance helped me to disengage intellectually and render into a state of neutrality, allowing myself to 'de-clutter', to trust in the groundwork we had done and to be more present. This resulted in a lack of nervousness and a sense of ease in our performances. (Moko Smith)

In the meantime the audience gathered at Queens Wharf in preparation for boarding the ferry. Ticket collector and Tour Guides in white lab coats provided a clearly identifiable presence and brought in an element of theatricality. The ferry departs – *signifying a Leaving of the Homeland.*

Fig. 6.2: Audience boarding the vessel

Performance Stage 2: The Journey over Sea

The ferry trip to Matiu/Somes Island involved a physical journey over sea in which the audience is subjected to the rocking movements of the vessel, and the sensory experiences of sea smells, seagull sounds, wind on skin and the changing scenery, with Wellington diminishing in the distance and Matiu island approaching ahead. On the first performance day the sea was rough and waves crashed over the vessel, drenching the travellers on the upper deck.

Fig 6.3: Impressions from the journey

The Journey was designed to transport the audience to the island but also to transport their state of being. To make them more sensory alive in the moment thus encouraging a heightened sense of perceptiveness for the coming performance experience. Although it was a relatively short (20-min.) journey, it took people out of an every day situation into a state of excitement, adventure, and expectancy.

Fig 6.4: Drenched but excited on upper deck

Fig 6.2 – 6.4: Cinematographic stills by William Franco

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SEA JOURNEY: ALTERING THE STATE OF BEING

It was a treat to go to Matiu on a lovely autumn day. I was interested in whether and how this performance would enhance this feeling of being on an out-of-the-ordinary outing. It certainly did! […] This performance worked on the senses more than the intellect. (Aud. #31)

Performance Stage 3: The Arrival

For the audience arrival I had timed it so that MUMUKE would start beating their drums before the ferry would come around the corner – giving the audience an opportunity to hear the Taiko drumming before seeing them. On approaching the wharf the ferry operator would slow down the vessel and suspend mooring to give the passengers a chance to watch the young drummers perform: Spring, Bayashi and Humiko – pieces that symbolise and express 'spring awakening', 'welcome' and 'a celebration of the spirit of the land'.

Fig 6.5: MUMUKE Drummers in actions

The powerful resonating beats of the Taiko Drums felt like the pulsing heart of Matiu/Somes Island. As if she had awoken after a long period of dormancy. The drumming never failed to accelerate the heartbeat of the performers, creating a feeling of butterflies and thrill. Not knowing who would arrive and how they would respond to our creations added to this thrill.

TAIKO DRUMMING: THE HEART BEAT OF MATIU

I had an amazing time – from the first moment I heard the drums on the wharf to the beautiful heartfelt farewell from the cast and crew. (Aud. #11)

The greeting was wonderful with the drumming and cabaret. (Aud. #20)

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Fig. 6.6: The ferry arriving

Performance Stage 4: Welcome

After the drumming the audience was divided in 2 groups for the bio security check in the *whare kiore* (rat house) that could only accommodate up to 30 spectators at a time. While the first group was inside the *whare kiore*, the other group was treated on the light-hearted entertainment of a Ringmaster and her three performing dogs. After initially following instructions, the dogs became more and more disobedient and began to interact with the audience, causing all kinds of mayhem, including a three-way hump (see fig. 6.7b). Inside the *whare kiore* the bio security check by one of the island rangers exploded into a burlesque Cabaret show teasing the audience members by presenting lots of flesh, nipples and sexual innuendo.

The dual entertainment in and around the whare kiore fulfilled several functions. Foremost it was intended to make the audience feel welcome and looked after. By including cross-gender and androgynous performances, audience interactions and in- and outdoor intersections, it also prepared the audience for the unexpected next stages of the journey, which could be described as 'Exploring New Territory'. The journey across the island to the various performance sites would involve a significant amount of physical, emotional and imaginative engagement as well as moments of interaction.

Fig 6.7a: Burlesque cabaret act

Fig 6.7b: Ringmaster & dogs act
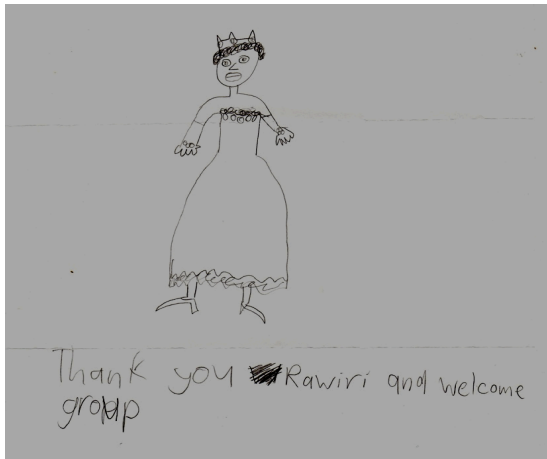
Fig. 6.8a Audience response from a young spectator   Fig. 6.8b: Performer-audience interactions

The exuberance and sexuality of the cabaret encounter at the beginning of the journey and the wonderful harmonies of the singers evocating a potent counterpoint to what I thought to be the horrors of the pens during the middle aspects of the works trajectory. (Aud. #13)

The performances that I particularly enjoyed:

→ All 3 dogs – such great energy + warmth. Great individual dogs – I feel I know each dog's personality now.

→ The intimateness of the larger than life Queen & her ensemble in the hut. They were so cheeky + giving + warm. (Aud. #42)

I loved the journey through the island – the warm welcoming guides / hosts and the feeling of being cared for. (Aud. #52)

I connected to the part in the Whare Kiore. It was a fantastic Powhiri that kind of sowed the seed of humour. Also, being Māori, I connected to all the obvious & subtle ways in which my culture was honoured & honouring to me – nā reira, kei te mihi, kei te mihi, kei te mihi. (Aud. #50)

What interested me the most was the element of surprise. Getting off the ferry and there we were right into it with the cabaret style entertainment and the dogs (was that street theatre?) outside. I remember thinking wow what next? Especially when I saw the outfits. Although my partner was a bit overwhelmed by it. Perhaps as the building was really small and he felt a bit trapped. (Aud. #5)

I loved being the Māori Queen and felt very engaged and connected with people in a way that comes natural to me. I love the sense of being neither male nor female but just being human. The chance to dress outrageously and create a character that befits this role was fun and I loved it every time I put on that amazing frock. I loved the fact that we were larger then life and performing in such a small space. (Rawiri Hindle)

A FRIVOLOUS WELCOME TO NEW TERRITORY

Performance Stages 5, 7 & 9: In Between

The remaining performance (Explorations of New Territory) included three transitions that involved travelling 'in between' locations. The first transition was the walk from the Whare Kiore to the Dell and required the audience to climb a steep but tarsealed road up the hill. Time permitting, the tour guides would point out Ngā Mokopuna or Leper Island and talk about Kim Lee, indicating the location of his cave, and so on. The second transition involved walking from the Dell to the Quarantine Centre and the third transition involved walking from the Quarantine Centre to the Recreation Hall for drinks and fruit (Whakanoa) and subsequently travelling to the barracks for the Kim Lee Noh Play.

Apart from the necessity to travel to the next location, the transitions also provided time and space to enjoy the flora and fauna, the views of the island, the harbour and the city and a chance to reflect and talk to other members of the audience or the guides. These breathing spaces were an essential part of the design of Ex_isle of Strangers and were included to create a different appreciation of time and stronger engagement with the environment (the island) and the people (fellow travellers).

Fig 6.9: Travelling to the dell

IN BETWEEN-NESS: A TIME TO CONNECT

The participatory nature of the audience made it different – i.e. we made connections by travelling to the venue together, walking together & eating together. Connections were subtle but definitely there. (Aud. #26)

The audience are drawn to become part of the performance by nature of being amongst it as well as feeling connected to the characters. I love the fact that the audience is not passive and needs to engage in order to make sense of what is happening. (Aud. #65)

Fig. 6.10: Appreciating flora & fauna on Matiu

Performance Stage 6: He Tangi nā Tāmairangi

As the audience approached the Dell they could hear the sounds of *koauau* (flute) and the vocal sounds of a *wero* (challenge) as well as incidental cries of distress. On arrival in the open space the audience were 'greeted' by a Māori warrior, Rangihaeata, who flung his *taiaha* (spear) in a threatening way. Then the audience could see a woman and her son symbolically tied to a tree, groaning and wailing in agony. The warrior turned his challenge onto the woman and an emotive exchange in *te reo* took place between Rangihaeata and Tāmairangi. Suddenly the sounds of guitar were heard coming from the bush. Tāmairangi and her son sang a *waiata tangi* that gradually melted the heart of the warrior. He released the woman, shared a *hongi* and she gave him her greenstone *taonga*. The boy was released, another *hongi*, the three of them sang the final verse and chorus and took off on the path down the hill.

This scene portrayed the power of art and song to touch the core of people and by doing so so doing dramatically influence one's destiny. It had a strong Māori content: the main actors were Māori, the language was Māori, the composer of the waiata was Māori, and the scene was on purpose placed within the domain of Tānemāhuta (Māori Atua of the forest, birds and insects). This performance took awhile before it reached its dramatic arc and the required level of passion and emotion. In the first performance it was more pretty than passionate but gradually the pathos became stronger. This was reflected in some of the audience responses: several audience members that attended the first performance commented that they did not to connect with the Tāmairangi scene, whereas those attending the last performances commented in positive terms.

Fig 6.11a: Bound to die

Fig 6.11b: A *waiata* that moves his heart
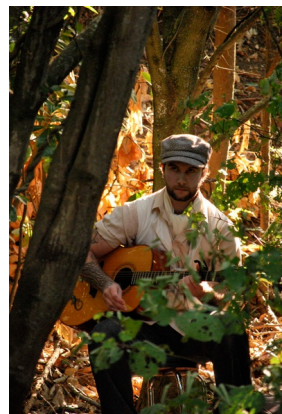
Fig 6.11c: Sounds wafting through the trees

THE POWER OF ART TO CHANGE DESTINY

There was only one thing for me that wasn't so powerful. I felt that Tāmairangi's waiata lacked passion & intensity - given it was what saved her. I felt it could have been stronger. That said – she was a beautiful wahine with a beautiful voice. (Aud. #53)

Fig. 6.12: Dramatic moments in Tāmairangi: *wero* (challenge), *hongi*, and searching for courage

A sense of lightness came with the freeing of Tāmairangi. (Aud. #9) / Māori woman & her son, the waiata – utterly beautiful, sad – happy resolution. (Aud. #3)

I particularly enjoyed the part on the track with Tāmairangi. What a voice. I always enjoy the Māori element in things. It was my first trip to Somes Island so at that point I could associate with how they might have felt on first arrival. (Aud. #5)

Performance Stage 8: Quarantine Pieces (Q1, Q2, Q3)

After the Tāmairangi scene the audience travelled to the Quarantine Centre to be divided into three groups of about 17 or 18 people each. A tour guide took each group to enter the building through a different entrance. Inside the Quarantine Centre three theatre pieces were performed simultaneously at different localities. The audience would travel between the pieces whereas the performers would perform each piece three times in succession for a different audience. As such this was the most complex section of *Ex_isle of Strangers* in terms of the coordination of performances and audience movement as well as the multiple layering of sounds and theatrical devices.

The Q1 piece (also entitled 'Peggy and the Boys') consisted of a visit to the office of the blousy, high-heeled, and rather crazy administrator and her security guard, who was heavily involved with experimentation on young male specimen of the human race, stowed in cupboards and submitted to a daily dose of disinfectant spraying. Q2 was the most obscure (and in my view the most interesting) of the three pieces. It started with a bejewelled female hand stroking the door and lock, then the audience was invited to enter the bizarre world of seductive animal-humanlike creatures, fully engaged in their imaginary world, filled with song and poetry. It ended with the shocking revelation of one creature in a furnace, reaching for his musical instrument. Q3 consisted of a Butoh dance, devised and performed by Miki Seifert, with the occasional guidance and direction from me.

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During the creation of Q1 & Q2, we explored the themes of: reaching out, confinement in small enclosures (cupboard, pens, cribs, office spaces), contrast between light- & darkness - in space and in quality of acting, the horror of incarceration, connections & disconnections, the sounds inherent in the space, smudging the distinction between animal and human being, and others. I was aware of possible associations with concentration camps, especially in relation to the gates, locks and furnace. I felt it was crucial to balance the qualities of suffering and lack of freedom with humour, lightness and beauty, and to avoid overwhelming the audience with depression and negativity. Most audience members appreciated this dance of light- and darkness, although for some it was not light, for others not dark enough. I personally felt we achieved a good balance.

The Quarantine Section was perhaps the most controversial part of Ex_isle of Strangers as it provoked the largest amount of audience responses. It was a theatre of dreams and images - fusing actions, sounds, space, words, intentions, costume & make-up devices in a dance of darkness and beauty. Most audience members expressed a real appreciation for the symbolical and theatrical aspects of the quarantine pieces whereas some indicated a need for narrative. These pieces were not developed with a structure of narrative in mind - they were an artistic and creative response to the atmospheric and theatrical possibilities of the space itself.

The quarantine scene was really interesting. I loved the absurdities, the metaphors and the changing mood. (Aud. #11) / The whole building was alive and inhabited beyond our direct experience, which I liked a lot. (Aud. #42) / I connected to the way in which the director and performers transformed what had been very oppressive, depressing spaces in the quarantine building into a fascinating theatre space, bringing out a beauty and lightness in what I had hitherto considered a cold ugly place (Aud. #9) / I found the quarantine circuit the most moving & disturbing. The juxtaposition of comedy & Butoh was very effective. (Aud. #31)

Warm-up: AG[5] of reaching out   In Miki's Butoh dance   Peggy reaching for the bottle

Fig. 6.13a: Manifestations of the 'Reaching Out' Leitmotif[6]

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[5] AG is the acronym for Archetypal Gesture (see section on Michael Chekhov in chapter two)
[6] Leitmotif from the German *Leitmotiv* meaning: guiding motive

Fig. 6.13b: Further Manifestations of the 'Reaching Out' Leitmotif

| Reaching out in song | Reaching from the furnace | Reaching from the cupboard |

As a theatre maker I am not particularly interested in developing narrative or psychological motivation. A New Pacific Theatre, in its aim to connect with spiritual dimensions, is bound to explore the mystic, the mysterious, the mythological, and the ultimate incomprehensibility of the human condition. This is realised by creating a theatre of oppositional qualities and forces: balancing darkness and lightness, avoiding the constraints of Kronos[7] (time) and Logos (reason), offering the audience plenty of space to interpret, imagine and create their own meanings. By operating on a certain level of abstraction and stylization multiple meanings are able to occur. One particular strategy I used for this purpose was that of 'Dislocated Choreography'. I asked the performers to choreograph a sequence in the huge space of the Recreation Centre, drawing inspiration by a number of images expressing various manifestations of 'Reaching Out'. After the choreography was scored and thoroughly rehearsed I asked the performers to 'dislocate' the choreography in order to explore the dramatic opportunities when performed in an extremely confined space, such as Peggy's office or the Boys' Cupboards. This was a spatial or choreographic exploration of the physical and mental condition of dislocation and imprisonment. It provided a fertile structure for anchoring the development of character and site-specific exploration.

The main sense of play and freedom in each performance. You could definitely sense the tension in having such large amount of freedom to express such serious, sometimes even oppressive, stories. It was both affecting and effective. (Aud. #52) / I really loved the range of sounds and hearing them in the background as well as foreground. (Aud. #68) / Images of concentration camps, Guantanamo. Atrocities in an idyllic setting – this contrast of the beautiful and the unspeakable! (Aud. #38)

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[7] The Greek God *Kronos* is the personification of 'Father Time' – guarding the logos and logistics of time with his scythe. He has entered our vocabulary by means of the concept of chronological (= sequential)

| Come in! | I had a dream… | Eleven barks | Polyphonic song |

Fig. 6.14: Delightful creatures playing, singing, and seducing in Q2

As a recent migrant, the sense of alienation came through strongly. The 3 guys reaching from the cupboards, then being hosed off, resonated with my own feelings of having my personal details exposed and on trial, and being in an alien environment that looks familiar but where the rules are subtly different. (Aud. #54) / What interested me most in this work were the men in cupboards – limbs protruding, grasping for freedom. (Aud. #7)

| Welcome to our open day | Online to the other side | Cello sounds drifting along | 'Personal details exposed' |

Fig. 6.15: 'Peggy and the Boys' in Q1

Fig. 6.16: Impressions of Miki's Butoh dance in Q3

[The piece] she presented was fantastic – timeless, full of emotion. Very powerful + so much commitment physically and emotionally. (Aud. #59) / I did not know who the woman was in the wooden cot. (Aud. #48) / The beauty and effort of such small overall movement spoke to me about everyday strains. (Aud. #36) / Found the girl-in-white in the pen particularly affecting me. She reminded me of a cow [oops, should she know that!] with no access to the outside visually & only marginally able to connect through the upper window. (Aud. #25)

Kotahitanga: Reaching Out to Overcome Separateness

I felt a deep connection with the suffering expressed within the isolation in the quarantine building. It strongly moved me. But it was so deep and dark an experience. There came an uplifting and sense of healing, with the journey on – both coming out of the confinement of the building into the sun and outdoors, and then the lighter next element of the performance – in short it was 'healing', confirming that life is also joyful. (Aud. #58)

The figure in the furnace, the people or animals in the cupboards. They made me want to reach out & participate / change something. (Aud. #47)

The Quarantine pieces provoked by far the largest amount of audience responses. In some ways these pieces could be interpreted as a condensed version of Ex_isle of Strangers *- presenting the experience of a guided tour to different sites inside an unknown bounded space (the Quarantine Centre), that required the audience to exit and enter the building, pass through locks and gates, experience freedom of positioning as well as confinement within the localities of pens, office space, corridors, and predetermined boundaries. Each Q piece provided an autonomous performance experience that was somehow connected with the other Q pieces through a unity of theme [Reaching Out], place [Quarantine Centre], action [Travelling] and sound [the simultaneous perception of sounds produced in the different pieces].*

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Performance Stage 10: The Kim Lee Noh Play

Much has already been said in the previous chapter on the writing and staging of the Kim Lee Noh Play. As explained there it was not my intention to present an authentic or traditional Noh Play.

The ancient Japanese Noh formed one of several sources of inspiration for the New Pacific Theatre in its effort to develop an original model of theatre making that is relevant for Aotearoa / New Zealand. It is worth analysing here how the Kim Lee Noh Play was Noh and not Noh.

In terms of spatial arrangement the barracks was roughly laid out in accordance with the various areas of a traditional Noh stage: the audience in front of the stage (*shōmen*) and on the left of the stage (*waki shōmen*); the *hashigakari* (bridge-way) separated from the Green Room (*kagami-no-ma*) by a curtain (*agemaku*) operated by one of our two *kōken* (stage attendants) in black. The musicians were situated upstage (*ato-za*) and the Noh Chorus seated stage left in an area known as *jiutai-za*. The Noh stage resembles an island, whereby the hashigakari is used for the journey to and from the island (it even looks like a wharf or pier) and the main stage is bounded by seated figures (audience, musicians, chorus) like a surrounding sea.

| Green room: BS | Musicians: US | Noh chorus: SL | Hashigakari: SR |

Fig. 6.17: Spatial arrangements for the Kim Lee Noh Play

The play opens with the *taonga puoro* musician swinging his *purerehua* (see Fig. 5.6) to mark the entrance of JIN CAO LEE, played by Moko Smith. His entrance on the *hashigakari* symbolises the journey from Hong Kong to Aotearoa/New Zealand. On arrival he performs a ritual of cleansing himself with cold seawater to honour and connect with the local deities (Tangaroa and Tāwhirimātea). Then he goes for a swim and the chorus explains in chant how the weather suddenly changes, dragging him out into the harbour and washing him ashore on Ngā Mokopuna in front of the cave where his great-grandfather had perished many years ago.

Fig. 6.18: JIN CAO LEE rolling around half naked – Noh or *no* Noh

The act of having an almost naked actor perform a slow roll across the stage is not a traditional device in Noh. Portraying the experience of fighting storm, waves and being dragged against his will through the Butoh-like movement of resisted rolling, and layering this action with a CHORUS chant describing in poetic words what took place, helped to express the metaphorical implications of weather as a karmic force towards a destiny beyond our comprehension. I felt it was important hereby to reveal the actor's body.

At Ngā Mokopuna, JIN CAO manages, by the skin of his teeth, to hold on to the kelp and call out for help, in Cantonese and English. This motivates the island ranger, the waki (ANNA), played by Whetu Silver, to enter the scene and check out how the island is holding up in the storm. *The use of English, Cantonese and Māori is obviously not authentic Noh.*

| Entrance ANNA | Sharing a ghostly story (*Yo*) | 'Is anybody there?' | Symbolic boat device |

Fig. 6.19: Use of a female actor in the role of ANNA

Traditionally Noh actors, musicians and chorus are all male. The historic and cultural reasons for the exclusion of female performers in Noh are not relevant or appropriate in our time and culture. I felt therefore justified to use female actors, musicians and chorus members. Throughout the staging I attempted to incorporate the dance of opposition as much as possible. For example, when ANNA shared a ghost tale about a group of shipwrecked sailors who were forced to spend the night on Ngā Mokopuna and reported seeing the 'twisted figure of a Chinaman, with a scarred face, shuffling up and down' (Kim Lee Noh Play: p.5) I asked Whetu to tell this story with an almost childlike sense of pleasure in telling a horror story to lighten up the sombre mood that started to surround her entrance through the stylized way of moving and speaking.

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ANNA crosses the channel in a simple wooden frame symbolising her boat (see fig. 6.19) and rescues JIN CAO, she then takes him into Kim Lee's cave for shelter and regaining his energies. ANNA feels an inexplicable sense of danger, threat and accusation in the cave and it takes effort to overcome her resistance to enter. A burden weighs heavily upon her shoulders.

During rehearsals we worked on the idea of ANNA carrying the burden of karmic guilt, like a huge heavy rock, on her shoulders. This burden increased or decreased in weight according to the various circumstances during the play. It facilitated the application of jo-ha-kyū in her actions. Using a simple frame to represent a boat is a Noh device, although most set devices are made from bamboo and not ply wood. Our boat frame was decorated with Māori design.

JIN CAO on the other hand is beginning to feel the presence of someone related (his great-grandfather) and certain mystic forces. When they sit side by side - as if by a fire – he shares his story with ANNA and the energy increases as both begin to realise the karmic causes that ties their lives together. When JIN CAO is about to reveal the name of his great-grandfather the earth begins to rumble and MĀTIU – the spirit of the island (played by another female actor Madeline McNamara) – enters the scene, urgently chanting a *karakia* to calm the winds of past distress and allow the right circumstances for spiritual reconciliation to occur.

The inclusion of Māori karakia is a further example of adjusting the Noh convention to New Zealand circumstances, whereas Buddhist concerns with spiritual reconciliation are universal concerns that can be expressed in any language or cultural idiom. The use of the kōrari can be compared to the use of bamboo grass (kuruizasa) in the hand of an agitated or confused person but clearly has more connection with Māori expression and New Zealand flora, and related to the work Tanemahuta Gray did with us during the first Matiu wānanga (Feb 2009).

| Kōken delivers boat to ANNA | The rescue | In the cave | Rumbling arrival of MĀTIU |

Fig. 6.20: A gradual revelation of karmic ties

The CHORUS and MĀTIU, in tandem, express the sorrow that the island was forced to host and witness over the years, and reach the conclusion that 'the time has come for the tide to turn' (Chorus #6). Subsequently MĀTIU evokes the ghost of KIM LEE who emerges in an explosive burst of anger and resentment, consistent with an evolution in the jo-ha-kyū rhythm from the introductory *Jo* stage to the more dynamic *Ha* stage, relating to a breaking or breaking through.

Kōrari choreography by MĀTIU   KIM LEE emerging in a furious explosion of anger

Fig. 6.21: The masked characters of MĀTIU & KIM LEE

The two masked characters of MĀTIU and KIM LEE represent beings from a spiritual realm and as such relate to one of the New Pacific Theatre areas of investigation: 'Return to the Gods'. On the crossroads of geography, culture and spirituality are the gods. They are the archetypal qualities inherent in nature and in culture. The Noh convention of actors wearing mask for the portrayal of the non-human roles of Ghosts, Spirits and Demons is supported by the application of Michael Chekhov's archetypal qualities - to achieve a supernatural presence.

I personally enjoyed performing with the gods and spirits in the Noh performance. It was an upper stratum that I liked working with because of the potential for drama, for stylization, for poetry and for power in a dramatic sense. The mask work, the stylized movement and the 'visual presence' of the spirit characters of Matiu and Kim Lee were reminders of theatre's ability to return to the gods. (Moko Smith)

After KIM LEE has released most of his fury, anger and resentment, he realises that the life of his beautiful great-grandson has been saved by the offspring of the person that exiled him to this horrible cave. Gradually his heart softens, enabling him to feel gratitude and an ability to forgive. This paves the way for his spiritual release and at the same time relieving ANNA from her burden of ancestral guilt.

The changing mood is expressed through the use of koauau, the harmonious chords of the chant 'Pure white wings beating the air' (CHORUS # 7), and JIN CAO and KIM LEE performing a tightly choreographed sequence in unison, symbolising their connection. Spatially the actors perform a square-shaped pathway and by doing so alternate who is in front and who is behind. This expresses harmony and equality. The CHORUS song ends with a strong rhythmic haka chant 'Toka Tu Moana' - a whakatauākī (Māori proverb) expressing the strength of a rock in the sea withstanding the ongoing turmoil of storm and circumstance. This brings the focus back on Matiu Island by honouring her strength and offering a feeling of hope for the future.

The play finishes with KIM LEE and JIN CAO LEE performing a powerful stomp with their left foot in absolute unison. *Traditionally the SHITE finishes a Noh play with a left footed stomp - we diverted from this convention by both SHITE and TSURE performing the final stomp.*

Playing the *koauau*   JIN CAO & KIM LEE performing their final dance – alternating in taking the lead

Fig. 6.22: The quality of *yūgen*[8] coming through in the final dance

I thought the different cultural dimensions expressed as part of *Ex_isle of Strangers* were crafted together beautifully. For me, the Noh performance exemplified this mostly out of all of the performances. Although Noh comes from a Japanese traditional base the inclusion of taonga puoro, Māori motif in the masks, using Te Reo Māori and Whakatauakī and the incorporating of Māori movement motifs added elements to the overall performance that created a strong sense of culturally diverse theatre. (Rawiri Hindle)

Noh or *no* Noh that is the Question

What the Audience had to say:

The Noh piece did not work for me. Trying to use a form where the performers do not have the years of training and family background of the Japanese Noh performers does no justice to either. Ritual theatre, yes – but no Noh! (Aud. #38)

The final piece was beautifully crafted and executed, pitching us all out into the Spirit world, bringing it more strongly before us than I've ever seen a NZ work dare to do. Beautifully held + contained, then settled + transformed. (Aud. #34)

The performance in the barracks was the pièce de resistance, the spiritual aspect of the play its crowning glory. The storyline bringing together the spirit of Matiu, the spirit of a Chinese exiled stranger, a young Chinese man seeking information about his ancestor, and a local DOC worker, draws a provocative picture of the kind of suffering that took place on the island. My sense was that, through the use of traditional Māori karakia, choral singing and musical/instrumental backing, an atmosphere of serene calm and peace were created. (Aud. #9)

I particularly connected to the motion in the Noh play. The sense of loss and confusion in [Jin Cao] – someone wanting to know about his past; one full of sorrow and pain, confronting the descendant of his ancestor's guard. The intensity of emotion, the chorus, the movement, they were all amazing. (Aud. #55)

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[8] Yūgen (see 2.5) is the Japanese term for a quality of profound mysterious beauty and elegance.

Fig. 6.23: The need for physical connection after the play

Each and every Noh performance took us on an incredibly powerful emotional, spiritual and imaginative journey. On completion we needed time to physically embrace one another, and return to earth, before we were could meet and mingle with our audiences.

Performance Stage 11: Whakanoa & Farewell

At the end of the Kim Lee Noh Play the audience was invited to the Recreation Hall to share a light supper with the ensemble. The sharing of food after a performance is very much part of Māori and Pacific custom. It fulfils the function of socialising and connecting with one another as human beings – to break the separation that occurred as part of the role division between audience and performers. On a spiritual level it also fulfils the function of lifting the tapu of a highly ritualised encounter such as a *pōwhiri* or Performance for that matter. This lifting of *tapu* is referred to as *whakanoa* - to make common. During this informal mingling I addressed the audience and acknowledged them for watching and supporting our work and to urgently ask that they take home an audience feedback envelope and return this to us with their honest feedback and responses. When the time had come for the audience to catch the ferry home, we had decided after the first performance that, as an ensemble, we would all walk the audience to the ferry landing and farewell them by sending them off with a huge groups wave.

Sharing of food is an essential element of the New Pacific Theatre creative and performance practice, serving the core values of whānaungatanga and kotahitanga. By accompanying the audience down to the wharf we established a connection with them that was more like one of friendship. From the way many audience members reached out to us on the upper deck of the ferry it was clear that felt very appreciative and connected - some did not want to leave us, or the island.

FOOD & FAREWELL: NO LONGER STRANGERS

I am grateful for the experience & for all you have shared on the day & in the programme I have kept. (Aud. #47)

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Fig. 6.24: Giant farewell wave from the wharf

Another aspect of the whole experience I particularly enjoyed was the connection built up with the audience over the course of the play, and farewelling the audience after the performance. It began as a simple farewell wave that spontaneously grew into a running human wave, a farewell gesture that was expressed through the whole of the body and was replicated by the departing audience on the boat. This gave the event a cathartic ending, embodying the rhythm of jo-ha-kyu, in that after a long period of audience-performer engagement, a period of building relationships, there was finally a moment where the two parties could meet together and express themselves mutually and unrestrictedly. After the cathartic meeting of the two parties there was a peace and serenity that followed, and completeness was attained. Never before had I seen so much of an exchange taking place between performers and spectators, the interrelations, one of the key elements of theatre, were strong both within the company and between the audience and performers. For me, this final action helped turn *Ex_isle of Strangers* from a series of performances to an event. (Moko Smith)

The running/wave farewell on the wharf looked utterly incredible from the departing ferry – I have never seen such an amazing farewell from that wharf, amongst all the other memories you created this will also be another taonga. (Aud. #68)

Performance Stage 12: Return Home

The return trip home was by public ferry, which meant that apart from the audience members there could be people from Eastbourne on the ferry to the city. This would facilitate a returning to the normality of everyday life.

At the end, I didn't want to get on the boat. (Aud. #11)

While the audience returned home the performers jumped from the wharf into the harbour to refresh and cleanse themselves from the intense experience of performing.

Fig. 6.25: Jumping in the harbour to wrap up

THE JOURNEY COMPLETE

Chapter Seven: Emerging Issues

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Introduction

At the end of the performance audience members were given an envelope with a form[1] to provide us with written and creative feedback. They were asked not to open the envelope until they were back in the city and the journey was completed. It is practically impossible to judge or assess audience responses without knowing exactly the variables that influenced their perception of the performance, such as: which performance attended, the viewing order of certain sections, the viewing point(s) within each section, and the amount and quality of interaction with the performers. I therefore decided to incorporate individual audience responses in relation to the various aspects and issues of the performance in the previous chapter rather than to draw absolute or generalised conclusions that may be incomplete or even invalid. Nevertheless, after analysing some of the audience responses in quantitative terms there are a number of responses that, with caution, can be used to draw some generalised conclusions or statements about the effect of the performance on the audience, and as such are of interest in this study. In the coming chapter I present a quantitative analysis of selected audience responses (7.1), discuss and analyse the main issues that emerged in this artistic work (7.2), and summarize the conclusions that arose from the creative development and performance of _Ex_isle of Strangers_ (7.3).

7.1 Quantitative Analysis of Audience Responses

More than a third (69 people) of the people who attended _Ex_isle of Strangers_ (200 audience members in total) took the time and effort to return their feedback forms – most of them with substantial detail, and including a variety of creative responses, such as drawings, poems, mind-maps, and so on.

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[1] See Appendix 3.3 'Audience Feedback Form'

Gender	Pākehā	Māori	Kids	Total
Male	18	2	2	22
Female	38	5	4	47
Total:	56	7	6	69

Table 7.1: Age, Gender and Ethnicity of Respondents
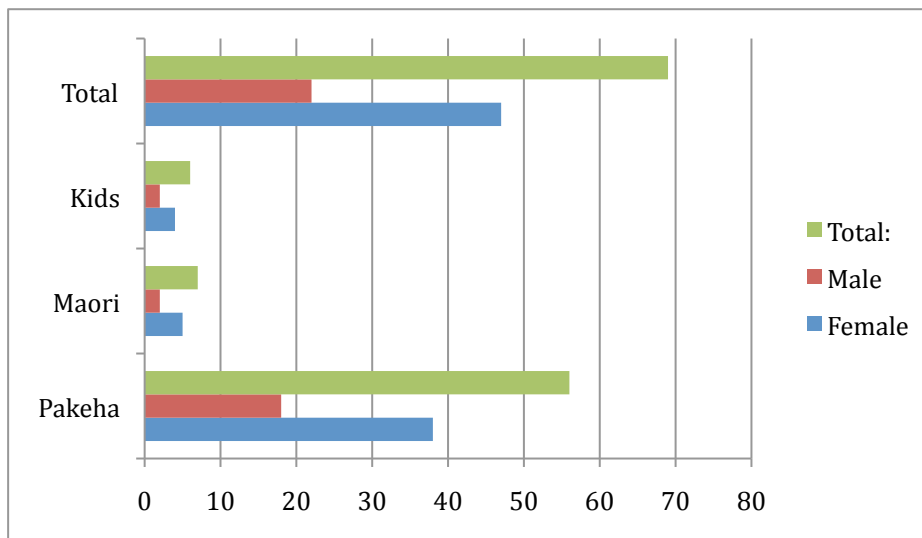
Chart 7.1: Age, gender and ethnicity in bar format

It is clear from these data that the majority of the people who gave feedback were female and Pākehā. When we compare the Māori/Pākehā ratio between the entire audience and the respondents it appears that Māori are less represented among the respondents.

Ethnicity	Entire Audience	Respondents	
Pākehā	173	62	36%
Maori	27	7	26%
Total:	*200*	*69*	*34.5%*

Table 7.2: Māori/Pākehā ratios
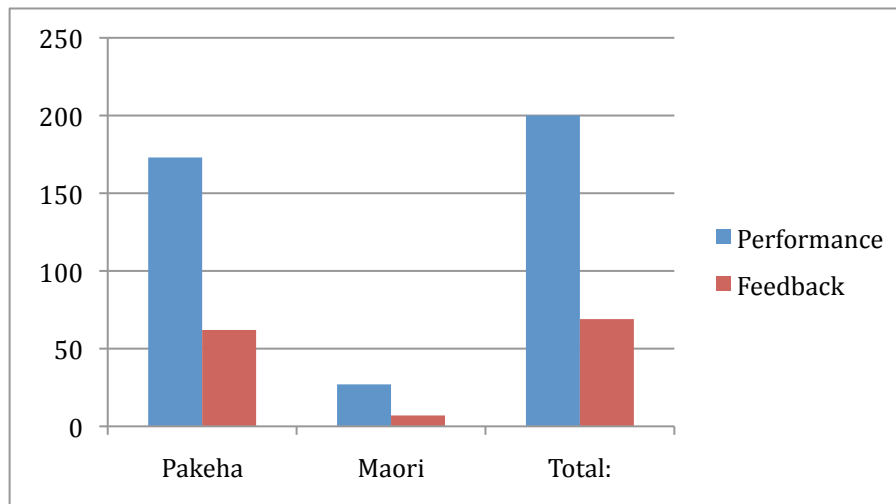
Chart 7.2: Māori/Pākehā feedback ratios in bar format

When looking at the responses to the question 'What was missing?' more than 50% of the respondents felt there was nothing missing, 35% mentioned one particular thing, and 7% of the respondents felt that there were three or more things missing.

Number of things missing	0	1	2	3 >	Total:
Number of Respondents	36	24	4	5	69

Table 7.3: Response to question: 'What was missing?'
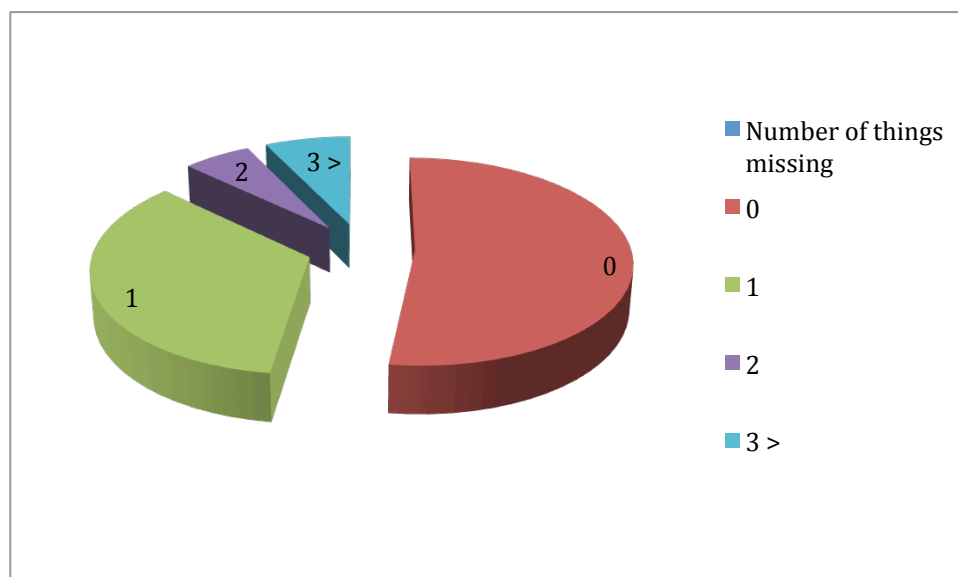
Chart 7.3: Pie chart: 'What was missing?'

People who felt that there were three or more things missing were mainly fellow theatre professionals. The area that was mentioned most often as missing related to: 'overall cohesion', 'dramatic connection between scenes', 'a sense of continuity', 'to relate the various pieces to one another'. I will respond to this criticism in more substance in the next section *Emerging Issues & Themes*. Other things that were mentioned missing, but more incidentally: 'Animals were missing'; 'Dancing was missing'; 'I wanted more singing'; 'There wasn't enough Māori mythology'; 'There wasn't enough humour'; 'The performances were not dark enough', and so on. These missing elements were often expressions of personal taste and regularly contradicted one another, for example 'it was too light' versus 'it was too heavy'. Several people suggested that the tour guides needed to be more active, more theatrical, take more initiative in encouraging the audience to chat and connect with one another. This is a valid point particularly for the first 2 performances. It took the guides awhile to relax into their role and start playing more. I could certainly have spent more time and attention coaching them, if we could have had more time. As it was, the guides had full-time jobs, and I ran out of people to recruit for the important performance role of guiding the audience. This criticism is certainly something I want to address in future projects of the New Pacific Theatre.
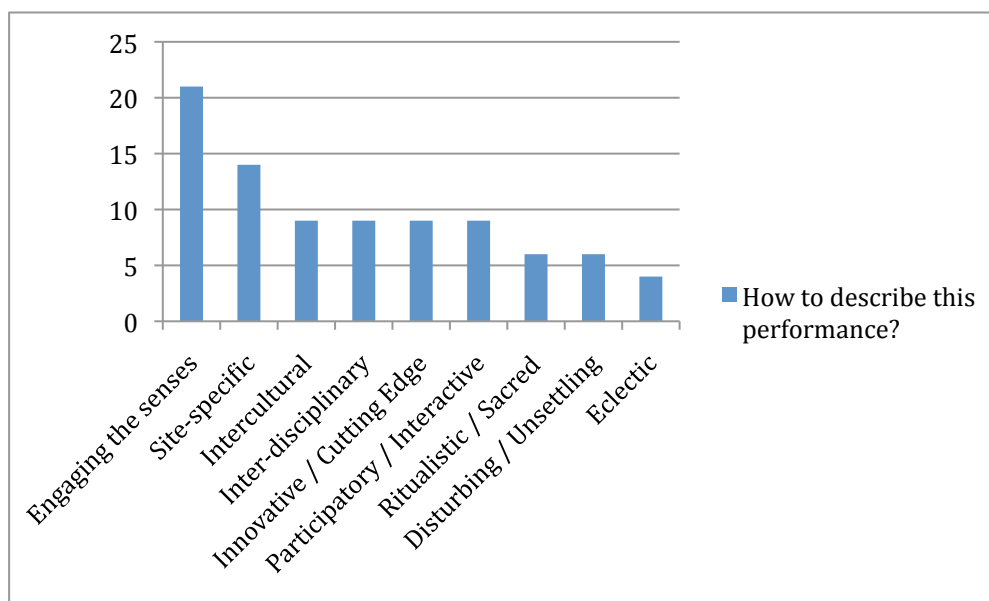
Chart 7.4: How to describe this type of performance?

By taking a closer look at how various audience members described this type of performance we get a certain indication of how the performance was perceived in general terms and whether the core ingredients were noted. The fact that so many respondents mentioned 'engaging the senses' means that the focus on presence during training and creative development and in the construction of the performance elements has come across. We saw in chapter three that presence, as an act of engaging the senses, is one of the key tools to connect with our environment. It comprises the how in 'how to connect'. By mentioning 'site-specific' audience members showed a perception that the production connected strongly with the site, its geography and architecture, 'intercultural' with its cultural qualities, and 'participatory/interactive' with its people. Whereas 'ritualistic/sacred' showed that a significant percentage perceived the spiritual dimensions and intentions that were infused in the performance.

A significant number of respondents mentioned that they never experienced a performance 'like this one' before, and were struggling to find words to describe the performance. I interpret this to mean that we were successful in presenting something that was original and innovative, justifying the 'New' in 'Towards a New Pacific Theatre'.

How to describe this performance?

- Engaging the senses
- Site-specific
- Intercultural
- Inter-disciplinary
- Innovative / Cutting Edge
- Participatory / Interactive
- Ritualistic / Sacred
- Disturbing / Unsettling
- Eclectic

Chart 7.5: How to describe this type of performance?

Several respondents came up with their own unique vocabulary to describe the performance, for example: 'Carnivalesque Exotica', 'Variété Dramatique', 'Burlesque Drama', 'Con-Fusing', 'Absurd Theatre', 'Environmental Theatre Plus' and 'New Pacific Theatre'. I found it exciting to see respondents' creativity in labelling our work in new and original terms. Although I am fully aware that this question only provided a rough and generalised measure of the effectiveness of our intentions, I observe in the responses an indication that what we set out to do was communicated at least to some degree.

7.2   Emerging Issues

The following section highlights a number of issues that arose during the creative development and performance of *Ex_isle of Strangers*, conn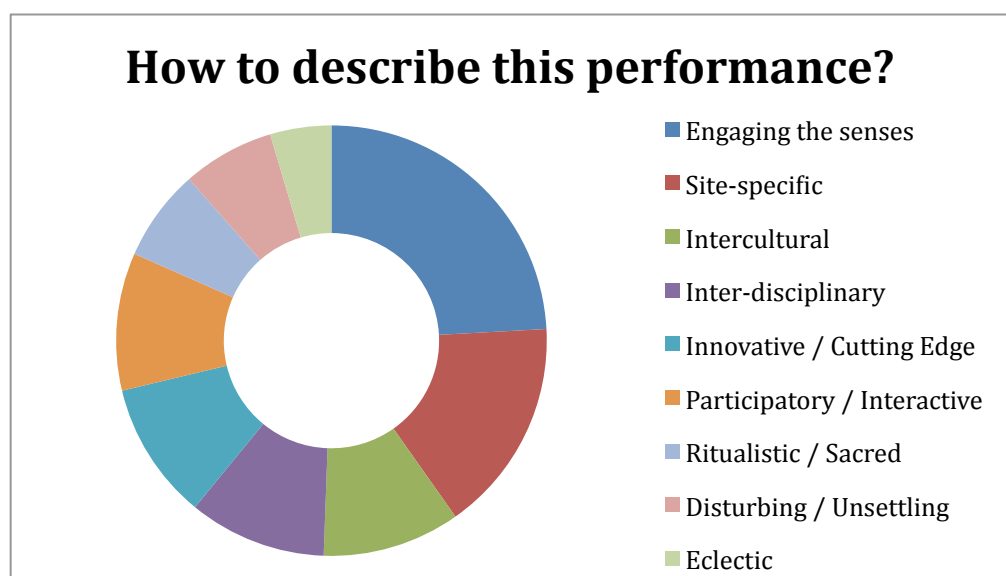ected to the research aims of a New Pacific Theatre. The first issue concerns levels of physical engagement (7.2.1) of both performers and spectators - relating to points of view, indoor/outdoor intersections, the layering of sounds, and transitional moments (the state of in-between-ness). The second issue relates to the spiritual dimensions (7.2.2) of our practice: to invite a sense of healing, the particularity of our spiritual practices, personal transformations that occurred, and transformation as an artistic tool. The third issue concerns the four guiding principles concerning the ethical and political aspects of intercultural performance and exchange, as formulated in chapter two. Here I assess *Ex_isle of Strangers* against these guiding principles (7.2.3). Next I respond to the main critique on our work – relating to a perceived lack of narrative or dramatic cohesion (7.2.4), and I discuss our application of the dance of opposition (7.2.5), particularly by juxtaposing tragedy versus comedy and balancing lightness and darkness. To conclude, I present an overall assessment of the effectiveness of *Ex_isle of Strangers* as the first exemplar of a New Pacific Theatre, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as a number of recommendations for future research (7.3).

7.2.1 Levels of Physical Engagement

The level of engagement of performers and spectators has been a particular focus during the creation and performances of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. In my experience, as a theatre maker *and* as an audience member, the transformative value of a

performance is directly related to the degree of engagement – physically, mentally, emotionally and imaginatively. The higher, and more total, the level of engagement, the deeper, and more lasting, the transformative impact is gained. Erika Fischer-Lichte (2009) relates the transformative power of performance to 'the state of in-between-ness'. She argues that a performance comes into being as a result of the co-presence of performers and spectators. This co-presence is a state of flux, of mutual influence, of inter-dependence, leading to unforeseen developments, events or effects occuring during a performance in various degrees.

> Over its course a performance creates the possibility for all participants to experience themselves as a subject that can co-determine the actions and behaviour of others and whose own actions and behaviours are similarly determined by others. (p. 391)

The in-between state 'of co-determining the course of a performance and being determined by it' was foregrounded in *Ex_isle of Strangers* by ensuring high levels of physical and spatial freedom and involvement for its audiences. In this section I will analyse the various aspects of the audience's *physical* and *spatial* involvement. Theatre performances in traditional venues don't require a high level of physical engagement from the audience: the journey to the theatre, getting to your seat, and leaving the theatre after the curtain call. Artaud (1958) warns that:

> [T]his conception of theatre, which consists of having people sit on a certain number of straight-backed or overstuffed chairs placed in a row and tell each other stories, however marvelous, is, if not the absolute negation of theater – which does not require movement in order to be what it should – certainly its perversion. (p. 106)

My experience of the majority of current New Zealand theatre productions is that they focus on engaging the audience on a *mental* and *emotional* level (through narrative and the expression of emotions), rather than on a physical or imaginative level (through particition and mobility). In order to advance the New Pacific Theatre mission of 'making an original contribution to the theatre practice in New Zealand' I wanted *Ex_isle of Strangers* to involve an exceptionally high level of physical engagement for its audiences. The physical journey by ferry over water, involving the

rocking movements on the waves, the smell of sea, the sounds of sea gulls, the changing scenery, and so on, combined with the traveling on the island to various in- and outdoor locations before returning, again by ferry, to the familiar surroundings of the city – provided an intensive 4-hour experience of physical engagement. On an imaginative level it was a journey of surprises. None of the audience knew where the next location would be, or what experience or entertainment to expect. As a consequence, the audiences' senses were on the alert, invigorated by an ongoing and complex flow of unforeseen stimulants – partly caused by performance elements and partly by the ever-changing presence of natural phenomena such as weather, flora and fauna. In this section I will take a closer look at four particular aspects of the audience's physical engagement with *Ex_isle of Strangers*: Points of View (A), Indoor-Outdoor Intersections (B), Layering of Sounds (C) and Transitional Moments (D).

A) Points of View:

In photo- and cinematography the abbreviation POV (Point of View) is used to indicate the camera angle and the particular appenditure employed, such as: close-up, medium or wide shot. The POV determines the lens through which the viewer perceives and appreciates the image. Whereas in live performance theatrical lighting is one of the primary tools to guide the audience's gaze. In *Ex_isle of Strangers* we used only natural light – rendering everything visible. Therefore, it was necessary to rely on other theatrical devices to distinguish between foreground or background. Through a general absence of seating, the performances were less framed in predetermined ways, thus allowing our audiences a significant amount of freedom to let their senses wander according to desire, will or intuition. Somebody may be drawn to look at, or listen to the chatter of, a *kākāriki*, or focus on the particular play of light and shadow among the leaves of a tree, or 'zoom in' on the possible reactions of a fellow audience member in response to particular performance events, and so on. Most audiences are not used to being given so much freedom, assuming an attitude of waiting for guidance, rather than taking responsibility for, or intitiating, their own POV, while others luxuriate in this freedom. One of the audience members described this as:

A challenge to commonsensical habits of audience behaviour, especially with the mobility of the audience and the optional viewing orders that suggest a series of episodic encounters […] rather than the often coherence and ordered viewing experience of much conventional theatre practices. (Aud. #13)

For the three pieces in the Quarantine Centre, for example, a mixture of chance and personal preference would dictate: the order in which the three pieces were viewed, the standing point of each audience member, and the level of interaction with the performers. With such a variety of factors into play the performance experience would be significantly different from one spectator to the next. To illustrate this point I will highlight some of the interactions that occurred.

In Q2, Peggy (the blousy, high-heeled, administrator with the false eyelashes) had to navigate significant numbers of visitors in her cramped office. On one occasion a member of the audience 'seduced' Peggy to share her bottle of rum with him, and when he took a swig he was rather disappointed to discover that it was only cold tea. Later on, in the same piece, male arms and legs, emerging from partially closed cupboards, would at times reach into empty space, while at other times unexpectedly encounter a physical connection with a member of the audience. This intersection would present both the performer and spectator with a choice: do I engage, grab, stroke, withdraw, or ignore this interaction?

Fig. 7.1: Spatial Intersection Q3

Two moments of Miki's Butoh Dance during which she 'invades' the personal space of two members of the audience – causing them to move away. This illustrates the different impact a performance moment has resulting from a performer – audience intersection.

I am extremely interested in the intersections that lead to a build-up, and exchange, of energy and pressure between performer and audience. These heightened interactions

create moments of improvisation between the parties involved. As these moments constitute a crucial aspect of *Ex_isle of Strangers* (and therefore of a New Pacific Theatre) I have been contemplating words that could be used to describe these intense moments of interaction and increased energy in performance. Could they be labeled: performance pressure points, knots, kernels, nodes, crises, crossroads, or combustion points? In discussing the function of actor – spectator interactions Fischer-Lichte (2008) asserts that 'through their physical presence, perception, and response, the spectators become co-actors that generate the performance by participating in the "play"' (p. 32). The bodily co-presence of, and subsequent interactions between, actors and spectators, generates what Fischer-Lichte labels an 'autopoietic feedback loop'. She relates this feedback loop with three closely related processes:

> [F]irst, the *role reversal* of actors and spectators; second, the *creation of community* between them; and third, the creation of various modes of mutual, physical *contact* that help to explore the interplay between proximity and distance, public and private, or visual and tactile contact. (p. 40)

The autopoietic feedback loop describes a process of mutual responsiveness between actors and spectators. Although this occurs to some extent in all performance, it is not difficult to see that when spectators no longer merely witness a performance, but as participants influence the outcome of (certain aspects of) the performance, they will physically, emotionally, and at times spiritually experience being part of it, thus increasing the intensity of the autopoietic feedback loop. *Ex_isle of Strangers* deliberately employed this device at a high level of operation – not only in certain sections of the performance, such as the Dogs, the Cabaret act, and during the Quarantine pieces – but in its entirety the performance was designed and constructed to enable close bodily co-presence and high levels of interaction between actors and spectators, thus enhancing its tranformational power.

B) Indoor – Outdoor Intersections:

Another intersection, impacting on the level of physical engagement of an audience, related to our exploration of indoor/outdoor crossovers as a performance principle in *Ex_isle of Strangers*. The *whare kiore* (rat house) could only comfortably host a

maximum of 30 audience members. It was therefore necessary to divide the audience in two groups for the dual activity of bio security check and Cabaret act that would take place inside. Instead of having one group simply wait for 10 – 12 minutes on the wharf until it was their turn to enter, we decided to provide some outdoor entertainment for them. Rather than developing two autonomous performance acts, we began to experiment with moments of interchange: looking in, characters from one scene entering the other scene, characters interacting on the threshold of scenes, characters responding to sound cues from the other scene, and so on. By experiencing both entertainments in succession, the audience would only be able to contextualise, or piece together, the crossover fragments on completion of both perspectives.

Fig. 7.2a 'Final make-up Check'   Fig. 7.2b 'Rat Puppet Show'

Fig. 7.2: Looking In
Two examples of 'Looking In' during the cabaret act in the *whare kiore.* First image (7.2a) shows the two female cabaret singers using the window 'as if' a mirror to check make-up. Second image (7.2b) shows the rat puppets looking at the people inside the *whare kiore.*

Furthermore, we made sure that throughout *Ex_isle of Strangers* there was a mix of in- and outdoor entertainment. Even when boarding the ferry, audience members were confronted with the choice whether to sit indoors: 'protected' from the sea spray and waves; or outdoors on the top deck: exposed to the elements of wind and sea. It is clear that choice, or timing (as the top filled first), would impact the level of sensory stimulation during the journey, perhaps even affecting the state of receptiveness later on.

C) Layering of Sound:

The Quarantine pieces provided a multiple layering of sounds. By having three pieces taking place simultaneously in different areas of the same space, the sounds created

in one piece would invade to some degree the other pieces, thus allowing for a complex and interesting simultaneity of foreground and background sounds. One of the audience members in her feedback observed:

> I connected to all the sounds in particular. The waiata Māori, wero, taiko drums, various instruments, noises, I connected to the most. I really loved the range of sounds – hearing some of them in the background as well as foreground – in different locations the sounds travelled differently. This made an enormous impact. (Aud. #68)

An example of such layering of sounds was presented by the sounds of the cello. While the cello was the main musical component in the Q2 piece, it provided simultaneously background music for the Q1 and Q3 pieces. Similarly, the sounds of the polyphonic song were foreground in Q3 and at the same time background sounds for the Q1 and Q2 pieces. This layering of sounds gave the same music or soundscape a different impact, depending on whether it was foreground music, and as such directly connected with the performers and visual imagery of that particular piece, or background music, causing the listeners to either, consciously or unconsciously, remember some of the previous scenes or anticipate what the dramatic context of these sounds could be. Although I did not orchestrate the coinciding sounds, the layering, within a certain range of variation, was a deliberate choice.

D) Transitional Moments: Time and Space In-Between

The various locations – from point of the departure (Queens Wharf) to point of arrival (island pier) to the dell, the quarantine centre, the barracks and back to the pier and the city – could only be reached through physical travel, either by boat or by foot. The physical travel gave rise to a metaphorical sense of journeying, of discovery, of anticipation. The time and space in between locations created moments of transition that were an integral part of the design of the entire performance. These moments were necessary to reach the destiny of the next location, provided time and space to increase 'presence' by taking in the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch of the environment, allowed the audience to get 'a feel' (intuition) for the place, *and* created opportunities to reflect, chat, and connect with one another.

> I had the sense that the island was an art gallery. Moving between the
> performances was like walking between paintings, or sculptures – except the
> experiences were multi-dimensional. There was a sense of anticipation and
> uncertainty – not being sure what was around the corner, what the next
> experience was, how long it would continue. Very mind opening. I felt like I was
> more a part of this experience than if I was watching it in a theatre, and yet
> removed as well. The boundaries were not always clear, which was unsettling.
> (Aud. #56)

Through a variety of devices (determining viewpoints, indoor/outdoor intersections,
layering of sound, and physical travel that gave rise to time and space in-between)
Ex_isle of Strangers required and evoked a high level of physical engagement from its
audiences, allowing performers and spectators to relate on the basis of proximity
rather than distance.

7.2.2   Spiritual Dimensions

Early performance fulfilled a unique function in the expression of, and
communication with, gods and beings from the spiritual realm, particularly in Asian
and Pacific performing arts. James Brandon (1993) observed:

> Everywhere in Asia and Oceania, early performance was associated with man's
> relations to the gods. In animistic belief performance is service to the gods, a
> request for good health or a good harvest, a channel to invite the spirits of the
> sacred world into the temporary world of mankind. (p. 3)

At times this relationship with the gods has been formalized in the spatial
arrangement of certain genres. For example, the *hashigakari* in Noh and the
hanamichi in Kabuki symbolise 'a passageway of the gods' (p. 143). The spiritual
dimension of performance not only relates to the relationship with supernatural
beings, it also refers to the intention of theatre to heal or to transform. During our
first *wānanga* on Matiu island Charles Royal (2009) identified *ūkaipō* as one of the
core values of the *whare tapere*. The concept of *ūkaipō* is an expression of the function
of theatre to provide spiritual nourishment, or transformation – to render us
revitalised and enlightened. This function is aligned with the Buddhist intention of

reaching our highest potential (=Buddhahood) through the fostering wisdom, courage, compassion and life force – aiming hereby to realise an absolute happiness (independent of circumstance) of self and other, and peace throughout the world.

A significant number of audience respondents (more than 20%) perceived 'healing' to be an important aspect of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. This was expressed in a variety of ways, such as: 'how a sense of community and acceptance of differences can heal historical xenophobia', 'the mark human or sentient suffering leaves on a place and the possibility of healing that suffering', 'the ability of the performer to transform an environment at a physical, emotional and spiritual level', 'I see the work as exploring healing through theatre/performance by working in situ with awareness of harsh past and emphasis on company developing as close knit community. Then invite audience whose compassion is triggered through experiencing the show and this is a healing process.'

What was being explored in this project?
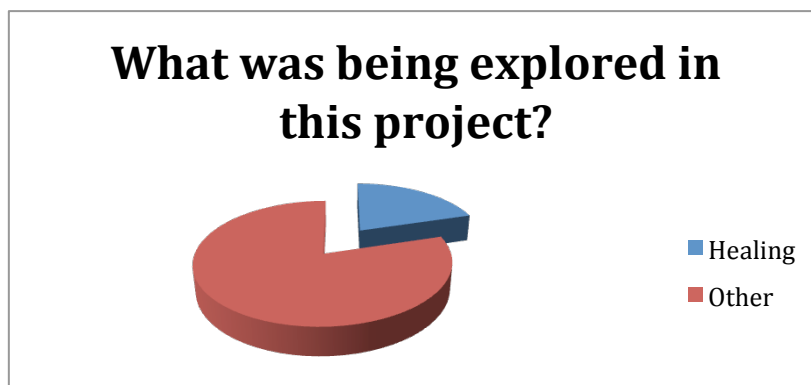
■ Healing
■ Other

Chart 7.6: Respondents who felt that the project explored 'Healing'

A number of spiritual practices were incorporated in our work, mostly from a Buddhist and *tikanga Māori* background. As mentioned earlier we started the day with *gongyo[2]*. Furthermore, before each meal we had *karakia* (prayer), initially led by one of our Māori participants and in *te reo*, but gradually shared by all and done in the language of their choice. This *karakia* was an acknowledgement and appreciation of the food to be received, the company of people and our artistic work together. Another significant spiritual practice was the hour of silence before each performance, followed by a final gathering, holding hands and offering a *karakia* that

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[2] *Gongyo* is the core practice of Nichiren Buddhism, consisting of reciting two chapters of the Lotus Sutra, followed by *daimoku* (chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo).

contained elements of traditional Māori, Ratana (a particular Māori form of christianity), Mahikari (Japanese spiritual practice) and Buddhism. From my experience prayer, in whatever form it takes, is an effective way of channeling the energies and intentions of a group of different individuals into unity of focus and purpose.

Every member of the core group reported that the creative development and performances of *Ex_isle of Strangers* had a profound transformational or healing effect on them. For some the transformation that occurred was in the area of a growing confidence in their artistry:

> I have unleashed the writer in me, which may not sound like much – but for a very long time I have been unable to write confidently around other people, let alone share words in a group setting; [the] residency really made me believe that I sure do have something to share and gave me the confidence to pursue more writing. (Nicole Simons 2010)

> Sometimes, when I compare myself to other actors, I can feel inadequate, inexperienced and under confident about my ability. This experience has made me value what I can do, the experiences I have and be proud of myself as an actor and confident enough to call myself an actor. There is always more to learn, personal barriers and fears to overcome, but I feel okay with that. Being a good actor is about approaching work with honesty, integrity, openness and giving both heart and soul – the rest will follow. (Will Moffatt 2010)

For others the transformation related to an enhanced quality of living or enhanced connection with self, other and the environment:

> I move differently in everything I do, I respond to things differently, I feel heightened by my experiences there and I continue to experience what you [Bert] have named as 'Presence' in my daily activity: a super awareness of how I feel, what I hear, how I hear it, what I smell, and so forth. (Whetu Silver 2010)

> This experience has transformed me by creating a community for me that I identify with as an extension of myself, and so have been driven to push myself creatively

because of the creative requirements emphasised by the combined will of the group. (Jacob Ennis 2010)

Some major transformations took place in my own being. I successfully took on a different style of leadership, one of *rangatiratanga*, embracing the art of weaving together a group who share in the same purpose through distributed leadership. I also developed a deep trust in my intuitive skills as a director and scholar. The creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers* was a complete new experience for me with no previous points of reference to guide me through the planning or organisational requirements. Despite this, many of the intuitive choices I made – for example, with regards to the duration of the residency, the planning of *wānanga* and rehearsals over time, and the people invited to collaborate in this project – turned out to be the choices that enabled the ensemble to be ready in time, have confidence in their roles and the work as a whole, while at the same time producing the scholarly results needed in the context of my doctorate.

Another spiritual dimension of our work relates to transformation as an artistic tool. We saw that Charles Royal (2009) identifies the process in which the performer transforms into a deity as *whakaahua*. Although it is beyond my expertise and jurisdiction to initiate processes of *whakaahua* in the traditional Māori sense of the word, what is available to me are strategies drawn from Michael Chekhov's acting methodology that serve a parallel purpose or function, particularly those of Archetypal Gesture and Imaginary Body. These techniques aim to transform the actor and his or her state of being through the integration of body and imagination and were applied throughout the creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers*. By combining Michael Chekhov techniques with presence work, the actors in our ensemble successfully achieved certain artistic transformations – i.e. change of Form (body) through Content (imagination). One of the participants noted how presence work and *whakaahua* work in tandem:

> I think the presence work resonates nicely with the pre-European Whare Tapere concept of whakaahua. Whakaahua were the practice of transformation: a change in the state of being. Performers were not trying to be like something, illustrate something or pretend to be something else: they transformed and became that

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something. These instant transformations required the performer to be present or sensorially alive in the moment. (Rawiri Hindle 2010)

7.2.3 Assessing Intercultural Exchange Standard

As part of the discussion on intercultural performance (see chapter two) I articulated four guiding principles with regards to intercultural performance and exchange, presented here:

1. Consider and absorb the original cultural and historical context of the material or stories that you are using as your point of departure;

2. Ensure that your working relationships are mutually beneficial, and that there is equal pay amongst the collaborating artists;

3. When working with an international or intercultural ensemble of actors allow the performers to use their first language, and their native performance codes and cultural expressions;

4. Through the use of devising and collaborative strategies allow each artist a voice in the exploration and generation of performance material.

In this section I will scrutinize how *Ex_isle of Strangers* adhered to these guidelines, particularly in relation to the incorporation of elements and principles drawn from the *whare tapere* and the Japanese Noh, since these are the two sources outside my own cultural position.

Re 1: *Consider and Absorb the Original Context*

Our source material was a mixture of Māori and Pākehā stories and histories. Through various strands of research (as detailed in chapter five) we considered the original historical and cultural context. This was absorbed through the process of devising that involved a mixture of Māori and Pākehā collaborators. The inclusion of a significant number of Māori performers, educators and researchers throughout the devising stages meant that the correct application of cultural values and expressions was monitored and included in the work wherever and whenever appropriate. Dr Charles Royal (cultural advisor to my project) participated in three of the devising *wānanga*, consistently informing the work with his expertise on the *whare tapere* and

guiding the process of honoring tradition while encouraging experimentation within cultural and spiritual safety margins. Four weeks before our residency Charles withdrew from active participation in the project as he took up a professorship at the University of Auckland. This was a huge loss and destabilized the project for a certain period. However, on reflection it meant that both Māori and Pākehā participants had to step up in their role of taking responsibility for the appropriate inclusion of *tikanga Māori* and elements of the *whare tapere*. One of our Pākehā members responded to this as follows:

> I found the incorporation of Māori values incredibly important in creating our communal living. Whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga were so utterly essential in helping to survive through the challenging work, and also the challenges posed by ill health and emotional stress. Growing up in a predominantly Māori town and primary school I've always had a respect for te ao Māori and enjoyed re-engaging with elements of tikanga which don't exist in my city lifestyle. One idea to come out of this project for me is a model of what biculturalism does for Pākehā identity. Biculturalism implies two cultures coming together as equal partners; this is not currently a reality in Aotearoa. However, I wonder if biculturalism can live within individuals. So that while I am not Māori and not a part of te ao Māori I can still acknowledge the importance of tikanga and reo to me as an integral part of my bicultural identity. I am not Māori but I am invested in te ao Māori through an interlocked path which we walk together. (Jacob Ennis 2010)

Considering and absorbing the cultural and historical context of the Noh elements that we used for the Kim Lee Noh play was a lot more problematic. I have not been to Japan yet and as such have had no direct contact with Noh masters or performers. All the knowledge that I have from this genre is through literature review, watching video/DVD, conversations with people who have Noh expertise, and experimenting with Noh applications within my own practice. John Davies fulfilled the role of advisor/dramaturg/cultural guide with regards to the appropriate use of Noh elements. Unfortunately he was unable to attend *Ex_isle of Strangers*, therefore I have no record of his assessment of the appropriateness of what we did. The many years of study and practice as a Buddhist have certainly endowed me with an embodied knowledge of Buddhist values and philosophies and I am therefore confident about

the appropriate inclusion of these. Also, the story of Kim Lee was a local story that had been well researched. During the writing, composition and choreography of the Kim Lee Noh play I tried to localize content and expressions as much as possible and only use certain structures or principles of Noh that, in my view, transcended the specifics of Japanese culture or society.

> The inclusion of the Noh style of theatre was appropriate to me as it has a tradition of telling a story that includes the realm of humans, gods and spirits and facilitated well the 3 main focuses of a New Pacific Theatre [Māori, Japanese, European]. This form of theatre in itself is not inherently specific to Aotearoa, but through impregnating the Noh form with content specific to our milieu, the piece became rooted in this location, making it intrinsically Pacific. (Moko Smith 2010)

Perhaps not having any Japanese Noh masters around allowed us the freedom to experiment and localise to the extent we did. Nevertheless, I am not sure whether our Noh escapades pass the scrutiny of this first guiding principle. Doing our Noh certainly felt great, and appropriate, but that may not be enough.

Re 2: *Equality*

As a collaborative work participation in *Ex_isle of Strangers* was voluntary, equal and mutually beneficial. Some of the performers, the designer and the film maker were paid a minimal fee – this was agreed according to need and expertise, and did not relate to ethnicity or cultural background. I personally did not receive any payment, and in fact I contributed a significant amount of my own money to fund the project. Although it would have been my preference to pay each participant an appropriate and equal pay, the funding situation did not allow for this, and part of the joy and benefits of this project came about because people participated out of passion, personal commitment for the *kaupapa* and belief in and dedication to a New Pacific Theatre. This went beyond a need for financial gain and created an equality among the participants. The benefits bestowed upon the participants were in the arena of intangible gains, such as personal and artistic transformation, *whanaungatanga*, giving back to the community, healing the land and so on. However, the development of this argument and attention to financial sustainability are certainly issues to be considered and addressed in future NPT endeavours.

Re 3: *Using First Language and Native Codes*

Māori participants were encouraged as much as possible to use *te reo*, *tikanga Māori* and Māori movement and sound motifs during improvisations, performance and as part of our residential living together.

> The inclusion of *taonga puoro*, Māori motif in the Noh masks, using Te Reo Māori and *whakatauākī* and incorporating Māori movement motifs added elements to the overall performance that created a strong sense of culturally diverse theatre. (Rawiri Hindle 2010)

An ideal company for this project would have included Japanese members with training in Noh, unfortunately, despite my efforts, I was not able to locate and recruit those. However, some of the Māori actors in our ensemble had previous exposure to Noh training and performance – having performed in *The Blue Shawl* (2008). Also, some of our Pākehā members brought knowledge of *tikanga Māori*, *te reo* or *taonga puoro* to the creative process, thus highlighting the existence of a certain fluidity of cultural knowledge across cultural identity.

Re 4: *Allow Each Artist a Voice Through Devising Strategies*

During the entire creative development of *Ex_isle of Strangers* participants have been involved in the generation of performance material by means of devising or collaborative strategies, with the only exception being the writing and composition of the Kim Lee Noh Play. Although the point of departure for the Noh play was a site-specific exploration during the first Matiu *wānanga*, as a result of the limited availability of the Noh chorus members, I decided to write and compose the Noh play myself. However, the choreography *and* the montage of sound, song, action and dialogue were developed through devising processes. The song for the Tāmairangi scene was composed by Hone Hurihanganui, and the actions and costumes concept were devised by the cast.

All the participants, and most of the audience respondents, provided positive feedback on the montage and synthesis of Māori, Japanese and Contemporary European theatrical elements. Some audience members felt that the Japanese forms

were over represented (Taiko, Butoh and Noh), and others felt that not enough Māori material was presented. On the other hand, many of the Māori respondents acknowledged and appreciated the inclusion of Māori values and *tikanga*, and I suggest that the Pākehā respondents who felt that there was not enough Māori material, did not recognise the inherent Māori values and strands in our work and perhaps were looking for expressions associated with *kapa haka*, which, as I explained in chapter two, are post contact and deliberately excluded from this study.

To finish the assessment of *Ex_isle of Strangers* in relation to the intercultural guiding principles I would like to quote core performer Te Kaahurangi Maioha:

> Ah! The delicate fusion of these three cultures is what made the work sing, and so seemingly effortlessly! I have grown up with Maori, European and some Japanese (through Kyokushin Karate) values so felt exhilarated in the combination. The depth and richness of these cultures were made apparent within the work and revealed each of their offerings with grace and beauty. (2010)

7.2.4 Narrative or Dramatic Cohesion

Around 20% of the audience respondents felt that *Ex_isle of Strangers* lacked in overall dramatic cohesion. Some of this feedback can be explained by the dominance of narrative based theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand leading to an audience expectation that theatre requires a narrative cohesiveness – a plot or a story in which there is a logical sequence of events – in accordance with the Aristotelian dramatic structure that urges unity of time, place and action. However, as explained previously, I maintain that the language of theatre is a language of imagery – similar to that of dreams. It deliberately employs unexpected, seemingly disconnected, changes in location, timeframe and action perspective. Lehman (2005) argues that, through the emergence of new technologies, our mode of perception is shifting from 'a linear-successive' to 'a simultaneous and multi-perspectival form of perceiving' (p. 16). And, according to him, this shift in perception requires a different concept of sign and signifiers.

> An essential quality of the dream is the non-hierarchy of images, movements and words. "Dream thoughts" form a texture that resembles collage, montage and

fragment rather than a logically structured course of events. The dream constitutes
the model par excellence of a non-hierarchical theatre aesthetic […] (p. 84)

Although less obvious than a cohesiveness of narrative, *Ex_isle of Strangers* was
created on the basis of the three robust unifying principles of Site, Action and Motive:

i. *Matiu/Somes Island*: all performance elements were developed as a
creative and imaginative response to selected geographic, cultural and
spiritual aspects of the island, and performed on various locations on the
island. As such the island (Site) formed a unifying source of inspiration and
backdrop for the performance.

ii. *The Dramatic Structure of a Journey*: the entire performance was structured
as a journey (Action). *Ex_isle of Strangers* started by gathering on Queens
Wharf, boarding the vessel, venturing on a physical journey over sea that
affected the senses and the state of being, arriving on the island, being
welcomed by the heartbeat of the island (Taiko Drummers), a ritual of
crossing the border (bio security check), a welcome (Cabaret/Dogs),
exploring some of the geographic, cultural and spiritual dimension of a new
territory, sharing food and company, farewell, and the return journey
home.

iii. *Reaching Out*: each and every section of the performance was imbued by
the intention 'To Reach Out' (Motive). Reaching out is one of the physical
actions to realise the *whare tapere* core value of *kotahitanga* – to overcome
separateness in a world full of division (Royal 2009). This motive was
incorporated in various sections of the performance, particularly through a
choreographic routine that was created in response to various images of
reaching out and subsequently 'dislocated' from one setting into another.

I am convinced that many of the audience members experienced the dramatic
cohesiveness of place, action and motive, perhaps on a subconscious level, without
being able to articulate it as such. This is not to say that we couldn't have aimed or
achieved a stronger aesthetic cohesiveness. In section 7.3 I will contemplate a
number of devices that could have improved the wholeness of the performance,

without resorting to a narrative or dramatic structure. To finish this section I would like to pose two questions to be pursued in future NPT projects:

a. Is it necessary to satisfy an audience's need for narrative or unity of style and genre, or is it sufficient to provide a unity of site, action and motive?

b. How much effort can one relegate to the audience to make up their own meaning, unity or overall cohesion?

7.2.5 Dance of Opposition

The dance of opposition was applied in the overall montage or composition of scenes. One of the audience members expressed to me that one of her highlights was the transition from Miki's dark brooding Butoh piece to Peggy's absurd and colourful comedy. It is a much used theatrical device to mix tragedy with comedy (Clown in Shakespeare, Kyogen in Noh, Satyr Plays in Greek Tragedy, and so on). One of the functions of the dance of opposition is to deepen the affect of the performance for the audience. If there is too much darkness in a piece the audience may end up being depressed; if there is too much lightness, the audience will soon forget the experience. The right balance of lightness and darkness will enhance the transformative value of a performance.

Fig. 7.3: Audience responses
It was crucial to find the right balance between light and darkness in the Quarantine pieces. During the devising sessions we often found ourselves drawn into the heaviness of the space and it took persistent effort to bring in right amounts of humor and comedy

Fig. 7.3a: Concerned faces at Q3   Fig. 7.3b: Smiling face at Q1

The quarantine building contained a very dark and oppressive atmosphere, therefore the pieces carried in them the danger of becoming too heavy and too dark. Although the quarantine centre was in actual fact only used for animals, as we worked in the space we found ourselves inclined to transfer associations of incarceration, locking up, disinfecting, and other imagined sufferings onto human beings. This led us to counter balance the heavy atmosphere of the quarantine building by incorporating qualities of lightness, comedy, clown and beauty in the Q pieces. We achieved this through the use of colourful costume and make-up devices (e.g. use of red nose) and the incorporation of beautiful or funny content, such as the stunning polyphonic love song, and Peggy reading out an outrageously funny, but factual, document on how to deal with animal arousal. But also by encouraging the performers to look for light and playful qualities of performance. I suggested the performers of the Q2 piece to imagine that they were children – playing in this amazing playground – joyfully experimenting with the possibilities of the various site-specific sounds, locations and positions in space (levels, enclosed, open, means of transport, use of holes in doors and walls, and so on). Further lightness was evoked with the use of soap bubbles coming through the hole in the door, the sound of giggles, placing smiles on the actors' faces, encouraging the guides to reassure the audience wherever possible and needed, and inviting the actors to aim for *direct eye contact* to break the spell of isolation and separateness.

> My like of the darker elements and moods of the performance [Q1] was replaced with the understanding that the higher aim of the performance was to bring lightness to the space in order for it to heal. After a discussion with Jacob about how we would make these changes, we realized that people can still enjoy themselves in such a situation - like a puppy still enjoys itself even though it can be on a leash. [By] turning into puppies that love their master and their boxes, the performance was able to be genuinely lighter and not fall into irony. (Moko Smith 2010)

The right amount of lightness was, from my perspective as the director, best achieved during the final performance when all performers collectively achieved a joyous playfulness that was infectious and affecting.

7.3   Conclusion

As a devised site-specific performance, *Ex_isle of Strangers* was created in collaboration with a large and diverse group of Māori and Pākehā artists in response to the tangible and intangible dimensions of Matiu/Somes Island. It exemplified the prototype of a New Pacific Theatre – presenting and testing the artistic principles and elements of a model of theatre making that relates to the geography, culture and spiritual values of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The performance followed the structure of a journey, taking the audience from a familiar environment (the city), over sea (journey) to a new territory (the island) in order to experience a variety of theatrical scenes at various in- and outdoor locations, sharing supper – mingling with one another and the ensemble – before returning home. *Ex_isle of Strangers* experimented with high levels of physical engagement and interaction between actors and spectators, indoor/outdoor intersections, and the layering of sounds, thus pursuing a strong transformative purpose. By drawing from the *whare tapere*, Noh and the MC technique, the performance investigated and addressed issues of intercultural performance, and adhered to the guiding principles for intercultural exchange as formulated in the early stages of this study. It was developed following a dramatic cohesiveness of place, action and motive, hereby using the dance of opposition as a leading dramaturgical and acting principle.

Ex_isle of Strangers accomplished its mission of investigating and testing selected artistic principles and values from contemporary European theatre, the *whare tapere* and Noh during the creative development and presentation of an intercultural site-specific performance that reflected the geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of Matiu/Somes Island. The creative process provided sufficient building blocks to construct the first draft of a New Pacific Theatre model.

In retrospect, and taking into account various pieces of feedback including my own, I have identified three areas that showed significant room for improvement. The first area relates to the story of 'He Tangi nā Tāmairangi'. I have to admit that during the development of this piece I was afraid to interfere too strongly with the artistic choices being made. Perhaps my fear was based on a perceived need for 'political correctness'. Looking back, I realise that I avoided risking directions or feedback that

could offend or be interpreted as culturally insensitive. Although it is vital to be culturally respectful, from an artistic point of view it is also important to take risk, and, for example, explore the culturally inappropriate. Such risk-taking explorations could highlight ethical issues, and present new ways of giving expression to a story or theme. An illustration of how my hesitant attitude impacted the artistic scope of this performance segment relates to Tāmairangi's song. My first impression of the song (composed by Hone Hurihanganui) was that it lacked the depth of passion that was needed to justify a change in destiny from death to living. As a Pākehā I was afraid it might be inappropriate to give critical feedback on the composition, the interpretation of the song, or even the choice of costuming. In the end, I wish I had been bolder and given the piece a stronger theatricality, as I believe it did not deliver its potential. It was moderate and pretty, rather than tumultuous and torturous, justifying a formidable resolution. It did not stretch the extremes of possibility. The question rises: 'to what extent does political correctness interfere with artistic rigor and experimentation?'

The second area of improvement relates to the dramatic coherence of the piece (discussed in section 7.2.4). Although I have no interest in creating a coherent narrative for the performance as a whole, I would have liked to experiment with further intersections and crossovers of characters between the various segments. Examples of such crossovers could have been: Kim Lee looking into the *whare kiore* during the bio-security check, or he shuffling up and down in front of his cave on Mokopuna Island, or he could have been half hidden somewhere near the Dell; Peggy could have popped up in Kim Lee play; the Dogs could have run through the Quarantine Centre, and so on. Time constraints contributed to these possibilities not being explored.

A third area of missed opportunity relates to the theatrical potential of the audience guides. All together, I realise that I underestimated the importance and dramatic potential of the guides. Apart from giving them a laboratory coat, glasses and a notebook, I failed to spend time with them discussing and practising ways in which to develop their characters, encouraging a far more active and theatrical way of

interacting with the audience, thus experimenting and stretching the transformative potential of their role.

A final point to be made here relates to the emergent nature of this research, as expressed in the title 'Towards a New Pacific Theatre'. In order to broaden the cultural and artistic base for a NPT practice, further practice-led research in various other indigenous artistic practices in the Pacific region need to be undertaken. Close to home this could involve investigating the artistic and spiritual dimensions of traditional Pacific performing arts practices, such as: the Tahitian *Arioi* (travelling troupes of performance specialists), the Samoan *Fale Aitu* (satirical clowning performers) and the ancient Hawaiian *Hula*, whilst further from home it could involve exploring the application of principles and concepts drawn from other Japanese performance practices, such as Kabuki, Bunraku or Butoh, or Australian Aboriginal performance practices, and so on.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

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At the conclusion of this study, it is essential to bring together the various discoveries and conclusions of both practical and theoretical components of this enquiry in an effort to construct a coherent model that will form the backbone of a New Pacific Theatre (hereafter NPT). Firstly, I run through the selected artistic principles and strategies from *whare tapere*, Devised Theatre, Michael Chekhov Technique, Intercultural Performance and Noh Theatre that will be incorporated in the NPT practice (8.1). Secondly, I review the practical implications of the creative process and performance component of *Ex_isle of Strangers* in their relevance for the formulation of a NPT model (8.2). Thirdly, I synthesise this complex mixture of principles, strategies and practical implications into a unified model that interweaves the four core strands of CONNECTION, COLLABORATION, EXPLORATION and TRANS-FORMATION and their corresponding values (8.3).

8.1   Artistic Principles and Strategies

In its aim to be deeply rooted in the spiritual and cultural values of Pacific tradition – the NPT needs to consider and incorporate elements of indigenous performance practice: in Aotearoa/New Zealand this is the Māori performing arts. In order to circumvent the effects that colonialism has had on the current manifestations of Māori performing arts I focused my investigations on the pre-European form of the *whare tapere*. To facilitate the inclusion of Māori artistic and cultural practices in its praxis it is essential that the NPT engages in collaboration with Māori theatre practitioners and invites them to guide and take charge of the *appropriate* application of Māori artistic and cultural practices at *relevant* moments in the creative process. Particularly, the six core values of the new *whare tapere*, *whanaungatanga*, *rangatiratanga*, *manaakitanga*, *tohungatanga*, *ūkaipō* and *kotahitanga* (see chapter two), while resonating strongly with my own worldview, with the Buddhist values of the Noh Theatre and with some of the aims and values of the MC technique, have

demonstrated its benefit and application within the artistic practice of a NPT in serving a cross-cultural spiritual and humanistic purpose without compromising its cultural specificity.

Devised Theatre offers a number of strategies for cultural identities and environmental qualities to inform the creative process, particularly through the genre of *Site-specific Performance*. In proposing the terminology of Host, Ghost and Guest to distinguish the tangible, intangible and artistic dimensions of site-specific performance, I have created a framework that enables this practice to become a powerful vehicle for the NPT to connect with the geographic, cultural and spiritual qualities of Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Audience Mobility* – the creation of performances that involve physical and metaphorical journeying that provide its participants (performers and spectators) time and space to interact with one another and the site they occupy – increases the level of physical and mental engagement with a performance, thus enhancing its transformative value.

The *Michael Chekhov Technique* is based on a deep faith in the actor's natural instinct and creativity, and his or her ability to fully engage body, voice and imagination. It has become a key point of reference in my work as a theatre director and actor trainer, and presents the most effective western-based techniques to balance the demands of form and content in theatrical expression. This study demonstrated the applicability of the MC techniques of atmosphere, psychophysical sensation, archetypal gesture, and imaginary body in the context of the NPT practice of intercultural and inter-disciplinary site-specific performance.

For the purpose of providing guidance with regards to the ethical and political issues of *Intercultural Performance and Exchange* I formulated the following principles:

1. Consider and absorb the original cultural and historical context of the material or stories that are used as the point of departure;

2. Ensure that the working relationships are mutually beneficial, and that there is equal pay amongst the collaborating artists;

3. When working with an international or intercultural ensemble of actors allow the performers to use their first language, and their native performance codes and cultural expressions;

4. Through the use devising and collaborative strategies allow each artist a voice in the exploration and generation of performance material.

Noh Theatre, as one of the oldest and most remarkable theatre genres in the world, has developed a wealth of expertise facilitating the actor's ability to connect with their body and the earth. This expertise is relevant and beneficial to realise the NPT goal of 'giving the actor feet'. Furthermore, Noh practice presents a number of aesthetic concepts and artistic principles that proved their value within the context of NPT training and practice: *yūgen*, as a measure of transformation, beauty and presence; *jo-ha-kyū*, as a principle to give variety to the overall arch of each action, beat, scene and the performance as a whole; and the *7/10th principle*, as a strategy to combine full inner action with resisted or veiled outer action.

8.2   Practical Implications

During the creative development and performance of *Ex_isle of Strangers* a number of strategies and artistic principles were investigated, tested or emerged, leading to the following conclusions:

- It is essential to involve a significant number of Māori performers/artists in the work of a NPT in order to facilitate the incorporation of Māori values, content and Tikanga.

- Residency – the combined act of living and working together over an extended period of time in a relatively isolated environment – is an essential strategy during the creative development of a site-specific work, and will form a core ingredient of a NPT. It provides a fertile environment to incorporate and realise the core values of *whanaungatanga* (relatedness), *manaakitanga* (mutual respect), *kotahitanga* (connection), *ūkaipō* (spiritual nourishment) and *rangatiratanga* (collaborative leadership).

- Mapping, as an act of physical, mental and imaginative engagement with the site of enquiry, produces an abundance of factual and fictional material to devise from, and contributes to the development of an affective attachment to the site, thus confirming it as one of the key strategies of a NPT.

- It is exceptionally beneficial for the artistic quality of the creative process and its outcomes to have participants take care of the spaces they work and perform in, through cleaning, beautifying and inhabiting the space with treasured experiences and memories.

- The fully embodied experience of connecting with certain phenomena in nature can profoundly inspire and enhance artistic and imaginative qualities of vocal and physical actions in performance, including the state of being of character or role.

- The transformational value of a creative process (including the final performances) is directly related to the degree of physical, mental and imaginative involvement of its participants (both performers and spectators).

- Through a variety of devices (determining viewpoints, indoor/outdoor intersections, layering of sound, and physical travel that gave rise to time and space in-between) *Ex_isle of Strangers* required and evoked a high level of physical engagement from its audiences, allowing performers and spectators to relate on the basis of proximity rather than distance.

- The creative process of *Ex_isle of Strangers* had a strong spiritual dimension to it, relating to the communication with, and expression of, supernatural beings, and the intention to heal or to transform: personally, artistically and relating to the 'suffering of the land'.

- The intercultural weaving together of Māori, European and Japanese artistic and cultural principles was an essential part of the creative development, and adhered to the guiding principles for cultural exchange.

- The dramatic structure of *Ex_isle of Strangers* was developed along the three unifying principles of site (Matiu/Somes Island), action (Journey) and motive (Reaching Out).

- The dance of opposition was one of a guiding principle in the montage and composition of the various scenes.

- The creative development and performances of *Ex_isle of Strangers* had a profound transformative impact on the performers. This led to a strong sense of connection with the land and one another (love, appreciation, respect, care), an improved range of performance skills; a grown confidence in self (as a performer and human being), an ongoing commitment to the purpose, values and development of a NPT, and an appreciation of intercultural performance.

- The ritual of a shared meal between performers and audiences evoked a sense of union that bridged the inevitable distance between performers and audiences in their distinct roles. This confirmed the social reality of communion following the performance.

- *Ex_isle of Strangers* audiences expressed an appreciation of site-specific performance as an effective way to connect with the geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of Matiu/Somes Island, the participatory nature of the performance as a way to create a sense of communion and community, the value of collaboration in the creation of original work, and the intercultural qualities of its work.

8.3   Synthesis

After analyzing this complex and rich mixture of artistic principles, strategies and practical implications, four pathways are emerging as the fundamental tools for realizing the NPT mission: CONNECTION, COLLABORATION, EXPLORATION and TRANSFORMATION. In this section I contextualize each pathway and relate them to the original aims of my research: to give the actor feet, to create a sense of community, to encourage risk-taking and a sense of adventure, and to return the gods. To finish, I offer a synthesis of my research findings in an image that graphically represents the four interwoven pathways of the New Pacific Theatre and their corresponding values.

8.3.1 Connection

To forge connections is the leading pathway and guiding principle that operates on many different levels of a NPT practice. It relates to the overall aim to connect with the geographic, cultural and spiritual qualities of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and forms the key ingredient of presence. It applies to the relationships within the ensemble, between performers and spectators, and between the various strands of intercultural and interdisciplinary practice.

Site-specific practice is the strategy that NPT adopts to connect with the tangible and intangible dimensions of a site, area or country. Through a process of physical, mental and imaginary engagement, involving research, mapping and residential *wānanga*, performance material is developed as a creative response to a particular site. *Presence* is a critical tool to connect in NPT actor training and performance practice. In order to turn it from an abstract concept into an operational strategy, I have come to define presence as: *the ability to be sensory alive in the moment*. Subsequently I have experimented with a number of strategies and exercises to enhance presence. By incorporating Māori perspectives on presence (*aroaro*) a unique Pacific approach to connect with our land and our people is emerging. For acting purposes it is important to balance sensory aliveness with a vivid imagination.

Building relationships with our fellow beings relate to the *whare tapere* values of *kotahitanga* (to overcome separateness) and *whanaungatanga* (the art of relatedness). It also corresponds with the Buddhist concept of the *oneness of self and environment*. Through realizing our connectedness we will be able to treat our environment and our fellow beings with love, trust and respect. As a strategy to connect with our body and the earth the pathway of CONNECTION serves the NPT aim of giving the actor feet.

8.3.2 Collaboration

Collaboration is the defining characteristic of devised theatre and of performance-as-research. It provides one of the most effective strategies to deal with the ethical, political, and spiritual complexities of intercultural performance. As such, it relates to

the *whare tapere* values of *rangatiratanga* (the art of weaving together people who share in the same purpose) and *manaakitanga* (the art of mutually upholding one another's spiritual essence). Collaboration assumes a style of leadership that serves the ensemble and facilitates each participant's contribution to the advancement of the collective goal. In the context of NPT practice, collaboration also refers to intercultural and interdisciplinary approaches to theatre making, in which the hybridity of vocabularies, strategies and cultural practices provide a complexity of artistic forms that enable multiple interpretations to occur in its audiences. In this way it has affinity with the value of *tohungatanga* (the art of symbolism). Collaboration is also a pathway that serves the NPT aim of creating communities.

8.3.3 Exploration

The pathway of exploration refers to the act of venturing into the unknown, and is another defining characteristic of the devising process. It involves avoiding predetermining the outcomes of one's actions. True creativity is the result of setting up a provocation or activity, without knowing where it will lead you. This enables new and unexpected outcomes to arise. In a society that is very much outcome-driven, it requires a great deal of courage to resist the pressure to fix outcomes prematurely and to lay in wait, trusting that something of value will emerge. As such, exploration is a pathway that is at the heart of both NPT practice and practice-led research. It serves the NPT aim of restoring a sense of adventure and risk-taking and is supported by the Buddhist value of *courage*. As this value is drawn from a combined devising and Buddhist practice I am using in this case an English term.

8.3.4 Transformation

A fundamental aim of the NPT is to create theatre that facilitates and causes the transformation of its participants, both performers and spectators. It is based on the conviction that theatre, and research, needs to enhance life and living. This aim is served by the *whare tapere* value of *ūkaipō* (to consume the darkness in one's life and provide spiritual nourishment), and the Buddhism value of *kosen-rufu* (to achieve world peace and the happiness of all beings through the inner transformation of individuals). By embracing the values of *ūkaipō* and *kosen-rufu* the NPT aims to

restore theatre back to its value creating origins. It employs three distinct pathways to achieve this. Firstly, by encouraging a high level of physical, mental and imaginative engagement of both performers and spectators, the transformative value of a performance experience is increased. Secondly, by balancing the demands of Form and Content a process of transformation is established. Thirdly, by incorporating the archetypal qualities inherent in culture and nature in its training and practice the NPT performer is encouraged to transform to levels beyond the personal, thus returning the gods. The various pathways of transformation are supported by the value and concept of *whakaahua*.

8.3.5 Graphic Representation

In an effort to design an image that would represent the four core strands and their corresponding values, I used the concept of weaving as an act of bringing together various strands that each maintain their own integrity but together form a unity in which the value of the total is more than the sum of its parts. The interwoven strands, or pathways, form an intricate pattern of foreground and background to make up an image that has form, beauty and wholeness.
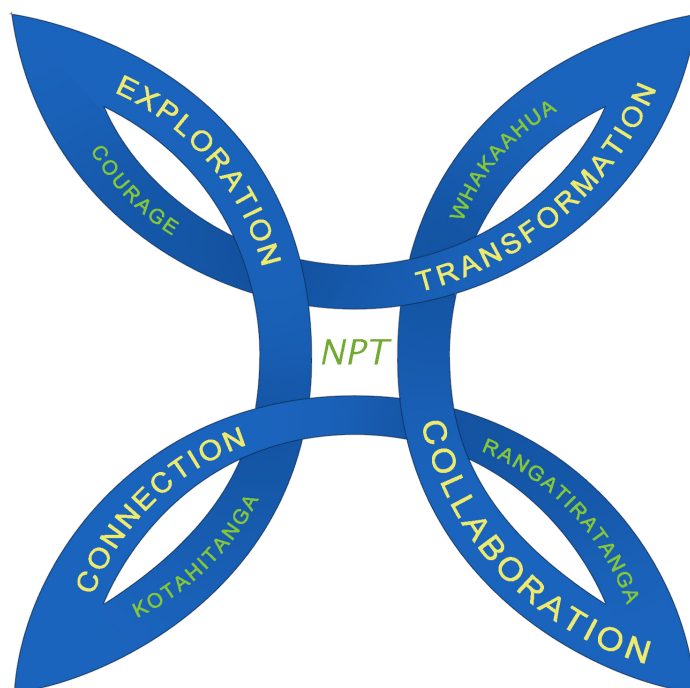

Fig. 8.1: The interwoven strands and values of a New Pacific Theatre

The strand of CONNECTION relates to the *whare tapere* value of *kotahitanga* (to overcome separateness). The core strategy to realize this strand and value is presence. The strand of COLLABORATION involves a style of leadership, best expressed through the *whare tapere* value of *rangatiratanga* (to weave together people who share the same purpose). The strategy of devised theatre embodies the aim and value of this strand. The strand of TRANSFORMATION applies to the transformation of the actor, expressed in the Māori concept of *whakaahua* (coming to be). It also relates, as explained by Fischer-Lichte (2008), to a process of performance making in which 'the spectators [are] not presented with a distinct object to perceive and interpret; rather they [are] all involved in a common situation of here and now, transforming everyone present into co-subjects' (p. 17). In other words, through a high level of physical, mental and imaginative engagement, a performance transforms from an object into an event, and the dynamic and active space in between performers and spectators transforms both into participants and co-creators of a shared experience. The fourth strand of EXPLORATION requires the participants to muster courage in order to dive into the unknown, and take risk, by engaging in activities of which the outcome is deliberately unknown, and therefore subject to failure and mistakes.

8.4 Conclusion

The New Pacific Theatre is an intercultural model of site-specific performance practice that, by drawing inspiration from the *whare tapere*, Devised Theatre, Michael Chekhov technique, Intercultural Performance and Noh Theatre, and through the pathways of connection, collaboration and exploration, creates theatre in response to the geographic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of a site that aims to transform its participants: give its actors feet, return the gods, encourage risk-taking, and develop a sense of community. Rather than remounting Ex_isle of Strangers on Matiu/Somes Island in a reworked state, the next step for a NPT will be to try out the emerging model at another site – testing whether the artistic principles and strategies are transferable and applicable to other contexts.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: Report Matiu Wānanga 2009

Appendix 2: Timeline Matiu Somes Island

Appendix 3: Feedback Forms

      3.1: Questionnaire Performers

      3.2: Feedback Form Audience *Ex_isle of Strangers*

Appendix 4: Newspaper article "Man adrift at sea for hours"

Appendix 5:   Kim Lee Nō Play

      5.1: Final Draft Kim Lee Nō Play

      5.2: KLP Music Table
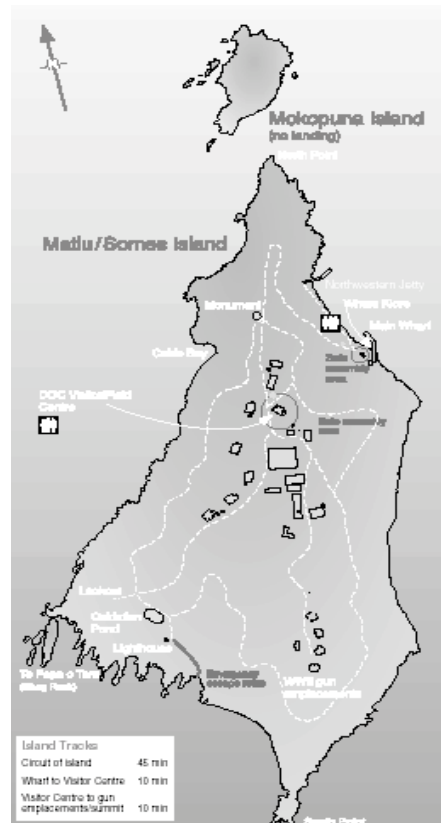
Appendix 6:   DVD's

      6.1: DVD Matiu Wānanga #1

      6.2: DVD Light & New Pacific Theatre Workshop

      6.3: DVD Ex_isle of Strangers Performance

Appendix 1: Report Matiu Wānanga 30 Jan – 1 Feb 2009

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Content:

I. Stipulated Objectives:

Before the start of the Matiu Wānanga conducted in the context of my PhD project 'Towards a New Pacific Theatre' I had determined the following objectives:

1. Gather data (experiences, reflections, fantasies, responses, feelings, understandings, perspectives) relating to the topic of my research

2. Enthuse and enrol the participants for my research project

3. 'To Get a Feel' for Matiu Somes Island: its geography, history and spiritual dimension

4. 'To Get a Feel' for one another as collaborators on this journey of investigation

5. Introduce participants to (some of) the areas of investigation and theatrical approaches used.

II. Evaluation of Objectives:

In this section I will report on each of the set objectives and determine to which extend the objective was met.

Objective 1: Gather Data

During the Wānanga, our cameraman, Andy Chappell, shot 11.5 hours of video footage and our photographer, Nyx Simons, took a large number of digital colour photographs and B&W photographs shot on film.

Each participant was given one B4 notebook and throughout the Wānanga I encouraged the participants to take notes, write down observations, feelings, experiences, reflections, as well as make drawings. At the end of the Wānanga the participants were asked to hold on to the notebooks to record any after thoughts, feelings, reflections that may occur. During the final session the group brainstormed (in subgroups) issues / questions relating to a New Pacific Theatre - these questions were recorded on A3 papers. Throughout the Wānanga I took lots of notes in my notebook and draft this report within a week of completing the Wānanga.

Objective 2: Enthuse and Enrol Participants

I believe the Wānanga succeeded in its aim to enthuse and enrol the participants to collaborate in my research project. Initially I was disappointed that every single Whitireia graduate I invited - 7 in total - pulled out at the last moment despite an initial agreement to participate. However, the final group of participants turned out to be ideal in numbers (14) and features. It included: 4 young and 2 mature performers, several musicians / composers, 1 lighting designer, 1 Māori arts educator, 1 Māori researcher, 1 cameraman, 1 photographer, and 3 directors. Fifty percent of the participants were Māori and fifty percent Pākehā; 8 were male and 6 were female. Everybody expressed at the end of the Wānanga a commitment to remain involved, and support and contribute to the project.

Objective 3: 'To Get a Feel' for Matiu Somes Island

The Wānanga succeeded in giving all of us a profound feeling for the island. The exercise 'Mapping Matiu Island' (session 4) offered an interesting range of spiritual, geographic and cultural/historic perspectives on the island. Most participants expressed a strong spiritual response to the island.

Objective 4: 'To Get a Feel' for One Another as Collaborators

Being on an island, eating, sleeping and hanging out together, as well as talking and working together, created a solid bond, a sense of Whanaungatanga and a sense of Kotahitanga in relation to the aims of the project. There was a robust feeling of mutual respect, joy, love and appreciation among the participants. Many of the participants joined in the early morning Buddhist practice.

Objective 5: Introduce Participants to Areas and Strategies of Investigation

At the start of the Wānanga I articulated the Kaupapa of my research, including my approach to 'Knowing', emphasising the importance of integrating *understanding*, *doing* and *being* in our process of investigation, and asked participants to sign the HEC consent form thus permitting me to use footage and opinions expressed during the various Wānanga in the various presentation aspects of my research.

I sketched an overview of the history of Matiu Island, explained the various stages of the devising process, and outlined the six genres from which I will draw in developing

a model for a *New Pacific Theatre*: Te Whare Tapere, Noh, Butoh, Michael Chekhov, Devised Theatre and Intercultural Performance. In practical terms I led a session on some of the core principles of the Michael Chekhov technique, the concept of Presence (introducing practical ways to enhance Presence) and offered coaching during the devising of a short work. Dr. Charles Royal facilitated a very stimulating and inspiring session on Te Whare Tapere, and offered interesting Māori perspectives during the discussions and work at hand. Lisa Maule talked - and had us think and share - about light and lighting, while Tanemahuta Gray led us through a beautiful session on Tī Rākau in which he has integrated taiaha moves with classical dance elements.

In Conclusion:

Overall I conclude that all my objectives have been met above expectation, and that the Wānanga has proven to be a stimulating and rewarding start of the practical component of my PhD project. This experience can be seen as a model for research and learning in which experience, reflection and intuition are balanced components in the process of extending knowledge and understanding. Ultimately the Wānanga raised and articulated many questions and issues to guide the future investigations of a New Pacific Theatre.

III. Overview Sessions:

Session 1 (Friday PM): Introductions

Participants stood up, one by one, to do their *Mihimihi*. After this I gave an overview of my research, its aims and strategies; shared my approach to *Knowing*; and explained the importance of recording responses to the work, for which purpose I gave each participant a notebook, and put up a number of large sheets of paper for people to write down questions, issues and commentaries.

Session 2 (Friday PM): Te Whare Tapere

On Friday evening Charles Royal led a session on Te Whare Tapere. He started by giving an overview of his background as a musician, and the awakening to his *Māoritanga*. Charles completed his MA on regional mōteatea, recording these elders,

and publishing a book. This is how he discovered a joy for research, learning about things and uncovering information. However, his MA did not address the performance side of this musical and literary tradition. Charles became concerned with the question: how did they perform? This let him to investigate (in the context of his PhD at VUW) the Whare Tapere - the pre-European houses of dance, storytelling, songs, games, etc. Different regions had varying manifestations of Te Whare Tapere (TWT) - sometimes the activities took place in a whare, sometimes outside, around a fire. Te Motu, an island in Kāwhia harbour for example, was a location for the Whare Tapere. There were no weapons allowed, no burials on the island, but in the height of summer a Whare Tapere was erected for the purpose of entertainment. TWT was one institution amongst other institutions such as Te Whare Wānanga, Te Whare Rūnanga, etc.

Under the influence of Pākehā and the subsequent move from pa to township Māori moved away from the traditional worldview towards a new Christianised culture in townships. This move was seen as a pacification of the natives and resulted in an abandonment of the old ways and ancient institutions such as TWT, Te Whare Wānanga, carving, etc. The 1890's marked the emergence of Kapahaka (or concert parties as they were called then). Although certain fragments of TWT were uplifted in the Kapahaka practice, it is basically a modern phenomenon, initiated by people such as Apirana Ngāti and Te Puea – for the purpose of fundraising. Kapahaka tends to use Māori words with Western tunes by composers such as Benny Goodman. Since 1972 Kapahaka competitions have provided a major focus for Kapahaka groups.

Although there are no longer any manifestations of TWT, fragments of this ancient art form are revealed through looking at our carvings and the kowhaiwhai patterns. There are 6 forms inside TWT:

1. Ngā Kōrero (speech-making and storytelling)
2. Ngā Waiata (song)
3. Ngā Haka (dance)
4. Ngā Taonga Pūoro (musical instruments)
5. Ngā Tākaro (games)
6. Ngā Taonga o Wharawhara (adornments: feathers, belts, perfumes, etc.)

The content for the various TWT forms were historical events, animal stories and various narratives. Haka is often thought of as a war dance, but it is really a generic term for dance, whereas peruperu is the Māori term for actual war dances. War dances belong to the domain of Tūmatauenga. Tū-mata-uenga signifies the 'transformation of face and body through anger'. Originally the moko was carved deep in the skin, and anger would bring out the moko. It was the influence of painters such as Lindauer and Goldie who portrayed moko that laid on the surface.

Ngā Tākaro (games) includes activities such as: stilt walking, tolls, Karetao (puppetry), kite flying, string games, drafts, etc., for the pure joy of playfulness. Storytelling in contrast was a more serious activity. There are several deities of TWT, among them Te Rehia.

Charles Royal told us that there are 7 aromatic plants that provide the perfumes of TWT. One of these plants is the Raukawa, which is crushed to release its essential oil and then mixed with some kind of carrier oil. At a particular Ngāti Raukawa Hui Charles suggested the establishment of a Raukawa perfumery as a creative and economic enterprise to enhance Raukawa identity.

One of the core stories relating to TWT is the story of Tinirau and Kae. It is a story known throughout the Pacific in various variations of a similar narrative.

Karioi is the name for a travelling TWT troupe ('Arioi is the Tahitian manifestation of such a travelling troupe). In the old days people used dance and sometimes instruments to cast spells (not voice), for example to put people to sleep. It is significant for a New Pacific Theatre (Te Moana Nui a Kiwa) that we are on an island for this Wānanga. Pacific people are an island people, their stories relate to Tangaroa, the sea, the sea creatures, travelling, etc. We are not a continental people. One of the functions of TWT was to create sexual partners so that children will be born to end existing feud and conflict. Particularly the Whare Mātoro was set up to provide an environment for woo-ing and courtship. The word *mātoro* is used to indicate: moving secretively, without drawing attention to oneself, like the way a cat moves when it stalks a bird.

Then Charles talked about the love story of Ponga and Puhihuia, and how aristocratic people needed to be able to sing and dance, to give them kudos. The dance of

Puhihuia is a dance in which she tries to get three eyes in alignment: the eye of the patu, the performer's eye, and the moon. There is a saying: 'You are Hineruhi – the bringer of the Dawn'. Not 'you are like Hineruhi' or 'you are similar to Hineruhi', but 'you are Hineruhi'. This relates to the process of Whakaahua - the transformation of the performer into a Deity. For this transformation to happen, something needs to be liberated.

<div align="center">

Transformation ➜ Liberation

Liberation ➜ Transformation

</div>

Whakaahua = 'Coming to Form' or 'Coming to Be'. For Māori their carvings are not symbols but they are actual manifestations of the ancestors themselves. Traditional baptising was a process of identification. Tohi - you are [such and such]. At the exact moment I asked Charles how such transformation was achieved, what specific training was required to achieve such profound transformation, the generator on the island was switched off and we continued the session in darkness. This meant that note taking was a lot harder.

The value of Love is crucial and grounding in order to restore a quality of Unity in a world of brokenness and separateness. Compassion is hereby the face. Charles continued to talk about the six values of TWT (acknowledging the contributions of his relative, Rev. Māori Marsden, hereby):

1. Rangatiratanga
2. Manaakitanga
3. Tohungatanga
4. Whanaungatanga
5. Ūkaipō
6. Kotahitanga (the parent vine of Love)

Ranga = to weave / Tira = a group with purpose / Tanga = the Art, therefore Rangatiratanga = the Art of weaving together groups of beings with special purpose.

Charles mentioned the image of a school of fish, or a flock of birds, in this context - united by a desire to act in unison. There is a strong sense of goodwill: they want to be together. He then quoted a Tai Tokerau expression (something to do with *Kouku*), which I didn't get.

Mana is the core concept in Manaakitanga - it is the essence or the reality of a being. This is not the same as Power as so many people seem to think. Charles then quoted the Māori proverb "E kore te kūmara e kōrero mō tōna māngaro" - the kūmara does not speak of its own sweetness. Mana relates to the spiritual essence whereas Mauri relates to the physical or body essence. Tapu relates to disciplines, to dedications. Mana aki - to uplift Mana – therefore Manaakitanga is the Art of Uplifting Mana. It is a mutual uplifting of Mana.

Whanaungatanga: whānau = birth. All life is birthed. Whanau is a group of individuals who share in the one life - facilitating one another / Whanaunga is a relative (for Māori the whole world is one whānau). Therefore whanaungatanga is the art of relating and relationship. Life is understood through relationships, and everything is in a state of relationship.

Tohungatanga: Tohu (= symbol) describes the arrival of Mana in a physical vessel. Ka tohungia tēnei tangata - this person is anointed / Mana has arrived. A Tohunga is a person who is a vessel of mana. They see things in a new way (illumination) and call to action. Therefore Tohungatanga is the art of bringing about mana in physical vessels.

Ūkaipō: Ū = breast milk / Kai = to consume / Pō = darkness. Breast-milk consuming the darkness. It relates to physical places in which we are renewed, healed, nourished, brought back to life (Te Ao Mārama). These places are different for everybody.

Charles quoted another Māori proverb: E hoki koe ki tō ūkaipō; kia purea koe i ngā hau o Tāwhirimātea - return to your ūkaipo there to be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhirimātea. Only you know what you Ūkaipo is. You could refer to a ūkaipo moment - a pool full of Mauri!

Kotahitanga: we live in a world of duality and separateness: good/bad, darkness/light, etc. Charles quoted C. G. Jung: "Where you stumble lies your treasure!" Kotahitanga is about overcoming separateness - building wholeness in a world of separateness.

Session 3 (Saturday AM): Michael Chekhov & Presence

We started this session with a game involving a ball, a veil and a stick. Connecting the different qualities of throwing (giving) and catching (receiving) these various objects with our breath and voice (your own name & the name of the person you are connecting with). This also introduced the complexity of keeping an open mind and being available for a multitude of qualities and possibilities at the same time.

In order to enhance our presence we need to balance our senses, involving a dimming of the dominating sense of sight, and a polishing of those senses that are less alert. Secondly we need to expand our Circle of Presence: from our immediate environment, to the space we are in, the environment we are in, the location we are in, the region we are, in the country we are in, the part of the world we are in, to incorporate ultimately the entire universe.

I then set a trajectory that included a variety of surfaces, and various shades of shadow and sunlight. The participants were asked to walk this trajectory 12 times - 6 times clockwise and 6 times anti-clockwise - aiming hereby to increase their presence by balancing the senses and extending the circle of presence. Charles explained in this context the concept of *Aroaro,* which relates to the inner senses as well as the outer senses. We didn't quite get around identifying or clarifying the distinction between inner sense and outer sense, and whether intuition is included in the Māori concept of Aroaro.

Session 4 (Saturday AM): Mapping the Island

The participants were divided in three groups and asked to map the island: geographically, culturally / historically, or spiritually. Each group created one or more oil pastel drawings to represent their findings.

Report Spiritual Mapping:

This group tried to get a sense of the original energy of the land. However, they observed that there was now quite a sad energy as a result of the people who spent time on the island. The group was drawn to the south end – opening to the harbour. They noticed that the island was quite blocked in the middle – a sad yak! The land is like a beacon of light but now she is quite sad and angry. Te Kāhurangi proposed to

ask her questions: how are you now? What do you need? She seemed thirsty, lie on her, and give her breath: a Hongi. She is happy for us to be there. The information centre still smells of hospital and gives off a strong sense of hate. The 3-dimensional model / map looks like te island is waiting to be dissected, a green off colour, the colour of death and corpses. There is regeneration, bush lower on the hills, a nursery. The gun placement spoke of possibility, like the remains of ancient ruins, a sense of civilization. There is a plot in the middle, 4 empty posts, within each square a mount - new possibilities. This is symbolised by the Kākāriki being chatty, light, alive, and full of promise. The land needs energy and loving but can't give back yet. The buildings in the middle are like a blockage - blocking the regeneration, it is concrete and barbed wire. Tear it down! 'What do we do with the buildings? Tear them down! What can we offer this (is-) land?'

Report Geographic Mapping:

'We wanted to go to mature bush, move around. Where did the island come from? We thought of Whataitai and Ngāke. It is surrounded by water. We made drawings of things we came across (landmarks), a huge totara tree.' This group also made a profile drawing of the island, showing a clear split in two halves: a green half and a yellow half. 'We came across forbidden tracks - we were curious but didn't venture there. There seem to be lots of secrets (military, hospital, Auschwitz). It is like a movie. There is a physical layer and an historical layer. We noticed bold textures: land, rocks, and contours, bush on top, contrast. The east side had lots of grass and Harakeke; it is very steep. It is clear that the island was totally denuded. Are there any old Waiata that could inform our geographic understandings?'

Report Cultural / Historical Mapping:

Original name came from Kupe, as an expression of the love for his daughter. Gifts of love: Makaro, Matiu and Ngā Mokopuna. The timeline suggests it was a place of exile, quarantine, a place where aliens were ostracised. A fear for Germany gave rise to paranoia, and the subsequent internment of anyone with some German connection. Kim Lee was the Chinese man suspected of having leprosy - he was exiled to Mokopuna Island also known as Lepers Island. [Ka nui ngā wētā - on the journey toward knowledge there are many wētā] The wētā is a symbol of apprehension.

A generosity towards nature took over, and in an effort to regenerate Matiu island human beings played a subservient role - a role of caretaker.

Session 5 (Saturday PM): Devised Theatre & Matiu Island

I began this session by outlining the characteristics of the devising process. Devised Theatre is a collaborative creative process whereby we know where we are coming from (point of departure) but we don't know where we will end up. In other words: the outcomes are per definition an unknown, and we hold off fixing outcomes for as long as it takes. To dwell in the unknown is an exciting and terrifying process. For the purpose of analysis and time management it makes sense to divide the devising process in 6 stages:

      i.   Point of Departure

     ii.   Research

   iii.   Exploration/Improvisation

   iv.   Scoring

    v.   Rehearsing

   vi.   Performing

Matiu Island is our point of departure and in preparation of this Wānanga I did some initial research on islands in general and Matiu in particular - based on the book *Island of Secrets* (McGill 2001) and the paper *Constructing Ex_isle* (Davies 2004).

The group was subsequently divided in three smaller groups, and asked to select one issue (or element of an issue). After this selection each group determined a location to devise a short piece based on their issue and the theatrical possibilities of their particular location.

The following issues and locations were selected:

Group 1:   **EXILE** (First aisle on right in quarantine barracks)

Group 2:   **ISOLATION/PURIFICATION:** The Kim Lee Story (third enclosure on the left after entrance to quarantine barracks)

Group 3:   **THRESHOLDS** (Whare Kiore, wharf and sea)

Towards the end of this session each group presented their devised pieces while the other groups gave feedback and personal responses.

Session 6 (Saturday Eve): Light and a New Pacific Theatre

Lisa Maule shared her journey from architecture student, through drama club and work with Red Mole, to SX and LX technician and designer. Then she articulated some of her thoughts on light and lighting: We all know about light, we all experience levels of light, the absence of light, darkness, shadow, etc. The experience of light can be divided in interior and exterior. Exterior / Outside: There can be the use of torches; it can be murky, dim, with shafts of light. It can be like searching, or illuminating another world. There is the sun light, the different angles and intensities, effecting our mood and feelings; there is moonlight, which is reflected sunlight, much cooler, less intense, often the light is more white or blue-white. Interior / Inside: the lighting designer uses natural light experiences, and transforms them with artificial light sources, still working with angles and intensity. Lisa asked us all to think of one interior light and one exterior light experience, which we shared with one another.

Inspired by lighting designer extraordinaire, Helen Todd, Lisa gave us the 5 qualities that can be distinguished when working with light:

1. Direction
2. Intensity
3. Colour
4. Volume / Texture
5. Duration / Time

I asked Lisa what her thoughts were on a New Pacific Theatre light. She responded by saying that it starts with us caring about LX. It is intangible. We need to look at the relationship between light and language, and how our language is filled with metaphorical references to light, such as 'seeing the light', 'to stand in someone's shadow', 'to have dark thoughts', etc. I suggested that the fact that we are an island nation means that we are surrounded by water and light reflecting off water.

Session 7 (Sunday AM): Kōrari Movement Session by Tāne Mahuta Gray

We worked outside, on a grassy area next to the visitors centre, on bare feet. Tāne Mahuta started with explaining the Tikanga of Tī Rākau, not to take them into the kitchen area or the whare paku. The taiaha work on Mokoia Island (Lake Rotorua) is

men only territory. However Tāne Mahuta has developed tī rākau work that incorporates some classical ballet idiom and is appropriate for both men and women. After reciting Karakia Tāne started to teach us a number of moves. It was interesting that he choose not to speak but explain the moves through observe and copy, adding specific detail or corrections through a kind of sign language. After learning a certain number of movements, we learnt the names for the various moves, and went through the routine calling out the names as we performed the moves.

The session was completed with a kind of moving Karakia, in the form of call and response, Te Waka - Tōku Waka, Te Awa - Tōku Awa, and so on. Tanemahuta talked about the importance to start with the Waewae (the actor's feet), and how one of his teacher would have the students work first in sand to create strength in the leg muscles, and a stronger sense of balance. Also to work on different surfaces, and in a variety of environments, such as on river floors, in forest, on rocks, etc. Charles suggested to put Tūmatauenga aside and to embrace Tāne Mahuta, who is considered the instrument of the world of light and the world of life.

Session 8 (Sunday AM): Questions relating to a New Pacific Theatre

To complete the Wānanga I thought it was important to brainstorm and collect the most important questions that need to be addressed in the investigation of a New Pacific Theatre (NPT). The group was once again divided in three smaller groups, each articulating and recording the following NPT questions:

1. How do you bring about collaboration of intercultural performance?

2. How do you maintain the integrity of the genres we draw from?

3. How do you balance the various (aspects of) cultures?

4. How do you challenge the traditional NZ theatre establishments into intercultural theatre?

5. How can you distil the essence of cultural sources and avoid hereby the issues of ownership and possessiveness?

6. What is the common language used to communicate in NPT?

7. How do you enrol practitioners and audiences into intercultural theatre?

13

8. What are the requirements, the conditions, the Pedagogy for the teaching of 'Return of the Gods"?

9. How do we identity the boundaries that a NPT wants break? What new boundaries does a NPT need to create?

10. How do we revitalise theatre for our communities?

11. How do we rid the 'dirt' and ' sexual connotations' associated with the naked body?

12. How can we strip ourselves down?

13. How can we incorporate the full vocal range / spectrum in a NPT? What training / practice is required?

14. How can we all continue to feed into this river of creating a NPT?

15. How could this lead to an Ensemble?

16. Whose stories do we tell?

17. What about the other cultures / theatrical traditions of the Pacific?

18. How do we ground NPT in love, compassion and forgiveness?

19. What are these things? Why are they important? How do we give practical expression to these values in NPT?

20. What is the NPT approach to gender? To diverse experiences? To disabilities?

21. What is the NPT view of children?

22. What is the NPT approach to stories in past, present, future? Historical stories? Future stories?

23. Are there other Pacific cultures to draw upon?

24. Is the Tikanga Māori based?

25. Who is responsible for NPT? Who will set the Tikanga for NPT? Upon what basis?

26. What is the purpose / what are the objectives of NPT?

27. What is the NPT approach to relationships?

28. Is NPT the proposed name, or a working title?

29. What relationships with other companies / networks do we need to establish and nurture?

30. How does NPT approach and handle conflict?

31. Will NPT be an opportunity for people to learn from a culture that is not theirs?

32. What do we mean by Pacific?

33. How is NPT self-sustainable? Human resources / knowledge; Financial; Audience interest; Physical resources (what are the physical resources needed?)

34. Do we use what the land provides or do we provide our own resources?

35. How do we combine different cultures for NPT training (e.g.: Yoga, Tai Chi)?

36. Is NPT about mixing culture? To what extend do we cross-pollinate? What is most relevant? How do we decide?

37. There are 2 possibilities: is NPT built from knowledge of the people who are participating in this exploration *or* is it pre-prescribed with an aim that the participants seek to achieve?

38. What are the possible performance settings for NPT – Festivals, Feasts, and Wānanga?

39. What are the rituals / techniques to protect ourselves while working in the spiritual realm? Particularly in an unfamiliar context (lack of language / customs expertise).

40. How do we bring the community / audience into and engage with NPT?

41. Who is that community / audience? Do they come to us or do we go to them?

42. What is the audience's level of engagement?

43. Questions of process / product: where do we focus our energy in the beginning? Where do we draw the line with cultural blending, and should there be a line?

Appendix 2: Timeline Matiu Somes Island

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Matiu Island: Pre-European and Post-European Timeline:

- 1000 years ago: Named by *Kupe*

- 13th century: Settled by *Ngāi Tara* for eleven generations

- In 15th century *Ngāti Ira* occupied Matiu Island and built two pā on the island (*Haowhenua* & *Te Moana-a-kura*)

- 1780 – 1835 *Te Ātiawa* displaced *Ngati Ira*

- 1827 *Ngāti Ira* chieftainess *Tāmairangi* captured by *Ngāti Mutunga*

- 1872: Human quarantine station established on Matiu Island

- 1900: Matiu Island was designated a prison

- WWI & WWII: POW Camp (Various prisoners unsuccessfully tried to escape)

- 1995: Matiu island becomes a D.O.C. domain

- 2008 Matiu Island returned to Te Āti Awa as the legal Tangata Whenua

- 2010 *Ex_isle of Strangers*: first public performance on Matiu Somes Island

Appendix 3: Feedback Forms

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3.1   Audience Feedback Form

Thank you so much for coming to our work-in-progress presentation of **Ex_isle of Strangers**. We would very much appreciate it if you could take your time to give us feedback on this work. In order to facilitate this process of feedback you will find 2 sheets of paper in this addressed envelope: one with a number of questions to respond to, the other to give a more creative response could take the form of poetry, drawings, collage, etc. Please return both sheets before 30 April 2010. Add your contact details if you wish to be kept informed of our future activities. Mauri ora!

What interested you most in this work?

What do you feel was being explored in this project?

How would you describe this type of performance?

What did you connect to in this piece? Please elaborate:

What was missing?

Other comments:

☐   I wish to be informed of the future activities of the New Pacific Theatre Collective:

    Name:

    Address:

    Email:

    Mobile:

    Signed:

3.2   Performers Questionnaire:

Questions for New Pacific Theatre Performers / Participants:

Date:

Name:

D.O.B.:

Māori / Pakeha [circle]

Role in Ex_isle of Strangers:

Occupation:

Involved in New Pacific Theatre since:

Tick if participated in:

    ☐   Matiu Wānanga #1 [January 2009]

    ☐   Light & New Pacific Theatre Wānanga [August 2009]

    ☐   Wānanga Studio 77 [Feb 6 & 7, 2010]

    ☐   Matiu Wānanga #2 [March 2010]   full / part

    ☐   Mātiu Residency [April 2010]   number of days: ……

_____

It is now more than a week since we have returned from our Matiu Residency:

1. Looking back, what were the highlights for you?

2. What surprised you most?

3. Did any breakthroughs occur for you? Elaborate:

4. In what way has this experience been transformative for you?

5. What new skills did you learn?

6. What new understandings came about?

7. How did you respond to the inclusion of Māori, Japanese and Contemporary European values and approaches? [Please elaborate]

8. How do you think this experience is going to impact on your everyday / professional life?

9. What are some of the transformations in the other participants that stood out for you?

Towards a New Pacific Theatre is a performance research project, which aims to develop a model of theatre making that is strongly connected to the geographic, cultural and spiritual qualities of Aotearoa / New Zealand.

1. In what ways did Ex_isle of Strangers address its research purpose?

2. If there is a model emerging? If so, what are the elements of this model?

3. What do you suggest should be the next step or activity for the New Pacific Theatre? What role would you like to play in this?

What other comments do you want to make? [Think of the poems you wrote, dreams you recorded, inspiring statements you made, entries in your journal]

Appendix 4: Newspaper article

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NEWS

Man adrift at sea for hours

EMILY WATT

A MAN blown out to sea while swimming off the Petone foreshore drifted for four hours before being washed up on Mokopuna Island in Wellington Harbour.

Exhausted and sick from having swallowed salt water, the 30-year-old then launched himself back into the waves to seek shelter on Matiu/Somes Island.

When, during that second bid for land, his hand touched a buoy near the island, he took it as a sign that he would survive, he told rescuers. He eventually found help, about 3am yesterday.

Terese McLeod, who was staying on the island, heard his cries, gave him a hot drink and blankets, then called police. She said he was

His saviours: Terese McLeod, left, and Alice Te Punga Sommerville heard the swimmer's cries after he washed up on Matui/Somes Island. Photo: ANDREW GORRIE

disoriented, cold and in shock, but remarkably well. He spoke of his thoughts in the water – of survival and life "in the bigger picture". "It touched us as well quite deeply."

Emergency Services warned Ms McLeod by phone of the risk of secondary drowning – when someone swallows so much salt water that it shuts off oxygen to their brain – and told her how to check for signs.

The man told police he had gone swimming at Petone Beach about 6pm on Saturday, leaving his clothes on the foreshore. Once past the wharf, he realised he couldn't swim against the almost 50kmh northerly wind so decided to go with the current.

He was in the water for four hours as he drifted about 2.5 kilometres before washing up on Mokopuna, north of Matiu/Somes. He then swam for the larger island, where he landed about 10pm and sheltered in a hut till the cold made him climb the summit.

There, Ms McLeod and her cousin, Alice Te Punga Somerville – who was his Victoria University lecturer – heard his calls. Police arrived about 4.30am with paramedics, who took him to hospital.

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Kim Lee

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A One-Act Play about spiritual reconciliation – set on Mātiu Island

Written by Bert van Dijk

Characters

SHITE: Ghost of Kim Lee, a Chinaman suspected of suffering leprosy and exiled to a cave on Ngā Mokopuna (Leper Island) – the islet just off Mātiu Island

TSURE: Jin Cao Lee, great-grandson of Kim Lee, pulled out into the Harbour after a swim at Petone's beach

WAKI: Anna, ranger on Mātiu Island

MĀTIU: Spirit of Mātiu Island - embodying the history and human suffering that took place on the island

KŌKEN: Two stage hands to place the various props at their right place on stage

Musicians

A flute, various Taonga Puoro, one hand drum, one cello

Chorus

Six to eight singers

A Play in One Act

To the sounds of drum, cello and purerehua, the TSURE enters, crosses the stage and kneels down at the WAKI ZA.

CHORUS #1

The waves of the Harbour: crashing…

This island – trembling on the fault line –

Disturbed by the violence of an unresolved past…

Horror of bones smashing on rock

And naked flesh burst open

In wounds like giant Hibiscus …

Memories float on crimson waves

And break against a wall of too much suffering.

At present, in the fuming storm

A single body is dragged against his will

From the shores of Petone

Through the gutter of the Sea…

Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah! Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah!

Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah! Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah!

[MUSICIANS create soundscape of wind / crashing waves underneath the TSURE dialogue]

TSURE

I am Jin Cao, a stranger to this land

How could I have known that -

Taking a refreshing swim in this magnificent Harbour -

Would release such fury of Wind, Sea and Earth?

And while I struggle to keep myself afloat,

Deep beneath the surface

There is a strange pulling

Issuing me forth to a fate unknown.

I have weakened so much

I can no longer resist …

CHORUS #2

He can no longer resist!

And like driftwood in a thunder of black waves *[drums rolling]*,

He is thrown ashore

At that same place of exile

From which his ancestor never returned.

Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah! Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah!

TSURE *[In a voice almost lost amongst the crying winds]*

Gau Meng Ah! Yau Mo Yan - Gau Ngo Ah![1]

CHORUS & TSURE

Gau Meng Ah! Yau Mo Yan - Gau Ngo Ah

Help! Somebody - help!

CHORUS

Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah! Za-Za-Za-Zah … Whsshh! Hah! Hah!

[The WAKI – in raincoat – a huge burden / rock on her shoulders - enters, carrying a torch in her hand.]

WAKI

Ay-ay-ay-ay! Tāwhirimātea seems to be in a foul mood tonight. The grumpy bugger! What an awful summer we got this year …
[*She stops towards the end of the hashigakari and addresses the audience*]

I am Anna, one of the rangers on Mātiu. It is strange that I've ended up here - more than 100 years after my great-grandfather was appointed warden on this same island.

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[1] *Cantonese:* Help! Somebody - help!

3

Oh, there was a lot of hardship and suffering during his time … I've heard there is an old Chinese proverb that says: "There are certain things in life you cannot predict!" Who would have thought that one day I would walk in his footsteps, ay?

But listen! Can you hear that? Sometimes the howling of the wind just sounds like somebody is calling out … from the depth of their being … in agony. *[Listens again attentively]* This time I'm sure it's really someone calling for help!

[She walks slowly to down stage right - shining her torch this way and that way. Music build to a climax.]

TSURE

Gau Meng Ah! Gau Meng Ah! HELP!!

WAKI

I could swear it's coming from Mokopuna Island. [*Shivers*] Huh, that's a spooky place all right. Some years ago a fishing boat crashed on that barren rock. The sea was going crazy and the poor fishermen had to crawl ashore - spent a couple of nights there - in a cave. When they finally got picked up, they looked as if they had seen a ghost ...
They kept saying they'd seen the twisted figure of a Chinaman - with a scarred face - shuffling up and down, up and down. They couldn't get away from that place quick enough! *[Laughs]*
I'd better check it out…

[WAKI walks diagonally across the stage to USL – turns and walks towards USR to a point that represents the Mātiu side of the channel that separates the two islands. WAKI points the torch in the direction of Mokopuna.]

WAKI

Hello-o-o-o, is anybody there?

TSURE

Gau Meng Ah! Please, help me!!

WAKI *[directs torch at JIN CAO]*

Oh my God! How did you end up there? Are you all right?

TSURE *[nodding his head]*

No … cold … exhausted … please … come … get me …

WAKI

Hold on to kelp tightly! I'll get a boat and come across as quickly as I can!

[WAKI steps into a bamboo boat frame and slowly traverses, with extraordinary effort, the rough channel that separates the islet from Mātiu]

CHORUS #3

In the darkness of the night,

Her little boat is tossed this way and that way –

It appears the sea is lashing at her

With a century of pent up fury …

How can she succeed to cross that raging channel -

But with a strength that comes to her

From a source beyond her comprehension …

It is as if her great grandfather

Urges her to save the life

Of this unfortunate stranger.

[On the other side, she helps JIN CAO up and covers him with an emergency blanket]

WAKI

How on earth did you end up here, my poor friend?

[JIN CAO is trying to answer but there is too much shivering and clattering of his teeth.]

WAKI

Don't worry - everything will be all right. Come. Let's take shelter in that cave over there. I'll light a fire and we'll wait for the storm to calm down.

[ANNA takes JIN CAO to the cave – a spot 2/3 USL. They mime sitting by a fire.]

CHORUS #4

[*Introduction:* Oe x 3 and the soft chanting of names]

Mingled with the raging wind on this moonless night   Aa!

You can hear the names

Of ancient chiefs and drowned sailors,

Of women and children - perished by a sickness of the flesh,

And the resentful cry of an abandoned soul

In the loneliness of this dark cave:

[*Repeat of the introduction theme - this time the chanting of names is strong*]

Whatonga, Tara, Tautoki,

Honiana, Te Wharepouri,

Gustave, Wilhelm, Fritz,

Anna, Anna, Albert, Marion,

John, James, Alice, Alice, Alice.

And among these – always that name: Kim Lee - Kim Lee - Kim Lee!

[*Crying call:* Aa! Aa!]

TSURE *[bowing]*

Thank you! Thank you for rescuing me.

Gau Yan Yat Ming Sing Gwo Chaat Cup Fou Toa:

CHORUS

Gau Yan Yat Ming Sing Gwo Chaat Cup Fou Toa: [2]

"It is better to save a life than to build a temple."

WAKI *[Offering JIN CAO a hot drink form her thermos flask]*

Are you feeling a bit better now? How did you get here?

---

[2] Ancient Chinese proverb

6

TSURE *[Misinterpreting the question]*

I came by plane - from Hong Kong. My name is Lee Jin Cao …

WAKI

Lee? Lee?

TSURE

My family is from Mainland China - from a little village called Xiaojingwan. A few months ago, just before my grandmother - my Mah Mah - passed away, she told me how her father set off to New Zealand - in search of better fortune for our family. They waited many years for him to send money for the passage – so they could join him - but … they never heard back from him. Such grief, such sadness … Not knowing what happened …

Did he take another wife? Did he shipwreck on the way? Did he pass on peacefully, or did he suffer an agonizing lonely death? Not knowing … it broke the heart of my Mah Mah. On her deathbed she made me promise to go to New Zealand … find out what happened … bring his bones back home. Her father's name was …

WAKI

Shhhh! Listen! There is a rumbling of the earth …   [*Drums rolling*]

MĀTIU *[Entering]*

Whakataka te hau ki te uru, whakataka te hau ki te tonga

Kia mākinakina ki uta, kia mātaratara ki tai

Kia hi ake ana te atakura

He tio, he huka, he hauhū – Tihei mauri ora!

I lie, a body of rock,

Wind swept and scarred by unthinkable suffering,

Like old wood buried in moss

Cold and forgotten

My name: once the proud gift of a father's love for his daughter

All but a murmur - tainted and decayed!

7

CHORUS #5

Sorrow! ……   [Aue!]

Sorrow is in the smoke of a struggling fire

And in the eyes of the fishes,

At being held apart in the waves,

Sorrow between paradise ducks,

Who have been in love since time out of mind -

But now, separated by a relentless storm.

MĀTIU

Sorrow… …

Sorrow is in the silence

Of those who refuse to speak words of love and affection -

Oh! I weep at the sound of rain and wind,

That tries in vain to drown the pain of old.

CHORUS #6

Sorrow that turned into rage -   [Aue!]

Clinging to a heart - filled with resentment.

A violent volatile bitterness

Seeking only revenge!

The Spirit of this island,

After so many decades of having to host and witness

Act upon act

Of exile, paranoia and cruelty …

The time has come for the tide to turn.

MĀTIU

My body

Yearns to be a sanctuary of new growth

Of hope and reconciliation …

And this unfortunate anguished soul:

MĀTIU & CHORUS

Blood of his blood, flesh of his flesh -

Rescued by his executor's offspring -

MĀTIU

Needs to be set free!

[MĀTIU perform the Kōrari dance and, together with the CHORUS chants the incantations to release the spirit of KIM LEE]

CHORUS

Return to your Ūkaipo, and be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhirimātea:

E hoki koe ki tō ūkaipo, kia purea koe e ngā hau o Tāwhirimātea[3]

MĀTIU

E hoki koe ki tō ūkaipo, kia purea koe e ngā hau o Tāwhirimātea!!

[The ghost of Kim Lee emerges from USCR to perform a furious stomp dance]

KIM LEE

With love and friendship denied,

One thought only crossed my mind:

A storm cloud of revenge and bitterness!

My soul - consumed by darkness -

Dwelled in the hell of angry thoughts.

CHORUS

This miserable raging ghost -

Wailed furiously in every occurring wind:

"Oh! I am lonely. I am so incredibly lonely!"

KIM LEE

I must strike. I must strike now!

But it has been said:

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[3] Traditional Māori proverb

"The flame of anger only consumes itself"[4]

> Son of the son of my daughter
>
> Rescued by the offspring of the hand
>
> That with ignorance - and cruelty -
>
> Exiled me to this rotten cave!

MĀTIU

He kitenga kanohi, he hokinga wkakaaro![5]

KIM LEE

To see them both, before me …

A white bird with a flower in its beak – flutters in my heart[6].

Itai Doshin[7]!

CHORUS

Itai Doshin: Many in body, one in mind!

TSURE

Are you Kim Lee - the father of my Mah Mah?

KIM LEE

I am …

TSURE

It has been said: Sung Ming Mo Sheung[8]

There are certain things we cannot predict in life.

MĀTIU

Ka āpiti hono, hei tātai hono! [9]

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[4] From the Sutrālankä Shāstra (Cat. No 1182)
[5] "To see a face is to stir the memory." (Kāretu 2003: 91)
[6] Reference to the quality of 'Yūgen' in a Noh Play
[7] Itai Doshin – Buddhist Philosophy of Unity: "Many in body, one in mind!"
[8] Ancient Chinese proverb: 生命無常

CHORUS

Look! Look!

MĀTIU

The pale moonlight - breaking through the clouds …

A final gust of wind, and Hine-ruhi is here at last.

CHORUS #7

Pure white wings beating the air,

And in the trees the cheerful chatter of kākariki,

Mending the strings of a once-broken heart.

Feet caressing the earth,

No longer strangers in a far-off place!

This island: 'Toka Tū Moana'[10] …

[SHITE and TSURE perform a short final dance before the SHITE - with a vigorous stomp of his left leg – finishes the play and everybody exits in designated order]

THE END

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[9] "Broken pieces are joined together and companies of men are reunited." (Kāretu 2003: 122)

[10] Literally: *Steadfast Rock in the Sea* - referring to a person of enduring spirit – someone who can withstand the challenges and storms of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

5.2   Kim Lee Noh Play Music Table:

I. First Part:

A. Entrance of the TSURE

1.   Entrance music [instrumentalist]

2.   Entrance song [CHORUS #1]

3.   Self-introduction Tsure

4.   Travel song [CHORUS # 2]

5.   Arrival of TSURE at a certain place [instrumentalist]

B. Entrance of the WAKI

1.   Entrance music [instrumentalist]

2.   Entrance speech WAKI

3.   Travel song [CHORUS # 3: sung in low pitch]

4.   Lament [CHORUS #4]

C. Dialogue between WAKI and TSURE

1.   Dialogue [speech style]

2.   Narrative [speech style]

D. Entrance of MATIU

1.   Entrance music [instrumentalist]

2.   Entrance song MATIU

3.   Lament #2 [CHORUS # 5 & MATIU]

4.   Incantation chant & dance [CHORUS, MATIU & instrumentalist]

II. Second Part

A. Entrance of SHITE

1.   Entrance music [instrumentalist]

2.   Entrance song SHITE

3.   Dialogue of SHITE, TSURE, MATIU and CHORUS

4.   Dance of SHITE & TSURE [instrumentalist]

Appendix 6:   DVD's

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6.1 DVD Matiu Wānanga #1:

- Presence
- Whare Tapere
- Mapping
- Devising
- Light
- Kōrari
- Social Time
- Final Session

6.2 DVD Light & New Pacific Theatre Workshop

- General
- Sensing Light
- Scenarios
- Archetypal Light

6.3 DVD *Ex_isle of Strangers*

- The Journey Begins: Actors' Preparation / Audience Departure
- The Arrival
- In Between
- He Tangi nā Tāmairangi
- In Between
- Quarantine Pieces
- In Between
- Kim Lee Noh Play
- Farewell & Return Home