

(Re)presentation in Verbatim Theatre

By

Tama Joe Smith 300327199

Supervisors: James McKinnon and David O'Donnell

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Abstract

Using a range of interpretive methodologies and based on both the practice of others and the author's production, direction and evaluation of a series of shows this thesis explores a number of aspects of verbatim theatre presentation and re-presentation (restaging). The form of verbatim theatre discussed is primarily that deriving from personal interview material and the predominant thesis focus is one of Australasian context and practice.

The thesis is in two separate sections with strongly related aims; the first section aiming to clarify and support the second. The first section answers questions about verbatim theatre evolution, processes and practices through both reviews of literature and interviews with prominent practitioners. It reveals vitality and diversity in VT practice, breadth and depth of scholarship in both Australia and New Zealand. It illuminates the processes and practices of creating and performing a verbatim play to support those who may consider doing so.

The second section describes and evaluates the performance of re-presentations in August 2015 of the VT play *We'll Meet Again*. This play had been developed in 1994 from interviews with war veterans to create a theatrical event honouring a generation whose common experience was involvement in the Second World War. The actors in the re-presentation were all students at Toi Whakaari:New Zealand Drama School and the show was performed in nine venues over six days. Audiences were predominantly elderly although those at community centre venues were of a range of ages.

Tools used to evaluate the performances included audience survey forms with room for written comments, observations of audience responses and verbal feedback and interviews with actors. The remarkably positive survey responses and powerful written and oral testimony support the argument that a re-presentation of verbatim theatre has the potential to reinstate and broaden further the impact, appeal, value and aims of the original work. This argument is further supported with the formation of guidelines to present research findings as well as supporting, in a practical and immediate way, those embarking on re-presentation. A selection of images and performance video, illustrating the context and findings of the research are included in the thesis document.



Figure 1: Bert's (Jack Barry) Times are a Changin'

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Figure 2: Warming up with a song.

Our most original compositions are composed exclusively of expressions derived from others

Alexander Graham Bell.¹

Introduction

Over the last 30 years, the form of theatre called, in the United Kingdom, verbatim theatre (VT)² has become increasingly popular world-wide. Starting as a form of provincial community theatre it has now moved on to mainstream success in venues in the theatre districts of central US and UK cities. As a drama practitioner and educator I am drawn to VT for its potential to involve audiences and learners both in exploring issues and events relevant to their lives and in the representation of real people telling real stories in dramatic performances.

Derek Paget, an early landmark writer interested in the form, describes VT in the following way:

In verbatim theatre, the plays are edited (or...transmutations of) interviews with individuals. Sometimes these interviews are taped and transcribed, sometimes actors work directly with the tapes themselves. Whatever the variants, aural testimony constitutes the basis for theatrical representation. (Paget 233)

Relevant source material is often gathered by the performers themselves, either by interviewing subjects or from archives such as court records, personal writings and media recordings. The creation of VT is typically driven by objectives such as empowering marginalised groups, unveiling alternatives to publicised narratives, or reporting on how communities deal with difficulty or disaster. VT implicitly lays claim to a certain authenticity or credibility based on the relationship between the performers and the people they represent. Furthermore within VT the substitution of an actor's live presence and performance for the lived experience of an absent person allows complex issues of subjectivity and mediation of truth to be explored. Stated another way, New Zealand VT practitioner and academic Stuart Young observes theatre having an "inherent ability to draw explicit attention to the interplay of

absence and presence [making] it an ideal site for foregrounding the complicated relationship between representation and reality” (Young 72)

More VT is being developed and staged world-wide each year with ever growing diversification and innovation. It addresses a wide scope of issues from international politics right through to culturally specific events or concerns on a community and personal level.

As a result of this complex development in the form, and with the intention of making a better resource for practitioners and educators, this thesis has developed into two parts, with two distinct but strongly related aims. The first part aims to clarify and support the findings in the second part.

My first aim in undertaking this research has been to add to the body of knowledge about VT and in particular to review the significant part Aotearoa and Australian practitioners have played in the evolution of the form.

Research questions related to this aim are:

How has VT evolved particularly in Australia and New Zealand?

What are the purposes, processes and practices involved in the creation of VT?

I have presented information about such practices to encourage and support others embarking on their own creative work in the form. This thesis begins by describing the evolution of VT using examples of key local and international productions. It then moves on to explore VT processes in detail, because VT may be more effectively defined by its intentions, processes and strategies than in the resulting production.

In order to make this a manageable and culturally focussed study this exploration of the processes has drawn on Australian and New Zealand case studies and interviews with and between key practitioners. It has also included material from interviews that I have carried out with New Zealand practitioners specifically to contribute to this study. Finally to manage the analysis of VT's ever growing diversification and innovation, I have focussed on particular VT work that has been developed almost entirely from personal interview rather

than published records. This more personally oriented mode of VT, made from transcriptions of personal interactions, also aligns well with my work in the performance section of this research.

As VT has become more regularly produced and performed, a number of original texts have been published and made available. VT practitioners are continuing to develop new work but it has also become more common to see restaged productions that I refer to as 're-presentations'. At the time of writing up this research, two such re-presentations *Be/Longing* (2012) and *The Keys are in the Margarine* (2014) were touring New Zealand as a double bill. Such re-presentations of VT plays raise questions I will investigate in this thesis.

My second aim has been to advocate for the re-presentation (restaging) of existing VT work. Through examination of the opportunities and challenges that this involves as well as through substantial re-presentation performances carried out as part of this thesis. I wish to investigate practical ways to establish again credible and intimate connections between performers, audience communities and the real voices of those who contributed to the original play script. My aim has been to investigate the idea that re-presentation of VT, if well managed, has the potential to sustain meaningful discourse around moral, social and historical issues and to do so by producing and evaluating a season of re-presentation performances of the VT play *We'll Meet Again*. I expect that the process and evaluation of re-presenting this play, again, twenty years after its original staging, will make a vital contribution to the findings of the thesis as a whole.

Research questions related to this performance component are:

What is involved in setting up, producing, managing, directing and evaluating these performances?

How does the evaluation of the performances provide evidence for and/or support the following

- if the key purpose of an original VT performance is "...to connect with an audience emotionally and intellectually, to empathetically inform and

empower through authentic story” (Anderson and Wilkinson 156) - can a re-presentation of VT achieve that same goal?

- how does the process of re-presentation, take into account the implications of the ever-growing distance (chronological, geographical, culturally or otherwise) between those involved in re-presentation and the original interviewees?
- the development of a set of re-presentation guidelines of use for others embarking on re-presentation of a VT play?

The central argument of this thesis component is that, when carefully considered and well-informed, re-presentations of VT beyond the original context and conditions are not only of benefit for broadening further the impact, appeal and value of the work but may also in fact, constitute a significant aspect of the form’s development itself.

Methodology

Over the last twenty years there have been substantive changes in what is viewed as research, the relationship between researcher and the subject of research, and the ways in which outcomes of research can be communicated. Furthermore researchers in the performance arts have often struggled to find appropriate and useful methodologies within orthodox research paradigms. However, to address the different research aims and key questions asked in this study, I have been able to use general interpretive approaches with the investigation of VT practice, process and performance itself as the key research components. I have drawn evidence, including that from survey results and interviews, related to actual VT and VT re-presentation practice. I have hence focussed throughout on descriptions, understandings and interpretations of verbatim theatre as experienced by writers, academics, practitioners and other participants as well as the evaluation of the performances of the re-presentation of *We'll Meet Again*.

Section One of this thesis begins with a brief literature review of the evolution of VT particularly in Australia and New Zealand. The main question in Section One is: what are the purposes, processes and practices involved in the creation of VT? To answer this I have investigated the 'practice' of creating original VT with sources of data almost entirely from either personal interviews with practitioners or first-hand accounts of these in relevant texts. The emphasis on description of specific VT intentions and processes, as carried out by New Zealand and Australian experts, of well-known and documented plays has led to a high level of reliability and trustworthiness of the information. It has also provided a rich resource particularly for those involved in the development of new VT as well as guidelines for VT re-presentation (further described in Section 2.4 Guidelines for Representation). All personal interviews were carried out under Victoria University Guidelines and ethics protocols.

Some notes about the value and complexity of 'the interview' as a source of data seem worth making here. The interview is not a simple research tool.

While on the one hand the research purpose may be to uncover some 'truth' or 'reality' one must acknowledge that people may mislead, distort, embellish or simply forget. Both interviewer and interviewee will have their own agendas. On the other hand the interview also "creates the basis for engagement with others, the openings for dialogue, the modes for drawing out views, the strategies for forming and framing questioning, the critical approaches to analysis, the strategies for representation politically, ethically and textually, and an approach to writing views." (Schostak 3-4)

The interview has been the way that I and others such as Brown in *Verbatim: Staging Memory and Community* and Hammond and Steward in *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre* have unlocked and presented information and gained insight into the attitudes, experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs, values, knowledges and approaches of VT practitioners. It has been the way I have provided useful practice based answers to the research question about VT and added new knowledge about the practice of VT, particularly in the New Zealand context. To support this research project I have interviewed and sought comment from prominent New Zealand dramatists³, the actors of this 2015 thesis⁴ performance component of *We'll Meet Again* and the writers and actors of the 1994⁵ performances of *We'll Meet Again*. It is also noteworthy that, beyond its effectiveness as a research tool, those qualities in interview material of allowing access to the complexity of lives and perspectives of others are the defining dramatic resource of VT itself.

Section Two of this thesis is about the re-presentation of VT and includes a performance component of actual VT re-presentations. The aim of this component is to add to the body of knowledge about re-presentation by means of actual practice (the performances), from my analysis, interpretation and summary of the outcomes of those performances and guidelines to support future practitioners of VT re-presentation. An action research approach (see 2.1.4 Reporting on the performance outcomes) has been incorporated within the performance evaluation to report on the outcomes of the cycle of performances.

My observations were confirmed and/or contested by audience surveys, observation of and discussions with audience and interviews with the actors.



Figure 3: Jean's Bluebirds

Section One: Presentation of Verbatim Theatre

“The origins of verbatim theatre lie in (the) alignment of new technologies with ancient storyteller’ craft, which brought new dimensions to oral traditions of sharing human experience.”
(Brown vii)

1.1 Evolution of Verbatim Theatre

Many substantial research papers and other publications have covered the early development and history of VT. Few papers have been as regularly cited as that of Derek Paget’s 1987 paper in the *New Theatre Quarterly* titled *Verbatim Theatre: Oral History and Documentary Techniques*. It acknowledges the roots of VT in the 1930’s to 40’s socialist theatre movements and reports the emergence of the term ‘Verbatim Theatre’ itself. According to Paget, VT is a particular technique commonly acknowledged as having developed from a British documentary theatre tradition of the late sixties and seventies and the pioneering work of a group of British practitioners; Peter Cheeseman, Chris Honer, Rory Robinson, David Thacker and Ron Rose. Forming an interconnected network of writers, actors and directors they created a series of community centred touring shows that came to be known as the ‘Stoke’ tradition due to the name of the locality of their regional base. These were performances full of lived experiences and speeches derived from the recordings of both formally and informally gathered interviews with ‘ordinary’ people. Through transcription, editing, and with a slight pastiche of music hall conventions such as mimed enactments and bridging music and songs, shows were created and performed and a successful regional touring circuit of provincial theatre was established.

The general intention of this early work was a validation of the identity, experiences and shared values of a community that was generally underrepresented in the national media and not normally privileged in political discourse. There remains a strong tradition of smaller scale VT rooted in community affirmation and awareness building, restorative, even therapeutic

in some cases. The work of Pam Schweitzer and the company she founded in 1983, Age Exchange, works in a form of VT known as 'Reminiscence' theatre. Following the Stoke tradition of touring community work, Age Exchange is focussed on working with elderly communities in regional Britain. Their theatre work explores the "transforming power of memories made accessible" (Gibson 12) through live performance of interview material, interspersed with music, singing and enactments. This form of 'Reminiscence' theatre has extraordinary similarities in methodology and aesthetics to the play *We'll Meet Again* which I re-presented as part of this study. Therefore I found Schweitzer's writing most insightful and informative not only as I reflected on the original development of the play twenty or so years ago, but also in the performance based research about the actual re-presentations in Section Two.

VT of this nature has continued over time but has expanded on concepts of community to include those related to commonalities of experience and broader themes of human interest. Such contexts and themes can remain domestic and regionally focussed, but may also be widened to a national and even international scope. Over the last thirty years VT has been developed in response to universal issues of crisis and/or controversy such as war, natural disaster, racism, political unease, treatment of refugees, and notable criminal acts. *The Laramie Project* (2001) a play based on impact of a homophobic hate crime carried out in a small town in Wyoming and *Talking with Terrorists* (2005), which discusses the importance of resolving terrorism through negotiations and peaceful discussions, are examples of successful VT plays that "tackle complex global issues and are performed on global stages" (Anderson and Wilkinson 154).

Over the last three decades audiences for VT work have grown significantly across the globe. VT performances, more universally relevant, are now being staged successfully in main centres worldwide and have had critical and commercial success in metropolitan theatres. VT development, particularly that engaged with presentation of multiple, often conflicting, perspectives on complex political situations, legal proceedings and social justice, has established an international theatrical movement that continues to developed

and grow to present day.

Another specific form known as 'Tribunal' VT has developed with the work of Nicholas Kent and Tricycle Theatre in Britain. This uses verbatim reconstructions of public inquiries, created solely from testimony recorded in court transcripts. With the intent of overcoming the deficit in reliable documentation that arises out of globalisation and political scandal, practitioners of this approach assert that VT can displace mainstream media as the form of documentation most likely to deliver the "truth" (Brown and Wake 19).

Crucial to the initial evolution of VT was the development of the portable tape recorder capable of recording the precise words spoken by interviewees to practitioners. Over time VT has developed in terms of use of this and other recording technologies making possible innovations in the conventional processes and performances.

In the USA, practitioner Anna Deavere-Smith, a heralded pioneer of VT, studied video as well as audio recordings of interviews to aid her in remarkable presentations of the poetics and rhythms of speech as well as the minutiae of expressions, movement and gesture. She is renowned for her virtuosic solo performances, *Fires in the Mirror* (1992) and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1994) that dealt with "traumatic instances of cross-cultural violence" (O'Donnell 8).

A more recent innovation in the UK is Alecky Blythe's work with the company she founded in 2003 called Recorded Delivery. In this form of delivery actors, while performing for audiences, use a headphone technique, that is, receive a "feed of original interviews via headphones" (Brown and Wake 18). In Blythe's latest work she also used verbatim material to create lyrics in a musical play about the impact of serial murders on a group of Ipswich residents. Although seemingly from an unlikely combination of VT and musical theatre this play *London Road* (2011) received unanimous critical acclaim and was even made into a feature film that was released internationally in 2015.

VT practitioners continue to innovate, incorporating new technologies such as that of media projection and sound design. Another example of innovation

involves the incorporation of physical choreography. For example, *The Black Watch* (2006) produced by The National Theatre of Scotland in the Edinburgh Festival, 2006, and then touring internationally, “achieved worldwide commendation for its melding of verbatim text with stirring physical and gestural choreography” (Forsyth and Megson xi). Experimentation in direction and dramaturgy is also constantly developing, often in mixing verbatim material in with the presentation of imagined contexts. David Hare, a highly successful British playwright with a fifteen year history of working in VT wrote *Stuff Happens* (2004) which included factual content around the decision to commit Britain to the war in Iraq. Speeches and press releases were incorporated word for word in the script. However, around these were written fictionalised scenes and dramatised interactions between the world leaders likely to have been involved in the decision making process. This play with its amalgamation of fact and fiction was an example of innovation that demonstrates VT maturing into a complex multifaceted theatrical genre. Such creative liberties, could be taken as part of the form’s evolution.

VT appears to have reached a stage in its evolution that with such a strong set of advocates, developers, practitioners and recognisable devices it has become a source of theatrical adaption and appropriation in its own right. As some work becomes more specialised it can encounter criticism on issues of representation, cultural appropriation, exploitation and sensationalism, efficacy or venerating one perspective over another. Much has also been made of concerns about the intellectual, emotional and cultural property issues and ownership of primary source material. Therefore practitioners are consistently required to carefully examine underlying principles in each stage of a work’s development and remain accountable for all decisions made during the process.

There is now a significant body of written material about the intentions and practice behind work in VT. While these resources provide invaluable and practical insight for those involved in the development of VT they also contribute to the critical discourse around claims regarding VT’s presentation of truth and authenticity. Scholarship and academic publication have also increased in the last ten years. Edited by Carol Martin the special issue of the

journal The Drama Review (TDR) took an early lead in this with the publication of the 2006 TDR special edition on documentary theatre. Martin followed this up in 2010 with a collection of articles from practitioners and academics in *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*. This growing body of critical scholarship, is also exemplified in UK publications such as Will Hammond and Dan Steward's *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre* (2008), Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson's *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (2011) and the Australian publication edited by Paul Brown, *Verbatim: Staging Memory and Community* (2010). While providing a broad range of perspectives and allowing for deepening discourse the practice based content also allows for further research into methods that have proven effective when developing VT. The introduction to *Verbatim, Verbatim* states that:

the purpose of this book is to provide... first hand descriptions of a variety of approaches to making verbatim theatre...the contributors with an opportunity to address ... questions...of truth and integrity, reality and fiction...(and) about rehearsal, research, editing, stagecraft.

Chapters of the book report on detailed discussion and interview with each of six leading UK dramatists Alecky Blythe, David Hare, Nicolas Kent, Richard Norton-Taylor, Max Stafford-Clark, and Robin Soans.

Get Real, which includes fifteen informative and provocative chapters each written by eminent practitioners and scholars also includes an insightful analysis of a range of practices, with a specific interest in British verbatim theatre. However it also presents an historic overview of the hybrid nature of Western documentary theatre since the 1930s and points towards the continuing vibrancy and diversity of VT development on the world stage with examples from the US, UK, Canada, Australia, South Africa and the Middle East.

1.1.1 Evolution of VT in Australia and New Zealand

From the 1990's, reputable examples of VT have continued to be generated worldwide. In particular, Australia has been a significant centre for VT development with many distinctly Australian plays created around such issues as communities recovering from crisis, the impact of colonisation, injustice, stories of disaster, war, refugees, asylum seekers and on feminist themes.

The Australian play *Aftershocks* (1991) created by Paul Brown and the Workers' Cultural Action Committee is recognised by many as a watershed production. Based on conversations between staff and members of the Newcastle Worker's Club about the events and impact of the Newcastle earthquake of 1989 it touched on universal themes of "how people respond to crisis, assume leadership, deal with death" (Anderson and Wilkinson 159) It has been turned into a film and has been restaged regularly across the country. Two and a half decades of creative development in Australian VT has produced many notable works. These include Alana Valentine's *Parramatta Girls* (2007), which looks into the personal history of abusive institutionalisation of young Australian women and Roslyn Oades's trilogy of VT plays, *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* (2005), *Stories of Love & Hate* (2008), and *I'm Your Man* (2012). The latter were performed by actors using the recorded delivery/headphone technique and investigate different definitions of courage in Australian society.

Of further national and even international significance has been the development of both VT plays and related scholarship intended to address racial issues. In particular this has included addressing historical events concerning the treatment of aboriginal communities. Maryrose Casey, an academic from Monash University, has explored the way in which play writing, direction and level of indigenous control of the process have a significant effect on the potential for meaningful communication. To do so she compares two VT productions, *Ngapartji Ngapartji* (2005) and *Career Highlights of the Mamu* (2002) both of which deal with the stories, lives and traditions of aborigine peoples impacted by atomic bomb tests carried out by the British Government on their lands in the 1950s and 1960s. In conclusion she states:

Indigenous stories have the potential to offer a deeper understanding of the human consequences of actions taken in the name of security. However, there are issues in relation to the framing of Indigenous theatre that need to be addressed to ensure that the telling is efficacious for the communities who own the stories rather than, in effect, just another form of exploitation. (Casey 137).

VT scholarship in Australia also comes in the form of the creation of VT as an intrinsic part of research – a form of performance ethnography. In the abstract to her thesis *Creating Verbatim Theatre-exploring the gap between public inquiry and private pain* Linden Wilkinson states “the thesis also explores...the increasing interest in performance as a research tool, because of its capacity to comprehensively present a multiplicity of complex truths”. She has followed this research with the creation and acclaimed performances of a cross-cultural play concerning the massacre of Aboriginal people at Myall Creek in 1838. This play *Today We’re Alive* (2014) has been very recently published along with educational resources making it immediately useful in educational contexts.

While in many countries “documentary theatre projects have become a staple feature of drama school and university curricula VT” (Forsyth and Megan 1), Australia seems to be at the forefront of building the study of VT into school level curriculum and qualifications. Particularly in these educational contexts the text *Verbatim: Staging Memory and Community*, specifically intended for teachers and students studying and creating verbatim theatre, is extraordinarily valuable. It deals not only with the nature, analysis, history, creative processes and authenticity and ethical issues of verbatim theatre but also includes website links, material and workshop material and exercises on topics such as making a verbatim play, interviewing technique, creating a headphone verbatim performance and acting in verbatim plays.

Although on a more focused and smaller scale an impressive lineage of VT creation and research also exists here in New Zealand. The seminal play *Verbatim* (1993) created by Miranda Harcourt and William Brandt, presented an intimate account of a matter of fact murder from the perpetrator

perspective but also foregrounded the impact of his actions on his and the victim's families. For five years the show toured New Zealand prisons, schools and theatres as well as international arts festivals in Sydney, Edinburgh, Denver and London.

Based in Otago Hilary Halba, Stuart Young, Cindy Diver and the company they are part of, Talking House, have created a series of socially relevant and important VT plays. *Hush* (2009), examined domestic violence, *Be/longing* (2012), was based on the experiences of migrants to Dunedin, and *The Keys are in the Margarine* (2014) was a collection of interviews with people either with, or caring for someone with dementia. All of these plays use the headphone technique on stage as well as a "copy gesture" (Halba personal interview) technique which requires the actors to learn a gestural choreography from watching video of the material that is played through headphones in performance. Both Halba and Young are academics at Otago University as well as VT practitioners and have created work as well as contributed, alongside others, a great deal to contemporary scholarship in VT over the last fifteen years. They have reported on VT matters internationally at conferences and in a number of scholarly papers. One of these describes the processes that Halba and Young went through in the development of *Hush* (2009), which was a practice-led research project as part of a University Theatre Studies larger scale investigation into strategies for making verbatim theatre. Another Otago practice-led VT project has been that of Fran Kewene entitled *Barrier Ninja* (2015). It also using the headphone and 'copy gesture' technique, is based on the testimonies of nine Dunedin people about hauora (possible translation is breath of health and life) and uses a kaupapa Maori approach and experience to research and production.

Colleague Suzanne Little has further extended the discourse on the nature of representation in verbatim theatre. In an insightful discussion she compares representation in *Hush*, which was developed under strict academic protocol and avoided as far as possible tampering with source material, with that of the development of *The Permanent Way* (2003) by David Hare. Little places the latter case, where significant recontextualising of source material has taken place at one end of a VT representation spectrum and *Hush* at the

other. Covering the range of VT practice in her conclusion, she refers to a useful quote by Janelle Reinelt, that any “examination of reality and a dramatization of its results is in touch with the real but not a copy of it”. (Reinelt 8)



Figure 4: Sporty enactments



Figure 5: Mischief in Church

1.2 Processes and Practices of Verbatim Theatre

The purposes for, the processes involved in, and the issues arising during the presentation of VT are the focus of this section of the thesis. I have examined a range of published scholarship, reviews and data collected around VT play scripts and productions. I have chosen to focus on published VT material from Australia and New Zealand as a way to acknowledge a foundation of cultural specificity found in VT work. Furthermore by enhancing the review of literature with material from my own interviews with New Zealand practitioners I have strengthened the relevance of the thesis by bringing the Australasian perspectives on VT practice to the forefront. I have also used the evidence and insight into current practice to inform the development of guidelines to aid re-presentation of VT.

The creation of VT is commonly a lengthy and meticulous process. In Paget's seminal 1987 article Cheeseman states "the key to our work is the painstaking use of primary source material-painstaking, protracted and scrupulous use of historical evidence" (Paget 318). To help manage a summary of these processes I have divided this chapter into five stages.

1. Intentions and purposes
2. The process of gathering of source material
3. Shaping of material into a performance text
4. Directing, acting and rehearsal techniques
5. Performance and audience reception

1.2.1 Intentions and purposes

VT projects are governed by the intentions of the initiators, often sociological, ideological and/or political in nature. These intentions critically influence decision making in each phase of a project's development. They can be a motivating agenda, decided prior to the gathering of source material, or alternatively start as an interest or subject of investigation and develop into a clearer purpose. The latter may occur in response to matters arising from

research, interviewing or from feedback after test presentations to audiences that often include the interviewees. The intention, however and whenever it is defined, directs choices made about what is included or excluded, emphasised or demoted in the development of a VT project.

A number of VT projects, in the words of a pioneering UK practitioner Chris Honer, have as a central tenet the creation of “a show that in some way (is) able to recreate some sort of community experience in the words of the people that had experienced it” (Paget 319). Such plays essentially function to present material that recognises and validates the shared stories within a community, attesting to a spirit of solidarity and recognition, before endeavouring to attract an audience from outside that community.

Such a play was the original *We'll Meet Again* created in 1994 after four months of interviewing of residents of Montecillo War Veterans' Home. To create this play the group I was a part of, inexperienced as we were in VT, set out simply to devise an event that allowed veterans the opportunity to reminisce with others in the RSA community. Jesse Griffin, a member of the original cast, reminiscing himself on the experience of touring the show, recalled a comment from one of the audience members “(an) elderly man who came up to me, said a few pleasantries, paused for maybe twenty seconds with a thousand yard stare, then turned to me with tears in his eyes and said “some of those things in your play... I haven't thought about them for 40 years...” (Griffin personal correspondence)

Alana Valentine's play *Parramatta Girls* (2007), traces the legacy of four decades of the institutionalisation of ‘uncontrollable’ girls in state facilities such as the Girls Training School in Parramatta. Valentine desired not to single out or focus on the “potentially voyeuristic horror of individual trauma” (Oades 61) or make overreaching political statements about large systematic failings. Instead by collapsing the words and anecdotes of over thirty-five women into eight representative characters, Valentine intended the work to first and foremost recognise and respect a particular community of tough and courageous survivors. She did so by “granting them something they had been

so painfully denied for decades, the chance to be heard and believed” (Oades 61).

In reviewing the first performance of the play *Be/longing* (2012), created by Talking House Theatre Company in 2012, Terry MacTavish, describes the show as based on a collection of interviews that together give “an accumulative impression of different immigrant experiences”. She described the work’s intention as providing audiences, made up of migrant and resident communities, with an opportunity to recognise what makes New Zealand culture unique, and to contemplate the conditions that make New Zealand welcoming but also alienating at times. “Our sense of where we belong is fundamental...and it is also fascinating to learn how we appear to others. Through sharing their experience we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves” (MacTavish).

The Keys are in the Margarine (2014), a VT play produced by Cindy Diver and Stuart Young for Talking House, raises awareness of issues around living with people suffering from dementia and *Hush* (2009) an earlier production by the same group raised issues related to domestic violence. *Verbatim* (1993) similarly, is firmly centred on those dealing with the repercussions of violent crime/homicide. Miranda Harcourt, interviewed in the recent publication of her VT plays, reveals a key motivation behind *Verbatim* when she states “I wanted to do something about murder, but I think it was murder from an unaccustomed perspective” (Brandt, Harcourt, and McKenzie 19). It is this objective of widening the discussion around homicide to include diverse and often unexpected perspectives that contributes to the piece’s “very strong drama-therapeutic underpinning” (Brandt, Harcourt, and McKenzie 19). In presenting specific stories from multiple perspectives, expressing conflict and confusion, tied together with universal themes like “dealing with remorse, regret, shame and the nature of choice” (Miranda personal correspondence) the work ultimately becomes more insightful, dramatically effective, and leaves the audience to decide who and what to believe or empathically connect with.

The intention to encourage unaccustomed perspectives aligns with a common underpinning VT intention in “seeking out discourse not normally privileged by either the journalistic or entertainment media” (Paget 322). In the case of the Australian VT play *Aftershocks* (1991), based on the impact of the 1989 Newcastle earthquake on the members of Newcastle Workers Club (NWC) a stated primary intention was “an alternative to the ways...a media system creates and communicates understandings of social crisis” (Mumford 37). Summarising further from Mumford’s account of the work, a club’s board member and historian, Bob Phillips, informally collected raw and moving interview material two weeks after the quake. Subsequently Paul Brown, in an appointed role of research facilitator and key creator lead eight researchers, all connected to NWC, to conduct a further twenty three interviews one year after the quake. With the policy of using only interview material firmly rooted in the NWC community and minimally edited transcripts the work would “tour the ‘unofficial’ stories of primary witnesses far and wide” (Mumford 38). It would also address the assertion that mainstream media, concerned only with sensationalised coverage of catastrophic events, demotes, discredits or distorts the authentic “heroism and aftermath experiences of everyday working people” (Mumford 37).

Although often complex and far from mutually exclusive, an understanding of the intentions behind the preparation and presentation of work is vital in any effective analysis of VT. However processes during the development of work, such as interviewing and feedback from workshop performances, will often impact and influence shifts in direction and overall objectives of the work. This degree of flexibility is desirable as it indicates the project is able to respond reflexively to material as it is gathered.

Summary of possible implications for re-presentation

In deciding to re-present a particular VT play script some careful consideration of the initial intention will aid in assessing the value, potential and pitfalls of re-presentation of the work. Questions such as whether there are the same or similar intentions motivating a re-presentation, or whether a re-presentation aligns with the original objectives, need to be considered. If a change to the original intention is indicated, such promotion to a different make up of

audience, what adaptations could be made without distorting or defying the intention the work was created with? Ultimately, in what way does the re-presentation represent and re-contextualise the issues and concerns of those whose voices make up the source material. In terms of service to that community what outcomes can be expected from re-presentation?

we have been burnt in the past by people not (aesthetically) serving the writing, not serving the plays, but it's really hard work to perform, people really aren't going to do it because its sensationalist, they're only going to do it really if they are committed from a social perspective to social change that those plays can effect

(Harcourt personal interview)

1.2.2 The process of gathering of source material

Once purpose or thematic intention is somewhat settled, the next stage in development of a VT production is the gathering of raw material for construction of the play script. This material, made up of interviews with members of a community connected in some manner to the subject or intention of the work, forms the content and context of the work. The interviewing process supplies the raw material for the script. The quality and integrity of this process also directly influences the social and artistic merits of the work.

Interviews are usually carried out by members of the creative company, although independent researchers can be involved. Producer, director, playwright, and the actors intending to perform the material, team up to carry out a range of recorded discussions. The interviewers, often working in pairs, have a complex task of prompting the memories and experiences from interviewees regarding the subject of the work, while at the same time looking for material that thematically links with other themes or ideas emerging from material previously gathered. Siobhan McHugh, an Australian oral historian and VT playwright, when asked to describe effective interview technique uses the term “aerobic listening”- a process which requires her to “be hearing what

(the interviewee) is saying and listening and being empathetic, and at the same time trying to see where does it connect to any questions that are either there or not, that need to be asked” (Oades 113).

In some cases interviewees are found through informal networks with one interviewee suggesting or introducing the interviewer to the next in an unplanned word of mouth manner. Other VT projects use agencies to arrange suitable candidates for interviewing. Such agencies, often with expertise aligned with the projects area of interest, can act as advisors, mentors or cultural translators for practitioners. This is vital when there are sensitivities or even legalities around the interviewing process. Halba in referring to interviewing for *Hush*, a clear example of a VT work with sensitive content, acknowledged the very real need to be advised by clinical councillors in selecting participants who had “kind of come through that experience (of domestic violence) and were able to reflect on it in a **safe** way”. (Halba personal interview, emphasis mine). Stringent consent documentation, laying out clearly what is intended and permissible in the use of interview material is common in VT and adds significant ethical safeguards for both participants and practitioners.

Anonymity or the use of a pseudonym is also a regular way of protecting interviewee’s privacy, an example being characters in Harcourt’s *Verbatim* based on perpetrators and victims of violent crime. But this can prove problematic in practice as other information in the interviewee material can be recognisably specific. There is a obvious paradox in the effort to transcribe the exact idiosyncrasies in what and how something is expressed, often with annotation of gestures, expressions, inferences, silence and emphasis and yet not be so accurate as to create another means of identification. This issue becomes even more pertinent when using the ‘copy gesture’ technique employed by work of Halba, Young and Diver. Halba recalled an incident after a performance of *Hush*, when an interviewee was recognised from a performers detailed representation of gesture and body language alone (Halba personal interview).

The job of the interviewer is far from straightforward because there is a need to pick up and process anomalies or even misinformation as well as to identify contrasting perspectives that can add tension and dramatic interest to the material. During the process of interviewing multiple perspectives of the same events arise and dissenting voices and contradictory or opposing views on central issues can emerge. Incorporating these divergences of perspective into the play script gives VT a diversity and sociological complexity. Rather than presenting answers or ideal truths it is this intersubjectivity- the shared (or partially shared) divergences of meaning, that makes VT a more compelling presentation of the multiplicity of lived experiences.

Summary of possible implications for re-presentation

The context of the original script material, the dynamics leading up to the interviews, as well as the procedures that were followed during the interviewing itself will inform the conditions and relationships the new cast and company will need to explore in re-presentation of the material. Where possible lines of communication with the original contributing communities should be established, and intention for the re-presentation should be shared. Any consents and permissions agreements should be respected where possible.

It should be also understood that a unique aspect of VT is that often relationships between the original interviewers and those that have trusted their stories to the work are often maintained and cherished by both parties. In considering a re-presentation, thought needs to be given to how the new work may impact on these relationships which could be considered as dynamic and still very much a present and ongoing rather than historical concern.

1.2.3 Shaping of material into a performance text

My Job was to find it, hidden as it was amidst over two hundred pages of interview transcriptions. Fragments of text, sometimes as small as a sentence or even a word were slowly combined into a series of bigger fragments which in turn form the building blocks of the play

(Brandt 27)

The Interviewing and source gathering process commonly creates an excess of material. The editing and crafting of this material is the next distinct step in the creation of a performance text. When referring to a performance text I include the ordering of content and dramaturgy of the play script as well as choices made around theatrical components such as stage directions, space arrangements and use of performance devices, conventions and technologies.

The task of arranging and transcribing the recordings often requires physically laying out the interview material to allow narrative elements, interruptions and intersections to be found, arranged and examined. Brown describes this as a search for 'nodes'- "moments of intersection between separate stories where the speakers address the same subject matter from different or complementary perspectives". (Mumford 42). Halba, in describing this stage in her work on *Hush*, said "we kind of laid out this massive piece of newsprint paper and we figured out in what order we would put things...and how we would introduce the play and how we would introduce each character" (Halba personal interview). This process, somewhat distinct to Halba's work, leads to video footage for the rehearsal of gestures and expressions that underpin the voice recordings used in headphone playback during each performance.

As the transcriptions are generally derived from the interviewee's responses to questions, or prompted first-person recollections of events VT, scripts tend to be predominately direct address with the audience who stand in for the interviewers in performance. This restricted stand and deliver mode, is often seen as a theatrical limitation of VT. However, some VT work has investigated variations on this conventional VT method of independent monologues

addressed to the audience. For example, in *Parramatta Girls*, dialogue has been constructed to facilitate “characters telling the stories to each other” (Oades 63) within its context of a reunion.

Another structuring device used in *Parramatta Girls* (as well as the play *Verbatim*) is that of compositing characters- amalgamating a number of different interviewee’s accounts into one character’s experience. Valentine concedes she built “her source material into eight distinct characters’ and shaped ‘her collected interviews around an invented narrative structure” (Oades 60). In doing so she achieved an efficacy in maintaining the intimacy of single voices but delivering the words and experiences common to many. Some compromise in the fidelity of any one individual’s testimony occurs in this process. However Valentine felt, due to her extensive interviewing as well as regularly inviting interviewee’s feedback on draft readings, that she was able to “see patterns in what they told me and the way they coped...I realised that I could start to collapse the stories together and it didn’t need to be pure verbatim” (Oades 60).

As playback and projection technology has advanced and become more available, technical components such as the use of still, video and audio enrichment have been explored as a part of the development of VT. It isn’t uncommon for media to be projected on stage backdrops or historical voice recordings to be included along side the live verbatim performances. These technical components contextualise, counterpoint or progress narratives in many VT performances.

Summary of possible implications for re-presentation

Study and reflection of any account of the original production may lead to potential ways the play script could be reconsidered or reorganised. The pace, rhythm and contrast of the episodes and how tension is built in and between character’s voices are all possible elements that could be explored by the new re-presentation company.

Well considered development in the technical components may also reveal potential innovation to enrich or revitalise the intention of the work or

showcase the way context has changed since the original production occurred.

I believe change for change's sake should always be undertaken with caution, particularly considering the possible sensitivities inherent in VT.



Figure 6: Sonny becomes a Dad.

1.2.4 Directing, acting and rehearsal techniques

Once a play script has “stabilised” (Wake 3) the next distinct task is to apply other practical stagecraft to the material. Director and performers now become involved in the process of exploring the most effective manner to rehearse and present the work while remaining aware of the representational challenges and ethical agreements and sensitivities inherent in working in VT. This stage of development is characterised by testing practical and aesthetic choices, not entirely unlike those made in fictional or imagined theatre, but with a constant concern for a fidelity to the words, inferences and sentiments of the original source material.

Stylistically VT has continued to diversify. Experimentation in presenting source material authentically as well as making engaging and entertaining theatrical events can drive VT in different directions in terms of performance theories and use of staging conventions. On one hand there continues to be a strong tradition of VT, concerned with the presentation of community narratives, but drawing from historical theatre styles like pantomime and music hall. This type of VT, linked stylistically to the early work in the Stoke tradition is characterised by the verbatim material being intersected with dramatised enactments, music and singing. This type of VT tends to be more participatory in nature and although having an entertainment bias often does a very effective job of combining celebratory, nostalgic and reverent intentions in one theatrical event. The original performance of *We'll Meet Again* was very much in this mode. Competence in physical comedy, mimed antics and confidence in singing were vital performance skills for the actors. The singing of old war songs at regular intervals aided the narrative progress as well as being historically fixing and enriching.

Another VT mode, referred to by some as ‘pure’ verbatim, is characterised by the task of rendering in the most exact manner every nuance of voice and gesture from the original interviewees. The vocal nuances, collectively referred to by Brown as the ‘voiceprints’ are the unique and “particular speaking patterns and rhythms” (Wake 3) of each individual, not only conveying literal meaning but also, in presenting pauses, stutters and changes in intonation, infer the interviewee’s train of thought, doubts and even

deceptions. Cindy Diver, goes as far as saying that in her VT work it is actually due to her being “specific to every physicalisation, every vocalisation” that she has the right to ‘borrow’ the material from the people she interviews and it is precisely because she works in such an exacting, pure manner of representation that she feels her work is ethically permissible “otherwise you might as well just say it’s based on a true story and do what ever you like...if you are being them you owe them, you owe them to do them right” (Cindy Diver personal interview)

A director, likely to be an initiator and interviewer in the project, is often well positioned to mediate between the actual interview material and the actor’s ability to present the material accurately as well as incorporate other components to produce engaging theatrical experience for an audience. Referring again to an interview with Diver, this time discussing her role in direction, she likens the process to working on a musical score “you have the right moments of poignancy followed by the moments of laughter, followed by the bit you want them to listen to, and you are arranging it, like a composer...it’s someone else’s music that you’re arranging, like a composer” (Diver personal interview). Eminent New Zealand theatre director Colin McColl worked with Harcourt on her solo performance of the six composite characters in *Verbatim* and was predominately concerned with transitions between the characters, “how the characters transformed from one to the next, and the next using a kind of choreographic process’ (Harcourt personal interview). The director’s main job in VT appears to be one of maintaining the integrity of the source material while administering to the broader theatrical dynamics of pacing, contrast, tension, surprise in realising the theatrical event.

Actors who, in many cases have also been involved in the interviewing processes, often begin their work with their own first hand impressions of the real people they are representing. These personal encounters and having heard the interviewee speak in their idiosyncratic ways can be a profound reference for the actors. Often actors noting that with direct connection comes a strong sense of accountability to those that have lived the experiences they are presenting. This sense of responsibility seems to resonate throughout the

preparation and rehearsal process. Halba in advising a group of actors, new to VT and in particular to the headphone technique used in the production of *The Keys are in the Margarine*, explained the unconventional nature of the work this way

actors new to Verbatim have to reconceptualise, reconfigure their actorly processes because it isn't about looking down there into the box that is the character and forensically picking the character apart ...its kind of putting the character up here or the testimony up here and giving them all that mana and going 'my job as an actor is to try and reproduce you as exactly as possible'...you go 'I put you up here and you're the kind of perfect form of what I'm trying to get to.

(Halba personal interview)

Actors are required to be precise, observant, and in command of the subtlety of voice and gesture. They also require a willingness to concede their own creative voice and 'actorly' choices to a process of disciplined mimicry.

Halba acknowledges that furthermore in development of an effective performance style a degree of 'dilation' in the delivery of the material needs to occur, referring to the taking of what is originally an intimate conversation between an interviewee and one or two interviewers and inflating or enlarging it theatrically to communicate with audience groups, all without losing veracity or becoming emotively distorted or overblown.

Test performances are commonly scheduled in the rehearsal process to acquire constructive feedback from the source community and other interested parties. These showings or readings exemplify the sense of "collaborative authorship" (Mumford 38) in the work, providing valuable opportunities for clarification or additional information to be included as well as being reassuring for actors, directors and the interviewees who have trusted.

Because the script is most often made up of discreet episodes of direct address between performer and audience, rehearsal can often consist of independent rehearsals between actor and director, without the need for the ensemble work required of more interactive plays.

Summary of possible implications for re-presentation

Is there a distinct mode in the work being re-presented? Was there a 'pure' verbatim approach in the original presentation? If so, there appears very little chance of accessing the original interval recordings due to ethical sensitivities, so some method of replicating the depth of scrutiny of voice and gesture, required of the original actors, may need to be developed.

If the original work had a broader interpretive approach, with provision in the script for dramatisations and other theatrical devices like flashback reenactments, mime, song and choreography then there would appear to be more opportunity to explore interpretive or stylistic approaches in both acting and direction. Casting decisions will clearly need to reflect the skill sets required for the particular mode of VT.

1.2.5 Performance and Audience Reception

The last stage of the process of creating VT, includes the performance itself. Often for the first time the community of interviewees gather to appreciate the effect their words and experiences, presented collectively, can have as a complete theatrical presentation. They are able to witness how a wider audience are impacted by the thoughts and experiences they shared and this in turn can confirm and clarify for these participants what the work strived to achieve. For example, in his review of the opening night of *Parramatta Girls* in 2007, Bryce Hallet recounts that "...former inmates (of the borstal) joined the actors on stage for the curtain call, there were tears, smiles and slightly embarrassed bows; an extraordinary moment of life and art blurring and uniting as one". It is in these moments that VT claims a significance beyond artistry or entertainment, but rather a spirit of social awareness building and advocacy. On the same opening night the playwright Alana Valentine recalls one of the interviewees coming up to her and saying "you've given me back the twelve year old girl that was taken from me". (Oades 62) Ideally some amount of the generosity and courage that characterised the interviewing and gathering of source material is appreciable and reflected in the care, effort, respect and time required in preparing and presenting the final performance.

This ethos of reciprocity and connectivity with the audience is VT's distinctive measure of success and certainly most often overshadows any commercial incentives.

VT is often framed with a preshow introduction when a member of the cast or company explains the unique qualities of the work to the unfamiliar and gives thanks to the community that contributed to the play script. Also at the conclusion of the performance time for a forum for feedback from the audience will often be facilitated. This post show discussion is particularly important if the content of the performance has the potential to upset or distress audience members. Jeff Szusterman, director of the recent tour in 2013 of *Verbatim* and *Portraits*, called this debrief after performances a 'decompression' (Szusterman personal interview) period that allowed members of the audiences the chance to talk through disturbing and/or unresolved issues that the show had brought up. Experts in the fields of criminal justice and victim support were also invited to contribute to these forums and pass on information about professional support services if need arose.

It is common for VT to tour unconventional venues associated with the communities that a work relates to. Club rooms and community halls are often selected as a middle ground with the space to accommodate the work but also familiar enough to encourage the attendance of those unlikely to travel due to personal preferences or circumstances. Examples of VT leaving the conventional theatre spaces and reaching out to communities are *Verbatim*'s years of tirelessly touring around New Zealand prisons and my own experience performing *We'll Meet Again* in dozens of provincial RSA's and rest homes from one end of the South Island to the other. Staging in these cases needs to be transportable and flexible and as these environments are not necessarily managed or equipped in the way conventional theatre spaces are, effective communication between company and the hosts of these alternative venues is important.

Summary of possible implications for re-presentation

Promotion of the show can draw from previous show image collections. Using old press etc could be useful in explaining the work to possible new audiences or venues.

Consider carefully a preshow introduction that includes the conditions around the original work, as well as presenting any new intention. In this process of 'hosting' or acting as a compere for the work one can reflect the complexity and significance of re-presentation. An explanation of the history of the work may help audiences appreciate and connect with the work and feel they understand and trust the intention behind the re-presentation.

Recordings of the work performed, and certainly original interview material can be exceptionally useful for any re-presentations, they will inevitably be a significant influence on how a re-presentation is approached.

The fact the work will have had some sort of community associated with it originally is always going to be an asset to promotion of a re-presentation, and re-establishing support from these communities is a crucial step in establishing any authentic re-presentation.



Figure 7: Introducing the show



Figure 8: Audience Interaction 1994 and 2015

Section 2: Re-presentation of Verbatim Theatre

Anne Bogart, suggests that “theatre is born after something is fixed, decided upon and then repeated” implying that theatrical creation is in fact reliant on the act of repetition and the “necessary act of resurrection is when the real art is born” (Bogart 65). Although Bogart is referring to theatre in general her comment is particularly relevant to VT.

The first section of this thesis has included the investigation of processes involved in ‘fixing and deciding upon’ VT work, and identifying how VT actors and directors prepare patterns of movement and voice that most effectively present the lived experience of those interviewed. In this second section I explore beyond this first cycle of direct representation and study what possibilities arise when VT is ‘repeated’ or re-presented after periods of time and other contextual changes.

Revival or rehash, re-presentations have been a mainstay of theatrical traditions as far back as the Ancient Greeks. The reworking of Shakespeare is often seen as the measure of prestige for a theatre company, confirming creativity and credibility. Commercially speaking the constant restaging of hit musical theatre productions like *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Grease* by schools and community theatre groups through to multi-million dollar international productions by professional companies clearly illustrate that theatrical reruns, the refreshing of the familiar, can be sustainably successful either artistically or financially. Howard Sherman, a theatre advocate, producer and blogger suggests “perhaps ... classics should be celebrated [and re-presented], because they can often show the current generation what craft and talent in the form has looked like in the past, in order to inform the future” (Sherman 2012).

Re-presentations allow work to speak of and to unique circumstances in a new and often exciting way. After contextual shifts, reality and truth need to be renegotiated. Returning and re-examining older work is an indicator of theatre’s ability to respond, adapt, change and evolve. Peter Brook’s venerated 1970’s adaption of *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, with stiltwalkers

and spinning plates, a classic example of the significance of re-presentations in theatre's evolution. Along with aesthetic development, re-presentations can also allow for a re-examination of the shifting relationships within communities and between theatre makers, audiences and wider society.

This renegotiation of reality and truth is particularly pertinent in VT. The phenomenal succession of world wide re-presentations of *The Laramie Project*, hundreds every year since first being presented in 2000, attest to a degree of universality in the themes and experiences in VT. The narratives on one hand factual and specific seem to connect audience timelessly to aspects of the human condition.

Regarding VT and in particular 'Reminiscence' VT this research attempts to explore how a re-presentation of VT can act as a theatrical aide-mémoire, an aid to keeping memories alive through performance. Friends, families and communities share memories: they are a source of culture and history.

Memory, reality, and truth are at the heart of the "necessary act of resurrection" that Bogart believes "is when the real art is born".

2.1 Re-presentation in practice- *We'll Meet Again, again.*

The most significant component of my MA thesis is the re-presentation of the play *We'll Meet Again*. The original creation and performances of this play, and subsequent 26 show tour of the South Island, developed from a 'community study' for a third year Theatre Studies course at Otago University in 1994. Developed from interviews with war veterans at Montecillo Home⁶ in Dunedin, the production's original intention was to explore VT's potential in creating a theatrical event honouring a generation whose common experience was their involvement in World War 2.

2.1.1 We'll Meet Again- 1994

I and three other students Jesse Griffin, Ali McLeod and Greg Brooks, selected the home for returned and retired servicemen and women in

Mornington, Dunedin, as our 'community' of study. We met with a group of regulars 'up the Jack'n'Jill'-the home's clubroom and bar, for informal group reminiscence discussions and then carried out follow up interviews with individuals in their rooms. We did not record all these encounters, although one of the group did arrange a tape recorder on occasion. We visited weekly for 5 months. Following the interviews in theatre spaces back at university we workshopped the words and anecdotes that we had collected. In a somewhat instinctive response to what we felt most suited the age and expectations of our source community, we developed a style of performance intent on representing broadly some common experiences of the war generation, and using characteristics of variety or music hall traditions (such as the compere, comedy antics, popular period songs and dance numbers). Scenes were chronologically structured, covering growing up in the 1920's and 30's, surviving service in WW2, the return home, marriage, raising a family, growing older and finally residing at the veterans' home. The original show was created from amalgamating the experiences of 12 Monticello residents into four composite characters, a similar technique to that used in the creation of *Verbatim* and *Parramatta Girls*. The four characters Alexander Smith, Jean Cameron, Robert Wilson and Douglas Ledly, were in the first three cases Southland New Zealanders and then the last, as a counterpoint, was born and raised in Liverpool, England. The audience was lead through key events in each character's life. Friendships and partnership were established as the woven narratives of each character intersected at crucial moments. Moving rapidly from directly narrated reminiscence, in and out of re-enactments, with regular historical features signalled with songs and occasionally a montage of iconic images puppeted above the set, the show ran for just under an hour.

Originally the play was only intended to be presented (and assessed) at Monticello home and then once more to a slightly wider elderly community at the Dunedin RSA. However on the back of the positive feedback (Appendix 1) from these two performances, and with a recasting of Gemma Carroll in the role of Jean, funding was secured from the Regional Arts Council and the show was taken on a South Island tour of 26 provincial RSA and retirements communities from Invercargill to Greymouth.

To this day the whole experience remains a fundamental theatrical experience for all four performers, both for its success as an entertainment and as an example of theatre created in service of a community.

2.1.2 We'll Meet Again- 2015

For this research I wanted to create a theatrical process and performance that allowed me to direct, manage and evaluate a series of VT re-presentations, twenty years after the original production. I was looking in practice, for the effective ways a VT performance can have intentional and theatrical sustainability over a significant period of time. Interestingly, from a NZ cultural context, there were a number of coincidental social and cultural circumstances that seemed to suggest that this particular project was timely and relevant.

2014 was New Zealand's World War One centenary year- therefore there would be a considerably heightened interest for authentic war stories and other forms of commemoration. It occurred to me that this could be either a significant boost to promoting the show, or equally, a bane due to media saturation. Incongruously, at the same time the nation was revering the courage and service of the New Zealand military of one hundred years ago, the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association (RSA) as an organisation was losing membership and selling off venues up and down the country. Their core membership, the veteran community was almost gone. The RSA had been a significant contributor of audiences and venues for the original performances, and any changes in its fortune was likely to have impact on the success of the re-presentation.

The production was initiated with the following goals;

1. To report on my direction and production of a dramatically effective full length performance season demonstrating creative, dramaturgical and organisational competence. As part of this process I will use an action research model to describe, interpret and reflect on data gathered during each of the nine re-presentations of *We'll Meet Again*.
2. To test the arguments that VT re-presentation, if well managed, has the potential to sustain meaningful discourse around moral, social and

historical issues as well as “connect with an audience emotionally and intellectually, to empathetically inform and empower through authentic story”. (Anderson and Wilkinson 156) To do this I will test and evaluate practical ways of establishing again a potentially credible and intimate connection between new and original performers, audience communities and the real voices of those who contributed to the text itself.

3. To develop guidelines for re-presentation by combining suggestions from the study of VT processes (outlined throughout Section One) with the findings from the performance-based component of the research, the re-presentation of *We'll Meet Again*.

2.1.3 Re-presentation aims and preparation

In moving from the role of collaborator in the original production to director of the re-presentation, I felt uniquely positioned to immerse myself in this performance based research. The process of casting, rehearsing, producing and publicising the project was a careful navigation toward this aim. How do I, as initiator and director, drawing from a collection of my own twenty year old memories of the original production, connect and inspire a new group of performers and establish interest in community audiences that weren't directly involved in generation of the work?

One of the reasons why *We'll Meet Again* was suitable for re-presentation was because, while there were no formal copyright or performance rights issues, I was able to contact both Montecillo and those involved in the original project to gain a sense of permission to re-present the work, and in both cases the idea was fully endorsed. No physical script was available but I was able to transcribe from a video of an original performance. This video proved to be useful resource in a number of ways. A verbatim transcription of an interview with myself and the 1994 cast straight after the show, was a great discussion point in rehearsal (Appendix 2).

With respect to the availability of performers I originally considered ex-high school students or more open auditions in the wider community. However, because of my concurrent work with Toi Whakaari students this seemed a more likely avenue and proved to be a remarkably straight forward and successful choice in securing talent. I approached Jimmy O'Donovan (who played Douglas), Samuel Austin (who played Alex) and Georgia Pringle (who played Jean), all second year students, to participate in a read through which went particularly well. It transpired they were interested in the work and accepted the offer of participating in the project. I knew that Jack Barry, a third year Toi Whakaari student and an exceptional musician and singer, had an interest in VT and after being given the script he accepted my offer to play the role of Bert and complete the cast of characters. Having the possibility of working with such a willing and able group of student actors from Toi Whakaari was exceptionally fortuitous to the project. Their voluntary commitment of time and talent cannot be overstated.

Within the Toi student body finding someone for a management role proved more problematic. Although a final year management student, Jenna Kelly, aided in the early stages of the work, contacting hosts and developing promotional material, due to a prior commitment she was unable to continue in this role beyond the preliminary stages. I also approached an 18 year old Hutt Valley High School student, Ash Moor, about interning as a rehearsal and stage manager. She had demonstrated particular skill as a stage manager while at High School and due to her intention to apply for Toi Whakaari she jumped at the chance, proved to be a huge asset to the working culture in rehearsals, and confidently worked through various production challenges.

I was unable to find someone for the role of organisation and promotion of the tour so I undertook this myself (Appendix 3). This proved to be a considerable challenge but with perseverance I did manage to find a number of suitable venues in the northern and central suburbs of Wellington and along with most venues came the possible communities from which audiences could be found.

Retirement villages were relatively straightforward to arrange as they had a 'captive' audience and established protocols around visiting performances but community centres were a far less certain proposition. I felt however that broader community venues, by nature of their uncertainties, would allow for more interesting and variable research outcomes.

There was a distinct difference between promoting shows in and to retirement organisations than community centres, but the fact I offered the show free of charge was a significant factor in successful negotiations with both. I decided to follow in the common reminiscence VT practice of not charging to see the show, as was the case with the original.

I am however grateful for a research grant from Victoria University Grants Committee, a large portion of which went on building a robust and transportable set, able to be broken down and to fit in my stationwagon. The set was made from recycled cabinetry, a screen with a large box for a footing and a higher level for an actor, inlaid with images of generations of the actor's families and finished with a generous coating of shellac to create an antique quality. The incorporated portraits, proved an apt design feature and resonated with the actors as well as being often remarked upon by audience members.

..having my mum's picture on the set ... that was really cool.... to feel like that connection to the photo... this is what we want to create with the audience..... (Georgia Pringle, actor's reflection)

Having recruited all the actors from Toi had its complications however. Understandably restrained by four different student's timetables, finding agreeable times to rehearse was difficult to start with. The rehearsal period was about thirty hours in total, with four three hour rehearsals on Wednesday afternoons and four three hour rehearsals on Sunday afternoons throughout August. The rest of the time was made up of shorter rehearsal slots that could not always be fully attended.

Free spaces at Toi Whakaari are also scarce but we were able to use a variety of studios and hold two of the Sunday rehearsals at Newtown Community Centre. Due to these time and space restrictions some of the

earlier rehearsals were quite functionary. There were technical elements and quick costume and character changes in the performance that required attention. I also decided, due to restraints, it was an efficacious idea to follow quite closely in characterisation and performance style as in the original. One exception was the replacement of the opening song which had been written specifically for the original context. Its lyric was particular to the time and original processes and not a fit to the current circumstances and the shows re-presentation. The song that replaced it *I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire* (1941) wasn't purpose written but was chosen as an appropriate substitute in its sentiment and tone.

Three weeks into rehearsals and with trepidation I suggested that the cast could watch a recording of the show from 1994. All four actors, at the time saw watching the recording as a helpful reference and resource. Georgia reflected, from watching the recording of the original, that she could see what the audience response might be, for example "find the comedy behind the lines...hear lines that could potentially bring a laugh".

The actors opportunity to process in rehearsal the distinctly VT qualities of the work, like exploring complexity and authenticity in representation, was somewhat reduced in the urgency of a short rehearsal process. I attempted to share as much as possible of my memories of the people and process involved in the original work and contacted the original cast members asking them to post, via social media or email, their memories and any advice. The correspondences that followed were poignant and well received and added another layer of interconnectivity between the original production and the re-presentation.

In reflection on the unique challenges of work in re-presentation of a VT performance the actors made the following comments:

...it wasn't like now I am Jack acting as Bert ...I can only be my version of Bert but ...I was affected by who I was speaking for ... used Bert as a vehicle for my empathy ...(In VT) how can an actor be affected if not by another actor ? by an audience? how can this happen in rehearsal without an audience?
(Jack Barry, actor's reflection)

The rehearsal process for me as an actor in training was limiting – was the acting just a copycat of the original? – initially it had not been relevant that it was verbatim – I treated it like words in a script – as an actor I felt locked in that I could not make my own version”

(Jimmy O’Donovan, actor’s reflection)

I didn’t want to like impose something I had onto it that wouldn’t have been real for that person in that moment..... because it exists already.....

(Georgia Pringle, actor’s reflection)

(I found it a challenge) to play an older person, being real and being old with integrity and gravity...to differentiate between the verbatim parts and the re-enactments, figuring out how this show is different from any other show”

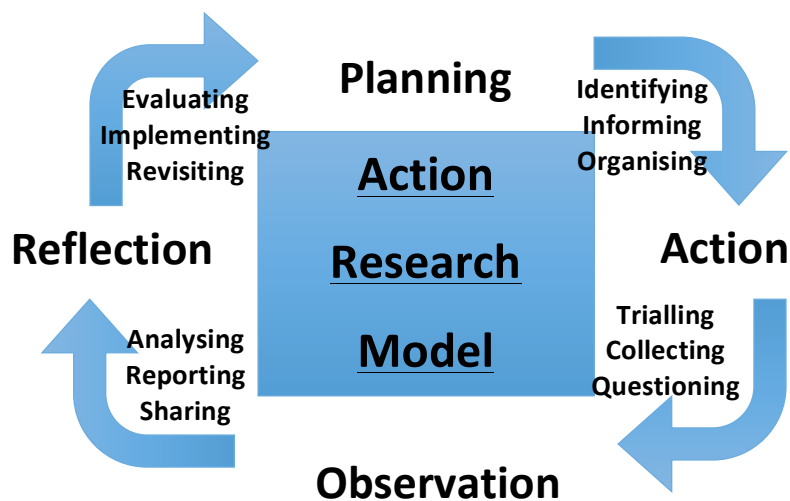
(Samuel Austin, actor’s reflection)

2.1.4 Reporting on the performance outcomes

We’ll Meet Again was performed nine times between the 24th of August and September 2nd 2015. The performances were generally mid morning or mid afternoon at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School, Newlands, Johnsonville and Newtown Community Centres and three large retirement communities and at 5 pm at the Anzac Lounge in Petone Working Men’s Club. The combined audience of approximately 400, were predominately middle aged or elderly (55-95 years) but a number of age diverse family and student groups also attended.

An action research model as shown in the diagram below has been loosely applied to organise and report on the outcomes of the performances. The report for each show broadly reflects the cycle of:

- planning of the performance at a particular venue with a particular audience
- the action of carrying out that particular performance
- observations, reflection and evaluation of main issues arising from the performance ...then back to planning for the next performance



2.1.5 Observation tools

I developed an Audience Information Sheet (Appendix 4) stating the Project Title as 'Re-presentation in Verbatim Theatre', the Principal Researcher as Tama Smith and briefly explaining the purpose of the research. I also developed a simple survey form as a means of getting some record of how the show impacted the audience and as a prompt for discussion after the show. I wrote statements in areas of particular interest. The survey form prompted members of the audience to choose how much they agreed with each of these four statements. The options available to indicate level of agreement were shown as:

Disagree	Slightly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
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There was also room beneath each statement for added comment. The four statements are listed on the next page with an abbreviated title for each statement to allow for easy reference in the show reports.

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

- referred to as the “**reminiscence**” statement

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

- referred to as the “**experience music**” statement

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

- referred to as the “**actor's representation**” statement

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

- referred to as the “**value as history**” statement

The survey form was backed by the ‘Informed Consent Form’ (Appendix 5) which allowed room to add a signature giving permission to include any feedback in research results. The survey forms were completed at the end of each show and were often filled in while members of the audience talked with myself, the actors and other audience members. Time to allow this to happen was crucial but was not always possible with some of the rest home routines. As a result the response rate varied from show to show. It was clear from both discussion and many thoughtful written comments that the audiences understood the purpose of the form, took completion of it seriously and gave their responses very sincere consideration. I have included and interpreted a number of audience comments from the survey forms within the reports from the shows themselves.

Overall 144 completed survey forms, including personal written comments, were collected from the estimated 400 audience members. This is a pleasingly high response rate and generated interesting data (Appendix 6). For the purpose of validation of the survey results I also collected comment and interpretation from other sources and in other ways.

Caroline Smith as observer sat at the side at each show with a copy of the script. She recorded on a 1 to 5 scale the strength of audience response at

the points of possible interest identified by me. Added comments of other notable responses from audience were also made on these observation scripts. These were things such as singing, smiling, clapping, laughing, tears frowns, and solemn expressions. They were recorded for subsequent examination and used to identify level and nature of engagement at particular points in the show.

In interviews with the actors, post the performances, I prompted their reflections on connections with the audience both during the performance and in their discussions with audience members after the show. I have added some actor and audience quotes to support findings from the performances.



Figure 9: Jimmy talks with audience after show.

We make new things upon the skeletons of the old. The more we can incorporate the old bones into the work, the more tensile strength will hold it up
(Anne Bogart, 65)



Figure 10: Todd's Death

2.2 Show Reports and Reflection

2.2.1 Show One: Toi Whakaari

The first performance was at 1pm on 25 August at Toi Whakaari as part of an annual Festival of New Work. This festival aims to showcase work in a phase of creation as opposed to a completed work. This also allows for constructive criticism with the aim of bettering the work. The work was presented four days prior to the first of the eight performances of the community tour to allow feedback to be acted on.

The venue was a large hall / studio space and the performance was staged in a corner in order to contain the stage area and direct audience attention. The audience of around one hundred was made up of an invited group of 10 to 12 year old school students and around forty adults including Toi Whakaari students, staff, visiting practitioners and performers who were there to contribute to the ongoing festival.

I welcomed the school group, explained briefly the history and context of the work and said that I was keen to hear from them after the show. However I did not do an introduction to the general audience or provide a program with an explanation of the play and song sheet.

There was an expectation that the Toi adult audience would be a critical audience and they did appear to be very serious most of time but much more positive than expected in their survey responses. Although the musical performance was not fault free, there was a very positive response to the 'music experience' statement where 81% of the 14 survey respondents recorded strongly agree or totally agree. As one respondent put it "Love old music like that. Such a time traveller".

A strong positive response was also evident for the 'value as history' question and 'actor's representation' questions where over 60% recorded a strong level of agreement.

In spite of the introduction, many of the children from the school group seemed a little bewildered by the shifts in and out of character. Some were

observed beginning to sing songs, so may have been familiar with them, but the actors didn't actively encourage them to continue and I had not yet prepared a song sheet for reference. The survey responses from the school children were enthusiastic (81% strongly or totally agree) for the 'music experience' question and all agreed that it was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life. They were observed enjoying the physical antics of characters and recognised some of the puppets. They maintained concentration to the end but seemed to miss many of the jokes based on verbal interactions.

The fact that this re-presentation was now being performed twenty years after the original – the Toi adult audience was of another generation and the school children even further removed from those who experienced World War Two (WW2) in some way. It is therefore understandable that the Toi response to the 'reminiscence' statement of the survey sheet included 18% for slightly disagree and only 45% for strongly and totally agree combined. The response to the 'reminiscence' and the 'actor's representation' statement for the school children showed an even greater level of disagreement. Around half of the class registered a disagree option for the reminiscence statement and a quarter for the actor's representation statement. As the teacher expressed it of his school students when explaining these relatively high number of disagree responses "it showed the kids' distance from that world".

Overall for the adult section of this audience this was not as strong a reminiscence experience for the re-presentation of *We'll Meet Again* as that I recall being expressed following the 1994 original presentations. However the following survey comments were among those that reflected a strong impact in terms of remembering relationships with older members of family.

- ✍ *Made me think about upcoming visit to Grandparents-who won't be around forever.*
- ✍ *Memories of whanau discussing what our grandparent went through while we looked through photos and albums.*
- ✍ *I realised why my grandfather raised my father in the way he did, and why my dad is the way he is. I never met my grandfather. Five stars!*

✍ The elders in my whanau were not old enough for war, however the entire show resonated true.

Following a short period of informal feedback with the school group and others in the Toi audience, the Director of the school and my practical mentor of my MA research, Christian Penny, suggested a workshop. He ran an inspired hour in full rehearsal. The actors were asked to run scenes and answer Christian's insightful and infamously critical questions. As I saw it this rehearsal, straight after the first performance, helped a great deal in finding more effective pacing and rhythm in show transitions as well as challenging the actors to find more playfulness, autonomy and clarity around the mode of performance (recall and enactment) and representation.

(Christian's workshop with us) gave me a framework to work off, gave me life as an actor, (focus on) who you speak on behalf of speaking for a captain, speaking on behalf of young captains, finding new things in the remaking of the play...

(Jimmy O'Donovan, actors reflection)

Although rating well in feedback, it seemed clear to everyone that the musical component and in particular the actors confidence around the songs needed to be worked on before the next performance. Also the audience's participation in this component of the show needed to be encouraged as much as possible, a programme with a song sheet was a priority issue for the tour. The fundamental importance of the music to aid the mood, humour, style and reminiscences became clear and the actors needed to find time to tighten up on these in the two or three days before the first 'community' performance.

We were all musicians and we needed somebody to lay down the rules but we all played around with leadership, threw in ideas, too many cooks in the kitchen, we needed to work on our own parts and then come...once we did that we were fine.

(Samuel Austin, actor's reflection)

It also became clear to me how important the hosting and framing of the show was. By this I mean the welcome of audience into the venue but also into the intention of the work. I had given the pre-show introduction role to one of the actors, but he didn't know the show or its intention sufficiently well to carry out this function confidently. I was encouraged by feedback to consider with more care the importance and potential of framing the work, with its legacy (whakapapa) and decided to undertake this role myself. However the actors introducing themselves and the characters they played, remained essential. VT and certainly reminiscence VT has an essential job of hosting the audience on a theatrical journey of personal memories and history. Furthermore with a re-presentation, there is an obvious purpose and advantage to doing the best job possible to explain the intention and history in the work both originally and as the re-presentation. The form has built in expectations to show due respect to those who the performance speaks on behalf of and help understand is being presented, represented and re-presented. In short it became clear that a crucial condition for a VT re-presentation to resonate as credible or believable to an audience, lay in the time taken to introduce the show. The possibility of tailoring each re-presentation to its audience and making as transparent as possible the intention and history of the work was a promising concept to further explore.

An illustration of this 'tailoring' relates to my awareness that a significant number of the Toi audience were Maori performers, due to perform themselves in the Festival, and the show certainly wasn't inclusive of a Maori perspective in New Zealand history. This could have been addressed with more awareness, consideration and care in the welcoming, speaking and hosting pre-show.

2.2.2 Show Two: Newlands Community Centre (NCC)

One significant aspect learnt from the previous show was the importance of how the show is introduced. I decided a two phase process would now introduce the show, I would explain the history of the work from amongst the audience and Jimmy, acting as compere, would introduce the show and the actors, in turn would introduce themselves. I had also produced a programme and in particular the song lyrics and the invitation to sing along would be referred to in pre-show discussion with audiences.

On the morning of the show, scheduled on a Friday at one pm, the company (myself, stage manager and the four actors) met at Toi Whakaari. The set and costumes were loaded into the car while the cast ran a rousing song and music rehearsal. This rehearsal went well in reassuring, reinforcing and settling the actors for the performance ahead. There was a sense of expectation and excitement in the company, this show would be the first chance for the actors to perform to a target audience of the elderly.

The administration at NCC had been contacted on numerous prior occasions and I felt confident that our arrival at the venue and set up would run smoothly. The venue was a modern, well maintained theatre space with a good size raised proscenium stage and good acoustics. The audience was made up of around thirty seniors most aged 50 to 80 years who had just had their regular Friday communal lunch provided by the community centre.

The new hosting procedures seemed to settle the audience into a comfortable beginning and they clapped along to the introductory song enthusiastically. The inclusion of the introduction process was acknowledged as being most successful and an important inclusion for subsequent shows. The programme and song sheet seemed to function well and were used to support the singing.

Enthusiasm, smiles, laughs grew throughout the performance. Tea, Anzac biscuits and tales of personal memories followed the performance with lots of keen communication with audience and enthusiasm for survey questions and talk with performers. Survey responses (from 50% of the audience) indicated

a strong positive response for the statements about the enjoyment of the musical experience, the actor's representation and particularly the value of the piece as history (82% totally agreed).

Again there was not such a strong positive agreement with the 'reminiscence' question. This was in spite of a much older audience than at Toi Whakaari. Interestingly though, there were comments which indicated the way the show had connected in different ways with different generations.

From a 34 year old a general reflection on life:

✍ I felt nostalgic, I was reminded of how life is precious and fragile.

From a 65 year old who connected with events from 1950 but also thought of her father:

✍ I could only relate to the placards and events from 1950 on. My father went to war but never talked about it.

From an 88 year old who had experienced war but in a different context:

✍ I grew up in England. My childhood memories of the war were of rationing, blackouts (against the bombing) and having to always carry a gas mask.

This reflection on the way different age groups respond differently to the show presents interesting considerations of intergenerational experiences and further investigation of audiences with variable age demographics.

This first performance appeared a positive and moving experience for audience and actors alike. The feeling of connection during the performance and discussions afterwards with the small but passionate audience had a profound impact on the actors and left them excited by what could be explored in the remaining performances. It was a model example of what was hoped for.

I didn't anticipate the level of response we got ...talking with people afterwards... I didn't realise what mattered to them...didn't realise what

the stories would mean to them. (For me) the show had a bit of a rebirth of what it meant to do it (VT).

(Jimmy O'Donovan, actor's reflection)

There was this one woman who came up to me who's husband had come back shell shocked, she went on and on, an amazing story and she started crying... and that was a pinnacle moment as far as an interaction goes.

(Samuel Austin, actor's reflection)

when I delivered the line "things had changed a lot since I've been away, like when I've come back from the war" to this woman and she nodded straight at me and it was just like... it hits you. You can give eye contact to somebody but then for them to acknowledge and be like "yeah you're right" ... she just confirmed what I was saying ... it's not just a line – we're having a conversation and I don't even know this woman.

(Georgia Pringle, actor's reflection)

There was also reinforced feeling of collegiality amongst actors and a strong drive and sense of purpose mixed with high spirits and kinship.

Cool I'm doing a show that's touring...massive shift for me...banter as a unit... inside jokes...collective energy... fun with my co-actors...taking the show to the people...actually going there...for them.

(Georgia Pringle, actor's reflection)



Figure 11: Jean shows off her new dress

2.2.3 Show Three: Petone Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association (RSA) at the Petone Working Mens' Club (PWMC)

The second showing, also on the first day of the community tour, was an evening showing at the Petone Working Mens' Club. This was an important performance for a number of reasons. Somewhat regretfully this was the only show that was hosted by and performed to an RSA audience. Initially I had been unsuccessful in making contact with an appropriate RSA administrator who would be prepared to host the show across the Wellington region. Fortunately I was able to pitch the show to Alison Sexton the president of the Lower Hutt RSA and she saw the potential of the show for the branch membership. I felt strongly this performance would be the closest representation context to the many original 1994 RSA performances. For me, to perform again with such an audience and receive a 'blessing' from this crucial community had been of utmost importance from the earliest stages of this current project.

This event was a regular Friday evening social meeting and it clearly had its own set of protocols. I was uncertain, as I suspect they were, of how we fitted in with that. The RSA venue itself was an Anzac memorial lounge adorned with many photos, remembrance plaques and a Roll of Honour. A performance space was set up at one end of the lounge with RSA people seated at tables at the opposite end of the space. Other audience members, principally invited by myself, were seated closer to the performance area.

The audience of around forty adults included RSA members and around ten drama teaching colleagues and friends. The age distribution of the twenty one survey respondents was about half from 40 to 69 years old and half older than 70 years.

The show began well - I introduced and talked about play and the actors introduced themselves with a great response to their specific regions of origin. There was enthusiastic clapping to the initial song and enthusiasm to all later songs, laughs and antics. This audience seemed to 'get' most of the jokes. However they became very solemn towards the end and intoned "We will remember them" with character Alex at the end. No other audience did this.

Immediately after the performance, a very appreciative response was voiced by an RSA official. Clearly in accordance with the established protocols of the RSA meeting, a list of significant historical war time events was read and with dimming of house lights and spot lighting of the roll of honour the Ode of Remembrance was again recited.

It was just a moving experience, seeing all the veterans there...seeing all that stuff around (the walls of the venue), was really intense afterwards...getting the Ode wrong was always scary, that was the place to not get it wrong and I didn't get it wrong.

(Samuel Austin, actor reflection)

I had the feeling that in some manner there was a degree of uncertainty about the connection between the RSA contingent of the audience and the performance. This could possibly relate to the tone and appropriateness of theatre show, verbatim or not, being perceived as unsuitable or inadequately 'serious' for remembrance.

The survey responses for all questions except that about the value of history were somewhat reserved and less enthusiastic than for other previous groups – were they uncertain that a group of young actors could pay due tribute in this way to returned war and service people? Some of the comments hint at that:

- ✍ *The songs always stir emotions-though I feel the length of time covered made it hard to emphasise with the fast moving scenes, songs and styles.~82 year old*
- ✍ *Covered most of my life.~86 year old*
- ✍ *My father fought in Northern France and was the only one to survive when his trench was blown up, he had a powerful personality and though he rarely spoke of his experiences there were huge emotions, the same power of suppressed emotion burst out of us all on V.E day.~82 year old*
- ✍ *My uncles and grandparents never spoke of the war, but some of the songs were ones they sang.~54 year old*
- ✍ *More songs, less drama.~82 year old*

Although again related to how the show is framed and introduced, a tentative hypothesis about careful consideration of whether there are other issues, in perception and practice, that might impact on a re-presentation needs to be investigated. This is especially if the audience of the re-presentation is strongly and emotively connected to the community the show represents, but where times have now changed with that community such as in the case of the RSA organisation and its members.

I got a sense of... what it means to hold a lifetime of stories... and inability to share your joys and passions with people ... made me sad
(Jimmy O'Donovan, actor's reflection)

I loved acting in the re-enactments ... it was fun... I can do that stuff ...the parts I found hard were when I woke up to that empathy for other people... who do I speak for? ... all those guys who came back to no-one? ... people who didn't speak about the war ? I was always scared that I was going to fuck it up ... wanted to pay respect but not cry..... hated those bits... I was so nervous... but that fear is what I crave for in performance...I was affected by who I was speaking for...that was a real big point for me...
(Jack Barry, actor's reflection)



Figure 12: Depression Blues song and dance number

2.2.4 Show Four: Johnsonville Community Centre Hall (JCC)

I had booked the large sports hall at Johnsonville Community Centre (JCC) as the only space large enough to stage the show. Promotion of the show at two o'clock on a Saturday afternoon seemed problematic and I was particularly anxious and uncertain as to whether anyone would turn up. My mother, a long time resident of the Johnsonville area was able to pitch this show to many seniors' groups connected to JCC as well as the few remaining members of the local RSA who now met informally at a local club. Many placards had been made and displayed and fliers handed out. Concern about audience numbers dissipated with a steady stream of audience arriving while we were setting up at one end of the hall where we constructed the set. The lack of any stage platform left actors on floor level. We served tea and Anzac biscuits as people arrived and a particularly jovial chatty atmosphere prevailed. There were around forty people including four children.

I again introduced the play and talked about the purpose of the re-presentation and the original interview process and the actors introduced themselves, before introducing the people they represented. The audience seemed to have already taken on board the nature and purpose of the show and their role both in my research and in support of young acting student's development. Many seemed to have made a decision to come along based on their interest, curiosity and inclination to support those particular aspects of the show. This impression grew with discussion between myself, the actors and the audience after the show and the written responses to the survey imply these focusses in the audience experiences.

👁 I was holding back tears for most of the performance. It reminded me of my beloved Grandparents. My grandmother was a nurse and grandfather managed logistics of getting supplies to the frontline. My Grandfather talked very little of his war experiences so I am thankful to learn about other's experiences so I can understand what happened to him. ~44 year old

- ✍ *In the scale of time W.W.2 was yesterday, W.W.1 was the day before. The last W.W.1 veteran has only been dead a few years and my mother was a V.A.D in U.K. 1916-1919.~87 year old*
- ✍ *This form of intergenerational community connection informs, heals and bonds us, with all of our strengths and flaws recorded. The actors successfully paid tribute to the lives of the persons they were honouring.~44 year old*
- ✍ *The characters all came to life and I loved the twist of how they'd meet each other. Goes with the saying it's a small world. An amazingly simple way to allow the audience to become part of the characters lives and to feel the emotions of the time. ~64 year old*
- ✍ *Great way to bring history alive. Bring play to schools to let students hear the 'real' history.~57 year old*
- ✍ *I hope this performance will be done again and again around the North Island or as far as possible. Real talent. Brings a smile and a tear.~70 year old*

Twenty eight survey sheets were completed (nearly three quarters of the audience) with over two thirds of the respondents older than seventy years. Again there was less certainty around the 'reminiscence' statement, but very strong positive response of almost 100% strongly agreeing or totally agreeing, about all other aspects of show. We were all very pleased with the success of the performance in a community based setting very different from the original performances twenty years ago and where the audience was not a captured one as in the original presentations. The expressions of appreciation and perceived value of the show were most heartening.

On reflection I feel this show was a successful example of how it is possible to promote a VT re-presentation to a general audience. The sense that the audience appreciated that there was rationale beyond simple entertainment was very satisfying. I suggest that there are qualities inherent in the form, such as intergenerational exchange, that can widen the appeal and deepen the impact of the work. How the expression of these qualities can be included in the promotion of the show is an interesting area of further consideration. It

is certainly another consideration for inclusion in what has become the fundamentally important pre-show introduction processes.

The venue was on first appearance rather theatrically inappropriate. A generic hall more suitable to sporting activities. However the fact the show was so well received by the audience and the actors recall it as a particularly enjoyable show is a commendation to the show's robustness and adaptability.



Figure 13: More singing with Icon puppets behind.

2.2.5 Shows Five and Six: Newtown Community Centre

This community centre was like the home base of sorts for the show – we had rehearsed there and it is where I live and where the actors study. We had decided to do two shows there and were very comfortable with all aspects of stage and venue, it was quaint and inviting. By this stage of the tour we felt confident that we were able to connect with community groups of older people and that people would turn up. Newtown was also my family Community Centre – my children had performed here with child care groups. The administration of the centre had been particularly interested and supportive of the show and had helped a great deal with advice and contacts in the organisation stages of the process. I had promoted the shows through my own Facebook page and a good number of people had registered their intention to come to either one of the two performances on Sunday afternoon or evening.

The audiences at both the afternoon and evening shows were very different from those at previous community centres and introduced a whole new element into the potential value of the performance. The afternoon audience was of around forty included mostly adults around 40 years old, around fifteen of their children aged from around four to ten and a small group of seniors from one of the rest homes and the evening was around thirty 30-45 year olds and ten mid teens and young adults. These audiences were compliant– they listened carefully to my introduction, looked at the song lyrics when told of them on the programme sheet. They were tentative in their responses in the beginning but once the enactments began and the style became clearer the physical antics and singing left adults smiling and children giggling. From ten to fifteen minutes in they were won over and remained very attentive and entertained for the rest of the show

More specifically the kids seemed amazed and all laughed and smiled at the sports antics and some kids really picked up on the father and son scene. The re-enactments were a real favourite with this audience, particularly the kids. My own six year son said that the British pilot's re-enactment of his early flying experience was his favourite part of the show. Other strongly positive

responses were to the icon puppets and there were many instances of discussion with kids, on parent's knees, explaining references or activities from a 'by gone era' and part of the show. One 42 year old mum explained in her survey response "Really was fantastic. Jacson (8) said 'It paints a picture in your mind of what it was like'".

This opportunity for parents to act as guides to the historical content of the show was an exciting thing to witness. This chaperoning between the generations is a exciting outcome for this research as I feel it indicates a new dimension to how the show could function as an intergenerational aid. The importance of the balancing of light and playful moments, that are full of life and relatable for younger audiences with the more solemn and period specificity was also illustrated clearly by the Newtown audiences.

The whole audience was solemn and watchful towards the end of the play as the characters aged and talked of death. However the mood changed as they joined in with the last song 'We'll Meet Again' and then clapped and clapped. Even the rather solemn males at the back of the evening show seemed animated and appreciative at this point. There had been a concern from actors and myself that the slower narrative pace towards the end of the show might cause the audience to lose interest. However it seemed to remain captivating for both the adults, teens and children.

The forty one survey responses for the statement about 'music experience' and 'value as history' were all agree or stronger but not quite as strong as for previous older community groups. However disagreement responses for the reminiscence statement were almost as strong as that for the school children at Toi. Over one third of the survey responses disagreed with the statement 'I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play'. But this seemed in no way to reflect the way that the audience connected emotionally with the lives being represented by the actors as many comments some listed here convey.

🐼 *The songs were beautiful and heartfelt, and accentuated the times that were being portrayed. Also helped the audience connect/be more directly involved. Convincing, funny, heart-warming performances. I felt*

emotionally invested and it was lovely how all their individual stories intertwined. ~21 year old

- 👁️ My grandma was born in 1919 and is most likely to pass away within the next weeks. I am not going to see her again but I felt a part of her with me while watching this piece. ~30 year old*
- 👁️ I had to keep reminding myself that it was actual words of actual people, not just a script. It really made the characters immediately relatable. ~42 year old*
- 👁️ Knowing that the characters were based on real peoples stories added to the performance. ~43 year old*
- 👁️ The fact that these were NZ stories really made it feel close to home for me. My Grandfathers didn't fight; one was ill and the other was too young and the war ended only a week before he would have been old enough. I liked the way you layered everything and gave each story equal weight. It brought those characters to life quite vividly, and I felt really privileged to learn their stories. ~23 year old*

The sentiment in the last of comments suggests how important cultural specificity is in the way audiences connect with the show. The show presents larger world events, like the depression in the 30's and the Second World war but predominately from the New Zealand perspective. Even the English character in his later years emigrates to New Zealand and therefore allows an outsider perspective on New Zealand's cultural idiosyncrasies.

These performances and the warm and enthusiastic responses from audiences of various ages reinforces the sense that the show offers the opportunity for sharing, self-reflection and empathy across generational gaps. The work's specificity around events and cultural idioms seems to create the potential of knowledge and experience sharing beyond the specific experiences in the character's narratives. Arguably the nature of VT and its modelling of reminiscence and interest in 'ordinary' experience allows each member of the audience to reflect on the value of sharing and what wonder can be hidden in the 'ordinary' people around them.

The suggestion that VT can work in a pedagogical context is of particular interest to me as an educator. The strong advocacy of this show as bringing history to life and actually triggering exchange between old and young seems really promising.



Figure 14: Alex and Jean Dance

2.2.6 Show Seven: Village in the Park Retirement Community

In organisation for the rest home scenario it was critical to discuss with the activity person at the home such things as the nature of the play, the performance requirements, the suitable audience age and ability range, refreshment facilities and protocols, the way the event would be promoted and the most suitable timing of the event to allow for discussion/feedback afterwards. We got a lot of things right for this show but had a few problems finding and providing drinks beforehand and the venue was a walk through area that we had to close off to provide a theatre space.

Many arrived early so again they became part of discussion and got tea and Anzac biscuits together before show and were part of the setting up of the scenery - this did promote a sense of togetherness between actors and audience. The thankful audience of around thirty five residents showed considerable enthusiasm before and throughout all parts of the show. Furthermore the actors were in command now and really comfortable with their roles – they did a really good job.

Alas because of the need of residents to leave to get to lunch discussion time and survey completing were limited. Survey forms were completed by only 11 of the residents most of whom were over 80 years old. All showed agree or stronger response to all questions even the reminiscence one. Responses to the questions about the music, actor's representation and value as history were all strongly or totally agree with almost 90% totally agreeing that the show was 'an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life'. There were some interesting comments from the small number of respondents but for the first time we became aware that writing itself was a challenge for some of the older residents.

- ✍ *Excellent to see Victoria is keeping up with the arts to a high degree.~87 year old*
- ✍ *Too close to truth for our family.~84 year old*
- ✍ *I come from England. During the war I lived in london and worked for the government. I lived through the Blitz and married in 1943 when my husband then left to serve in North Africa, Italy and Egypt.~93 year old*

👉 *Especially enjoyed when they were old at the veterans home, loved Robert's grumpiness and directness.~51 year old*

Another really strong aspect of connectedness with these audiences is that the interviewees of the original piece ended their lives in a rest home. This was not a factor with previous re-presentation audiences, in community centres, Toi Whakaari and the RSA show but is a potential link with future audiences over and beyond the earlier war years.

A fundamental component of VT and in particular reminiscence VT is post show discussion with the audience. If this is to occur in re-presentations one needs to ensure time and the atmosphere is conducive to this happening. This can have an impact on scheduling, booking arrangements, venue configuration and audience size

More intimate in the theatre like Newlands...gives a sense of empowerment...physically going into their spaces...Lovely to be playing on there home turf...going to them and reaching out, not only stories but physically reaching out, going into their space, making them feel at home, as comfortable as they can

(Jimmy O'Donovan, actor's reflection)

Because I drive past the Village in the Park so often, I've always thought it looks bad in there, dingy as hell, now that I know people who live there its totally changed my perspective.

(Samuel Austin, actor's reflection)

2.2.7 Show Eight: Rita Angus Retirement Community

Unfortunately communications with this rest home were more of a challenge. The resulting space for performance was an open corridor area with people travelling through. Some people arrived early but tea, biscuits and talk were not an option here. There were 36 seniors most of whom were over 80 years old. There were only two males, by far the fewest of any audience. Many elderly and apparently quite unwell residents were placed in the front row in armchair beds.

Actors were now comfortable enough to cope with the age and fragility of the audience. After the show a comment from one of the actors was “I felt I was performing to people for whom this might be the last thing they will remember....”. A number in the front row ‘slept’ during most of the performance and many seemed not to have understood the references or pick up on elements of humour in the re-enactments. Fortunately a small core of very responsive and great singers at the centre second and third rows helped lift the show. Some residents were keen to talk with the actors following the show. Most of the survey respondents were over 80 years old and almost all the responses were agree to totally agree, even to the question about reminiscence. Clearly very many had difficulty writing so comments were limited.

- 👉 *I was evacuated to Inverness during the war.~88 year old*
- 👉 *Reminded me of time on Guadalcanal. Marched to some of them (the songs).~93 yrs*
- 👉 *Brought back a lot of memories, sad and happy.~89 yrs*

This performance was to a ‘traditional’ audience, in the sense that a great number of the original shows were to elderly in residential care conditions. The similarity in warmth of reception and sincerity in feedback suggested to me that the re-presentation was successful in resonating with new audiences.

The cast was clearly exhausted both physically and emotionally after this performance, the intensity of touring seemingly catching up on us. This

exhaustion possibly created a degree of sensitivity evident in Jack's reflection a week or so later.

One lady in particular...obviously suffering...hard look on her face but her eyes... I'll never forget. First strum of the guitar and I looked up and.....her eyes - so much inner life... couldn't talk and bed ridden but so alive ... someone's last performance?...

(Jack Barry, actor's reflection)



Figure 15: Sonny looking for a Home.

2.2.8 Show Nine: Malvina Major Retirement Community

This final show was presented to an audience of around eighty residents most older than 75 years and twenty staff and family. While this was the largest audiences for one show the sense in the cast was one of enthusiasm and willingness to finish the work.

There was no mistake about the appropriate members of the audiences this time, the very competent activities officer had chosen well, and the administrative staff had successfully promoted the show to the most appropriate residences in the vast community. Many of the residents of this large complex moved with walking frames, and had to travel substantial distances to reach the venue. They parked their walking aids along the walls of the large space.

The venue was a large social lounge. Effort had been made to set the space up specifically for our performance. There were many rows of rather bulky armchairs leaving little room to manoeuvre. The set was installed in space left available at one end of the room.

This was an attentive and apparently appreciative audience with noticable response to songs, reenactments, humour and the puppeting of iconic NZ images. Clapping and singing were particularly noticable.

To conclude the show, I took the opportunity to pay tribute to the audience, cast and crew. This seemed to be received well and triggered members of the audience to stand and speak as well. Unfortunately the combinations of the tributes, the need for the residents to make their way back across the complex for lunch and the awkwardness of the seating arrangements meant that after show discussion and completion of the survey form were limited.

In spite of this there were a number of clear reminiscence responses. One staff member who had actually worked at Montecillo took the chance to speak to everyone of her fond memories. As a resident with connections to Dunedin, she also wrote in the feed back.

👉 I came from Dunedin and Montecillo was known from childhood in Mornington. A dear friend lived in the new one in St.Kilda.~86 year old.

At least two veterans with long service careers were reported to have greatly valued the opportunity to talk and be listened to about their experiences and how their lives were reflected in the work. All of the twelve survey respondents agreed with the 'reminiscence' statement.

The audience's appreciation for the show was also clearly evident in their strong or total agreement with the other three survey statements and even more specifically in the written feedback.

- ✍ *A thoroughly enjoyable and professional performance, good elements of humour too. The performers obviously gave it their all. ~75 year old*
- ✍ *Enjoyed it hugely-Well done, come again! ~70 year old*

There continued to be a challenge for the performers to realise the shifts in things like age and where they could position their performance to best represent the characters as they moved through their lives. It is worth adding that over the last third of the tour audiences had become exclusively elderly residential communities. Considerations around life span, elder care, and mortality seemed to influence the performances and affect the actors work. Encapsulating this Jack reflected "I couldn't help but feel this would be the last thing some of these people would ever really remember".

2.3 Summary and Reflections on Re-presentations.

My first performance aim was to produce and direct a season of the show *We'll Meet Again* and demonstrate creative, dramaturgical and organisational competence in doing so.

To achieve this aim I was fortunate enough to:

- Have access to a video of the original performance from which I was able to transcribe, albeit a time consuming exercise, a useable script.
- Have access to facilities at Toi Whakaari for casting and rehearsals.
- Be able to recruit from a body of Toi Whakaari acting students with a skill set appropriate to the show.
- Have the support and mentorship, for both myself and the actors, of Christian Penny, Director of Toi Whakaari.
- Establish access to potentially suitable community venues, rest homes and an RSA lounge as well as a range of audiences over a short period at the end of August 2015.

Following casting and a regrettably short rehearsal period I organised the show to be performed in eight venues and with nine significantly different audiences. The size and scope of the show season grew well beyond my initial expectations.

I used an action research model to describe the cycles of planning, performance, observations and reflections following each of the nine performances. I reported on these under each of the shows. From the observed and expressed audience responses, interactions between the cast and audiences and the survey responses, I believe the tour of *We'll Meet Again* was most successful. It demonstrated creative, dramaturgical and organisational competence in direction and production, was an acknowledgement of the considerable talents and generosity of the cast and responsiveness and enthusiasm of the audiences.

The special features of the show such as the historical re-enactments and the incorporation of songs, were at times a challenge for the actors as they rapidly

switched from the direct story telling of an older person to a younger person involved in antics at a younger stage of their life. However the style integrated well with the overall performance and was also clearly appreciated by the audience with many positive responses. In the 144 survey responses, from a total audience of around 400 all agreed and almost all strongly or totally agreed that 'the choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience' and 'enjoyment of the play and that the show was an interesting and enjoyable way to bring history to life'.

However, this was not just any show. It was a VT re-presentation, and I had two questions specifically related to this aspect of the show. In particular I aimed to evaluate the show's ability to connect with an audience emotionally and intellectually and to empathetically inform and empower through authentic story. Social issues particularly related to post war life and eventually rest home life, personal and wider historical issues were prevalent topics of discussion after the shows as were the different discourses between different generations in the audiences at the community shows. From these discussions and the many comments to and by actors and on survey sheets, the shows clearly connected with the audiences emotionally and intellectually through stories they described as 'ringing true'. Again all survey respondents agreed and most strongly or totally agreed that 'the actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally'. However the audiences, particularly younger members, were less certain that 'I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play' with around one tenth of the overall responses disagreeing with this statement. In spite of this I believe there is ample evidence to support my first re-presentation contentions that it had both reignited the discourse around the original production and connected with the audience emotionally and intellectually to empathetically inform and empower through authentic story (Appendix 7).

My second re-presentation question was to investigate the way in which the process of re-presentation might take into account the implications of ever-growing distance between those involved in the re-presentation and the original interviewees. Re-presentation of any play presents initial challenges

for all elements of production, direction and theatrical processes. Decisions need to be made about what elements of the original will be/can be retained and/or modified. This is arguably more critical in VT re-presentation in order to maintain the connection with and critical integrity of the original interviewees' testimony. Initially the connection between the re-presentation actors and the original interviewees for *We'll Meet Again* was distant. The significance of performing in a VT re-presentation was for them at first bewildering and unclear. However it didn't remain so.

For the actors the real connections and significance of this VT re-presentation came with the performances before an audience for whom the show was designed. As they reported following the Newlands Community Centre show all the actors were profoundly moved by the first performance with the realisation that these stories were not just lines but conversations with audience members. They didn't anticipate the level and depth of audience response, didn't realise it mattered to individuals or realise what the story would mean to them. This was a realisation of 'what it meant to do VT'. The stories had not been collected by the re-presenters. However the re-presentation experiences recorded by both actors and audience were similar to those recorded by the interviewers, script writers and actors, myself included, of the original performances.

This work is about community, found in the audience. The story is only partly ours. It is really theirs. We helped it to be told but are really instruments. We heard some life changing stories during the gathering of stories and writing process. We heard equally moving moments while on tour. *(Greg Brooks, personal correspondence)*

So there are channels that allow navigation over the growing distance in time between the original interviewees and those involved in the re-presentation. These channels can be navigated through the memories of the interviewers, creators and performers in the original but most of all through the audiences at every show. The audience may not be of the same generation as the interviewees but comments from all shows, especially those made to the actors themselves, provide evidence that the stories of the interviewees

continue to provoke memories of family, ancestors and/or historical events themselves with these new generation audiences (Appendix 7).

2.4 Guidelines for Re-presentation of VT

Both the examination of the processes of development of an original VT presentation and evaluation of the re-presentation performances of *We'll Meet Again* have allowed the development of a set of guidelines for theatre practitioners and arts educators interested in VT re-presentation. They hold potential value in demystifying, encouraging, supporting and providing practical information on the issues that need to be considered when embarking on any re-presentation of VT.

I present these guidelines in four categories of recommendation as a way of summarising the interconnected and varied factors that are aimed at enhancing VT production, direction, performance and audience involvement.

Consider the original production and scrutinize characteristics in the way the work was constructed and presented.

- The relationship between the intention of the original and re-presentation is a critical comparison; try to be as informed as possible about the conditions surrounding the origin of the work, how and why it was conceived.
- Attempt to find answers about permission and accessibility, from informal blessings to sourcing performance rights. Also consider any possible questions about appropriation on personal or cultural grounds in re-presentation of VT.
- Look at any record (written, video, digital) of the work and search for indications of the original work's preparation, processes and practices.
- Define what relationships may or may not need to be established, respected, or maintained to add credibility and authenticity to the re-presentation in the current conditions.

- Be interested in new questions arising from re-presentations and what they say about shifts in matters of context, such as time, culture, geography and politics that were central to the work previously.

Examine and select possible VT ‘modes’ and ‘style’ for the re-presentation, and explore any implications that may arise due to choices made.

- A mode can refer to work with rigorous attention to accuracy around gesture and voice, a psychological realism or ‘pure’ VT intent. The ‘headphone’ work of Recorded Delivery and Talking House is one good example of a mode
OR it can refer to a more sociological realism or ‘community’ VT intent, with tropes common in ‘reminiscence’ VT, such as a compere, comedy, and composite characters.
- A style refers to the theatrical and technological devices used in presenting the VT material. Period or atmospheric music, still and/or moving projection, the dynamics of direct address, narration and enactment are all stylistic concerns.
- Be interested in how mode and styles of VT originated and how and why they are developing, adapting or evolving.

Define the roles in the re-presentation, i.e. director, performer or member of the audience and wider community.

- **Directors** will need to be as informed as possible about the peculiarities of VT and able to be an effective spokesperson for the work and VT as a theatrical form. They need to be interested in, decisive about, and committed to the integrity of the re-presentation and hold some accountability for casting, staging and theatrical choices. They need to establish and maintain a rehearsal culture that reflects to some degree the qualities and intention in the work.
- **Performers** will need a grounding in the peculiarities of VT, mainly pertaining to the integrity or credibility of the

representation of their role(s). They will need a dynamic understanding of specificity of voice and gesture and how posture and movement can display and reveal character. They will need, beyond their representation of characters, to be engaging to the audiences- charming, charismatic, and sincere depending on the tone and mode of the re-presentation. They need to be observant, attentive and adaptable in their 'actorly processes'.

- **Audiences** will need to be invited and encouraged to connect (and in some special cases re-connect) with the re-presentation. For some audience members a re-presentation will serve to inform or build awareness of the central themes or events of the work, however a true measure of the success of the re-presentation will rest in how the work is received by audiences with direct and indirect experiences of the central themes and events, who will best validate its credibility.

Frame and explain work in preshow introductions and postshow discussions.

- Allow the audience understanding of the history, legacy or Whakapapa of the work. Who was involved in development and presentation processes from original performance to re-presentation? What was the work intending to say or show, then and now? How was it received? What has changed in and around the work and what hasn't? Where was the work created and how was it staged? Imparting this contextual information will enrich the experience for audiences and possibly create new connectivity, with retrospection on historical, geographical and/or cultural reference points.
- Explore the opportunities in the welcoming of audience to the work. Test different ways a show can be introduced and framed. Plan and adjust initial speeches and moments for differences in audiences. Early welcoming interaction 'around' the show itself,

and a little information about how and why the work was originally created can generate trust and ease in an audience.

- Promote a post show discussion as it is a significant opportunity to debrief and further inform the audience of the intentions behind the original production and also the re-presentation. Where possible invite people from outside the cast, with appropriate expertise and experience to help work through any issues the show may have raised for audiences. These post show debriefs, if well managed, can be a profound additional experience for actors and audiences and serve in evaluation of the work.

Section Three: Conclusion

My primary aim is that this work informs, encourages and supports others, particularly those involved in theatre education, embarking on their own creative work in Verbatim Theatre. To achieve this I first review and answer questions about VT evolution and processes within an international and historical context but with a focus on the nature of developments in Australasia and the contributions made by NZ and Australian practitioners. I report on the conclusions of this section of the work in 3.1 VT Evolution and 3.2 VT Processes and Practices.

My second aim is to provide evidence that re-presentation of VT, if well managed, has the potential to sustain meaningful discourse around moral, social and historical issues, to reignite the discourse around the original production and “to connect with an audience emotionally and intellectually, to empathetically inform and empower through authentic story” (Anderson and Wilkinson 156). In addition I aim to identify key factors in the form of guidelines to support and advocate for future re-presentations in educational contexts as well as community theatres and by professional companies.

In order to meet these re-presentation aims I implemented a performance based research project during late August 2015. In doing so I produced and evaluated a nine performance season of re-presentations of the VT play *We’ll Meet Again*. I had been involved in creating and touring this play in 1994. I report on the conclusions from this performance work in 3.3 Re-presentation of Verbatim Theatre.

In 3.4 Reflections, Discussion and Moving Forward, the final section of this Conclusion, I reflect on the some aspects of this work and consider further directions in work related to Verbatim Theatre particularly in the New Zealand context.

3.1 VT Evolution

My review of the now extensive worldwide literature on and about VT evolution has revealed vitality and diversity of practice and emerging breadth and depth of scholarship in VT development in both Australia and New Zealand from the early 1990's onwards. A review of the Australian literature, including reports of many performed plays, leads to the conclusion that Australian VT has developed in a wide variety of techniques and explored diverse historical, cultural and social themes, many of them distinctly Australian. Particular strengths lie in the talented and accomplished academic and practitioner community and in the depth and breadth of scholarship which includes practical support such as guidelines and workshops for the drama education communities. Notable recent developments are the merging of scholarship, research and VT play creation in the form of performance ethnographies and the telling of stories of indigenous Australian communities.

The close relationship between academics and theatre practitioners (often the same people) is also evident in New Zealand. A core group of practitioners from the University of Otago Theatre Studies department with their focus on 'practice as research' and collaboration with local theatre groups have created a number of VT plays and introduced related discussion in international academic forums. A special contribution has been in-depth discussion of approaches to their creation of the NZ specific VT dealing with social and potentially therapeutic issues, often of a sensitive nature, using the 'head phone / copy gesture' technique.

While further work would be needed to make the overview of evolution more comprehensive in itself, I believe it provides valuable information and direction to the key resources currently available to support practitioners, educators, and students as both a background for further VT study and/or creation possibilities.

3.2 VT Processes and Practices.

Much of value for the VT practitioner or potential practitioner is revealed in the exploration of the processes involved and the relationships between those giving testimony, the mediators of the testimony (producers, interviewers, writers, directors, performers), and audiences. Work in this section of the thesis suggests that creation of VT can often be a lengthy and meticulous process and supports the view that “the key to our work is the painstaking use of primary source material-painstaking, protracted and scrupulous use of historical evidence” (Paget 318). The nature of these interdependent and interrelated VT processes is revealed in the thesis section under the headings: intentions and purposes, the process of gathering of source material, shaping of material into a performance text, directing, acting and rehearsal techniques and performance and audience reception.

The wealth of detail supported both in the literature reports from practitioners and interview responses from NZ practitioners reveals their passion and conviction matched with the complexity, diversity and innovation in their approaches to theatrical presentation and sound ethical and moral consideration.

....but it's really hard work to perform, people really aren't going to do it because its sensationalist, they're only going to do it really if they are committed from a social perspective to social change that those plays can effect
(Harcourt ,personal interview)

3.3 Re-presentation of Verbatim Theatre

The original intention of the re-presentations of the VT play *We'll Meet Again* was that it be a stand alone component for assessment towards Master of Arts. Subsequently, however, to include it in the thesis as a re-presentation case study, research questions about the performance and evaluation of the shows were developed. Such questions relate to the potential of re-presentation to sustain meaningful discourse, to reignite the discourse around the original production and to connect with an audience and inform through authentic story.

A central argument of the re-presentation component is that, when carefully considered and well-informed, re-presentations beyond the original context and conditions are of benefit for broadening further the impact, appeal and value of the work. I believe that all aspects of these re-presentations such as initial considerations, informed decision-making and execution of production, management direction and performance processes combined with all the performance evaluation evidence gathered, described and analysed from audience and actors, fully support this central argument.

Some further conclusions about the particular value and impact of the work are noteworthy. In preparing for the shows I decided to extend the kind of venue and nature of anticipated audience to community centres and hence a much wider age demographic than for the original 1994 shows. From early discussion and experimentation I discovered the vital importance of tailoring the introduction, both in tone and content, to explain and frame the work and its legacy. This was done for all shows in order to take account of the nature and composition of a new audience and enhance connectivity with them.

A notable and significant consequence of the diversity of new audiences for *We'll Meet Again* was the occurrence of frequent intergenerational and within-generational communication. Post-performance discussion, powerful written testimony on the survey forms and analysis of survey results, indicated that the direct connection with the war generation for the younger generations may now be through fathers and grandfathers rather than the direct memories which had connected original audiences to the work.

I was holding back tears for most of the performance. It reminded me of my beloved Grandparents. My grandmother was a nurse and grandfather managed logistics of getting supplies to the frontline. My Grandfather talked very little of his war experiences so I am thankful to learn about other's experiences so I can understand what happened to him
~ written comment from a 44 year old at JCC

This provides clear evidence and example of the resultant broadened appeal of the work and in fact supports the idea that the play enabled new and younger audiences to connect meaningfully within a sincere context with the war generation. Furthermore, as is the case with many VT performances, the opportunity for direct discussion by the cast with the audience is expected and occurred at all performances. The resultant oral testimony was a powerful and compelling experience for all involved.

There was this one woman who came up to me whose husband had come back shell shocked, she talked on and on, an amazing story and she started crying... and that was a pinnacle moment as far as an interaction goes.
(Samuel Austin, actor's reflection)

A further question central to the research was: how does the process of re-presentation take into account the implications of the ever growing distance (chronological, geographical, cultural or otherwise) between those involved in re-presentation and the original interviewees? I am particularly confident that audiences outside the veterans age range, namely 40-50 year olds and younger, were on the whole, no less affected and moved by the sentiments in the show, than the degree I recall from 1994 veteran audiences. Any anticipation that the re-presentations would be received dispassionately were clearly refuted by the experience between actors and audiences and the consistency of positive feedback. Even without a direct connection or experience of the historical period of *We'll Meet Again*, younger audience members seem to easily find their own manner of reflecting and revering the lives present in the work. So there are channels that allow navigation over the growing distance in time between the original interviewees and those involved in the re-presentation. These channels can be navigated through the

memories of the interviewers, creators and performers in the original but most of all through the audiences at every show.

I loved acting in the re-enactments ... it was fun... I can do that stuff ...the parts I found hard were when I woke up to that empathy for other people...who do I speak for? ...all those guys who came back to no-one? people who didn't speak about the war ? I was always scared that I was going to fuck it up ... wanted to pay respect but not cry...hated those bits... I was so nervous.... but that fear is what I crave for in performance...I was affected by who I was speaking for...that was a real big point for me...

(Jack Barry, actor's reflection)

Even if not all of the audience had a direct connection with the war experience there was always very strong agreement that the musical experience, connection with the actors' representation of the stories and the value of the performance as history were very significant and appreciated aspects of the audience's theatrical experience.

The songs were beautiful and heartfelt, and accentuated the times that were being portrayed. Also helped the audience connect/be more directly involved. Convincing, funny, heart-warming performances. I felt emotionally invested and it was lovely how all their individual stories intertwined.
~ written by a 21 year old at NCC

In conclusion an overwhelming body of evidence from all involved in these representation performances attests to the potential of verbatim theatre to sustain meaningful discourse as well as 'connect with an audience emotionally and intellectually, to empathetically inform and empower through authentic story'. (Anderson and Wilkinson 156) .

This form of intergenerational community connection informs, heals and bonds us, with all of our strengths and flaws recorded. The actors successfully paid tribute to the lives of the persons they were honouring.
~ written comment from a 44 year old at JCC

3.4 Reflections, Discussion and Moving Forward

This research started out for me in a turbulent manner. Shifting my expectations from a prescribed two year Master of Theatre Arts programme to a one year independent research focus was unsettling as was the need to rapidly formulate a research topic and write an MA research proposal. On the positive side it proved exceptionally advantageous to have had the treasured theatrical experience of writing and performing in the original 1994 *We'll Meet Again* to centre and ground my research.

I believe the thesis focus on VT in NZ and Australia is justified in terms of my intention to explore and add to a body of work that is culturally and historically relevant to our countries. However given time I would have included wider representation and interviews from practitioners in Australia especially about more recent VT work. A broader investigation of information about a range of the frequent re-presentations of VT plays both in Australia and NZ would have the potential to further support the evidence and claims about re-presentation practice made from the performance of *We'll Meet Again*.

A further aim related to re-presentation is to advocate for the re-presentation of existing VT work by developing guidelines to use in supporting others embarking on re-presentation of a VT play. Contributions from all parts of the thesis but particularly Section Two have contributed to this. While these guidelines would benefit from further work to incorporate ideas, resources and recommendations especially for actors and other practitioners in a greater range of VT modes, they already constitute a useful beginning.

(I found it a challenge) to play an older person, being real and being old with integrity and gravity...to differentiate between the verbatim parts and the re-enactments, figuring out how this show is different from any other show

(Samuel Austin, actors reflection)

The thesis also focuses on that mode of VT obtained from personal interviews with limited reference to that obtained from written records. It seems likely that those embarking on developing VT, particularly simple VT play scripts by students at school level, may well want to encourage students to include or

build VT on documented material as well as interview material. I hope to use and extend the practical findings of this thesis to develop further resources for both supporting the drama education community and teachers to embark on developing VT with their students. This could well include advocacy for the inclusion of VT in NZ curriculum and NCEA qualifications. Given the Australian drama and education community strengths at school level I will also continue to seek out and support closer relationships between our two arts education community.

This thesis pays tribute to previous research and literature resources but is strongly based on theatre practice and performance. Above all, in VT tradition, it draws on and is validated by an abundance of powerful testimony from those not usually heard. The thesis adds to the body of knowledge on VT and supports and advocates both for VT presentation and re-presentation.

On a personal level, I am proud of what was achieved in a practical sense during this research process. Every performance of *We'll Meet Again* has been a delight and I was privileged to have found such a talented group of actors willing to commit to the work. The overwhelmingly positive and appreciative audience responses and the heartfelt conversations with so many, have left moving and enduring impressions – paying, tribute yet again to the lives of those who originally shared their stories.

Playlist-in chronological order

Aftershocks(1991)- Paul Brown

Fires in the Mirror (1992)- Anna Deavere Smith

Verbatim (1993)- Miranda Harcourt and William Brandt

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 (1994)- Anna Deavere Smith

We'll Meet Again (1994) -Crikey Dicks

Portraits (1997)- Stuart McKenzie and Miranda Harcourt

The Laramie Project (2000)-Moises Kaufman and Tectonic Theater Project

Career Highlights of the Mamu (2002)

The Permanent Way (2003)- David Hare

Stuff Happens (2004)- David Hare

Fast cars and Tractor Engines (2005)- Roslyn Oades

Ngapartji Ngapartji (2005)

Talking with Terrorists (2005)-Robin Soans

Black Watch (2006)-Gregory Burke

Parramatta Girls (2007)- Alana Valentine

Remembering One Day in December (2007)- Linden Wilkinson

Stories of Love and Hate (2008)- Roslyn Oades

Hush (2009)- Talking House

London Road (2011)- Alecky Blythe

Be/Longing (2012)- Talking House

I'm your man (2012)- Roslyn Oades

Munted (2012)- Bare Hunt Collective

The Keys are in the Margarine (2014)- Talking House

Today We're Alive (2014)- Linden Wilkinson

Barrier Ninja (2015)-Fran Kewene

Notes

1. This Alexander Graham Bell quote is from a personal letter to a teacher of Helen Keller's, Miss Annie Sullivan. It is congratulatory in tone, and allows Bell to stress how strongly he thinks Sullivan should share her knowledge and experience by training other teachers in her processes and techniques.
2. Rather than Verbatim Theatre, in the USA the term 'Documentary Theatre' is more commonly used to describe theatre based to some degree on transcribed interview material.
3. I carried out a series of skype interviews with prominent New Zealand practitioners with particular interest or experience in VT. The dates of these are as follows:
Miranda Harcourt 20/1/2016
Hilary Halba 14/12/2015
Jeff Szusterman 13/3/2015 and 6/12/2015
I also meet and interviewed in person, Cindy Diver 14/11/2015 while touring a VT double bill through Wellington. The Interviews were informal but a list of question was emailed prior and then referred too during the hour long interviews. Transcription was done on some of the interview recordings. In this thesis I have referred to any material quoted from these interviews as ~Name~ personal interview.
4. I carried out summative interviews with the actors (Georgia Pringle, Samuel Austin, Jimmy O'Donovan and Jack Barry) with a set of prepared questions, within a month after the last show. They were asked to reflected on the whole experience and I include numerous quotes referring to them as ~Name~ actor's reflection.
5. After visiting with two (Jesse Griffin and Greg Brooks) of the three original writers and actors of the 1994 *We'll Meet Again*, and contacting the third (Gemma Carroll), I asked them to respond in email or facebook about what they remembered about the work and what advice they could give their 2015 counterparts. I have included quotes from this correspondences in this thesis and refer to them as ~Name~ personal correspondence.
6. Montecillo Veteran's Home and Hospital has been operating for 98 years. When we visited and interviewed it had an iconic Dunedin location on Eglinton Road in Mornington Dunedin. It has since been rebuilt on Bay View Road, St Kilda. I visited and talked over the show with the CEO Fred Daniel in April 2015.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of support from 1994.

MONTECILLO WAR VETERANS' HOME

PATRIOTIC AND CANTEEN FUNDS BOARD

*All Communications to be
Addressed to
Secretary - Manager
Telephone (03) 453-5770*



*Montecillo War Veterans' Home
79 Eglinton Road
Dunedin
P.O. Box 7089*

October 19th, 1994.

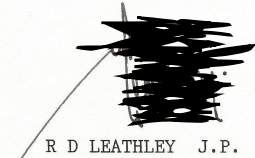
TO WHOM THIS LETTER MAY CONCERN:

In March of this year I was approached by four young students from the University of Otago. Their request to me was for assistance in their "Creating Community Theatre" studies which formed part of their requirements for Education and Arts Degrees.

For some months they spent a great deal of time "getting to know" our Residents and learning the many and varied experiences of their lives. From this they then wrote a play under the non de plume of "Crikey Dicks Theatre".

The play that had its World Premiere at Montecillo was a tribute to, namely Greg Brooks, Tama Smith, Ali McLeod and Jesse Griffin. The Play, Till We Meet Again, contained everything that one would expect could possibly have happened in these elderly War Veterans lives, drama, love, war, humour, tragedy and loss. The Play Wrights' captured all these moments with sensitivity, respect, and dignity. That the Residents whose lives are portrayed in this play have agreed for it to go "on the Road" is testimony to the understanding and expertise these four young people have displayed.

It was a great experience for Montecillo and I can only commend to anyone with an interest in the lives of the elderly that this is compelling viewing.


R D LEATHLEY J.P.

Appendix 2: Interview with the original 1994 touring cast.

Duncan Sarkies (Friend and Videographer):

What usually happens at the end of a show Jesse?

Jesse:

We usually um usually pack up all the gear first and then um put it all...

Duncan:

In the van

Jesse:

Yeah

Duncan:

And how much gear is here Greg? You've got a guitar, a cricket bat, a case..

Jesse:

A case with lots of stuff in it

Greg:

We've got this method aye. This methodology where the rostra has...

Jesse:

Yeah the rostra, big black thing, that folds up, has to go under the seats first, we have to get everything out, can't put anything in...at the end of the show we basically pack everything up and then we sit round and have a yarn with everyone who saw it, talk about old times, there looked like a few characters there that would be good to have a yarn with

Greg:

What did he say in the end? that guy, said could have gone for a hour longer.

Tama and Gemma enter.

Tama:

(Laughing) Gemmas getting oogld by a couple of the old guys.

Duncan:

Can we have a, like interview thing, maybe you guys should sit in the back of the van

The all sit.

Duncan:

How's it different from all the other stuff you've done?

Gemma:

Beer, you get beer

Tama:

Beer

Jesse:

I don't know, we get, it's a really good time aye, a really rich experience to um to perform something that's really quite emotional and touching and all, and see them getting a lot out of it

Duncan:

That's what I feel watching it aye

Jesse:

Wicked

Gemma:

When people come up afterwards and say something that relates to the show, you know like...might have served in the same place as one of characters

Duncan:

What are some of the other interesting things that have happened? How did you write the show?

PAUSE

Jesse:

Well for about 4 months we um we conducted lots of interviews with, ahhh the cats up at Montecillo, the old guys, and um got the good, got the good stories that they had all the experiences, put them together to form 4 central characters. There fictional characters but there all based on the experiences of 10 people.

Tama:

The experiences are culminated into the 4 characters

Jesse:

So they are a wee bit larger than life but all the experiences are real

Duncan:

You all conducted your own interviews?

Gemma:

Well we meet everybody really

Jesse:

We found it was best to double, two people talking to one person

Tama:

Yeah

Jesse:

That was the best way of doing the interviewing

Duncan:

Most conversational?

Jesse:

Yeah

Tama:

What I really like about the show from a performers point of view is that up till now every time we've gone into a new space, the shows been completely different, and the audience has been completely different you'd think you'd think that they are going to be these old foggies but in fact there's great diversity in the audience, the people yeah, its just like in Brooklyn...

Gemma:

You're not doing it to an audience, that big audience you get in a theatre, you're doing it to people, individuals almost you can... you deliver lines to people, you look them right in the eye you know, and you give them stuff and you get immediate reactions

Duncan:

What happens when you look them in the eyes?

Gemma:

Umm you get nods and winks and tears sometimes

Greg:

Yeah yeah there's no, you know, when your in the theatre and you have lights in ya face there's none of that. Down to earth aye, it's a really straight giving and receiving, immediate, its really immediate, you're not performing to black, you're not performing to blackness

Jesse:

Exactly

Gemma:

Its people

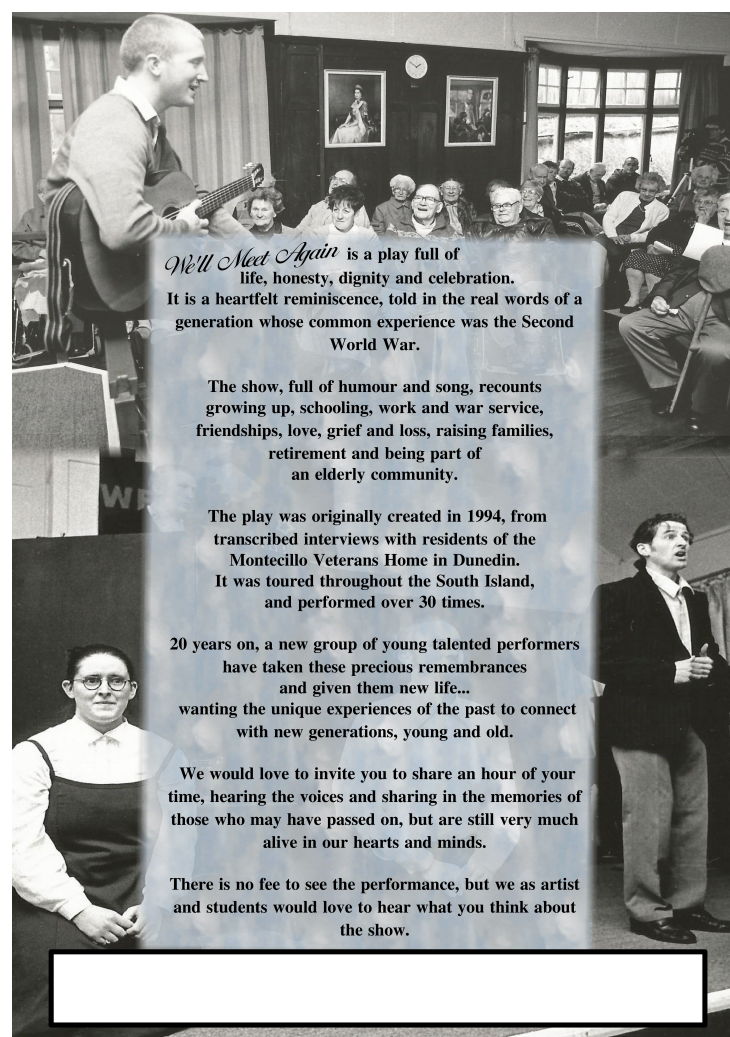
Tama:

and setting up, just the whole process of getting familiar with the space and performance area and the audience, just building the relationship up right from the start

Jesse:

And the sing-a-long is so wicked	Alexandra on Monday.
	Gemma:
Tama:	Oamaru, Timaru, Ashburton, then about 6
And you're on their turf	
	Tama:
Jesse:	6 gigs in Christchurch
If you didn't have that sing-a-long to warm up, its so important	
	Gemma:
Duncan:	Yeah lots in Christchurch
So where to from here guys, your on tour	
	Jesse:
Greg:	Then off to Greymouth
Milton	
	Duncan;
Gemma:	All I can say is congratulations on the show, any last words
Then Gore	
	All:
Duncan:	(smiles, in unison) We'll Meet Again.
Do you do old peoples homes?	
Greg:	
Milton's an RSA and the've invited a few retirement homes	
Jesse:	
Then were off to Gore on Friday, then Winton on Saturday and then	

Appendix 3: Poster and Flyer Design.





Audience Information Sheet

Project Title: *Re-presentation in Verbatim Theatre*
Principal Researcher: Tama Smith

I am conducting research into Verbatim Theatre, a form of performance based on transcripts of "real" speech, spoken by real people about lived events. My thesis focuses on the first productions, how they are developed and staged and also what occurs in re-presentations after the passing of time and other changes in contexts. The aim is the study will be written as a thesis and/or articles on this topic and will become a valuable resource for students, practitioners and teachers working in Verbatim Theatre.

We'll Meet Again is the practical component of this research. As a performance it was designed, directed and performed to test the way the play, written 20 years ago, would be received by new generations of audience with a different range of life experiences and relationship to the history presented in the play.

In completing the survey and sharing your impressions with actors in after show discussion, your feedback will contribute to my research. This information will be correlated, analysed and may be included in my thesis writing, as well as possibly in articles in theatre and education publications. If your comments are used directly in research, you will be referred to by your first name and age to maintain a degree of confidentiality.

You have the right to withdraw from participation in this project for up to 4 weeks after the interview takes place. The surveys will be stored safely by me and disposed of after 4 years.

Should you require further information about this project, please do not hesitate to contact my MA supervisor or myself on the email addresses below.

Tama Smith
Principal Researcher
smithtama2@myvuw.ac.nz

David O'Donnell
Senior Lecturer
Theatre Programme
Victoria University of Wellington
david.odonnell@vuw.ac.nz



Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Re-presentation in Verbatim Theatre
Principal Researcher: Tama Smith

I agree to an interview with Tama Smith for his study into the processes involved in presentation and re-presentation of Verbatim theatre. I have had the project explained to me, and have read the information provided about the focus and purpose of the research, which I retain for my records.

I understand that the interview material may be used in whole or in part in a MA thesis and possible articles written by Tama Smith. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to read and comment on any material relating to this interview prior to publication. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participation in this project for up to 4 weeks after the interview takes place.

I understand the recordings of the interview will be stored safely by Tama Smith and electronically wiped after 4 years.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

Disagree	Slightly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
----------	-------------------	-------	----------------	---------------

Comments:

The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play?

Disagree	Slightly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
----------	-------------------	-------	----------------	---------------

Comments:

The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me

Disagree	Slightly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
----------	-------------------	-------	----------------	---------------

feel connected to people they interviewed originally.

Comments:

The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

Disagree	Slightly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
----------	-------------------	-------	----------------	---------------

Comments:

Toi Whakaari

Question

Audience response (1= disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5=totally agree)

Intermediate School Group

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
21%	29%	23%	20%	7%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	7%	5%	5%	82%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
21%	5%	23%	25%	25%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	14%	4%	4%	78%

Toi Whakaari Group

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	18%	36%	9%	36%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	18%	36%	45%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	36%	55%	9%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	36%	27%	36%

Newlands

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	38%	23%	38%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	7%	31%	62%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	7%	31%	62%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	18%	82%

Question

Audience response (1= disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5=totally agree)

Petone Working Men's Club

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	33%	33%	24%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	14%	52%	33%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	19%	48%	33%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	48%	52%

Johnsonville

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	23%	46%	31%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	25%	75%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	4%	36%	60%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	29%	71%

Question

Audience response (1= disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree , 5=totally agree)

Newtown

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
8%	29%	26%	13%	24%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	2%	20%	17%	61%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	2%	8%	35%	55%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	2%	36%	62%

Village in the Park

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
0%	0%	34%	22%	44%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	60%	40%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	0%	0%	40%	60%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0%	21%	89%

Rita Angus

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
0%	0%	8%	54%	38%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	8%	0	46%	46%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	0%	18%	37%	45%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	17%	33%	50%

Malvina Major

Question

Audience response (1= disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree , 5=totally agree)

1. I was reminded of my family's or my own memories and life experiences while watching the play

1	2	3	4	5
0%	0%	22%	44%	34%

2. The choices of songs, style of singing and music added to my experience and enjoyment of the play

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	11%	89%

3. The actors performed the character's words and stories in a way that made me feel connected to people they interviewed originally

1	2	3	4	5
0	0%	11%	11%	78%

4. The show was an interesting and entertaining way to bring history to life

1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0%	11%	89%



Lower Hutt Memorial RSA (Inc.)

P O Box 33-055 ■ Petone 5046 ■ New Zealand
www.lowerhutt rsa.org.nz ■ (04) 568 5404



14 September 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We were privileged to be able to host the performance of 'We'll Meet Again' on Friday 28th August, as part of our Club night activities.

We realize that the original show was first performed in 1994 but it still had a powerful impact onto people today. The response from the members and guests of the LHMRSA was outstanding – all present agreed that it was well presented and portrayed situations that are in many ways, still very relevant today. With only a few changes it could well have been 2015.

The young students from the National Drama School gave a great performance and showed great skill and an understanding of the depth of emotion in the characters that they portrayed. All of this was done with a limited number of props and costume changes.

I would thoroughly recommend this show to all New Zealanders and RSA members in particular. A must see.

Alison Sexton
President.