

Chapter 1: 1994

(The year of *This Most Wicked Body*)

Member, Dance Committee, PERFORMING ARTS BOARD of THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL.
Appointed as visitor to the PERFORMING ARTS BOARD of THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL.

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

directed and performed solo performance installation, a 10 day/240 hour performance marathon.

Percussionist David Montgomery, restaurateur Gay Bilson, video artist Peter Oldham, lighting
Simon Wise. The Performance Space, Sydney.

(1995) Excerpts performed at the **Hong Kong Fringe** Remounted for SIDETRACK PERFORMANCE
GROUP'S Contemporary Performance Week 6.

(1996) Remounted for Progressive Dinner Conference, The Performance Space, Sydney. Tour to the
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, W.A. (co-produced by Lesbian and Gay Pride).

(1998) **toured to 1998 Adelaide Festival with pianist Gerard Willems, Gay Bilson and Simon Wise.**

HEAVEN

choreographer for SIDETRACK PERFORMANCE GROUP, director Don Mamouney, composer Peter
Wells. The Performance Space, Sydney.

(1995) tour to **Perth Festival.**

I begin this document at the time of having recently folded The Sydney Front.
I had a house (and a mortgage) in Newtown, Sydney,
two young dogs and a cat.
I was nearly 40 years of age,
and was contemplating another new freelance career.
That March I had the opportunity to see William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt
at the Adelaide Festival - I went 3 times.
Since Lindsay Kemp in 1975,
since Pina Bausch in 1982,
since Suzuki Tadashi in 1985 -
I was again excited by theatre.

Passion becomes the Front's swan song

Carmel Dwyer, Sydney Morning Herald 05/01/1994

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writing in June 1993:

In commencing this documentation at January 1994
I am feeding the myth that this was the beginning of a freelance career,
after the folding of The Sydney Front.

That is NOT the case!

I have begun in 1994 because the complete files of The Sydney Front
are now housed at the Centre for Performance Studies at Sydney University
and are available for anyone to peruse - public property.

The fact is my entire career (35 years since 1972)
has been a freelance one.

Although I have been associated with companies
including The One Extra Company, The Sydney Front and now The opera Project,
my work has been made with those companies on a contract basis -
at most a few month's work on any one particular project.

I have created some company structures,
partly to provide a public and funding recognition of,
and context for, certain types of work,
but also to manage the finances of my own freelance career.

It's not actually a career, and never has been:
I do "odd jobs".

If I had got out of the practice ten years ago,
when The Sydney Front folded at the end of 1993,
I may have found a new career in my late 30's,
rather than waiting until my 50's for a new life.
And I might have something now to look forward to.

I was probably arrogant -
believing my work had some intrinsic value, that it somehow mattered.

But it was ephemeral-
now just a few deteriorating videos, a handful of reviews
and some gaping documentation.

So maybe this document will serve as a cautionary tale.

PERFORMANCE SPACE Magazine
Issue #3 Spring 1994

Interview

NIGEL KELLAWAY - THIS MOST WICKED BODY
by Billy Crawford and Angharad Wynne-Jones

Billy Crawford: Nigel, in November you come back once again to perform at The Performance Space, this time without The Sydney Front. Can you give us a sort of potted history of your practice?

Nigel Kellaway: I came to Sydney in 1981 with the intention of working with Kai Tai Chan. I'd just spent 3 years in Adelaide. I went there to work with Richard Meale supposedly to do my masters in composition and to be his quasi-assistant. I worked with him for 9 months - then we went separate ways. It was not a happy relationship, probably because I was too young and inexperienced to write in a way to fulfil his expectations. That split effectively put an end to my aspirations to write or compose. It was a very traumatic experience because I'd written music since I was 9 or 10 and to be 21 and to decide that I had absolutely nothing to write ...

I was sitting in Adelaide and needed money so went out and got a job as a class pianist with a ballet school, which I didn't know much about, but it was going to earn me money. Also I went knocking on the door of the Australian Dance Theatre in the time of Jonathan Taylor. Occasionally I played piano for a class and sometimes I joined the class.

Billy: Was that the first time you'd danced?

Nigel: No, I did a certain amount of classical ballet when I was young which I gave up for Saturday morning hockey - I felt I had enough artistic pursuits at the time. Then I went to Melbourne Uni and became involved in Margaret Lasica in the early days of the Melbourne Modern Dance Ensemble. That was my first taste of modern dance. I had already worked a lot in musicals - singing and dancing. Then when I was in Adelaide I found I was picking up more dancing jobs and earning more money than I ever had as a musician. Talking to various people, friends in the Premier's department, they said for the kind of artist I was, there was one person who I should be working with and that was Kai Tai Chan - but that took a long time to happen. I went to Adelaide, originally for one year, but ended up staying three. Moving to Sydney I started working with Kai Tai from late '81 to '84. It was the second generation of One Extra. In that group was myself and Julie Shanahan who's now with Pina Bausch and has been working in Germany for ten years. I worked with Kai Tai for that time, which was a significant period for him during which we produced work such as *Jacaranda Blue*. Then I applied for funding to do a work which involved people that had been with One Extra - Julie Shanahan, Mickey Furuya and her then husband Tsukasa Furuya, Lynne Santos. It was called *The House of Awa*, which performed at The Performance Space in '84.

Billy: Was that under a company name?

Nigel: No, it was just a bunch of us. I think a lot of people thought it had something to do with One Extra but it didn't. I think there was considerable expectation from that piece of forming something out of that collaboration, but within a month of it closing I was on a plane to Japan with no intention of returning.

Angharad Wynne-Jones: Was it out of a sense of things not working out for you the way you would have liked?

Nigel: No, it was for totally personal reasons. I followed a lover to Japan and made a decision then that it was more important to my life than what the Australian theatre scene had to offer. I think it was also the stress you always feel when you're making a work. When you get to the point where it's actually on, you think surely there must be more, because to actually make a piece of theatre I feel is like making an injunction in your life. The early initiative and creative process is invigorating but eventually you have to

formalise it, structure it and that is an injunction on your thought pattern. It becomes your final statement and the process stops sometimes weeks before opening night. I was tired and feeling that it wasn't all that exciting. I'd already made a lot of theatre and I thought there had to be more to life, a life outside theatre, a personal and real life. I went to Japan with no contacts, \$40-50 in my pocket, not knowing anyone besides my partner who had left for Japan a month before because his "Australian" visa had expired and so he'd flown back, and I arrived in Japan. I was living in a housing commission estate a long way out of Tokyo, I was the only registered foreigner or alien as they call it, in that prefecture and it was totally isolating. It took me two weeks to discover how to get into Tokyo by train, a trip of one hour. Everything was in Japanese characters. The only way I could see to make some money and survive there was to do modelling work, so I registered with a whole variety of agencies and got ripped off stupid by most of them.

I made contact with the Australian Embassy and the cultural attache and first secretary was Alison Broinowski. She used to joke that she had a dream to do two things while she was working there: one was to bring the Sydney Dance Company to perform in Tokyo; and the other was to get an Australian to work with Tadashi Suzuki. She gave me lots of contacts, said I should hunt down Min Tanaka - I knew of him and went pursuing him. One Sunday I went to see him perform at the National Gallery in Ueno and who else should be sitting there on the floor next to me but Russell Dumas. Russell marched me straight up to Min and introduced himself and me and it was arranged that I should do classes with him in Hachioji which is about a three hour train journey from where I lived. Classes started at 7.00 in the morning and it was the middle of winter. I think Min expected me to live in the studio like everyone else, which I refused to do and I think that set me apart from the rest of his company.

Angharad: Were they all Japanese?

Nigel: Almost entirely. Then I was awarded a travel study grant from the Theatre Board of the Australia Council to study with Suzuki. I was there in the early days when Suzuki opened his summer school attached to the festival in Toga. There were about ten of us westerners working with him and his company. I was the first Australian and I felt my role there was partly ambassadorial. He taught me things that I always thought were possible but didn't know how to do. He showed me that there was a particular technique for doing the kind of things I wanted to do. I wasn't interested in Suzuki's work *per se* but rather the craft of the actor, and Suzuki had this set of exercises. I'd never seen such a simple set of exercises which seemed to teach the actor everything they needed to know to walk on stage and sustain themselves (physically) on stage. I discovered that the brain was a fairly flawed instrument and that the body was more reliable. It was a total denial of head acting. We'd all seen this before but I'd never seen the technique. - it was a method, a codified method - I hadn't even been aware of its existence. It was a much more articulate method than Grotowski's. Grotowski had things but they were so vague - primarily because Grotowski was so strongly in the lineage of Stanislavski which you had to embrace as well. Suzuki's work denied that school totally. His roots, though informed as an academic in western theatre, are in traditional Japanese theatre, particularly Noh and Kabuki.

I came back to Australia with this new wealth of information wondering what the fuck I was going to do with it.

Angharad: Why did you come back?

Nigel: It was time. At the same time as I got the overseas study grant I applied for a Directors and Choreographers Development Grant. It gave me a small salary for a year and the possibility that I could go out and work for a number of companies either with some financial support from them or not. I worked with the Sydney Theatre Company and I spent a long time with the Australian Dance Theatre while they were in between artistic directors Jonathan Taylor and Leigh Warren. There was a twelve month gap there and I spent six months with the company making a work with them - which was an extraordinary luxury to actually work with a modern ballet company and to have six months to make a work.

Angharad: Did you use the Suzuki training in that time?

Nigel: Yes, I did. I worked with Mike Mullins to create the doomed work *Illusions* for the '96 Adelaide Festival and with the small and varied cast. I trained them extensively in Suzuki and I have to say there were some standard textbook Suzuki scenes in *Illusion* - I was the choreographer. It was quite an

experience and not a happy one for anyone involved.

John Baylis, who had been administrator at One Extra, resigned by chance within two or three weeks of me coming back to Australia. He was unemployed and Mike Mullins contracted him on *Illusion* as a performer. It was actually in Adelaide tucked in the corner of a bar at the Festival, that John and I decided that there must be better ways to make theatre than we had in the past. We were particularly depressed. Eight months later The Sydney Front had sort of got together. The main centralising force was those people who had been in One Extra. These were John, myself, Clare Grant, who I had never actually seen perform. She'd come back from Europe to work on a piece for One Extra; also Chris Ryan who had also worked on that. Roz Hervey had just left One Extra. With Roz there was Geoff Cobham who lit our first show. Mickey Furuya and Andrea Aloise, who John and I had just worked with on (Entr'acte's) *Ostraka*, and we asked Pierre Thibaudeau and Elisabeth Burke as guest members for the first season.

Angharad: So the intention from the start was to create a company rather than a work?

Nigel: No, we weren't that naive. We had a history going back with the people in the group so it wasn't something completely new. We came together because we knew each other, we knew each other's work and each other's history. We applied for funding, didn't get it but produced the work regardless. For *Waltz* we painted the foyer of The Performance Space in lieu of rent. For our next show we painted the front of the building. That was in 1987. Our first meetings were in November 1986 for *Waltz*. We named a director for that piece which was myself. It was, I guess, initiated by me but it was the creative process which distinguished The Sydney Front from any other theatre company at the time. The conversations revolved around the question of what was wrong with the process of crafting theatre in this city at that moment, what was wrong with the company structures. One important question was the ownership of work. Many performers in this area had worked with companies where we'd create works in an intensely collaborative process. The performer, those people out there on stage, create such an enormous amount of that work and then when it goes to production it becomes such and such a work directed by so and so - so that it is always remembered as their work, for instance, Kai Tai Chan's *Jacaranda Blue* or Pierre Thibaudeau's *Ostraka*.

This was not going to happen with The Sydney Front. There was a cast list in alphabetical order. The process of making the work was of utmost importance. We never named a director in our work after that. It was irrelevant to the process. Even naming me as director of *Waltz*, that has been forgotten in history. *Waltz* has been remembered as The Sydney Front's. Everyone working on the piece was responsible and should take equal credit. There was no text in the beginning so there was no individual name you could put on the work. It was only through that process that The Sydney Front was able to continue, by sticking steadfastly by those rules. Regardless of the internal processes of making the work, what was happening in the studio, who was taking certain leads in certain areas, that was The Sydney Front's business, no one else's - it was not to be made public what the internal mechanics of the process was. It was to be a united front presented to the world and I think it was the only way the company could have stayed together and developed.

Angharad: Maybe we should talk about the work you are going to be doing here in November. Where its development comes from and where you see it going.

Nigel: In late '85 when I got back from Japan I did my first solo show - *Give me a Rose to Show How Much You Care* at The Performance Space - that was straight off the plane from Japan and that was a way to sort out what I'd actually done in Japan and to solve the question of how I could put this on stage and translate this to my experience of theatre in Australia, acknowledging the fact that I'd been away for two years.

It was very Suzuki in its style and I think it made, in its small way, quite an impression here mainly because people had never seen me performing that way before. There was suddenly this new performance edge that was happening in that piece. It was highly melodramatic and expressionistic and utterly over the top which surprised people. It made some kind of intelligent sense too because it was so fractured, it was this new melodrama for the late 20th century. It denied psychological motivation, it was this absurd fractured personality on stage, and more than a little ironic.

The next solo work I did was *The Nuremberg Recital* three years later and now *This Most Wicked Body*.

From working with The Sydney Front, a collective, I come back to making solo pieces because I am able to pursue certain interests. There are certain obsessions that I cannot explore in a group. I can only do them on my body. I guess it's my interest in the skill of the performer. It is best for me to develop that on myself. It gives me licence to work through certain obsessions which I don't feel I have a right to inflict on a group. I haven't done an extended solo piece since *The Nuremberg Recital* in '89.

What makes my theatre unique are the elements I'm working with, which come from my training as a musician. I still think first and foremost as a musician. It was the first discipline that I learnt from a very young age. Music is thinking in the abstract, so my first artistic experience was working in abstract form - music is entirely self-referential, it doesn't relate to anything but itself. Theatre is for me about time. That is the main building block that I am aware of working with in the theatre - how do I manipulate a space in time. If I have an allotted time, one and a half hours, how am I to divide that, how am I going to manipulate the audience's perception of that time, how am I going to push that tolerance level of time just that little bit further to make an audience work, to challenge an audience. The processes of making theatre are about certain dynamic levels; its highly compositional, loud and soft bits, fast and slow bits. They are the building blocks of theatre. Much more so than a character, than a certain personality on stage. The manipulation of time is the essential theatre form.

I'm doing this piece because as a performance and audience member I am becoming increasingly bored with theatre. I guess I've become frustrated, making and watching it, because when I go into a theatre there is this built in limitation. I know approximately how long I'm going to be in there for. The actual experience of fiction within the theatre. is only going to last for an hour or so and I know that at the end of that time I'm going to end up at exactly the same spot. I can't actually get any further because theatre is about fiction, the creation of fiction and how an audience deals with it. But there is only so much you can do, so far you can stretch the audience's imagination, put them off balance, in that time.

I'm hardly the first person to have moved into and lived in a space for ten days. It's been common practice for the past 25 years. Beuys, for instance. But I'm not coming from a visual arts perspective. I'm not a performance artist. I come from a theatre background and I'm interested in making a very long piece of theatre. Because it's the only way I can get myself out of this bind, of this full stop that happens at 9 o'clock. When the audience comes in at 8 o'clock there is always an energy or level of excitement. I am most excited in the first thirty seconds when something emerges, that first moment is the most exciting and the easiest moment to create an image for - its most seductive and attractive. How do I avoid that? In this piece there is actually going to be an 8 o'clock moment. I will be onstage from midday to 9.30pm. It will be a continuous performance. The doors will be open so that anyone can come in and view my performance. But at 8 o'clock the doors actually close, lights will go dark and up on me. But the audience will carry into that process a very different knowledge. They actually know that they are not seeing the beginning of a piece but the last hour and a half of a nine and a half hour work which I imagine will mean that the audience will approach that moment in a very different way.

Angharad: Why have you chosen to actually have that? Why not just open it from 12 to 9.30 and have people coming and going at will throughout?

Nigel: I guess I'm still holding on ... I guess it's a way of framing this whole project.

Billy: But if people came at seven they would just walk into the theatre anyway?

Nigel: Yes, and I will be performing. So that moment of closing the door is putting theatre in quotation marks and saying "this is a piece of theatre". I hope that the knowledge of the theatrical act is very different for the audience because they cannot deny that that moment has a history.

Billy: They don't have an end either in that sense. Will they be able to remain after the end of the show?

Nigel: Yes. Until 10pm but after that there will be a security process that they will have to go through if they want to stay.

Billy: So there is a certain antagonism between theatrical performance and the traditions of visual arts performance apparent in the other twenty two hours.

Nigel: Yes. It's a real antagonism because that installation thing I approach from a theatrical perspective. I ask who am I? If I was coming from a performance art perspective I could rest at - "it is Nigel Kellaway". Here I grapple with the fictional nature of the actor.

Billy: Also with your history and background, even though the form is visual arts, you can't escape the theatricality of being in the theatre, whereas a visual arts person could or would attempt to.

Nigel: Yes. I will make no attempt to do that. In fact I think I will be doing the opposite. But that is a question I will have to hand over to an audience, to make their own decisions, to perceive it in a way that they are able to.

Billy: It will be interesting to see how antagonistic they are. Do you see the piece developing in the sense that what might be seen on Tuesday night might not be the same thing as seen on Thursday?

Nigel: I don't work in an improvisatory manner on stage. Sometimes the movement material is slightly more roughly sketched, but the form of the piece, the theatrical material is meticulously worked and dependent on light, music and all the trappings of theatre.

Billy: But as with any audience participation the structure is there to organise things more than the script.

Nigel: The whole question of audience participation in a work is one of the great theatrical cons. You're offering the audience a degree of freedom of opportunity but of course you are not at all, it has to be a highly manipulated situation. I hold all the cards. I know what the lights are going to do next, I know what the music is going to play next, I know there has to be a specific outcome to a scene and I will have ten or twenty aces up my sleeve at any moment, so I'm obviously better prepared for the moment than any member of the audience could possibly be. We've had audience members come and then go away and plan something for two nights later but I still hold the cards, I'll find a way around it. It's brutal. You can always pull the lights on them.

Angharad: Why do you think audiences are so ready to participate?

Nigel: Because they've been invited into a dangerous situation while knowing that eventually they're going to be safe.

Angharad: So it's a secure thrill ride ...

Nigel: Yes it is. There's a degree of sexual kick about it yes, and because there's this moment, they don't know what's going to happen and they have to contribute something, but I also believe in being very caring and very kind to audiences. I'm not there to abuse audiences. I'm there to entertain and to enlighten, stimulate them. There are certain responsibilities. There's a contract made at the box office and I respect that. If you are going to push an audience that far then you need to throw in a safety belt as well.

Billy: With The Sydney Front these thing you asked of the audience were always taken up.

Nigel: Because we always explained the parameters. Take the strip scene at the end of *Don Juan*. I explain to them exactly what we need. One person is required to take their clothes off and remain in stage for two minutes. Nothing else will be expected of them. I'm being absolutely honest then and I think they do it because they trust us. I am not going to lie and if I did then throw a surprise at them then I'm suer they would never do anything for me again - so I think one has to be absolutely honest. The surprise, and what I can never prepare them for, is the experience of standing there naked in front of the audience. There is no surprise - that's not what constitutes the theatrical moment - but the unexpected experience of doing it and the people forced to watch it. That is what makes the theatrical moment. I can't prepare them for that because I don't know entirely what that is. I've been naked on stage, but as a performer. What this comes back to, and is far more interesting, is the question of the actor - because this person who has taken their clothes off is not an actor. For us to run around naked on stage is the easiest thing on earth, because it's not your body on stage, that naked body has nothing to do with your personality. That strip scene was very muddy because the person was not an actor - it was their body on stage.

Billy: I'm interested in the parallel careers - your solo career and The Sydney Front. Now with the end of The Sydney Front, how do those two join together finally?

Nigel: There is a feeling for me that *This Most Wicked Body* is the Final Piece - which I haven't felt before. I haven't seen my career as a linear thing working towards the masterpiece. I don't believe in that. Of course there is some development, but I'm really not interested in my history. There is a feeling that this is the piece I have to make and I sense an end in sight with this piece. Much of what I have explored is summed up in this piece that I'm making. That it is going to take me to a certain place which I don't know yet, and usually I know exactly where I'm going to end up at the end of making and performing a piece of theatre. There are generally no surprises. I know what the experiences are going to be. This one I don't know. I really don't know. I'm doing this one because I see no future in trotting out more pieces of theatre. But I am a theatre artist, there is nothing else I can imagine myself doing or that I want to do, which is a real dilemma. I guess I'm doing this piece because there are certain discoveries to be made in that dilemma. I'm booked in to do a few pieces next year. I know I can make them and do them, but am I really interested?

Is the show going to change? I said no, it's going to be set. Maybe the format will be set. I know *my* experience of that piece is going to be very different at the end of the ten days than at the beginning. There'll be personal discoveries. Now that stuff isn't really interesting to talk about. There are a whole lot of mysteries in there because I've never seen anyone do it before. What I bring to the project is a technique, skills, a method which I will rely on. The only reason why I'd attempt to do this is that I feel I have the technique to achieve it but it's pushing much further than I've pushed it before. At the end of it, perhaps I might become interested in a whole lot of things. So it's the end of a period but I trust it could shift me anywhere.

The crucial point is how an audience perceives me. I'm used to walking off stage and into the foyer and talking to people about the show I've just done and there's always this sense that audience members think they know me because I haven't played a psychologically motivated character with a different name on stage out there, so they have this sense they know me, but in fact they don't know anything about at all and I think that a lot of the relationships I have with people are based on all sorts of strange assumptions - I think they feel they know a lot more about me than they actually do. They've seen me in many different guises on stage and these accumulations are how they see Nigel Kellaway but, ofcourse, the reality is different. I'm an actor. It's very difficult to have a conversation with someone in the foyer after a performance because they know no more about you than know about them and yet the basis of your conversation is so different.

Angharad: At what point do you switch off?

Nigel: You don't. It's a very theatrical exercise, purely theatrical. It is as much ongoing argument as communication. My only concern is how an audience perceives it. I'm in there to make personal discoveries only in so far as it takes me onto another project. It is not a voyage of self-discovery - that's the worst it could be. Theatre is not about that.

Angharad: I'd be interested to know what you think about contemporary practice and Suzuki training or the kinds of training available to performers in Australia now.

Nigel: It's a very mixed bag. I suppose the most interesting performers I've seen, from a Sydney perspective, are those people that have had a similar kind of education to myself - a diverse grab bag of experiences. Working with an enormous variety of training methods and people - the non-institutionalised performer. Those people that come through training institutions in theatre carry an enormous disadvantage because they have been taught a particular way of thinking. Suzuki is like a rash of misinterpreted "truth" over this country at the moment. Keith Gallasch's comment at "25 years of performance art" was apt when he said, "performance art is everything. We are actually quite happy to embrace everything and anything that out there." I'm not interested in defining the practice because it's a very liquid thing. It took me a long time to free myself from a classical music education and I guess that is why I ended up working in theatre and not as a composer and I think the same thing happens for a dancer. My background is eclectic, it's a grab bag of everything and it's not particularly precious. Like the work of Vicki Spence - where the hell is that coming from? It's a grab bag of so many things. Once you

teach a strict method it stops you thinking in any other way. What we have emerging at present in Sydney is a lot of interesting non-institution trained artists. It is after all, possible to respect conventions without necessarily embracing them. You have to work very hard at being an outsider, it is a conscious balancing act of one's subjectivity and critical objectivity that makes valuable art and valuable human beings.

transcribed by Kerrie Schaefer

(as displayed on the theatre doors at Performance Space)

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

an explanation

At 12.00 noon on Thursday 17th November 1994 NIGEL KELLAWAY was confined in the theatre and courtyard of The Performance Space, where he will remain 24 hours a day until 9.30pm on Saturday 26th November.

THIS MOST WICKED BODY is not a visual art installation. It is a performance that responds to the theatre, dance, music and allied performative arts.

From noon each day he performs a solo in the theatre. This is partly improvised around a predetermined structure. In preparing this section of the work considerable room has been left to develop the material over the ten day season. The outcome depends on the artist's imagination and his pacing of energy. It is a marathon exercise in maintaining the actor's theatrical presence.

Between 6.30 and 7.30 each evening a short break will be taken, to enable the artist to shower and the technical resetting for the ensuing evening performance. Audience are welcome to enter the theatre, though perhaps it will be unoccupied during this hour.

The main evening performance begins at 8.00pm each day. This is the climax of the day's performance. Nigel Kellaway is joined on stage by percussionist DAVID MONTGOMERY and restaurateur GAY BILSON. Theatrical material that has been explored throughout the day is given full and precise definition within the context of Nigel's evening meal. Prior to the performance he will invite a member of the audience to dine with him.

At the end of the day, when the audience has finally left, Nigel remains to sleep onstage each night, waking to prepare himself for the next day's performance.

Each day and night Nigel is pursued by video artists PETER OLDHAM. He is filmed during and between each performance; on stage and off; performing, preparing, sleeping. This documentation is edited each day and presented on monitors installed in the theatre. This is a process of accumulating evidence.

Admittance to the theatre from midday to 7.00pm is free although a donation will be gratefully received. Audience may enter at any time and move freely around the space between these hours.

Ticket prices from 7.00pm to 8.30pm are \$18 full price, \$14 for Performance Space members and \$10 concession. On Monday 21 November and Tuesday 22 all tickets are \$10.

For the evening performance the audience are requested to confine themselves to the seating area.

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

PROGRAM NOTES

My name is Nigel John Kellaway. I was born on the 17th of November 1954.

I am an actor. I have stuffed twenty or thirty dolls with the sawdust that was my blood, have dreamed a dream of a theatre in this country, and have reflected in public on things that were of no interest to me.

(with apologies to Heiner Muller)

So begins THIS MOST WICKED BODY.

In 1992 I committed an act of unplanned consumerism - I purchased a compact disc of the Bach Goldberg Variations performed in 1955 by a young Glen Gould. This was the seed of an obsessions. THIS MOST WICKED BODY is my response as a musician, pianist and actor. My heart falls for obvious things - beauty, distance, a virtuosity I have attempted to answer in this collaboration with David Montgomery and Gay Bilson.

Throughout the day the variations are heard in their entirety, then the parts are scattered, repeated over and over and eventually submerged. An initial idea or theme may resurface from time to time, perhaps again in variation. The viewer will see only the evidence of a fractured mind. We attempt gathering the pieces.

Nigel Kellaway

The compositional structure of THIS MOST WICKED BODY is that of theme and variation. The evening begins with a statement, performed by Glen Gould, of J.S.Bach's Goldberg theme. It is not a melody, but rather a ground bass, implying a harmonic progression. As Bach was, in 1742, I have been commissioned to compose and perform a set of variations on this ground bass. As a 20th musician I have been allowed to escape the bonds of 18th harmony, as and when I have thought fit. At times I have sought to hide the theme, and elsewhere I have displayed it proudly. Some variations are referential to Bach, some are purposefully not. At times I have followed Nigel's theatrical demands. But more often I have been given license to write freely for the concert platform, providing a lead for the theatrical material. This had posed some questions: What are expectations of music for the theatre? How do we prepare ourselves for an evening in the concert hall? How do we listen?

David Montgomery

What food the host shares with his guest is of no importance to the audience. The audience are spectators, uninvolved. The guest is, in his involvement, their link to the host. Even so, the realisation of the ten dinners is based on the idea of a theme with variations: an opening, simple statement, compounded and shifted over the succeeding eight dinner, with a return to the original broth at the tenth dinner. Somewhere in his script, Nigel says, "I spy on a scene that exists entirely for my benefit and yet over which I have absolutely zero control". He says this over a dinner table to his guest, who has volunteered to dine with him. Does it surprise you that the words 'host' and 'guest' both have their roots in the Indo-European word 'ghostis', meaning stranger?

The intimacy of the table is fraught with mistrust and the tongue is indeed the 'parlour of great risk'.

Gay Bilson

THE AUSTRALIAN
November 18th, 1994
by JOHN McCALLUM

INCARCERATION OF BODY AND SOUL

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PRESS COMMENT ON THIS MOST WICKED BODY

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RealTime #4
December/January 1994-1995
By KEITH GALLASCH

Locked in

Not so much incarcerated in The Performance Space as in his body, Nigel Kellaway pushes that body to its limits. Kellaway set himself the task of living in the theatre for ten days, fed by leading chef Gay Bilson, sleeping in an opulent bed, performing the work in segments to visitors in the afternoons with brief breaks for a fag and a chat, and in toto in the evenings between eight and nine thirty to a seated audience, one of whom had the great pleasure of sharing a Bilson meal (prepared on the spot) and the dubious delights of being ogled, videotaped and monologued at. The work proceeds through a series of striking movement images evoking ballet (especially in the arms) and butoh, suggesting real pleasure and some pain (on pointe and suspended from one wrist but without the obligatory St Sebastian arrows) and performed with a steady stream of talk written by Kellaway himself and, more often, others (Wilde, Rilke, Auster, Muller etc.) The consistency of the tone of delivery, arch stylish sing-song, and apparently very personal content about age, authenticity and lust, suggest one voice, not quotation, and trigger a feeling of psychological intensity and, towards the end, suspense as self-doubt (fictional or not) escalates.

I say incarcerated in his body because the knowledge that this a non-stop ten day performance is almost incidental (you watch for signs of exhaustion, you try to imagine the space as home, you see last night's table guest and meal and Nigel's ballet teacher on video monitors). The performance is complete in itself, the bigger issue is *this wicked body* that Nigel Kellaway finds himself alive in, even trapped in, a male body that dresses and gestures as female, female of ballet and opera and past generations of coquettish middle class western women. This male psyche envies this female body, wants it for itself, especially at forty years of age where the skin, he notes, declares its aging, where lust is the issue, not sex. As for actual women, as opposed to the fantasy of their bodies, the only 'appearance' I recall is a brief narrative about a prostitute who "sucked him off" and whom he frames with a sneer. The claim by some that this is not a gay show rather yet another account of the *human condition* (aided and abetted by Kellaway's going head on at issues like fakery and authenticity and his unconvincing denial of naturalism) is a feel good evasion of much that is specific, disturbing and powerfully unresolved about the work. Something killed off audience members, despite a good publicity campaign and good reviews. Perhaps word got out that the stylish larrikinism of The Sydney Front was not on the menu. Something sinister, something deeply personal, something not quite right, even correct was being served up.

In performance, Gay Bilson is unlit, we can just make her out. But her presence through the preparation of the evening meal, its serving and its unhurried eating amplify the real time super-naturalism of *This Most Wicked Body*. Joel Markham plays waiter, personal assistant and stage hand. Resplendently surrounded by his percussion instruments, David Montgomery performs his exacting compositions worked from the ground bass of Bach's Goldberg theme as 'played by Glen Gould' at the beginning of the show. Kellaway's performance is spacious, allowing us plenty of room to revel in Montgomery's music. As with Kellaway's delivery, Montgomery's music is diverse but coherent - shimmering, balletic, 'pretty' ("in contrast to the dark, aggressive, rude and offensive text" says David), funereal, and includes an exquisite serial palindrome (an ingenious mathematically calculated composition reminding us that Gould's other love was Schoenberg's for Bach).

After a mere two visits I take home with me a Gothic shadow - Simon Wise's white and gold light emanating from low-slung gold cross-bars making the space more intimate but eerily deepening its perspective, Nigel's full black gown with gold braid, dark diaphanous gauzes across the space, the Edwardian table and chairs, the aroma of Gay Bilson's evolving consomme, the intensity of the percussion built not on a melody but a ground bass, the dark reds and golds of a cushioned 'oriental' bed and the seriousness generated by Nigel's text pitched against camp display. Hopefully *This Most Wicked Body*, the ninety minute performance, as opposed to the ten day event, will stay in the Kellaway repertoire. Perhaps the *incarceration* was only a metaphor for the uneasy relationship between the man and his body.

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Real Time #4
December-January 1994-1995
by KERRIE SCHAEFER

Knowing Nigel

After *This Most Wicked Body* I wonder if there is anything that I haven't seen and don't know about Nigel Kellaway. Live and replayed on video screens in The Performance Space theatre, I have seen Nigel dance naked, looking seductive in a black, off the shoulder evening gown, eating meals created for him by Gay Bilson and showing his appreciation for the music composed and played live by David Montgomery. I've seen him asleep, waking, dressing going to the bathroom, eating muesli for breakfast in the courtyard of The Performance Space, cleaning his teeth with his tongue, blowing his nose with a hankie and looking for leftovers in discarded cigarette packets. He has confessed to a sexual encounter in the theatre and recounted this in explicit detail. There doesn't seem to be much left to know about Nigel and his bodily habits, pleasures and desires.

At the same time, it is precisely this presumption of knowledge that this theatre piece calls into question. What is pornographic or obscene in *This Most Wicked Body* is not the explicit showing of Nigel's life as he lives it in the theatre but rather, that these visibilities can be taken as referring to a real person. That is, what is obscene in this (or perhaps all) theatre piece(s) is that the spectator may presume on the basis of a representation to know the truth about Nigel Kellaway.

The work of The Sydney Front was instrumental in uncovering and challenging the often unacknowledged and unrecognised power/knowledge relations between actor and spectator in the theatre. This was most dramatically demonstrated in an early Sydney Front piece in which a female performer stood alone on stage facing the audience. She stood quite still and after some time a male spectator suggested that she take her clothes off. As in his earlier work with The Sydney Front, Nigel Kellaway resists and frustrates spectatorial desires. This time the focus is not on the spectator but on the persona of Nigel Kellaway.....(He) collapses the distinction between representation and reality, performing and non-performing self. Spectatorial desire cannot derive from securing or knowing the *real* or *true* identity of the performer because this isn't clear from the start.

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

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PERFORMANCE SPACE Magazine
Issue #5 Autumn 1995

Review

NIGEL KELLAWAY - THIS MOST WICKED BODY

by William McClure

In the following article I have attempted to record a discussion which was recently conducted between two members of The Performance Space (Dark and Bati) concerning Nigel Kellaway's recent work *This Most Wicked body*. In order to understand this discussion you must first be privy to the scandal which was revealed to both Dark and Bati (and myself) only minutes prior to their talk. The scandal concerned what took place with the theatre of The Performance Space between midnight and 8.00am (i.e. the theatre's darkest hours) during the season of *This Most Wicked Body*. What was revealed to Dark and Bati is that at a point in time (approx on the 4-5 day) a completely intuitive decision by Nigel (a decision lacking a concept - an aesthetic decision?) to live out the extremely erotic text of *This Most Wicked Body*. On each of the final nights a prostitute was called in (three boys and one woman); during the following nights' performances the events of the previous night were represented in vivid detail. As you will see (if you read through to the end of this article) the revelation of this scandal caused a shock that Dark has still not recovered from. Speaking on behalf of the others, the scandal concerning *This Most Wicked Body* seemed to be incredibly important; for without it the irony of what occurred during the performance (and the structure of the irony itself) could not be fully appreciated. This discussion is far from complete, and it is also true to say (now that I have had the benefit of writing it down) that it lacks a sense of itself. Bati and Dark (especially Dark) initially maintain their usual formal composure, but eventually this deteriorates into wild allegory as the shock of this most scandalous body gradually seeps in. At the beginning of their discussion I think they are trying to gather themselves for the shock that they knew they were about to experience. This, I'm almost sure, is how Dark would describe his present state of mind.

Bati: (opens in response to the news that has just been received) The twist to all this is that the details of these acts were never a secret, but were retold each performance the following night. We, of course, well most of us, simply assumed that Nigel was acting in a classical sense (i.e. borrowing another's subjectivity). We assumed he was merely speaking, for the most part, another's words (eg. Rilke, Auster, Muller, Wilde). In fact he was doing something quite different he was speaking his own words and being himself. In hindsight (and that is the only way that we can view *This Most Wicked Body*) we can now say that the sections of the text which were borrowed from others merely operated to hide from us (as if both to protect us and to conceal secrets) that shocking news that Nigel was representing actual events. It now appears as though Nigel was wanting to reveal a scandal concerning his body (*This Most Wicked Body*), but in order to do so he had to speak in the words of others. At the time that I was watching the performance I must admit that I wondered whether the eroticism (which suggested itself so strongly to me) had been realised or not. But each time that thought occurred to me, another voice would quickly insinuate itself into my consciousness saying, "don't be ridiculous, this is only theatre". It now disturbs me that this voice should have such a strong hold on the way I view theatre. Me of all people: one who believes that a theatre (when it is at its best) is not the place where subjectivity is simply borrowed from others, but is the place where it makes its first appearance.

Dark: I think you mentioned something very interesting when you said that in order to speak of the scandal concerning his body Nigel had (of necessity) to speak the words of others. This is just the problem that

was posed by the entire 240 hours of *This Most Wicked Body*. How do we speak or represent the body as an object (especially an object of art) without using another person's voice or words? I say "especially art" because it is at least assumed, I hope, that in order to make the body an object of knowledge I must speak in another's voice. Typically, I must speak in the voice of the father, of society and of the State. To speak of the body is always going to involve an act of ventriloquism. Another person's words are always going to be placed into or onto the body to create the appearance that the body is speaking for itself. To speak of the body not as an object of knowledge (either theoretical or practical) but as an object of art is, I would say, like trying to speak the unspeakable. The scandal that is now revealed operates to remind us that what is said of the body (especially the body-in-the-theatre) is spoken in other voices. What is now revealed is that the wicked body could not speak of itself or for itself, but could only speak by an act of ventriloquism. You also made an interesting point when you suggested that classical theatre may be distinguished from *this Most Wicked Body* on the grounds that the performer's subjectivity was not borrowed but appearing for the first time. By this I assume you mean that Nigel managed to achieve that remarkable state of being - himself. I think that is too simple a description. And I am sure that you do not mean to leave it in that simple form; but it is important that you be clear. If *This Most Wicked Body* challenges anything it is the view that subjectivity is a substance. Nigel therefore cannot be himself, since there is no self, in or out there, for him to be.

Bati: (jumping in) That is precisely what I meant to say. I am of the view that all this talk of being-yourself is some kind of hangover from the Christian era. If anything I would say that subjectivity is 'nothing'; it is the gaping hole which one rushes to fill with the characters of their own choosing. In *This Most Wicked Body* Nigel chose to fill the hole with ballerinas, opera singers and upper class women that celebrate the difference between culture and nature. He did not believe that he was being himself. Most commonly, that is in every day experience, people choose to fill the gap with characters they believe to be themselves. This I think is an incredible reminder of the power of the Christian era, but also of the power that theatre can have in breaking the illusion. The Christian says "that I am born in sin", to this I say "you were first born in the theatre and that this reality that you call sin is a powerful illusion of the theatre." I am no essentialist, Dark. I would not say that being oneself is, as you say, "a remarkable state", but rather a horrid admission to blindness. But the irony of my situation, that has once again been brought home by *This Most Wicked Body*, is that I do not know how to approach the theatre in its institutional form. It is difficult to say, but the problem is this: if I say that as soon as I am born I am born into the theatre, how then do I approach that institution which is called 'a theatre' or 'The Performance Space'? Put briefly, how do I approach the theatre that is within this theatre called life? *This Most Wicked Body* shows me that my approach is too complacent. Maybe I've seen too much bad theatre to care. And you, Dark, sound a bit too safe in your words for my liking. You were equally stunned when you were told about The Scandalous Body. It is a sad fact when we assume that what goes on inside the theatre is rhetorical and what goes on outside is not. When we walk through the doors of a theatre it is as if a sacrament is spoken to us from the mouth of the Father, and it says "what you are about to see is illusion". Or to use the expression of our other friends, "what you are about to see is merely a copy of something more real, or at best a simulacra which merely pretends to be real". This of course creates the opposite thought in our mind that all that goes on outside, especially in the realm of politics and commerce (these days the two are basically the same) is real. In theory I don't believe this. You and I, Dark, have been educated to think otherwise. Yet *This Most Wicked Body* proves by the most scandalous device that (in practice) I do think this. I am disturbed, Dark, and if you had an ounce of consciousness for what you call Irony and double movements, so would you be.

(Bati pauses, as if waiting for Dark to reply. When Dark fails to say anything Bati goes on.)

Bati: What took place in the theatre (and I'm not interested in getting caught up in the problem of 'place') during the performances on the final four or five nights of *This Most Wicked Body* was as real as anything that takes place outside it. Just think about the way in which the news is produced. An event occurs and then it is reported. We never get to see the event, we only get its report. What is real for us is not the event but the reported event. This is precisely what was occurring during the final performance nights of *This Most Wicked Body*: an event occurred and then it was represented (and all the events occurred 'within' the theatre). What we need to ask ourselves is what it is that distinguishes the experience of watching the news from that of watching *This Most Wicked Body*, for surely most of us would make some distinction. Is it that the social space has a way of appearing real, and that when we put in place an institution which is called a 'theatre' that is a way of supporting the reality of the other social institutions? If that is the case *This Most Wicked Body* explodes the division which we make in society between real and

theatrical institutions, fact and fiction.

Dark: (at last interrupts) I agree with you, Bati, *This Most Wicked Body* does do this. But I would add that it also questions the status of facts. What happens to a fact when it has its origin in a theatrical place? What happens to the 'place' Th the theatre the 'fact' may be able to produce a semblance of reality but in itself has no reality. Or are we to think that what *This Most Wicked Body* does by involving itself in the scandal surrounding facts (that they are not factual) is turn the theatre into a place where real events occur? No, I do not think that the director of *This Most Wicked Body* is naive on this score. This, I think, is one of his favourite scores. Now that the scandal is out (now that we know that the theatre [within the Performance Space] was made an accomplice in the scandal that surrounds all the facts) we are not to think that the conspirator behind this atrocity was himself attempting to engulf the theatre in the real. Rather, we should think that he was attempting to put te real on stage and thereby return the real to it's 'proper' place. By doing this, the unspeakable scandal concerning the non factuality of facts was revealed. For example, now that the scandal is out we can say that what was revealed of the most wicked body was factual, but we must also remind ourselves that is speaking the facts the body did not speak for itself nor about itself. Rather another voice intervned between the body and itself so as to represent another body - a different body (a body of representation, or a represented body).

Me: I love it when you talk like that, Dark. I say, "let your wicked tongue all hang out"!

Dark: Now that you mention tongues, I cannot resist commenting on one of Nigel's most significant bodily gestures. It is this action that he does with his tongue when he is telling a story, of recounting an event (the two are the same). He develops a little glint in his eye and fullness of his tongue is revealed. It is sharp and bares a remarkable similarity to the shape of point shoes (which he also wore at times - truly his body is wicked from head to toe). It curls around and touches his top front teeth as if in preparedness to play a piano recital. You know that there is wickedness going on in the delay which is created by this gesture - it is a kind of spiritual possession, and you know that whatever is about to be said by that most wicked body is not going to be the truth. You know that it is going to speak in another person's voice. This movement of the tongue which is an almost unconscious gesture brings me very close to the wicked body. The interesting thing now (in the light of this scandal) is that this wickedness is revealed to be only half the story. What was being hatched behind the scenes is another trick which coincides with the publication of this scandal. This one to me is more diabolical that the first. I call this the wickedness of autobiography. We have seen this type of performance a number of times lately at The Performance Space. A person stands in front of an audience and recounts some very personal information about their life. In that context we believe that the person is telling the truth. It is then up to us to think what happens to truth when it is presented in a theatre. *This Most Wicked Body* is not like that, it is what I would call a delayed autobiography. At the time that we were watching the performance none of us thought that Nigel was being autobiographical, that is, we did not think that he was recalling events that had happened to him. We simply thought that he was being someone else. Maybe we thought that he secretly wanted to be those other female persons, but we never thought that he was being autobiographical. Now that that thought has had some time to settle, we are now confronted by the well timed disclosure that we were wrong, all of us had been deceived by the most scandalous of devices. It is now revealed to us, after some delay, that Nigel was being autobiographical (Do I sound like I'm repeating 'myself'?) Yet, in this period between the performance and the timely release of scandalous information one cannot fail to see that tongue at first pointing (as though to promise a direction and a pirouette all at once) then curling back upon itself as to give the appearance that it is about to offer up its own secrets. It curls back upon itself with its autobiographical promise and yet what is released is another voice - this one goes under the name of Nigel Kellaway, no less deceptive no less real. He has set yet another trap for the unwary ones who are caught ever so unconsciously in the dual web of reality and illusion. The release of the scandalous information will cause these ones to think that what they though was an illusion has, in fact, turned out to be real. If so, the tongue has calculated correctly, it has once again hidden its lack of being behind the mask of reality. But if instead we hear this tongue with another ear we will understand its delay. We understand that in the gap between the performance and the disclosure the tongue has had time to choose another voice in which to speak. The wicked body speaks in yet another's voice. This time the more believable voice of Nigel Kellaway. What is retold and recounted concerning the theatre darkest hours is acted out, this time in ways which appear more believable, but are no less diabolical. To use your words, Bati, "the show goes on". The 240 hours is merely a metaphor for an entire life which is spent within The Performance Space. As 'members' of The Performance Space we should be aware of this. Does the tongue now strike so at to poison all those who would not be aware of their membership? Which

reminds me, I am not sure that I am paid up? Who amongst us know believes that this latest revelation has more substance than that which we did not believe? Than that which was performed in the title *This Most Wicked Body* in what has been institutionalised as 'The Performance Space'?"

(Dark pauses as if struck by his own words, he appears to be entering a state of ecstasy - an outer body experience. He goes on.)

Dark: Yes, I suppose that is the significance of this well timed (delayed) release: the question which makes our own lack of consciousness shine even more brightly in its darkness. What weight do we now give to this revelation? Do we give it more weight (weight and reality are the same) than that which we did not believe? I can see that tongue curling, it has its prey in its sights and laughs a diabolical laugh. If we do give it more weight, what authorises us to think that one representation is more real than the other? What are the social mechanisms which support and create this assumption? Do we now assume that the wicked body talks in its own voice? This latter performance (ie. the one that releases the scandal concerning this most wicked body in the name of Nigel Kellaway) is to me a more calculated, more powerful performance because of its persuasiveness. Nevertheless it is the same performance since the reality it represents took place within a theatre. There is no way that we can distinguish between the two performances in terms of a real and theatrical model of the social space. Both representation concerning this most wicked body are theatrical through and through. Apart from anything else this is so since both forms of representation are bound up with the inescapable illusory effects of autobiography. In the act of doing nothing but representing this most wicked body, nothing of the wicked body is represented. I know all of you hate me when I talk like this. I wish I could say it in a way that was clear. But it is, I think, impossible to state the diabolical act of representation in clear words. To do so would ofcourse be to cloud the issue in transparency.

Me: Dark, it is not true, I love it when you talk like that. I can see your point (I think?) but I do wish you would say a bit more.

(Dark, however looks dazed by his own words. I turn to Bati, as if to suggest that he should now talk on behalf of Dark. Being the perceptive person that Bati is, he leaps to Dark's aid.)

Bati: Let me try to say it for you, Dark, in the simplest way that I can. For I feel that we have all been a victim of the same cunning. This tongue you talk of I assume is a metaphor for the tongue of Nigel Kellaway. Just nod or shake your head, Dark. I will respond to such bodily gestures. How we hear this tongue seems to depend entirely on where we place it. If we place it in the theatre we assume that it is creating illusion, and if we place it outside in a social and autobiographical mode we assume that it is telling the truth. Now all these assumptions 'seemed' to be have been passively confirmed right up until the time we heard this scandal. Then, all at once, the tongue lashed out and shook us twice. The first shaking of our foundations is still being felt - that is, what thought to be false has turned out to be true; what we thought to be rhetoric is now revealed as scientific and legal fact. That was the first shaking. It is as if that tongue which we sat comfortably in front of from 8.00pm to 9.20pm had struck us dead, or found us already dead to its wickedness. What else is wickedness than that which cannot be disclosed. This scandal has caused us to feel the aftershock of our own death. The next strike, and that is one which has just struck Dark (or maybe he is ahead of me and is on three strikes) and is yet to fully strike me, is a type of reverse of the first. This time we locate the tongue in a context where we assume that it is telling the truth. But as Dark says, in this place the tongue is bending back upon itself so as to touch itself. The next time it flicks forward it is with all the more velocity and force. This time the illusion which it covers us in is all the more powerful. This time we are not even sure if we experience the aftershock of our death - the awareness of our death seems also to be covered in illusion. In this moment what is legal and scientific fact is revealed to be theatrical, and the theatrical is unknowable because it lacks an essence. In the second state I cannot say whether what is revealed by the scandal concerning *This Most Wicked Body* is truth or fiction; for I have no way of knowing the difference between these two. If I think that the scandal is true then I must know the difference between truth and fiction. And what authorises me to think that I know this difference? Dark was attempting to say, and I was also saying (Who speaks here, me or Dark?) that the authorisation is purely cultural. We assume that what takes place in those areas which have been institutionalised as performance spaces is illusion. We go there thinking that we pass from the realm of truth to the realm of fiction. If *This Most Wicked Body* demonstrates anything it demonstrates that this assumption is alive and well, and that nit stands on shaky ground. It is as if we think we live in a social space which is largely made up of reality, but one that has also set aside 'within itself' additional spaces of

illusion (ie. performance spaces). The illusory nature of these spaces is guaranteed by the rest of the social sphere which is real. In this way we can be 'sure' that we know what illusion it - we know the difference between reality and illusion. The general publication of the scandal (which coincides with the reading of this article) of *This Most Wicked Body* reveals the spurious nature of such assumptions concerning The Performance Space. This publication is yet another Performance Space (what does it mean when The Performance Space puts out a magazine?), is yet another medium for disseminating the truth of *This Most Wicked Body*.

Me: (Thinking to myself) But whose voice is the truth revealed in? Is it Bati's or Dark's? Or is some other tongue behind these two? Who reveals the truth of *This Most Wicked Body*? Is this publication yet another act of ventriloquism? Other voices put into someone else's mouth who then pretends to speak on her/his behalf? We shall have to leave this thought hanging.

(Dark rouses himself to stand, his shoulders are slumped from exhaustion.)

Dark: What is the thought that cannot be seen or grasped?

(Bati and I look at one another, worried that Dark may have finally taken the turn.)

Dark: (waits, and then answers his own question mournfully). It is a thought which hangs between death and life. I am thinking like a vampire. I see the ghostly and pallid face of a vampire as it whispers its name from behind the this veil of transparency: "My name is Nigel Kellaway" it says - "and I speak the truth".

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

script copyright Nigel Kellaway 1994

Music selected for the 1998 Adelaide Festival production with pianist Gerard Willems

SCENE 1 MY NAME

My name is Nigel John Kellaway. I was born on the ... of ... 1954.

I am an actor. I have stuffed twenty or thirty dolls with the sawdust that was my blood, have dreamed a dream of a theatre in this country, and have reflected in public on things that were of no interest to me. That is all over now.

MUSIC 1: Rope Solo

Beethoven Sonata No. 32 in C Minor Opus 111

1st movement *Maestoso - Allegro con brio ed appassionato*

MUSIC 2: Speech and slow walk to table

Beethoven Sonata No 32 in C Minor Opus 111

2nd movement *Arietta. Adagio molto semplice e cantabile*

Yesterday I discovered a dead spot on my skin. Dying begins, or rather is accelerating. By the way, I happen to agree with it. One life is enough.

I have seen one new age arise after another, each one dripping blood, shit, sweat from all its pores. History arrives at the winning post on a dead horse.

I have seen the hell of women from below: The woman dangling from the rope. The woman with her arteries cut open. The woman with the overdose, snow on her lips. The woman with her head in the gas-oven.

For thirty years now I have tried to keep myself from the abyss with words. Consumptive from the dust of the archives and from the ashes that drift from the pages of books. Choked by my growing disgust with literature. Burned by my evermore fervent desire for silence.

In the babble of the academies I have envied the deafmutes their silence. And in the beds of the many women I never loved, I have envied their soundless fornication.

I am beginning to forget my text. I am a sieve. More and more words slip through. Soon I shall hear no other voice but my own, asking for forgotten words.

Friends enter, debate soundlessly, occupy the seats.

These are my friends. I have been forgetting their names for some time now. To forget is to be wise. The Gods forget faster than anyone. It is good to sleep.. Death is a woman.

SCENE 2 PROSTITUTE SPEECH

One night, for no particular reason, I went out to wander the lifeless neighbourhood and walked into a topless bar. As I sat there at my table drinking my beer I suddenly found myself sitting not far from a voluptuously naked young lady. She sidled up to me and began to describe all the lewd things she would do to me if I agreed to pay her to go to the back room. There was something so openly humorous and matter-of-fact about her approach that I eventually agreed to her proposition.

(Light cigarette)

The best thing we decided would be for her to suck my cock, since she claimed an extraordinary talent for that activity, and indeed she threw herself into it with an enthusiasm that fairly astonished me.

As I came in her mouth, a few moments later, with a long and throbbing flood of semen, I had this vision,

at that very second - that which has continued to radiate within me: that each ejaculation contained several million sperm cells, or roughly the same number as there were people on this earth (more or less). Which meant that within himself each man contained the potential of an entire world.

And what would happen, could it happen, was the entire range of possibilities: a spawn of idiots and geniuses, of the beautiful and the deformed, of saints, catatonics, thieves, stockbrokers, highwire-artists.

Each man is therefore the entire world. Or so I said to myself, at that very moment, as my cock exploded into the mouth of that naked woman, whose name...I have now forgotten.

HERE!!!!!!!!!!

Here, I'm in my seat.

Even if the lights go out.

Even if they tell me there's nothing more.

Even when the greyish draughts of emptiness come drifting across the stage.

Even if, of all my distant forebears, none sits by me any longer.

I'll still remain.

For one can always watch.

MUSIC 3 For reading of porno book

Beethoven Sonata No 13 in E-Flat Major, Opus 27 No. 1

2nd movement *Allegro molto e vivace - attacca*

SCENE 3 WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES

When I close my eyes, you are beautiful. Or hunchbacked, if I want it.

The privilege of the blind. They drew the better lot in love. They are spared the comedy of circumstance.

They see what they want to see.

The ideal would to be both blind and deafmute - the love of stones.

Don't take your hand away. It's not that I'm feeling anything for you.

It's my skin that remembers.

MUSIC 4 For serving dinner

Beethoven Sonata No 2 in A Major, Opus 2 No. 2

4th movement *Rondo. Grazioso* (first 2 minutes only - stopped by Nigel finger-click)

SCENE 4 RON, ROD, ROB

Can I confide in you? It's a tad tacky, but last night I was here terribly late, working on the show. The crew left around 11 o'clock and I stayed on for an hour or so alone, supposedly to rehearse - just a short scene I wasn't feeling totally confident with. But I had a visitation - oh, nothing celestial! - dreadfully mortal - a total stranger off Norwood Parade - Simply walked into the theatre. Heaven only knows what knows what was happening with the security system. I suppose I could have complained to Festival management, but given the outcome, I decided to let it lie.

You see, I had sex with him, just over there on those seats. Some guy called Ron, or perhaps it was Rod, or maybe Rob - anyway, something like that. I'm awfully afraid it wasn't very good. I'd hoped it was going to be *real* sex, but you know somehow I felt further away from it than ever. I felt a little like God, studying something he'd created only to discover some dimension he'd never planned. A little like a father probably does with his son at a certain age. I don't know who I'd expected to fuck, but it certainly wasn't some badly lit guy who's name I couldn't quite catch.

Anyway, I fucked him hard, which is the way he said he liked it, but you know I was thinking about something else - I was thinking about creating pornography. Imagining how we looked, where the camera

should sit. I tried to maintain a pace that wouldn't bore people that weren't actually involved. I wondered whether we made compositional sense. I wanted to criticise certain expressions of his as being too melodramatic - or on a couple of occasions too laid-back for what was actually going on. I mean, when someone is shoving his cock up your arse you are supposed to look pained, not half asleep! But then, I suppose, a viewer might think that we were faking it and that it was / who was overacting. I could just hear some snotty aesthete (a bit like myself) saying, "Well, I don't require realism, BUT!!!....."

Anyway, it was all over quite quickly. When we'd finished he wrapped his arms around my waist. Nice touch, I thought. I almost felt like saying "You're sweet", but somehow it really didn't quite suit the occasion. So I said "See ya later, Ro.....", carefully muffling the final consonant, just to be safe. Well, he shot off down Norwood Parade, probably never to be seen again!

So, I was a tad shagged out and didn't get that much rehearsal done. I do so hope it doesn't show.

MUSIC 5 For eating

Beethoven Sonata No. 18 in E-Flat Major Opus 31 No. 3
4th movement *Presto con fuoco*

SCENE 5 JEFF HUNTER SPEECH

Jeff Hunter - do you know him? - know the name? - no? Well then, I shall tell you! He's an actor - young, short brown hair - the star of half a dozen or so movies. His physical makeup I would say fits my master plan for the 'ideal sex partner' - the guy I've refined from twenty odd years of fucking and fantasising. His personality? Well I've no idea, I've never met him - but I would imagine sort of lazy, good-humoured, self-absorbed - passive. Jeff Hunter exists entirely to have sex - in particular, to suck cocks, to rim, to get rimmed, to fuck. He appeared on this earth in his late teens and disappeared sometime in his mid twenties. If I were to be critical I would suggest that the high point of his life occurred about halfway through a film called **KEPT AFTER SCHOOL**. He's standing naked, spread-legged on a desk on a classroom set. One guy eats out his arse, another sucks his cock, a third licks his balls, and a fourth French-kisses him.

I've focussed on Jeff, but what I'm really thinking about is how he must have felt having sex in such a transparent context. I'm that snotty aesthete (yet again!) looking at a metaphorical window, as though it were actually open. I use this window to spy on a scene that exists entirely for my benefit, and yet over which I have absolutely zero control.

I concede that my distance from it is part of its magic. And this magic is an abstraction that a cute guy like Jeff can stand around naked in, feeling infinitely more important than he could possibly be. You see, just as contemporary art eschews the traditional notion of subject, pornography is not about what it appears to observe - sex, that is. No! It's about lust - Oh, not the actor's, but their director's, their audience.

Oh, look, I'm sorry. I'm flailing around on choppy waters here. I see Jeff sunning himself, naked on a beach, but he's oblivious. My heart falls for the obvious things - beauty, distance.

I concede that this distance is part of its magic. And this magic is an abstraction that a cute guy like Jeff can stand around naked in, feeling infinitely more important than he could possibly be. You see, just as contemporary art eschews the traditional notion of subject, pornography is not about what it appears to observe - sex, that is. No! It's about lust - Oh, not the actor's, but their director's, their audience.

Oh, look, I'm sorry. I'm flailing around on choppy waters here. I see Jeff sunning himself, naked on a beach, but he's oblivious. My heart falls for the obvious things - beauty, distance. I suppose I should really be roaming around the porno cinema like all the other men. Jeff Hunter's merely the subtext for what's really going on there in the dark - a sort of unfocussed shadow hovering over the shoulder of each guy they're jerking off. Well, I suppose the palm of some stranger's hand could be Jeff Hunter's arse, if you were really hopeful enough.

But I'm too tuned into what's what - film as opposed to life - a cinema screen juxtaposed with a theatre too grim to light. You and I supposedly having dinner together.

MUSIC 6 For clearing of dinner and Orgasm Speech

Beethoven Sonata Opus 10 No. 3 2nd movement

SCENE 6 ORGASM SPEECH

No, don't retract your tender offer, sir. I *am* buying. I'm buying in any case. No need to fear emotion. I don't hate you. Why should I hate you? - I've never loved you.

Let's rub our hides together. Ah, the bondage of bodies. The agony to live and not be God. To have a consciousness, yet no power over matter.

No, don't rush it slower yes, that's good yes..... yes
.....YES!!(*faked orgasm*).

(*music finishes - lights cigarette*)

Well, that was well acted, wasn't it?

What do I care for the lust of my own body? - my brain is still functioning at its normal rate.

I am totally cold.

RECORDED MUSIC

J.S.Bach Cantata No 143 *Lobe den Herrn, Meine Seele*, BWV 143

2nd movement Choral (Soprano) *Du Friedefurst, Herr Jesu Christ*

(repeated 4 times)

SCENE 7 CANTATA DREAM

No, this has nothing to do with me. This has nothing to do with THIS! This is not why we're here. Joel!!

(Joel: YES!)

What's this all about? We are here to be pure, clean, precise. We are betrayed! LINE!!

(Joel: THEY SING ABOUT CHRIST!)

They sing about Christ, but this is not our language. This is the sound of desire squeezed out. I wanted to be purely secular, but now we have the sound of orchestras and the singing of little boys.

I was once just as young - as slim and fair and tempting. I was so pretty. I know it's hard to believe now, but I was *divine*.

I WANT TO FONDLE THE WORLD IN PUBLIC!! THAT LITTLE BOY IS NO FUCKING ANGEL - HE SINGS LIKE HE'S GOT A COCK SHOVED RIGHT UP HIS SMOOTH LITTLE ARSE. HE KNOWS - HE'S JUST NOT LETTING ON!!

Don't take your hand away.

Why, don't you long for it? Something soft, young, clean? You know just how to talk to him - the suggestion, the perfectly timed question. You have the power, the experience. He is listening - he may well be yearning too.

But he'll wait for permission. Yes, he may well be more clever than he's letting on. Who holds the reins? Who's side is age on? Whose hand is on whose cock first?

It's not that I'm feeling anything for you. You see, it's my skin that remembers.

(*Conducting*) You were never there when I needed you - when I needed your touch. You just said we should take a holiday - some time off together. WHY?! So you could go fishing?!

You and I walk through the ruins after the smoke has cleared and the grass grown over the evidence. There we take snapshots of each other and wait for our bus. We're always arriving after it's all over, and when you can't see for yourself what any of this was all about.

O, STOP IT!! *(Taped Music stops)*

And I am lonely most of the time, waiting for the assignment to arrive, the job interview, the holiday on Dunk Island.

RECORDED MUSIC:

J.S.Bach Cantata No. 143 *Lobe den Herrn, Meine Seele* BWV 143
7th movement Choral (Choir) *Gedenk, Herr, Jetztund an dien Amt*

SCENE 7a AUDIENCE ABUSE

What?! Do I detect jealousy? You?! What a regression! Yes, he does look a little like you. Attractive. Though his advantage is his youth. In bed, as well, if you'd really like to know.

In ten years there probably wouldn't be any difference between you, if I could turn you both into stone with one loving glance of the Medusa. A fertile notion, eh? - the museum of our loves. We would have a full house, wouldn't we, with the statues of our putrefied desires. Those dead dreams classified according to the alphabet, or lined up in chronological order. Free from the accidents of the flesh. Not exposed anymore to the horrors of change.

Our memory needs those crutches. One can't even remember the various bends of cocks, let alone faces. A haze - it's all just a fucking haze.

Do you seriously want to poke around in these muddy leftovers?

I pity you.

Oh, coffee! May I join you?
(sits at table)

Finger bowl!!
(Joel brings bowl, soap and towel - Nigel washes hands)

Excuse me.
(Nigel moves to piano)

MUSIC 7

Schubert Fantasie for Piano Duet in F Minor Opus 103

SCENE 8 COFFEE SPEECH

So tell me, you know enough about me for the meantime - tell me about yourself. What do you do for a living? ... And how old are you?.(29). 29? And I'm (43), today. You know, I've seen photographs taken of myself (14) years ago, and I hardly recognise myself. But I suppose that's probably my fault - my own choice.

(Stage Manager), I'll have some coffee too, please.

(coffee served)

You know, I'm not talking to you like this merely to ingratiate myself. It's actually very painful for me to be forced to tell the truth. I'm actually in terror of being discovered. The elegance of my diction is merely a front - anything rather than speak the truth. I sweat, I speak with revealing hysteria about the 'SECRET OF LIFE' - anything but admit the truth. It must be an terrible thing for a man to discover suddenly that all his

life he has been speaking nothing *BUT* the truth.

But, this is **ART!!** I am totally uninterested in authenticity. The 'SECRET OF LIFE' is to appreciate the pleasure of being terribly, terribly deceived.. Insincerity is merely the means by which we multiply our personalities.

I mean, does anyone of you think you could possibly summarise the daily fluctuations in your physical appearance with a single name? Well, which is it to be? As the casually dressed citizen, or perhaps as the well dressed night-clubber? Or shall it be as the naked lover, as spontaneous as the half-remembered boy?

Go on, select a photograph of yourself to send to me, to introduce yourself to a total stranger. Choose from that stuffed wardrobe of all those versions of yourself acquired since that moment that you reduced yourself to zero by announcing to yourself and to the world **I AM**

Oh God, I'm tired. It's been a very long day. I think perhaps we'd better leave it there. Thankyou.

(exits- fade to black)

MUSIC 8 to accompany Golden Light Speech

Beethoven Sonata No. 23 in F Minor (Appassionata) Opus 57
2nd movement *Andante con moto*

SCENE 9 GOLDEN LIGHT SPEECH

I hope I may be able to contribute to your entertainment with this my final performance: **HOW TO GET RID OF THIS MOST WICKED BODY!!!!**

I shall cut open my veins as I would an unread book. I shall do it with scissors, since I am a woman (and every trade has its own jokes). You can use my blood to make yourself up - a new grimace.

I shall find a way to my heart through my flesh - the way YOU never found, since you are a man, your breast empty, and only nothingness growing inside you.
Your body is the body of your death. A woman has many bodies. You have to bleed yourself if you want to see blood. Or one man has to bleed another. Envy of the milk in our breasts - that is what turns you men into butchers.

If only you could give birth. I do regret that this experience will be denied you, this garden forbidden, because of a decree by nature hard to understand.. You would give the best part of yourself for it, if you knew what you were missing, and we could make a deal with nature.

I did love you. But I shall push a needle into my womb before I kill myself, to be sure that nothing you have planted is growing inside me.

You are a monster, and I want to become one. Green and bloated with poison, I shall walk through your sleep. Swinging from the rope, I shall dance for you. My face shall be a blue mask, my tongue protruding. With my head in the gas-oven I shall be aware that you are standing behind me, with no other thought but how to get inside me. And I, I will desire it, as the gas bursts my lungs - it is good to be an actor, and not a conqueror.

When I close my eyes I can see you rotting. I don't envy you the cesspool growing inside you. Do you want to know more? I am a dying encyclopedia, each word a clot of blood. I wish I could watch you die, as I watch myself die now.

By the way, I am still quite pleased with myself. This can still masturbate, even with the maggots!!

This Most Wicked Body

1994 Grant Acquittal to Australia Council - extracts

Nigel Kellaway: Writer, director, performer.
costume and set - design and building
Lighting co-designer

David Montgomery: Composer and performer

Gay Bilson: Food design and performer (chef)

Simon Wise Production Manager, light and sound operator
Lighting co-designer

Joel Markham: Stage manager, light and sound operator
Performer (waiter)

Peter Oldham: Video - cameraman, director, editor

Associated Artists:

Jenny Andrews: 1.00pm daily ballet class teacher on stage

Heidrun Lohr: Photographer

Rosalind Richards: Publicist

Steven Phillips
Wayne Brennan Sound recording engineers
Peter Wells:

Glen Gould (1932082): Pianist (The Goldberg Variations of J.S.Bach)

Paul Auster
Neil Bartlett
Denis Cooper
Mickey Furuya Text sources
Nigel Kellaway
Heiner Muller
Rainer Maria Rilke
Oscar Wilde

The Creative Process

I wrote *this Most Wicked Body* alone over 8 months. I had promised myself that I would dedicate 1994 to this single project. I successfully avoided making any other work during the year. It was a necessarily frugal year. It has been suggested that perhaps I should have employed a director. I was unable to pay the few existing collaborators properly, let alone involve a director over the necessarily long creative process. Others have suggested that I should have directed the work on another performer. This seems to me absurd, given the nature and reasons for this project (and I can't imagine who would have done it). Ofcourse, these alternatives may have been wise, But the fact remains that I did it myself.

The Music

The structure of *this Most Wicked Body* was based on The Goldberg Variations of J.S.Bach - a theme with variations. This structure permeated all aspects of the work - text, lighting, music, food, choreography, video. Thematic statement, variation, development and (as is Bach's prescription) final return to the original subject, consumes the work.

Subsequent to applying for the grant, David Montgomery was appointed chief percussionist with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. This meant a change in our envisaged creative process. The work was written by phone, fax, mail and three weekend trips to Sydney (paid for by other concert engagements) over six months. We eventually came together for a final two week, full time rehearsal period.

David's composition used Bach's ground bass throughout. He recorded several tuned percussion lines in Brisbane over which he laid an elaborate live performance on Marimba and vibraphone. One section was rhythmically derived from Bach's variations on untuned percussion. This was David's first composition for the theatre, and was extremely well received. He is a virtuosic performer, who adapted to the rigours and compromises of theatrical performance with exceptional elan. His music had a particular grace and sensuality, rare in percussion music, that balanced the brutal crudity of my own material. It was a most pleasurable and successful collaboration.

The Video

After the death of Stephen Cummins in 1994, my original collaborator, I approached Peter Oldham to contribute the video component. He would shoot me in the theatre each day, sometimes as early as 8.00am and through the day until 10.00pm, accumulating 3 hours of footage. From 11.00pm to 2.00am he would view the rushes and plan the edit, which he would start at 4.30am and have a one hour's freshly edited material ready to be shown before midday each day. This edited product would play on monitors in the theatre continuously for the next 10 hours. At times it was designed to synchronise with my live performance, providing subtle variation. But more often it worked in counterpoint - many images overlaid on minimalist performance material. There is 30 extraordinary hours of broadcast quality footage with excellent sound quality, as a result. (edited in 1995 to a 68 minute promo video)

The Design

I designed the sets and costumes myself. I kept the budget extremely low. It was essentially the cavernous black box of The Performance Space. I introduced the necessary dining setting, kitchen and bed and a series of bark muslin scrims that at times could be drawn across the space to divide it, conceal and distort perspective. Simon Wise and I designed the lighting together. The basic concept was to lower the rig to just over 2 metres from the floor on a slight rake. The effect was reminiscent of television lighting - very hot and broad and ideal for the video.

The Food

I began discussing the project with Gay Bilson early in 1994. She was to keen to simply provide a service - to feed me as necessary. But such a service seemed to beg greater notice. And so the 8.00pm performance became a dinner - a guest at the table, a waiter, music to accompany, and desirable cuisine. Gay designed a cooked on stage a menu based on a theme with variations - beginning with a simple tomato consomme on the first night, to which she subsequently added ingredients, developing into quite sumptuous and elaborate meals, and eventually, on the final night, returning to the original simple stock. She took some delight in surprising me each night with the erotic possibilities of her art.

My lunches departed from this simple structure, mainly because Gay realised that it was my major nourishment for the day, and generally came in several courses, with plenty of fresh fruit (I ate very well, and lost 9 kilos over the 10 days).

Gay maintained a diary throughout the season, and plans to write a paper, when she finds the time, provisionally entitled "Cooking in the Dark". Gay kindly worked on *This Most Wicked Body* for no fee. As she pointed out, I would never be able to afford her, anyway.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT'S SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

It is difficult to assess the project at this stage - my subjective involvement in the process of performing the work was a little too complete. However I will try to be critical. As it is unlikely that anyone will read this, I will jot down a few observations, skimming the surface of a complicated project, and fulfil my contractual obligations with the Australia Council archives.

Before embarking on this work, I had absolutely no idea what the experience would be for myself or my audience. The actual task of performing the 10 day marathon was simply a job, like any other. It's hard work and you survive it. Every work brings its own problems which demand particular solutions. I have, over the years, become quite adept at anticipating each new hurdle. *This Most Wicked Body* However, as I suspected it might, took me quite by surprise. I found solutions to the challenge of maintaining my performance that I would never have expected of myself. I dealt with the ordeal in ways that ran contrary to everything I have ever believed in as a performer. I found I no longer recognised myself - I had become monstrous. The subsequent few months of coming out of the theatre were in some ways far more difficult than the experience of the actual season.

Self-indulgence is a criticism from which every actor recoils in horror. It is a term so utterly condemning of our responsibilities as communicative artists. It inspires the ultimate paranoia in us. But I cannot deny that it was, with generosity, an integral part of *This Most Wicked Body*. It is so bound up with loneliness and excessive investment. How could such a work not contain an unacceptably large dose of self indulgence. Performative ego was high on the agenda. It would be silly to deny it. The task at hand was somehow to construct something meaningful from it - even though it was never going to be pretty. At this stage, I am sorry, I cannot gauge my success. I have no doubt that as the season developed, more and more people left the theatre appalled.

Composing such an extensive performance text was a new challenge for me. It comprised eight monologues, of varying lengths - mostly pornographic, several abusive, all explicit. During the day I would improvise on them, tailor them to my specific audience. At times they became intimately conversational, leaving ample room for audience members to contribute their responses. I was amazed at how many people wanted to tell me details of their most private experiences - generally erotic, often merely fantasies. Each night, at 8.00pm I would rediscover the source of these texts and fit them back into the evening performance format. The show developed and changed irretrievably.

I had imagined it was going to be a solo marathon, but it became one for all six people involved. The hours, energy and care my collaborators invested in *This Most Wicked Body* was phenomenal. A few of them had less sleep than I. They made me feel at times very selfish. It was a small universe existing with The Performance Space and it all revolved around Nigel Kellaway, 24 hours a day. It was a punishing regime. They indicated their exhaustion and slaved on cheerfully. They have all earned my inestimable respect and gratitude.

Crisis hit us all around day 5. I began gagging on every monologue. It is difficult to maintain that degree of ugliness. My collaborators confessed they were repulsed. I had written, stolen, rearranged the material as fiction - it was the theme of the work - how an audience perceives this fiction within the reality of a performance marathon. I began to have difficulty sustaining the material, keeping it buoyant. I had a show, and audience and a crew reliant on my skills, that were becoming overtaxed. I, myself, was tired of the facade.

So I decided to change the premise of the text. It would no longer be fiction, no longer those impersonal lies that have sustained my career to date. Every action I spoke of, I was going to perform. Every story was to be a retelling of a real event. It became an exercise in self-abuse - and the audience was none the wiser. You see, in fucking someone every night in the theatre and recounting these adventures the next day, reality becomes rhetorical, and rhetoric always appears fake. My audience assumed it must be fiction, where in fact there was little divide between reality and fiction. It was all a device. It got me through the season. And it lent my performance a ferocity it has never had before. Perhaps that is good - perhaps not.

And whilst on the subject of fiction - the food deserves some comment. In the theatre we accept the fake. So long as it looks okay, it doesn't matter how it feels, tastes, works for the performer. The evening meal I shared with a guest from the audience and so I was not at all surprised that it tasted superb. But at lunch, I ate alone. Gay had pondered on this. It had to look great, but it could have tasted like shit - she could

have faked it, and saved herself ten sleepless nights of preparation. But she decided, no, it was going to be the authentic article. The experience each day of eating that food alone in such a theatrical context was almost shocking. It certainly threw me off balance - which was her admitted intention.

When I embarked on this project I had entertained the notion of it being my last work. After 20 years of conceiving theatre, I was tired and bored. \$20,000 (funding) was going to buy everyone some respite. It was going to be a modest curtain-call. But I'm sorry, it hasn't worked out that way. I'm not happy with the results yet. It has simply made me eager. For what? I don't know exactly, but I am absolutely sure that I never want to make an easy piece of theatre again. I am only interested in something that is difficult - for everyone involved. I don't want to waste time.

YOUR COMMENTS ON RESPONSES TO THE PROJECT

Press comment has been interesting. Rosalind Richards had worked very hard and successfully in acquiring pre-publicity, on a very meagre budget. It was a difficult production to sell. We struggled for weeks to simplify the message - 240 hours sounded like an impossible investment for an audience to make. If they only came for an 8.00pm show would they feel they were missing out on the real meat? Jill Sykes certainly confirmed these fears in her Sydney Morning Herald review, which I think contributed partly to the poor box office. Some valuable lessons in selling this show were learnt in retrospect. Paul McGillick later told me that he had enjoyed the production, but had found it too complicated to write about. The gay press, unwarrantedly wishing to embrace it as a piece of 'gay theatre', dropped it fast when it conformed in no way to acceptable notions of positive gay politics. (Capital Q sent two reviewers, and then refused to print.)

The reviews the show did receive, interestingly talk as much about the reviewer as the production. John McCallum in the Australian willingly admits this and actually apologises for it. I find his the most honest, though perhaps unrevealing, comment on the work.

It was disappointing that no member of the Drama Committee (Australia Council) attended the show.

I have received little response from the audience. My peers have been largely unwilling to discuss the work with me. (I have never performed a work at The Performance Space that has emptied the foyer after the show with such speed.)

Perhaps they were afraid that I had invested too much personally into the project - that 240 hours was going a little over the top. Perhaps they perceived something unpalatable about me that they had not noticed before. Or perhaps the show was simply bad, and they were embarrassed. I don't know, and I probably never will. The ethics of using an audience member on stage in such a relentless manner has worried some people. Interestingly though, every night my guest stayed afterwards to thank me personally for my performance - they didn't seem too upset at all.

The many people I have spoken to that didn't see the show have said they had wanted to, but the marathon nature of it had been too daunting. There were some people that stayed with the show over several days and watched it develop. They were strangers to me, to whom I never talked and so I don't know why they persevered or what their response was. However, only two present on opening night (an audience made up mostly of people working in or associated with the performing arts) returned to see the developing evening performance. It has been difficult reconciling this with the intentions of the project. The success or otherwise of *This Most Wicked Body* will perhaps become clearer over the ensuing years.

Nigel Kellaway

4th February 1995

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

BUDGET NOVEMBER 1994 EXPENDITURE

WAGES

Nigel Kellaway (performer/director) 1886.56
David Montgomery (percussionist/composer) 2500.00
Simon Wise (lighting/production manager) 2000.00
Joel Markham (stagemanager) 1200.00
Peter Oldham (video artist) 1500.00
Rosalind Richards (publicist) 1773.50
Jenny Andrews (Ballet Teacher) 200.00
Bump-in Labour 75.00
Prostitutes 670.00 11805.06

PRODUCTION

Theatre Hire (2wks x 1400) 2800.00
Theatre Electricity 167.16
Costumes 113.80
Sets 352.25
Properties 142.04
Lighting 290.08
Video 1800.00
Sound 608.80
Food 444.31
Wine 132.50
Kitchen Hire 105.82
Opening night entertainment 125.82
Freight (Instruments from Brisbane) 385.76 7441.42

PUBLICITY

Advertising 1161.50
Poster / Flyer design 460.00
Printing 700.00
Distribution 240.00
Photographs 434.00 2995.50

ADMINISTRATION

Postage 129.90
Tickets 11.00
Telephone 50.00
Bank Charges 38.87
Credit Card Commission 10.40
Photocopying 24.40 264.57

TOTAL EXPENDITURE 22506.66

INCOME

Australia Council Funding 20000.00
Interest 152.52
Program Sales 63.00
Box Office 2316.00

TOTAL INCOME **22531.52**

PROFIT **24.97**

Chapter 2: 1995

(The year of *Fright!!!*)

CHOUX CHOUX BAGUETTE REMEMBERS

toured with Annette Tesoriero to HONG KONG FRINGE

ORIENTALIA

performed in cross-cultural project with Peking Opera actors Xu Fengshan and Zhang Zhijun, director Sally Sussman, writers Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter, composer Andree Greenwell, lighting Janine Peacock. The Performance Space, Sydney.

FRIGHT!!!

directed for SIDETRACK PERFORMANCE GROUP, composer Andree Greenwell, lighting Geoff Cobham, costumes Annemaree Dalziel, dramaturg Keith Gallasch. The Enmore Theatre, Sydney.

THE MEASURE

performed with SIDETRACK PERFORMANCE GROUP, director Don Mamouney, composer Peter Wells. LIVID FESTIVAL, Brisbane, QLD.

Contents

1995 Works

Script of Choux Choux Baguette Remembers

Reviews - Pamela Payne - Sun Herald

Xpress Magazine

David Gyger - Opera Australasia

Fright!!! Credits

Fright!!! Reviews - James Waites - SMH

Stewart Hawkins - Daily Telegraph Mirror

John McCallum - The Australian

Chris Fleming - Beat Magazine

? - On the Street Magazine

CHOUX CHOUX BAGUETTE REMEMBERS

1 hour version

copyright Nigel Kellaway & Annette Tesoriero 1993

1. WERTHER - Massenet

Va! laisse couler mes larmes

2. Don Jose: Mais moi, Carmen, je t'aime encore,
Carmen, hélas! moi, je t'adore!

Carmen: A quoi bon tout cela?
que de mots superflus

Don Jose: Carmen, je t'aime, je t'adore!
Eh bien! s'il le faut, pour te plaire,
Je resterai bandit
tout ce que tu voudrais
Tout! tu m'entends, Tout tu m'entends, Tout!

Mais ne me quitte pas, O ma Carmen,
Ah! souviens toi, souviens toi du passé!
Nous nous aimions, naguère!
Ah, ne me quitte pas, Carmen,
Ah! ne me quitte pas!

Carmen: Jamais Carmen, ne cédera!

3. LA SPAGNOLA

4. Carmen: La, la, la.....

Tosca: Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore
non feci mai male ad anima viva
Con ma furiva
Quante miserie conobbi, aiutai...

Carmen: La, la, la....

Tosca: perche, perche Signor, Ah.....

5. Don Jose: Ainsi, le salut démon ame
Je l'aurai perdu pour que toi,

Pourque tu t'en ailles, infame,
Entre ses gras rire de moi!
Non, parle sang, tu n'iras pas!
Carmen, c'est moi que tu suivras!

Carmen: Non, non, jamais!

Don Jose: Je suis las te menacer!

Carmen: Eh bien! frappe moi donc, ou laisse moi passer.

Butterfly: O ame, sceso dal trono del l'alto Paradiso,
guarda ben fiso, fiso di tua madre la facia!
ch te'n resti una tracia,
Guarda ben! Amore, addio! Addio! piccolo amor!

6. CARMEN - Bizet

Seguidilla

(Footy half-time: Orange and massage)

7. NANNA'S LIED - Kurt Weill

(Footy half-time: Untie, Water spray, Towel)

8. I HOLD YOU HAND IN MINE - Tom Lehrer

9. Tosca: O Mario, non ti muovere....
s'avviano...
taci....vanno....scendono...scendono...
Ancora non ti muovere.....

Ti soffoca il sangue?

Scarpia: Sorcorso!

Tosca: Ti soffoca il sangue?

Scarpia: Aiuto!

Tosca: Ah!

Scarpia: Muoio, muoio!

Tosca: E ucciso da una donna!

Scarpia: Aiuto!

Tosca: M'hai assai torturata!

Scarpia: Soccorso! Muoio!

Tosca: Odi tu ancora? Parla! Guardami! Son Tosca! O Scarpia!

Muori donato! Mouri! Muori! Mouri!

E morto? (Nigel: Morto)
Or gliper dono

10. Don Jose: Pour la derniere fois, demon,
Veux tu me suivre? Veux tu me suivre?

Carmen: Non, non!!
Cette Bague(tte), autre fois, tu me l'avais donee, Tiens!

Don Jose: Eh bien! donee!!

Vous povez m'arreter.
C'est moi qui l'ai tuee!
Ah! Carmen! ma Carmen! adoree!

11. L'ACCORDEONISTE - Michel Emer

12. Choux Choux Chat with the audience.

13. Recording from Tosca - Nigel enters as Butterfly and plays first phrase of *One Fine Day*.

14. WIE LANGE NOCH? - Kurt Weill

(Nigel continues *One Fine Day* as Choux Choux dresses in Kimono)

15. ONE FINE DAY - Puccini

16. Carmen: est un oiseau rebelle
Que nul ne peut apprivoiser,
Et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'appelle,
S'il lui convient de refuser.
Rien n'y fait, menace ou priere,
l'un parle bien, l'autre se tait
Et c'est l'autre que je prefere,
Il n'a rien dit: mais il me plait.

L'amour. l'amour, l'amour, l'amour....

Mario: ma nel ritrar costri...
il mio solo pensiero
ah! il mio sol pensier sei tu! Tosca, c'est moi!!

17. JE TE VEUX - Erik Satie

18. DARLING, JE VOUX AIME BEAUCOUP - Anna Sosenko

19. Don Jose: Pour la deniere fois, demon,
Veux tu me suivre? Veux tu me suivre?

Carmen: Non, non!
Cette bague(tte), autre fois
tu me l'avais donnee, Tiens!

Don Jose: Eh bien! dam.....

Tosca: Presto su! Mario, Mario!
Su, presto! Andiam!
Su, su! Mario Mario!

Morto! Morto! Morto!
O Mario...morto?...tu?... cosi?
Finire cosi? Finire cosi?

Pinkerton: Butterfly!

Don Jose: Carmen!

Tosca: O Scarpia!

Pinkerton: Butterfly!

Tosca: Ti soffoca il sangue?

Scarpia: Soccorso!

Tosca: Ti soffoca il sangue?

Scarpia: Aiuto!

Carmen: Eh bien. Frappe moi donc.

Tosca: E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!

20. YOUKALI - Kurt Weill

21. (curtain call) LES AMANTS DE PARIS - Leo Ferre and Eddy Marnay

CHOUX CHOUX BAGUETTE REMEMBERS - PRESS COMMENT

THE SUN-HERALD
February 6th, 1994
by Pamela Payne

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XPRESS MAGAZINE (WA)

November 18th, 1993

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... *Choux Choux Baguette* is an unusual mixture of slapstick comedy and opera - yes, opera.

The Diva from hell, Choux Choux emerges from the audience as an aggressive Italian stereotype, and she immediately has our full attention. She launches into Italian tirades and then breaks into song, Choux Choux (Annette Tesoriero) is a big lady with a big voice.

Choux Choux is deliciously over the top, showing all of the exaggerated emotion of an opera singer in an irreverent send up of some of the really good death scenes from *Carmen*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*.

Choux Choux's performance rests in that interesting space between the sublime and the ridiculous. Annette Tesoriero's vocal training and ability give Choux Choux the voice of a real, live Diva; whilst her stage antics and theatricality would appeal to anyone who enjoys slapstick humour.

The visual comedy is an important aspect of this show, because the songs and script aren't in English. She communicates in sign language often with the help of a couple of French bread sticks. The baguettes she's carrying have many uses - weapons, missiles, sex-aids, and even food. Food fetish? Definitely. She even brings out the whipped cream!

Choux Choux's performance is supported by a long-suffering pianist who doubles as a punching bag when our highly strung Diva turns nasty. There's a less than friendly rivalry between them.

Messing around with celebrated opera pieces means that Choux Choux needs a love interest, and she chooses a male victim from the audience (you have been warned!).

OPERA AUSTRALASIA

February 1994
by David Gyger

(Reproduced with permission)

Annette Tesoriero's considerable presence and artistry are showcased to perfection in her one-woman show entitled *Choux Choux Baguette Remembers: A Fractured Opera Tale*, which I caught up with at the Tilbury Hotel in Sydney's Woolloomooloo on Sunday, January 9.

I had previously encountered this extraordinarily versatile artist in a handful of other performances none of which was even remotely akin to any other - in Raffaele Marcellino's *The Remedy* for Sydney Metropolitan Opera in 1989, in Rainer Linz's *Volcano and Vision* for Calculated Risks in 1990, as Arminda in Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera* for University of NSW Opera and in Andree Greenwell's *Sweet Death* for Chamber Made Opera in Melbourne in 1991; and, most recently, singing Italian excavations from our colonial past at the opening of an art exhibition on Observatory Hill, Sydney.

Her one-woman operatic extravaganza is quite as enjoyable in its unique way as Judy Glen's Spaghetti Opera, which I reviewed in these columns in November 1992 after attending a performance at the very same Tilbury Hotel; but it provides a very different night out, even if both shows involve a knowledgeable and loving sendup of this eminently senduppable art form by artists admirably equipped to do just that.

Tesoriero's show features a series of lightning-quick changes of gear which were as brilliantly executed as they had been devised in the first place by Tesoriero and her accompanist Nigel Kellaway, who is very much drawn into the dramatics of Tesoriero's performance as is the audience itself - in particular, a man roped in from the front phalanx of tables to tie Tesoriero up for her rendition of Carmen's Seguidilla and then be accused in quick succession of being Pinkerton and Scarpia as well as Don Jose.

The spark of Tesoriero's performance arises from its quite uncanny juxtaposition of extraordinarily disparate operatic characters and situations: literally without batting an eyelid she switches from a typically gruesome Tom Lehrer song about a severed hand gradually revealed to be a souvenir of a woman he has himself slain

to Rodolpho's Che gelida manina from *La Boheme*, or from Cio-Cio San's ritual self- destruction at the end of *Madama Butterfly* to Don Jose's agonised confession of the murder of his beloved at the end of *Carmen*.

Like Glen, Tesoriero proves, whenever she chooses to do so, that she knows her operatic onions inside out and has the technique to play it straight: as in stunt diving and many other sorts of clowning-about, one can't effectively parody a serious human activity without being pretty good at doing it straight in the first place.

Unlike Glen, though, Tesoriero has a conventionally solid operatic build; which means she could easily produce enough decibellage to blast 'em out of the back rows of the upper circle in any conventional-scale opera house you'd care to mention - any time she wished.

Once or twice, during *Choux Choux Baguette*, she put her powerful, versatile, beautiful and admirably schooled vocal wares on full display to great effect; clearly though, her all-round talent shines brightest in the freer, more informal atmosphere of cabaret and, to a lesser extent, the contemporary music theatre genre, than it ever could reasonably aspire to do within the formal strictures of standard repertory opera.

FRIGHT!!!

Written and directed for Sidetrack Performance Group

Performers: Regina Heilmann, Jai McHenry, Meme Thorne
Dean Walsh, James Berlyn, Rolando Ramos, Xu Fengshan

Dramaturg: Keith Gallasch

Music: Andree Greenwell

Costumes: Annemaree Dalziel

Lighting: Geoff Cobham

Production: Neil Simpson

Enmore Theatre. May/June 1995

Reviews

Fright on the fringe a tedious tease

James Waites

Sydney Morning Herald, June 2nd, 1995

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Fright-full drama is lost in space

Stewart Hawkins

The Daily Telegraph Mirror, June 2nd, 1995

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John McCallum

The Australian, June 2nd, 1995

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Chris Fleming
Beat Magazine, June 17th, 1995

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One feels presumptuous and over simplistic to suggest that *Fright* is clearly *about* anything, as the production spurns theatrical conventions such as linear structure, narrative format and psychological continuity in favour of theatrical dream scape of Grotowski-like visceral directness, combing both aesthetic indulgence and base depiction. Its erratic negotiation through the territories of fear show not only our paralysis but our desire and thirst for it.

However, as Sidetrack make clear, any notions of individual horror are intricately linked to a shared cultural base. And this is one of the triumphs of the production. The erratic shifting between the banal and compulsive to the graphically morbid and sadistic struck me like a hypothetical dream-meeting between Peter Greenaway and Woody Allen, conversing on the particularities of human frailty.

Indeed, filmic references are necessary on account of the detachment and physical distance of the audience from the action. Apart from intermittent threats from the cast and the occasional interloper, the production sacrifices intimacy for scale and one wonders whether the Enmore Theatre was the most appropriate choice of venue for a production of this type. However, if the

audience size is any indication, such a venue is perhaps another of those necessary evils. The oft-quoted John Lennon had very little nice to say about what he considered the avant-garde. But then again, he probably never had the opportunity to see a troupe like Australia's Sidetrack Theatre in action.

FRIGHTFULLY FUCK!

On the Street, June 6th, 1995

(Reproduced with permission)

The second opening night of *Fright*, the new willy-swishing expose of the macabre, is currently sending audiences bonkers at the Enmore. The ritualistic devildom of the naked, of fucking, screaming, singing, chanting, fighting and dying people on stage become, for an hour or two, a natural part of life.

The reasons so many people walked out within the first 20 minutes may vary but, if anything is certain - and nothing is certain when it comes to a plot in this show - if you are easily offended by nudity, violence, torment and perplexity, then you should definitely see this and perhaps you'll get over your squeamish ways. On the other hand, if you like to see cocks and tits and fannies that don't belong to you bouncing around before your eyes you'll just love *Fright*.

Some of the scenes in this bizarre performance leave a lasting impression indeed, and some of the lighting effects, designed by Geoff Cobham, are nothing less than sensational. If there were anything to complain about it would have to be the yawn-inspiring breaks in pace which, considering the experience of the director Nigel Kellaway, are bewildering. Surely everything, every aspect of *Fright*, must have been carefully thought out prior to the opening night. On one hand *Fright* has to be one of the most sensational shows around and, at the same time, I must admit I dozed off twice while the bits of inexplicable dilly-dally failed to keep my attention between other scenes where I was astounded.

Frightfully sorry to whine but, in all fairness, *Fright* is worthy of a visit and does leave lasting images of macabre and horrific scenes well and truly planted in your brain.

Chapter 3: 1996

(The year on the dole and 'bits-and-pieces')

MYSTERIES

(by Knut Hamsun, adapted by Patrick Troy and Peter Haynes) performed and co-directed with Patrick Troy with SPLINTERS THEATRE OF SPECTACLE for the Canberra Festival, Canberra Playhouse, ACT.

COMPRESSIONS 100

created and performed in installation as part of project co-ordinated by Tess de Quincey and Stuart Lynch, the Sydney Opera House.

FISH OUT OF WATER

directing consultant for solo performance by Deborah Pollard, The Performance Space, Sydney.

BURYING MOTHER

designer for solo performance by Meme Thorne, Belvoir Street, Sydney.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF HAUNTED PLACES

directed solo performance by Erin Hefferon, writer Josephine Wilson, composers Rob Muir and Derek Kreckler, lighting Mike Nanning. (1996-97) touring **Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth**. Produced by the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. (1997) **Tour to the London International Festival of Theatre, performing at the Royal Court Theatre.**

Contents

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West Australian Applications for Artistic Directorship of The One
Extra Company The opera Project - Aims and Objectives

review

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

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**Ron Banks The West
Australian October
1996**

Application for the Artistic Directorship of the One Extra Company

In 1996 the position of Artistic Director of the One Extra Company was advertised. I had applied for the position unsuccessfully in 1991, when Kai Tai Chan relinquished the reins.

My application in 1996 was a protracted affair. The company's board had been tardy in responding to the resignations of the previous artistic directors (Graeme Watson and Julie-Anne Long) and Australia Council applications for multi-year funding were pending. I first submitted a brief expression of interest, The company then got back to me, to request that I further flesh it out. They then invited me to apply for the position, and to submit a formal application addressing certain criteria.

Despite the numerous requests they made, I was not interviewed for the position, and received no written notification of their decision.

Below are excerpts from my submissions.

28th April 1996

Ms Valda Craig Chair,
Board of Directors The
One Extra Company PO
Box 384 Forestville NSW
2087

Dear Valda Craig and Members of the Board,

I am writing in response to your advertisement in last weekend's Australian and to elaborate on my initial expression of interest in applying for the position of Artistic Director of the One Extra Company. Annette Shun Wah, in a telephone conversation two weeks ago, suggested I might do so. I hope greater detail regarding my vision and a few strategies may help you in considering my suitability for the position.

I believe that The One Extra holds a critical position in the history and the future of Australian dance and theatre. Its role is to be a provocative force in an arts community that is often dogged by hesitancy and conservatism. The One Extra has always needed to shake the categories of genre. It cannot model itself on borrowed structures. In a time when many companies in Australia are looking alarmingly similar, I believe that The One Extra must set itself defiantly apart. I embrace the concerns facing all dance companies in this country regarding a tightening of the funding dollar. It has always been a fiercely competitive field (as so, perhaps, it should be). We need to carefully and constantly reassess our artistic output and how it is served by our company structures. ~~We need to demonstrate a unique reason to exist.~~

Having spent the past three years on the Dance Committee of the Australia Council and closely observing the funding and policy meetings of the NSW Ministry, I feel confident in saying a rigorously articulated, radical and broad definition of what constitutes the performing arts is welcomed with both enthusiasm and some relief by the funding bodies. I do not believe that The One Extra can afford to ignore its history as a leading proponent in challenging the conservative exclusivity of performing genres.

My career has been committed to equipping myself and those with whom I have worked with the skills, technique, artistic literacy and vision to create work that recognises the discrete nature and history of each performative genre whilst, at the same time, interrogating the boundaries that have been erected between them. My work is made for an audience, first and foremost - an audience I strive to seduce into reassessing their expectations of dance, theatre, music, design and their own personal position within the theatre space.

I believe passionately in excellence. I strive for a virtuosity of technique and intelligence of vision and content. I aim to make the difficult options entertaining. I wish to lead a company of mature and experienced performers into areas of dance and theatre that will impact across the full spectrum of the performative arts.

ARTISTIC STRUCTURE

The nature of the company's creative process would be collaborative. I am not an autocratic director in the studio. The calibre of an individual work is dependent on the contribution of all the artists involved.

I will always choose to work with mature collaborators - those who have a variety of processes, have strong personal creative aspirations, and who will actively challenge my own decisions. A suitable director is one with the ability and experience to encourage this contribution and hone it with an overarching aesthetic coherence. This is the premise on which I have created my work over many years. The eventual ownership of this product is something I willingly share with my collaborators.

A company's recognisable individuality is developed over years by a director who carefully selects the collaborators and ensures a continuity in process. There must be a clear progression within the company's opus. The development of an audience goes hand-in-hand with this articulate artistic progression.

I have spent the past twelve years of my career creating almost exclusively full length works. It has been a period of learning about the structuring of time. Underlining the shape of my work is a deep concern with musical forms. I have explored a variety of theatrical spaces and the manner in which an audience relates to these environments. I believe that over these years I have developed a keen understanding of these resources of time and space and have demonstrated an ability and confidence in manipulating them in quite radical ways. It is an ongoing and rigorous enquiry.

There have many artists sharing this process with me and who understand the complexities of my vision and my strategies of exploration. I am very aware of the importance of creating the correct mix of collaborators, of ensuring a constructive dialogue and continuity of process whilst, at the same time, encouraging the fresh input of new personnel. Financial constraints preclude a full-time salaried core of performers. Some continuity of performers however must be attained from production to production. This is essential for the artistic development of the work, its future touring capabilities, and the public recognition of the company as a stable entity. Particularly at a local level, the company must be seen as more than just an artistic director. Artists who have expressed interest in working with me in the near future include:

Performers: Dean Walsh, Kate Champion, Simone Baker, Brett Daffy, Regina Heilmann, Jai McHenry, Rolando Ramos, Xu Fengshan, Annette Tesoriero, Sarah Dunne, Padma Menon, Ros Crisp.

Composers: Andree Greenwell, Peter Wells, Sarah de Jong, Richard Vella.

Lighting Designers: Simon Wise, Geoff Cobham, Neil Simpson, Ivan Smith.

Costume Designer: Annemaree Dalziel.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The administration of a company must be developed alongside its artistic program. It is a case of working "from the ground up", to create a structure that serves the product.

I would suggest that in its first year the artistic director hold the senior executive position in the company, creating an effective collaboration with the appointed administrator/general manager/business manager (whatever title seems the most appropriate). The role of this business manager would be twofold. Firstly, in the general "housekeeping" of the company to fulfil its obligations to the funding bodies, Corporate Affairs, ATO, GIO, etc. For this, essential accounting skills and experience are required. The more creative (and rewarding) aspect of this position would be in the development of an artistic program and the general promotion of the company, in

collaboration with the artistic director. Promotional ability, imagination and a certain fearlessness are essential criteria for this position.

I believe that if certain priorities are concentrated on in the early life of the new structure, this job could be managed by a single person. It is the task of the artistic director to inspire and support the business manager, to define the parameters of the role and to take a generous share in the workload. I have many years experience in the joint administration of a performing arts company and of numerous projects.

The goal should be to contain the administrative structure of the company as tightly as is humanly possible, particularly in the early stages. The needs of the artistic output must define the structure. Extra personnel should be employed only as required. A company has peaks and troughs of activity throughout a year, so as long as productions are viewed as individual projects they can be budgeted with an extra administrative component. Core costs can be kept to a minimum.

In regard to the promotion of individual seasons a separate organisation or individual should be contracted. In my experience the results can be just as effective and certainly more cost efficient than managing this in-house.

The production management of a company is a crucial element. Likewise, this technical support should be contracted season by season. My preference is for a continuity of personnel in this area. The production manager is the lungs of a production. A certain production shorthand develops over years of collaboration. It also facilitates the life of a given work in repertoire.

PROGRAM

In its first year the company would need to consolidate its position within Sydney - a body of work needs to be created.

I am concerned about the life expectancy of a work. Touring is clearly a way to extend it. The work grows over time. The remounting of a work for touring requires some compromises, but from my experience this means it is refined and its strengths focussed. A National visibility must be developed for new work. When it is dynamic and professes a radical vision it must be held accountable beyond the confines of Sydney.

Touring opportunities must be explored from the outset if they are to be available from the second year of operation. A first season would ideally be up by April 1997.

The first three works for the company need to astound their audience in their diversity of form. Each production should be unexpected. However, an intellectual and aesthetic coherence to the program must be developed. Its audience must be able to recognise a common spirit in the work. For this reason I would choose to direct all productions in the first year. As the new company's visibility develops, co-productions with other directors and organisations would be planned. The reach of the company's influence would thus be broadened, but carefully managed. Descriptions such as 'alternative', 'avant-garde' and 'cutting-edge' may be problematic today, but they are intimately associated with the history of The One Extra. They have been used to explain the company's reason to exist over 20 years. The company, in embarking on a new era, must reposition a strong spotlight on itself as the provocative voice of Sydney theatre. In its first year it should produce a surprising quantity of new work if it is to espouse a rigorous, energetic and accessible new vision.

We are, however, being constantly reminded in this country (particularly every two years as another feast of international work arrives in Adelaide) that we produce work on very short rehearsal periods. Great work, of course, takes a very long time to create. Some strategies are required. We have a tendency in Australia (partly due to our small population and touring limitations) to make work quickly, perform it fleetingly and then discard it to start on the next new and under-resourced work. As a freelance director I have a number of what I would term "unfinished" works in my repertoire, created over months, performed and then left to gestate over the years. This is a quarry to be mined. In revisiting this material we would be gaining months, even years, of free time. I am not suggesting a simple remounting of old borrowed work. It is the dramaturgy of a work that takes years to consolidate. It is the concepts, basic material and the logic of these theatrical ideas that would be developed into new and completed works. This is a strategy which I believe deserves careful consideration.

Sarah Miller in her article for RealTime 12, *ANOTHER OPENING, ANOTHER SHOWDOWN*, warns that "Australian artists and companies achieve what they achieve despite all the obstacles thrown in their respective paths and that the ability to develop aesthetically ambitious and intellectually rigorous work in a sustained way in this country is still out of reach". She is referring to the "sheer amount of resources (money, material and last, but not least TIME) that precedes the presentation of any international (imported) performance or theatrical event in this country ... (and) the concomitant lack of resources (time money and material) that go into supporting even the best funded Australian projects and companies ..."

Following are three full evening works that may comprise the first year's program. These are very broad outline:

Broad outlines of the works followed:

- 1 The Monstrous (a reworking of elements of *Fright!!!*)
- 2 Godot (the waiting there of) a collaboration with Indian Dancer Padma Menon, and her Kailash Dance Company from Canberra
- 3 The Berlioz A song/dance cycle

It is interesting to note that when my application was unsuccessful, these three works went onto become The opera Project's *The Romantic Trilogy: The Monstrous* became *the Terror of Tosca*, *Godot* became *Tristan* and *The Berlioz* became *The Berlioz-our vampires ourselves* (The opera Project, however, took 3 years to make them!)

I admit the size of the proposed program is ambitious. I hope it at least indicates the scope of my concerns. It contains broad gestures to be developed. If the Australia Council agrees to grant an extension on its May 15th closing date and the company decides to go with it, then these initial ideas would have to be developed very briskly. I believe that the three proposed works could be brought in on budget if the funding bodies maintain the company somewhere close to its current figure. I have ordered the three works above in descending order of envisaged production cost, and projected box-office should be budgeted accordingly. Any deficit needs to be carried over to the subsequent production, with the year's final work budgeted on close to zero box-office. I will never allow a company to run into deficit at the end of its financial year when multi-year funding is not assured. A surplus can always be disguised by crediting preproduction on the next year's ~~Program~~ program. that I have arrived at a stage in my career when I have the skills, experience and confidence to lead a company such as The One Extra with a quite singular and attainable vision. I look forward to a future of growth, with many surprises and unforeseen avenues of opportunity. I hope my letter is of help to you in reaching a decision regarding the future direction for The One Extra Company and that I may have the chance to discuss further with you my interest in the artistic directorship of the company.

yours sincerely,
Nigel Kellaway

14th May 1996

The Selection Committee The
One Extra Company Ltd. PO
Box 394 FORESTVILLE NSW
2087

Dear members of the Selection Committee and the Board,

I am writing to apply for the position of Director of The One Extra Company. As was suggested by Annette Shun Wah in our telephone conversation yesterday, I would ask that this application be read in conjunction with my expression of interest of 28th April which answers in some depth several of your criteria. Rather than repeat myself I have here added a few points to my initial letter, where I felt it necessary, or as requested.

1. A CLEARLY ARTICULATED VISION FOR THE ONE EXTRA

My vision for the company is described in my expression of interest. However, in addition, I would like to say that a company must attain a great deal more than the singular aspiration of its artistic director. My application is driven by more than just my personal need to make art. That of course is an essential part of it, but I believe a company should strive for a complexity of goals. It must be able to develop an identity beyond that of its artistic director. The One Extra should serve its community by example. It should support and encourage emerging talent by challenging the soft options in the creation and presentation of its work. It should create a practical forum for enquiry into the nature of performative art.

The One Extra describes its agenda as the creation of "dance of ideas", but this always be qualified. A structure must be created to ensure that these ideas are always rigorously explored, inspiring interest, intelligent, and the audience's response to these ideas is, above all, one of considerable satisfaction.

2. DEMONSTRATED INITIATIVE, VISION AND SKILL TO RUN A LEADING PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY

I consider myself a fairly pragmatic artist. I have spent my career developing the skills to get ideas on stage. I understand the nuts and bolts of theatre. I rely on the co-operation of specialists and fiercely protect a healthy and diplomatic environment for our collaboration.

My work has covered a wide spectrum of forms and has been, in the main, self initiated. The Sydney Front was developed over seven years from a loose gathering of similarly concerned performers to become an efficient and quite prolific organisation. I am proud that throughout this process of structuring, the company never lost sight of its artistic objectives.

I believe that my ability to foresee problems before they arise and the fact that I tend not to procrastinate have been important factors in the success of the many projects I have undertaken. I make well considered decisions quickly. On the other hand, I expend a good deal of energy listening to others, so I can be confident that my decisions are both authoritative and representative. Decisiveness and flexibility are efficient bed-fellows in the managing of an organisation, in my experience.

3. A DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO GENERATE NEW IDEAS AND ESTABLISH COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES, REFLECTING A BROAD APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY DANCE THEATRE

I shy away from the established definitions of "dance theatre". The moment one locates that definition, one's work begins to alarmingly like everyone else's. My approach is extremely broad. In my last solo performance *This most Wicked Body* I relied heavily on text. This is not usual for me. My craft is built on the body. "Dance" for me is as broadly defined as the organisation of the body in time and space, recognising and attributing historical cultural precedences. I am never precious about the form, or rather, I never approach a new work with preconceived notions of form. I invite the influences of my collaborators. They define my work. A rich variety of collaborators have been responsible for the considerable breadth of my work to date.

I would like to see The One Extra develop its identity as a meeting place for artists working across the full spectrum of performing and allied arts. I want to build a forum for ideas that challenge our notions regarding the body in the space. Discovery is the reason for process.

I have discussed this further in my expression of interest under the heading ARTISTIC STRUCTURE.

4. A WILLINGNESS TO UNDERTAKE, AND A DEMONSTRATED CAPACITY FOR, A RANGE OF BASIC MANAGEMENT TASKS.

Please refer to my expression of interest, pages 3-4.

The Sydney Front Inc. was jointly administered by myself and John Baylis. I was for the seven years of its operation the public officer and tended to the day-to-day administration of the company. I have cared for the administration of all my self-initiated projects and have advised many independent artists on administrative matters.

As I have stated in my expression of interest, I believe that the director MUST play an active role in the administration of The One Extra.

5. EXCELLENT "PEOPLE" SKILLS AND MEDIA SKILLS.

My "people" skills I think are addressed in my expression of interest. I have also listed a number of referees who will attest to my abilities in this area.

My output over the years has attracted considerable media attention - ranging from the puerile to the highly intelligent. I am very comfortable with the press and have the experience to be selective with my words and images. The promotion of work is essential to the creative process. I think two qualities that attract the media are my willingness to provoke and my refusal to compromise for their sake. I enjoy working with publicists and discovering the right angles with which to sell a work. I insist on very thorough preparation.

I hope I have the opportunity to discuss my application with you in the coming week.

yours sincerely,
Nigel Kellaway

Referees:

- 1 Don Mamouney Artistic Director, Sidetrack Performance Group.
- 2 Sarah Miller Director PICA, formerly Director Performance Space.
- 3 Keith Gallasch Co-director Open City, Co-editor RealTime
- 4 Jane Westbrook Project Director, New Images, British Council

formerly Chief Executive Officer, Performing Arts
Board Australia Council

The following have indicated during the past week that they would be happy to assist with their recommendations:

5. Nick Tsoutas Director, Artspace.
6. Russell Dumas Artistic Director, Dance Exchange
7. Angharad Wynne-Jones Artistic Director, Performance Space
8. Geoff Cobham Production Manager, Adelaide Festival formerly Production manager, The One Extra Company
9. Clare Grant Director, Playworks formerly member of The Sydney Front
10. Wendy Blacklock Director, Performing Lines

My application for the position of Director of The One Extra Company was a rather public affair. Everyone in the Australian dance scene seemed to know about it. But I was not short listed for an interview.

Annette Tesoriero consoled me with her assessment that I was never going to be appointed as director of any existing company and I should start my own - again!! And so we approached Don Mamouney and tendered the idea of "Sidetrack Opera" - an affiliated company. He didn't like the name (or the political and funding mine-field it promised) but he gave his absolute support for our endeavours: free rehearsal space, a computer and much good will. We chose the name "The opera Project" and applied successfully for project funding to the Australia Council Theatre Fund in late 1996.

THE OPERA PROJECT Inc.

Aims and Objectives

THE OPERA PROJECT Inc. is the initiative of Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero. It intends to create an ongoing process to examine contemporary theatrical structures within a collaborative forum involving several artists who have worked together in various combinations over the years. We have chosen the word OPERA for its literal Italian meaning - a work - as well as its culturally implied meaning. It is a PROJECT in so much as it entails, first and foremost, an interrogation of form. Our concerns are to develop a rigorous theatrical practice in which music is but **one** contributing component. These concerns are not those that can be explored within forms that are dominated by either a literary text, a particular physical vocabulary or a predominantly musical ~~opera~~ **opera** - a concept is culturally determined. It has developed a language of music, libretto and mis en scene, as separate, 'closed' texts. Our aim is to 'open' up these traditionally and forcibly 'closed' texts and thereby untangle the fabric that makes up our contemporary notion of opera.

The structures of funding bodies have forced us to ask a perhaps superfluous question: What is the difference between drama, dance, music theatre and opera? Our answer is essentially ~~nothing~~ **nothing** - they are all theatrical practices. THE OPERA PROJECT applies within the 1998 Theatre Program because our method is defined by our theatrical experience, first and foremost. Our objective is to create work that impacts across a wide spectrum of contemporary performing arts.

THE OPERA PROJECT Inc. will be launched in September 1997 with its first production **THE BERLIOZ - OUR VAMPIRES, OURSELVES**, at The Performance Space, with support from the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council.

Chapter 4: 1997

(The year of *The Berlioz- our vampires ourselves*)

Awarded the 1997 Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship by the NSW Ministry for the Arts.

THE SINKING OF THE RAINBOW WARRIOR

(opera by Amanda Stewart and Colin Bright) directed for THE SONG COMPANY and australYSIS at National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Sydney, for the Sydney Festival. Designer Pierre Thibaudeau, lighting Ivan Smith, costumes Annemaree Dalziel, sound production Kevin Davidson.

Co-founded **THE oPERA PROJECT Inc.** with Annette Tesoriero, a company dedicated to the interrogation of contemporary music/theatre practice.

A DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM

Piano accompanist for dance work choreographed by Gary Rowe (U.K.) performed for ANTISTATIC festival, The Performance Space, Sydney.

SIX VARIATIONS ON A LIE

Directorial assistance for dance work with Rosalind Crisp, Nikki Heywood, Ion Pearse and James McAllister, performed for ANTISTATIC festival, The Performance Space, Sydney.

THE BERLIOZ our vampires ourselves

co-created with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. performing with Annette Tesoriero and Dean Walsh. Based on a scenario by Keith Gallasch, original sound by Peter Wells, lighting with Simon Wise, The Performance Space, Sydney.
(1998) toured to 3rd Australian Performing Arts Market, Adelaide SA.

BETWEEN PARALLELS AND MERIDIANS

Directed installation with Artist Gerardo Rodriguez-Bruzzesi at The Art Gallery of New South Wales.

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The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior

Sydney Festival - on the water at the Australian National Maritime Museum

Libretto: Amanda Stewart

Music: Colin Bright

Design: Pierre Thibaudeau

The Song Company and australYSIS

Reviews

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Deborah Jones
The Australian, January 14, 1997

The Eighth Wonder and *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* are entirely predictable recent operas, their dramatic shapes inherited from the 19th century, their music closer to the musical than to the significant operas of the 20th century. *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*, on the other hand, constantly and engagingly surprises. Although musically it inclines to an accessible modernism - save where it trips into rap and rock and achieves a sustained open-ended lyricism - this opera is theatrically (in the interplay of composition and libretto) a potent contemporary work. Some of its power was unleashed in its premiere production on and in the water, a barge, a yacht and HMAS Vampire on Darling Harbour. Its Australian antecedents and companions are the music theatre works documented in John Jenkins and Rainer Linz's timely *Arias* (Red House editions, Footscray 1997). Many of the most interesting of the cited works parallel contemporary performance in their play with meaning, states of being, narrative and site. You cannot bring 19th century expectations to these works. Those who have seen *Einstein on the Beach* - or more pertinently, Robert Ashley's *Improvement (Don leaves Linda)* - will know the pleasure born of patience when confronted with new opera. Even so, any opera, even the most conventional, renders words and narrative unintelligible from time to time as music drowns words, as the demands of the notes distort words into sound, or, as is most often the case, it is sung in *another* language.

I invoke 'intelligibility' because it was the issue which the production of *the Sinking...* and the librettist in particular were punished in reviews - despite aspects of the work being praised. And while I would be party to some of the criticism (there were too many distances involved which made the audience work too hard, lose their attention, stare into the darkness for action that was elsewhere and underlit) I had no more or less a struggle with the work than I've had with many an opera or music theatre work. Unlike plays and musicals, operas do not often make for a complete experience the first time around. The movement from impressions to understanding is gradual. There is however, much in *the Sinking...* that was lucid, much of the libretto that was amplified, even made quite literal at times, by designer Pierre Thibaudeau and director Nigel Kellaway's exploitation of the site, use of projections, of spy thriller imagery, and off sound - exquisitely designed by Kevin Davidson. The clarity of the scoring and fine ensemble playing of Bright's music by austrALYSIS, conducted by Roland Peelman, invariably created space for the singers' voices. The physical and theatrical confidence of the Song Company was amazing given that acting is not their business - aided by Kellaway's understanding of the non-psychological portraits in Stewart's libretto. Even so, the desire as an audience member to understand was strong, even when absorbed by the production's dramatic images and sounds. Those of us who purchased a program - synopses should have been distributed free - and got to read it in the fading light were no doubt advantaged.

The particular challenge of Amanda Stewart's libretto is that it operates from narrative episodes (not always casually linked) and, especially, from a rich variety of voices (created, documentary, fluid, fragmented), and while individual moments and shapes are easy to grasp - a love duet, an interrogation, a monologue of loss - assembling the whole is more a reflective than a logical act. Even so, the overall progression of the work is chronological, once initiated by the ghost of Fernando Pereria (the photographer killed in the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior) emerging vocally from an eerie rumbling bass underworld. (There are too many like pleasures in the work to mention here.)

I hope that *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior* gets a second production, so often the vital opportunity for any opera's future. While its creators are enamoured of the work as site-specific, a theatre (or other interior space) version with the same creative team could give the libretto its real chance, and a clearer indication of how expertly Bright has responded to Stewart's idiosyncratic use of language and made it his own. This first production deserves praise in every department. It is true to the ambition of the work in scale and detail as it ranged across a battleship, through water and light, in the sustained and chilling wind of an atomic blast, and the greater betrayals and acts of complicity that constellated around the sinking of a protest vessel. Along with Denise Stoklos' *Mary Stuart* and, on the Fringe, *The Geography of Haunted Places* (also directed by Kellaway), this was one of the most significant events of the 1997 Sydney Festival, whatever its shortcomings at this stage of its development. Its meanings, its engagement with the politics of the Pacific of which we are a part, and the language in which we are thus embroiled, gives it relevance and urgency.

Keith Gallasch
RealTime February/March 1997

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF HAUNTED PLACES

Writer: Josephine Wilson
Performer: Erin Hefferon
Director: Nigel Kellaway

Toured Perth, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and London

REVIEWS

Rediscovering unmapped badlands

Stephen Dunne
Sydney Morning Herald
20 January 1997

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Political places

Keith Gallasch
RealTime Feb/March 1997

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I saw Denise Stoklos in *Mary Stuart*. I saw Erin Hefferon in *The Geography of Haunted Places*. Utterly different performers, different shows. But both fought their hair, rearranged their bodies as if not quite in them, as if believing a pose would solve their being, both enacted radical physical transformations; both spoke as if the act was critical, every word precious, each breathing space vital, barely holding back from an outburst beyond their control. While Stoklos read as the totally trained exponent of her own Essential Theatre, her influences inscribed in every manipulation of her face as mask and the foot as dance step, Hefferon (with a cool grace and essential stillness) declared no influences (save the careful framing of scenes provided by director Nigel Kellaway) and could thus truly frighten with her sheer strangeness and the sudden swerve into what felt like real anger as, naked on a chair, between long cigarette inhalations, she transformed momentarily, without a trace of irony, into a raving Australian fascist (with some choice phrases from Pauline Hanson's repertoire).

I had to see *Geography...* twice to believe the achievement it is. Hefferon performs a bizarre bewigged bimbo, Miss Discovery, in *cheong sam*, grappling with theories of place and desire ("Sssh, please, I'm trying to read of the landscape of intransigence, of the drama of resistance"), surrounded by stuffed Australian animals (invoking the role of the museum in our cultural shaping - "The world, my fishy friends, is not a museum to dribble over" - shedding her clothes in a set of delicately moved transitions from Oriental to South Pacific to naked 'self'). The text she delivers is as remarkable as the performance: "Show me just one of your truths that could not be read as irony, one secret that has not been whispered until the lips are sore". Josephine Wilson writes with a postmodern verve (implicating her audience with direct address: "So glad to be here. So glad to find a sympathetic audience"), but neither opaquely or abstractly; the specificity of her language creating delicious and disturbing images side by side with blunt swipes, eg at the Minister for Foreign Affairs. "He's a Doctor. He says, 'Talk about it'. He says, 'It's good to get it out of your system'. Well I know what system he means". She squats as if to defecate.

When she first saw the original version of *Geography...* a couple of years ago in Perth, Sarah Miller told us that this was an important work. She was right. It is to her and PICA's credit that she has finally remounted it with Nigel Kellaway's expert direction, Mike Nanning's lighting, Rob Muir's and Derek Kreckler's powerful soundtrack, and toured it to Brisbane, Sydney and Adelaide prior to its Perth season. *The Geography of Haunted Places* is an inspiration.

The opera Project Inc.

THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves

Project Description from Grant Application

THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves explores the historical legacy of opera as 'degenerate' and draws parallels with the homoerotic history of the vampire.

At its inception opera insisted that its marriage of words and music be a hierarchy with the text dominating the music. Historically, however, opera has overturned this domination and revealed that words and music are not located as two separate identities but flourish as one within the sensual realm of the listener. This destruction of the supremacy of language makes opera a fit subject for the enthusiasm of sex/gender dissidents. The eighteenth century critic Count Algarotti describes the musical element of opera as:

... effeminate and disgusting: the music should be the handmaiden to poetry..... (but) when music grows all powerful, words turn about and recoil upon themselves a movement repugnant to the natural processes of our speech and passions..... Music encourages words to behave like sodomites, overturning the natural sources of pleasure and meaning.

By the end of the nineteenth century Oscar Wilde was clearly suggesting that musical utterances awaken a homoeroticism in the listener because they evade explicit meaning. Opera, a hybrid of words and music, is therefore regarded as morally tainted. Degenerates aren't satisfied with just one artistic medium - they want everything - all at once. They desire opera's ambiguity.

Individual vampires may die (after a century even Dracula is feeling his mortality) but as a species vampires have been our companions for so long that it is hard to imagine living without them. They promise escape from our dull lives and the pressures of our times, but they matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs and our times are inescapable.

Nina Auerbach 1995

In the early nineteenth century, the vampires of Byron, Polidori, Le Fanu and Shelley offered an intimacy, an homoerotic sharing that threatened the hierarchies of sanctioned relationships. By the turn of that century, vampires had become empire builders, repudiating the intimacy or friendship offered by their sentimental predecessors. They had become creatures of denial.

In DRACULA Bram Stoker created a new vampire, a caricature of Oscar Wilde, whom he despised, a vampire drained of generosity, turned away from friendship. The Wilde trials helped construct an absolute category that isolated the 'homosexual' from 'natural' men and women. DRACULA takes definition from a decade shaped by medical experts. Before the Wilde trials, vampires were free to languish in overtly homoerotic adoration of their mortal prey. The Wilde trials meant that a certain relaxed affinity between men lost its fluidity.

The so-called homosexual was imprisoned in a fixed nature, created as a man alone like Dracula - one hunted and immobilised by the stalwart manliness of normal citizens. Dracula was a vampire, bound by rules, defined by the many things he could NOT do. Dracula was less in love with death and sexuality than with hierarchies - the gulf between male and female, antiquity and newness, class and class, England and non England, vampire and mortal, homoerotic and heterosexual desire. DRACULA personified the utter fear of the hated unknown.

In the 1970s with the emergence of the gay movement and Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles", vampires began to recover their lost literary significance - the homoerotic bond of Byron and Polidori. They resurrect the old assurance of affinity - "Remember your oath" sounds almost like a cry for gay solidarity.

The vampire's homoerotic birthright is restored after almost a century of Stoker's homophobic taboos. Rice's vampires are a select and refined club, a fraternity of beauty and death. They do little, but are superb spectators. They are amoral aesthetes, beautifully devoid of social consciousness. For these vampires hedonism is the only reality. Is this the reality of opera? The performing body is 'otherness' in human shape and in witnessing this the audience becomes aware of its own potential elasticity.

Today the vampire has become a fearsomely androgynous icon:

With its soft flesh barred by hard bone, its red crossed by white, this mouth compels opposites and contrasts into a frightening unity, and it asks some disturbing questions. Are we male or are we female? Do we have penetrators or orifices? And if both, what does that mean? And what about our bodily fluids, the red and the white? What are the relations between blood and semen, milk and blood? The mouth of all vampires, male and female.

Christopher Craft, *KISS ME WITH THOSE RED LIPS*, 1984.

This is a vampiric vision so inclusive that no melodrama can contain it. Melodrama sits too uncomfortably in a post-modern age. It is shy of intellectual analysis. We concentrate the work on this clash of early nineteenth romanticism with the tenets of modernism. The work builds its structure upon Hector Berlioz's song cycle, *LES NUITS D'ETE (Summer Nights)* for mezzo-soprano and piano. These are settings of six poems by Theophile Gautier composed in 1834, the epitome of early French romanticism. These highly virtuosic songs are preoccupied with the themes of desire and death, a ravishing dark work with a deceptively cheery title. The 40 minute song cycle is extended to a full evening work for three performers - Annette Tesoriero, Nigel Kellaway and Dean Walsh (now performed by Paul Cordeiro). Peter Wells creates an additional 20 minutes of recorded sound in which the Berlioz, performed live by Tesoriero and Kellaway, is embedded.

The primary concern of The opera Project is the 'theatrical' body. These vampires concentrate on the flesh - the voice of the singer and the actor and its relationship with song and text, the body of the dancer, singer, actor and pianist, the body of the audience.

At the end of the 20th century, who are our vampires? To answer this we must define our desires. These desires - as yet unknown and unfulfilled - are necessarily fraught with danger and fear. New vampires will emerge. They will be a strange hybrid of the unknown and of our acknowledged cultural experience. To consider the ideas of opera and of vampires we must embrace a certain view of history. ***The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*** explores the contemporary within our collective myths, providing layers of meaning. Beyond which, it was the ideal work to launch The opera Project - witty, seductive, interrogative, provocative and clever - a work to impact across a wide spectrum of contemporary performing arts, in keeping with our artistic mission.

The opera Project LAUNCH - SATURDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER 1997

Artistic Directors' Speech

- **Annette Tesoriero** - Ladies and gentlemen. I am Annette Tesoriero and with my co-artistic director Nigel Kellaway, and on behalf of our board of directors, I would like to warmly welcome you to the launch of The opera Project Incorporated.
- **Nigel Kellaway** - We would also wish to thank those organisations, sponsors and individuals who have made this evening possible, and have been so generous with their time, expertise and in some cases, goods to assist producing ***THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves***. A shoestring budget production such as this requires the enormous good will and energy of many people, and The opera Project is very fortunate to have found so many who trust and share in our vision.

- **AT** - The decision to launch The opera Project with a work such as **THE BERLIOZ** has been carefully considered. If we may dwell for a moment on certain aspects of the work you have seen tonight, we may be best able to explain our *raison d'etre*.
- **NK** - The musical basis for this work is a collection of 19th century French "art" songs. Even though Berlioz, the composer, groups these songs together under one title *Les Nuits D'ete* (or *Summer Nights*), no one story line drives the song cycle. We could have chosen an extant narrative opera to deconstruct or even commissioned a librettist and composer to write a new work. But we didn't! While we do not necessarily intend to dismiss these options in the future they currently do not form our primary focus.
- **AT** - A quick glance at our logo explains our position. This is *small o* opera.
- **NK** - We are not a small version of *big o Opera* - we are not grand opera on a minuscule budget. Our processes and aspirations are not those of grand opera. Having said that, we are also not content to merely tinker around the edges of operatic form by employing a few well tried contemporary performance techniques. The opera Project's mission is not to create and present new operas within a traditional model. Nor is it to fetishise the "new". We have called ourselves The opera *Project* - and our project's concerns are in regard to theatrical form and creative process.
- **AT - THE BERLIOZ** was created by a collaborative team of performers, writers, composer, designers, publicist and technicians. We believe that the days have passed when it was commonly held that the future of Australian theatre lay exclusively in the discovery of new Australian playwrights. A veritable army of theatre artists, writers included, in recent performance history have eschewed that absolute belief, and have done important work in developing alternative creative strategies.
- **NK** - The opera Project hopes to continue this development of alternative creative strategies. All too often a potentially exciting work loses out because of financial constraints which demand one single rehearsal period and performance season. So, we feel that strategies for remounting and reworking a piece must be developed. The opera Project must necessarily become a Producer of its own work. A company name and structure can enable the development of what is generally known as a repertoire. This is not just a quaint prewar curiosity, but part of a process of ongoing assessment and development of the work.
- **AT** - The opera Project, we can assure you all, is planning ahead. For 1998 under the umbrella of The opera Project, Nigel Kellaway's performance of **THIS MOST WICKED BODY** will tour to a major Australian international festival with the pianist Gerard Willems and restaurateur Gay Bilson - this work premiered here at The Performance Space in 1994. In June 1998 we also plan to premiere a new work, again here, at The Performance Space. This work called **THE TERROR OF TOSCA** promises to bring together Puccini, Peking Opera and Australian composer Andree Greenwell.
- **NK** - We sense there is a *closeted* audience out there, eager to explore the *idea* of opera, but somewhat reluctant to engage with the beast in its current form. We are in search of the audience willing to question intelligently all those well-protected assumptions which seem to form the basis of mainstream opera production. An audience who may come to opera hoping for everything at once, are unafraid of superfluity, but also wish to defend their right to place opera within the same sphere as other theatre arts and to judge it accordingly.
- **AT** - We are sure you are all aware that this evening's launch of The opera Project is one first step in the development of our audience base. While we hope that the funding bodies continue to smile on us, and so provide the necessary seeding money for each production, it is our audience who

will support us in continuing with the development of our work in creative ways - that acknowledge the sometimes less than optimistic financial context that the Arts find themselves placed by the powers that be. We thank you for joining us tonight for the launch of The opera Project Incorporated and we hope that this evening's performance of **THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves** will encourage you to spread the word wide and will wet your appetite for the next opera Project project.

- **NK** - All of us involved in The opera Project are privileged to have attracted the support of a man who is keenly aware of the challenges involved in creating new and attractive work. He has worked with us all over many years, placing himself in the often hazardous role of a producer. Anthony Steel is one of those rare high flying festival directors in Australia's performing arts industry, who has watched the ongoing process of contemporary performance, has cared deeply about it, and supported its production.

Anthony graciously accepted our invitation to this evening's performance and to launch our new company. Unfortunately last minute changes in appointments find him in Adelaide tonight, but he has sent a message to us all, and it is with great pleasure that I introduce a close personal friend and colleague of Anthony's - the man, I believe, who was initially responsible for inviting Anthony to Australia in 1971, when he was heading the department for the arts during those halcyon days of Don Dunstan's South Australian government. Ladies and gentlemen, Len Armadio - to read Anthony Steel's message to us this evening.

**MESSAGE FROM ANTHONY STEEL AT THE LAUNCH OF THE oPERA PROJECT Inc.
AT THE PERFORMANCE SPACE, SYDNEY
SEPTEMBER 20TH 1997.**

Read by Len Amadio in Anthony Steel's absence

As the rest of you tut tut at my appalling rudeness in agreeing to officiate this evening and then not even bothering to turn up I sense that perhaps Nigel and Annette are perhaps secretly empathising with my effrontery (or should that be Sydney Frontery?) for theirs is not a theatre of manners. In the context of the hedonism of Emerald City, soon to be compounded by the mind numbing search for Olympic glory, their questioning about our assumptions about opera, deconstruction of our expectations, and shattering of our intellectual, moral and sexual preconceptions, not only become more urgent but promise witty and daring relief from the stark realities of our dismal national political agenda.

When the distinguished Yugoslav director Ljubisa Ristic came to the Adelaide Festival in 1984 to devise a production marking the year of George Orwell's celebrated work, he cried out in despair during rehearsal "I can't get Australian actors to stop smiling!" His cast were chosen largely from Sydney and they had spent too long working in a theatre culture dominated by highly subsidised productions of Broadway and West End hits. This evening's protagonists must often feel a similar frustration in a town where the vast majority of audiences are looking for purely escapist entertainment.

They should rest assured that there are many who have enormous admiration for their seductive work and rejoice in the establishment of their new enterprise, with its fascinatingly original artistic mission. They need and deserve our continuing support and encouragement. Had I been at tonight's performance I would know more exactly how to frame a toast to suit this occasion. As it is, I will play safe and ask you simply to join me in drinking (now, if that is appropriate, or whenever your glasses are charged) - to The Kellaway, The Tesoriero and The opera Project. May they stimulate, provoke and amuse us for many years to come.

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

September 30, 1997

by **JAMES WAITES**

Love at first bite

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THE AUSTRALIAN

September 26, 1997

By **JOHN McCALLUM**

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CITY HUB

September 25, 1997

by **BARBARA KARPINSKI**

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BLOODSUCKERS EXTRAORDINAIRE

The opera Project kicks off with *The Berlioz - Our Vampires Ourselves*. Is it cutting edge, interrogative performance or just big "O" opera in masquerade? Barbara Karpinski ponders the meaning of opera.

Beauty and death make strange but ever alluring theatre companions. *The Berlioz - Our Vampires Ourselves* exploits, cherishes and parodies operatic melodrama and the vampiric night siren cliché. For those of you in the dark when it comes to opera, *The Berlioz* is based on Hector Berlioz's sumptuous song cycle of 1835, *Les Nuits d'Ete*.

The Berlioz - Our Vampires Ourselves is the degenerate brainchild of Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway, who appear as divine diva and wicked pianist, accompanied by dancer with a body-to-die-for, Dean Walsh, playing an illicit vampire from hell. Walsh's body ripples and writhes to the original sound FX by Peter Wells, which sounds more like a high-camp horror movie soundtrack than operatics. Flesh and fantasy undulate to the music. All so divine.

The audience sits in chairs draped in white cloth redolent of abandoned mansions, deceased estates and the novels of Ann Rice. We are seduced with great subtlety rather than assaulted, as is often the unfortunate avant-garde interpretation of audience participation.

The show is more like cinema or a series of still life portraits. Tesoriero and Kellaway describe the opera Project as being an "interrogation of form". They ask: "What is difference between drama, dance, music theatre and opera? Our answer is nothing."

The Performance Space is transformed into another time, another place. This transformation is largely a product of the inventive and evocative lighting of Simon Wise and Nigel Kellaway. They cut new holes in the rafters just for the show.

A shaft of light appears from above. A pallid-faced vampire sits on a chair day dreaming. Another vampire idly sits playing piano and gestures across a crowded room. The mezzo-soprano with heaving bosom (Tesoriero) enters, bathed in light. The boys kiss. The diva laughs. The vampires gorge on red roses, scattering them as if they were blood from a B-grade splatter movie. How many ways can you fuck a rose? *The Berlioz* explores them all.

Just as Walsh looks as if he is about to drown in Tesoriero's magnificently succulent bosoms, he gets lucky with the piano player (Kellaway) and succumbs to some hard-core homoerotic delights. After all, the pianist has been giving him that cheeky boy come-fuck-me stare all evening. The movements of all three performers are finely tuned and precise.

The vampires try to avoid the light and their homoerotic hunger, but are unable to. Some explicit boy-to-boy sex happens under the precarious glare of the spotlight. A dangerously delicious thing for a vampire!

The show was based on a scenario by Keith Gallasch (writer and co-founder of Open City) and was created by the performers. Kellaway's previous claims to fame include his status as co-founder of The Sydney Front in 1987. His major productions include *The Pornography of Performance*, *This Most Wicked Body* (a 240 hour marathon) and *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*. In the latter, performed as part of The Sydney Festival, the audience sat by the docks of Darling Harbour while the action happened across the water in long shot. *The Berlioz* is a far more intimate and accessible show.

Kellaway expresses some deadly serious ideals in his opening launch speech. "We are not a small version of big o opera - we are not grand opera on a minuscule budget ... (However) we are not content to merely tinker around the edges of operatic form by employing a few well tried contemporary performance techniques."

But despite these lofty ideals as with all opera, big or small, the meaning is as elusive as the spectacle is strong. There are no surtitles on stage. If you don't *parlez vous Francais*, the audience can read the translation from the program notes. A sample reads like this: "My fair friend is dead, I shall weep forever: She has carried my love into the grave."

Whether *The Berlioz* is about the homoeroticism of desire, the sadness of love struck angels or just a tongue-in-cheek high camp extravaganza, it's great to look at even if you don't understand a word.

The Berlioz is a spectator sport and the audience is invited to be the voyeur. If it satisfies your kink, *The Berlioz* provides an evening of salacious entertainment and bent humour. All so decadently divine. But what does it all mean? I sip my champagne and ponder the meaning of opera..

OPERA-OPERA

November 1997

by **DAVID GYGER**

(Reproduced with permission)

Berlioz song cycle in new light

Much though I have long loved Berlioz' song cycle *Les Nuit d'Ete*, I had never viewed it as an outcrop of the dramatic muse in the oeuvre of a composer who produced such intermittently exhilarating, if significantly flawed, stage works as *Les Troyens*, *Benvenuto Cellini* and *La Damnation de Faust*.

The opera Project Inc., one of those commendable peripheral performing arts enterprises which seems afflicted by the nonsensical idea that weird typography will somehow denote artistic individuality and merit, nevertheless transcended both its name and the superficial limitations of its springboard work by creating the fascinatingly cohesive, and in some respects provocative, music theatre work which received its world premiere at The Performance Space, Sydney, last month.

The impact of the creativity of *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* was enhanced and underscored by the music-making of two thirds of the performance ensemble, mezzo-soprano Annette Tesoriero and pianist Nigel Kellaway. They performed the song cycle "straight", that is in a thoroughly conventional concert ambience, an hour before the music theatre version written by Keith Gallasch and realized by everyone on the production team, as well as the

three performers involved. To be frank, though, it was not quite like that, as anyone who has strayed into The Performance Space by accident or design over the years would have anticipated; for the venue itself generates a powerful individuality which is utterly at odds with the neutrality of your conventional, if arguably not ideal, concert venue.

This concert rendition of *Les Nuits D'ete* was superficially as conventional as they come, with Tesoriero, soberly clad, nestling in the graceful curve of the piano manned by Kellaway, and singing with the sort of knowledgeable stance, restraint, musicality and commitment expected of a lieder recitalist of stature.

But the ambience of the event was perceptively, if not massively, widened by the state of affairs on the audience side, where all of us were seated in chairs varying in sumptuousness from not at all to over-stuffed.

Draped in shrouds as if we had entered by mischance a long-disused house wrapped up in mothballs, they established a somewhat musty environment which at least in passing stimulated one, if only perhaps subliminally, to ponder what might lie - or indeed lurk - beneath the shrouded surface.

Which of course was precisely what the second half of the evening was to probe to considerable effect.

The basic scenario was little varied from that of the preliminary recital when we returned after interval; the chairs were still deployed largely as before, though one was now located in the middle distance and Tesoriero, when she appeared, was now clad flamboyantly in a massive black evening gown and bearing a red rose as she emerged down a stairway at the far end of the space.

Both her appearance and demeanour were in stark contrast to the contemporary gear and low-key psychological persona she had worn for the recital phase of the evening. The chair in the middle distance was occupied by dancer Dean Walsh, who exchanged meaningful looks with pianist Nigel Kellaway, which gradually developed into a homosexual love affair culminating when both stripped to the buff for an extended upstage coupling near the end of the performance.

Tesoriero and Kellaway also flirted meaningfully at various stages, with Berlioz' frequently super-heated settings of voluptuous texts being augmented by the dismemberment of flowers and much mouth-to-mouth contact which intensified the impact of the drowsily lush midsummer ambience implied by the title of the song cycle and mirrored so splendidly in the music itself.

It became clear that the song cycle was being used as an imaginative springboard; that the love imagery imbedded in the poems of Theophile Gautier and realized so superbly in purely musical terms by Berlioz was being taken a further imaginative step - into the fantasies of the performers themselves.

When things seemed in danger of going over the top, like as not, the performance drew back to the cool-as-cucumber detachment of the lieder recital from which it had leapt forth almost as if out of control.

The cumulative result was as fascinating an extension of a strictly concert event into the realms of imaginative music theatre as I have witnessed in many a moon.

The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves is precisely the sort of contemporary music theatre initiative one hopes to encounter every time a world premiere is mooted; full marks to The opera Project Inc. for the creative effort involved, if not to the preciousness of its moniker.

THE NATURE OF OPERA AND GAY MEN

THE BERLIOZ

The opera Project

The Performance Space

MARIA STUARDA

Opera Australia

Sydney Opera House

Leigh Raymond

Sydney Star Observer

2nd October 1997

(Reproduced with permission)

The Berlioz is 'an interrogation' of opera. Like most interrogations the results are not entirely happy for the subject or for the audience.

The piece uses Berlioz's song cycle *Nuits d'Ete* and develops around relationships between the pianist (Nigel Kellaway), and singer (Annette Tesoriero) and the audience (dancer Dean Walsh). These roles change in the course of the performance but are fairly consistent and momentum is generated by exploring their relationships as vampires and figures of homoerotic desire.

It sounds flatter on the page than it is in the theatre. As theatre, it is moody and elegant; the performers are adequate and Tesoriero has an attractive dark mezzo. As a piece, however, its interest and momentum are principally sustained by Berlioz's song cycle, not be the object of the exercise, interrogating opera.

The problem is really the ideas: they are reductive and over-ambitious. The piece tries too hard, indulges too much and come across self-indulgent.

Compared with the extraordinary performance of a 19th century warhorse - Opera Australia's revival of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* - the limitations of *The Berlioz's* approach are plain.

MS is an archetypal big sing diva opera. In the title role, Deborah Riedel gives a performance of unsurpassable camp which gives her instant passage into the opera queen's hall of fame.

From the moment she enters fluttering gaily into the garden of the castle, to the final moment of the opera when she's frozen before the execution block with her cross raised high above her head, it is a performance in the best spirit of camp, both hilarious and awesome. This is not to diminish in any way Riedel's achievement - on the contrary.

She has a big dramatic coloratura voice, she sings fairly accurately, and her flung-out top notes are electrifying.

Joan Carden also gives a truly remarkable camp performance - though it's a performance as tragic camp. Carden is still a regal stage presence but her voice is in decline. The results are courageous and moving.

In the case of *MS*, the performance of the real thing is actually more illuminating about the nature of opera, gay men and desire, than any interrogation - even though it doesn't offer gratuitous sex on stage.

The opera Project Inc.

Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero - Artistic Directors
72 Margaret Street Newtown NSW 2042 Australia Tel/Fax: +61 (0)2 9516 3762

October 10, 1997

Mr Dominic O'Grady,
Editor,
Sydney Star Observer
PO Box 939
Darlinghurst, 2010

Dear Mr O'Grady,

I wish to thank you for opening up the public debate on "the nature of opera and gay men" (as Mr Leigh Raymond's review of Thursday October 2, 1997 is titled) by including in your publication Mr Raymond's review. This review compared The opera Project's production "The Berlioz: our vampires, ourselves" and Opera Australia's production of Donizetti's "Maria Stuarda".

I take it from the review that your reviewer's disappointment in The opera Project's production was that it did not deliver a camp enough aesthetic to justify our claim of interrogating the operatic form itself. This presupposes that the only issues worthy of interrogation are the stylistics of opera production. While this is one of the areas up for discussion, we of The opera Project do not see ourselves limited by such a presupposition.

Your reviewer located the camp aesthetic in "Maria Stuarda" in the performances of Ms Carden and Ms Riedel. I am left to ponder that as I was the only female on stage in "The Berlioz" that the source of your reviewer's disappointment in the lack of campness lay in my performance style. I make no apologies for that. As one of the on-stage creators of the work with Dean Walsh and Nigel Kellaway, I feel comfortable that the female body on stage in "The Berlioz" is an instrument of her own desires and not a whitewashed persona upon which opera queens may project their own notions of femininity. The three creators of this work, regardless of what sex we "do", feel that the desires of female and male bodies on stage along with those bodies' relationship with their own art and with each others' bodies is the real text of "The Berlioz".

If "camp" as described by Susan Sontag in Wayne Koestenbaum's book **The Queen's Throat** is "*the anarchic jolt we experience in the face of artistic artefacts that try to be serious and fail*" then I do indeed value your reviewer's implied judgement that "The Berlioz" was not camp enough for his liking. We are serious in our endeavour and whether our endeavour be humour or otherwise, we expect to succeed.

The comparison between a work which aims to theatrically discuss issues surrounding the relationship between the sung voice, our bodies on stage, music and our various emotions and desires ("The Berlioz") and a work in which the style of performance has been appropriated, as Koestenbaum would claim, by a gay audience ("Maria Stuarda"), does not, I feel, bear much fruit other than to set the issues out there in the opera (queen) community.

It would seem that your reviewer found the "Maria Stuarda" performance more enjoyable because it was the "*real thing*" - I presume he means that it was real camp. He then goes on to write that the "*real thing is actually more illuminating about the nature of opera, gay men and desire, than any interrogation.*" I am interested to partake in a discussion on how a **representation** of what Koestenbaum refers to as opera's "*anachronism*" does the illuminating job better than a work whose main precept is to make explicit our (audience, performers, society's) relationship with the art form. Can we talk about something and thereby hopefully illuminate it, by merely representing it?

Presumably "Maria Stuarda" is so self illuminating and self reflexive on "*the nature of opera and gay men*" that your reviewer or sub-editor felt no need to superimpose those same words over Ms Carden's image as they did over The opera Project's publicity photo.

The relationship between captions and their connected image speaks volumes :

Ms Carden as "*tragic camp*" is "*courageous and moving*", while Annette Tesoriero (as not camp enough) is "*gratuitous sex on stage*".

Mr Raymond claims that the problem is really the ideas. I would concur with Mr Raymond on this - ideas can be a problem especially when those ideas do not fit with your own. But what a privilege to be able to discuss ideas irrespective of whether or not they support or subvert the status quo.

One important point which your reviewer omitted both in his review and in the article on September 18 is that "The opera Project" claims to be 'small o' opera'. We are using the word 'opera' in its literal translation from the Italian language as well its culturally inscribed meaning. We are not 'large O' opera ie grand opera but on a minuscule budget! We are, however Project with a 'capital P', that is, we are art workers with a sense of continuing artistic discussion on music, our society and our desires.

With this in mind I have cced this letter and its enclosures to the contributors of our 'operatic' discussion thus far.

Viva la voce!

Annette Tesoriero
co -artistic director

cc: Ms Robyn Archer
Ms Joan Carden
Mr Rodney Fisher
Mr Keith Gallasch
Ms Barbara Karpinski
Mr Wayne Koestenbaum
Mr John McCallum
Mr Moffat Oxenbauld
Mr Leigh Raymond
Ms Deborah Riedel
Mr James Waites

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THE BERLIOZ - OUR VAMPIRES OURSELVES

Let me tell you a story.....

1.

As audience enters, only their chairs are lit. The piano is closed and draped in a white dust cloth.

Sound A - room noise - glasses clinking, voices, footsteps etc. - from speakers at far end, almost like another room.

In the softest shafts of pinspots in the far distance, Nigel and Dean intermittently enter (almost imperceptibly) and watch the audience.

Dean enters out of the dark and sits upstage of the curtains, softly backlit.

Eventually he brings his chair just prompt downstage of the curtains and sits waiting as the audience lights dim. **Sound Fades.** Waiting in silence.

2.

Time passes.

Sound B builds very slowly as soft light fills upstage area revealing Nigel standing.

He walks down stage, stopping momentarily at the curtains to observe Dean (who glances nervously at him) and then walking to the bowl of rose blooms. No stems. No thorns.

He picks up a bloom and brings it lovingly to his nose, head back, inhaling deeply, his neck laid bare. He returns the rose bloom to the bowl and moves to the piano. He quickly uncovers and opens it, playing a lingering **F#**. (**Sound quickly fades to silence**) Dean quivers slightly. With his eyes on Dean, Nigel plays **Phrase 1**. Dean responds with a pronounced sigh. His body quivers - is it a shiver of fear or pleasure? Both?

The pianist stops to observe. The spasm has passed. A smile passes between the two men. Nigel leaves the piano, approaches a chair OP downstage, which is slowly lit, and sits facing Dean across the empty space. They share their distraction in the silence. Then the smallest smile passes between them.

Sound C - a de / reconstruction of small boys screaming, coming nearer.

Dean indicates, eventually, that Nigel should return to the piano.

Nigel walks back to the piano and sits. He studies the keyboard and plays **Phrases 1&2**. Dean trembles in his seat, responding to each note. Nigel glances at him, pausing at times to appreciate his control.

The pianist stops. the dancer calms, but when the pianist recommences the dancer loses control, a sigh, a shiver, a single, small convulsion rising from his stomach. The pianist takes control, manipulating the other's plight with his playing. He tires of this. He stops playing.

Stillness. An exchange of false smiles. Distraction, an emptiness, a hunger, a waiting.

3.

The pianist recommences his playing **Phrase 3** with conviction. With neither sigh nor shiver, the dancer responds with a racking convulsion, clutching his stomach as if to vomit, the dry retching of

starvation and thirst, throwing him from his chair. His tongue thrusts out, quivering, licking the floor, licking his lips as if to draw the least bead of sweat into his bitterly dry mouth.

Dean suddenly turns toward the piano on **Phrase 4**. He is still, he is threateningly silent. He returns, calmed to his seat and watches Nigel, who aware of Dean's stillness, stops playing, but will not return Dean's hungry gaze. The sound of murmuring boys' voices is getting closer.

Nigel delicately raises a hand across his chest to just below his throat. With his other hand he falteringly picks out the soprano's first vocal phrase, **Phrase 5**, - a dangerous if tentative provocation - watching Dean as he plays.

The dancer advances across the great distance of the room, stops short of the pianist, bends over the bowl of blooms, swoops up handfuls, forces them into his mouth, turns away, arches his head back, chews and bites, but cannot gulp and spits the petals out with a great cry and a fading fall of sobs. Nigel responds with a sudden and dramatic pounding of the keyboard, **Phrase 6**. Dean dashes to the piano and thrashes the keyboard. **Sound fades quickly**. Stillness and just the fading sound of the piano discord. Nigel suddenly rises to confront Dean, and a possible kiss turns into an attempted bite to the neck. Dean escapes just in time and returns to his seat, sniffing, tidying himself, wiping his mouth, as Nigel moves from the piano to his seat, in angry frustration.

Their heads turn to each other. No smile. Each reaches to an eye while holding the other's gaze, and each catches a tear. Each takes their tear to their tongue, places it on the tip, draws it in and savours the salty drop.

Stillness. Distraction. Their attentions move to a caressing of their groins. Eventually they share an idea - Nigel should try another phrase - something new!!

4. Le Spectre de la Rose

The pianist slowly moves to the piano and plays the opening 10 bar introduction of **LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE**. Light slowly builds through the open door of the OP dressing room - a black cave.

Sound D - a long, slow, distant wind blows toward the space.

The dancer is moved but controls himself, looking away from the piano, his hands moving to his ears.

From the far distance, Annette's voice, a fragment of the song faintly connecting with the accompaniment. Nigel stops suddenly, in shock. Silence - Nothing. The pianist conjures again repeating the single bar arpeggio over and over, drawing Annette slowly down the dressing room steps and into the space. The voice is heard again. The song continues as Annette approaches the curtains, like a spectre, pallid, her walk a slow glide, her attention on her song, unaware of the pianist and the dancer. The pianist stares ahead and allows his eyes to close to relish his power.

Bar 18 - Annette walks through the curtains and approaches Dean, stopping just behind him. The dancer lowers his hands, but dares not look back as if in fear of being overwhelmed.

Bar 31 - Dean suddenly stands, grasping his chair, but will still not look back at Annette. Annette walks past him, reaching the rose bowl by **bar 37**, standing with her back to Dean.

The dancer quivers and feeds - staring fixedly ahead, his mouth moves as if eating, his head arching back, the line of his neck swallowing, the torso rising, the stomach filling. He catches phrases of the song, drawing them from her in giant draughts of breath, chewing and ingesting

them (**Bar 38 *Mais ne crains...***). He moves his chair across to the OP side. He sits, facing away from Annette - tense and alert like an animal.

The singer turns to the dancer and moves slowly toward him. (**Bar 42 *Ce leger parfum...***) It is as if she is singing for him. The dancer senses her nearing. He stands and turns suddenly to her, his arms reaching out, his tongue thrusting and licking. They embrace - she appears to be singing into his open mouth. (**Bar 45 *J'arrive du paradis...***)

The pianist cuts through this intimacy, slamming the keys. (**Bar 49 slam F# discord**)

The dancer reaches a hand to the singer's mouth, feels around it and appears to be about to enter it with a finger when the pianist slams down the lid of the piano, rises and moves away, angry and distracted. Dean and Annette stop and watch him.

Silence. She glides to the piano, adopts a recital pose, waiting. Dean is prone on the floor. The pianist turns to Dean and Annette, contemplating his next move. He eventually chooses to return to the piano and picks up the song from **bar 42**. They complete the song, Dean coaxing the song from her, bringing a chair for her to sit beside the urn.

The dancer claps discreetly. He blows her a kiss. She catches it and ingests it. Stillness. Silence. The light in the space slowly dims to almost a blackout.

5. L'ABSENCE

Then dancer stands behind the singer who sits beside the rose bowl. The pianist commences **L'ABSENCE**.

This scene is as formal and elaborately stylised as a court dance. All three have elaborate choreographed hand movements, based on a common motive, but individually varied. Both Dean and Annette in turn fall out of control but each time reharneß their decorum.

As the soprano sings, (**Bar 15**) the dancer draws near until he rests his face between her breasts. She clasps her hands to his head, eventually lifting it and singing to him almost mouth to mouth. She takes a rose bloom and places it in his mouth and gently pushes him away. (**Bar 41**) Dean toys with a thorny rose stem - a private moment.

Between our hearts, a killing distance.

Bar 53 - Nigel pauses interminably, slumped away from the keyboard. Dean draws him back to action by attempting to play a Bb.

The soprano continues to sing with perfection (**Bar 54**), but while the dancer's gestures are as smooth and eloquent as her's, she now shows signs of physical distress, her hands moving across her stomach and chest.

The song finishes. The soprano gasps, convulses and collapses.

The dancer is behind the pianist. He leans over him and transfers the rosebud from his mouth to Nigel's. Nigel delicately extricates it, and then suddenly grabs Deans mouth and violently kisses him. Nigel and Annette laugh hysterically.

SNAP TO BACK BLUE LIGHTING STATE. FRANTIC SOUND E - LOUD

Nigel draws Dean to Annette - they whirl him around the room. Annette grasps the horrified Dean to her bosom and then makes to bight his neck. Dean escapes to the piano.

As Nigel pounds the first notes of the introduction of **L'ILE INCONNUE** the lights suddenly change to a new state and **the sound quickly fades**.

6. L'ILE INCONNUE

Singer and pianist present **L'ILE INCONNUE**. The dancer, now well fed, dances ecstatically in response - an ecstasy, and mounting desperation, fear and exhaustion.

The soprano draws near, circling him, reaching to him, chasing him.

She touches a hand, pulls him violently to her, places her mouth across his and breaths in deeply, and again and again. He struggles, but his life has left him and she drops him to the floor.

Invigorated she commences the song again. (**Bar 61 *Est ce dans le Baltique?....***)

She circles the piano, singing, drawing near to the pianist until she stands over him.

The dancer has finished his dance of death and collapses by the urn of roses.

The pianist and soprano smile to each other, their mission almost accomplished.

7. SUR LES LAGUNES

The pianist and the soprano are at the piano. The dancer is at the foot of the urn. The soprano is singing **SUR LES LAGUNES**.

As the soprano sings, the dancer moves from the floor up and over her body, feeling his way around between her legs, arms and body and breasts, her neck and, finally, her face lips and mouth. It is as though Dean is trying to control Annette's singing.

Increasingly, if gently, he distorts her singing, pulling back her hair, pulling back her skin, compressing her cheeks, distorting her lips, placing his fingers in her mouth. She sings on unperturbed although the words and notes distort and although the pianist struggles to connect. Now Dean appears to be driving Nigel's playing.

As the song nears its conclusion, the dancer shudders orgasmically and slides to the floor, leaving the final notes clear. Nigel reiterates the final piano tremolos of the song, teasing Dean with them as he shudders on each note as he disappears beneath the piano.

The soprano breathes easily. The accompanist relaxes, slumped at the piano. But suddenly Dean is behind him.

Sound F - a mysterious music and wind

Nigel leaps to his feet and leaves the piano to pace the space and eventually gobbles a rose bloom. Dean pursues him menacingly. Nigel angrily spits out the bloom and returns to the piano.

8. VILLANELLE

The accompanist and singer commence **VILLANELLE**. The dancer rehearses the coming rape scene.

The dancer is now stalking the soprano, but she escapes his grasp and positions herself by the piano.

They recommence the song. Dean's angry desire is mounting. He slowly and menacingly approaches the pianist, who suddenly leaps from the piano interrupting the song.

The pianist again moves to the urn - he shivers, sighs, runs his hands up across his body, picks up a rose, fondles it - "Oh" - a bloom with a rare thorn. Thoughtful, he sucks at the tiny wound.

The dancer has taken his place at the piano, and strikes a note. The pianist moves suddenly to the dancer and grasps his hand, drawing him up to face him.

INTERLUDE

Nigel collects Dean and serenely foxtrots him around the space. Nigel is leading, but at some unnoticed moment Dean has taken the lead. The sound does not imply their dance - they control their own pulse. Perhaps in a moment of sudden brutality, or perhaps so subtly Dean has Nigel pinned to a side wall, beyond the curtains. Dean is thrusting his tongue into Nigel's mouth, his hands grasping at his crutch. He tears Nigel's coat from him, pulls him brutally to the proscenium stage by the hands, lifting him up, stripping him naked as he tears off his own clothes.

In a moment of inspirational control, Annette moves backstage, reveals a tripod spotlight which she wheels to the proscenium to illuminate the brutal anal rape of Nigel by Dean. She takes the spotlight with her the length of the space to the piano, and thrashes out a Bb double-octave (**Sound G - sound cuts to an ominous rumble**). Nigel is suddenly standing over Dean - he plunges his teeth into Dean's neck, who is racked with shuddering and then collapses. The soprano accompanies herself in an elongated arrangement (sung down an octave) of AU CIMETIERE. Nigel slowly moves away from Dean's corpse and redresses.

Annette leaves the piano and moves towards Nigel at the urn. In slow-motion, and screaming horribly, she bites Nigel's neck rapturously, sharing in the 'booty'. Nigel accepts it passively, almost orgasmically. They return to the piano.

They commence **AU CIMETIERE**.

9. AU CIMETIERE

The pianist and soprano are at the piano.

*At one moment sweet, yet, of death,
stifling your breath.*

*.... the spectre
Whispers with empty arms*

(Bar 98) Dean, who has been lying dead, suddenly throws himself to his feet with a terrible screaming and howling. **Sound H**

The pianist stops playing. The soprano turns inquisitively to the pianist, who innocently shrugs and resumes his accompaniment.

Dean slowly moves to the wall.

On the closing vocal phrases of the song Annette moves slowly toward Dean. The song finishes and Nigel in the lower reaches of the piano mysteriously rolls the arpeggio introduction of LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE. Annette reaches out and takes Dean by the hand and leads him back to his chair. She turns and moves into the distance as she entered, slowly, a spectre as the light fades. Nigel lets the theme of LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE emerge high on the piano, very softly. SHE HAS GONE.

Sound D- A long, slow, distant wind blows toward the space - and then nothing.

10.

Nigel completes the final notes of his melody. **Silence.**

The two men look at each other, as if strangers.

The pianist licks his pricked finger.

The dancer does a slow circular lick of his lips.

A long half-smile passes between them.

Slowly the two men turn to the audience - the smallest, suggestive ("come hither") smile.

Fade to black.

ARTISTIC REPORT

Description of Project undertaken:

The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves is a theatre work devised by Nigel Kellaway, Annette Tesoriero and Dean Walsh in collaboration with writer Keith Gallasch, sound designer Peter Wells and lighting designer Simon Wise.

Its initial source material was the 1834 song cycle of Hector Berlioz *Les Nuit D'ete*. The opera Project commissioned Keith Gallasch to prepare a scenario including the six Berlioz songs, exploring the relationships between 19th century vampiric literature, homoeroticism, and operatic representations of desire. The performers developed the draft scenario in the rehearsal studio.

The resulting production was performed at The Performance Space, Sydney, previewing on Thursday 18th September 1997, with two opening nights on Friday 19th and Saturday 20th (incorporating the official launch of The opera Project Inc.) and played until Sunday 5th October. On Wednesdays 24th September and 1st October Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway preceded the performance with a 7.00pm recital rendition of the Berlioz song cycle.

Details of all artists participating in the project:

Creative team: Performers -	Nigel Kellaway Annette Tesoriero Dean Walsh
Original Scenario -	Keith Gallasch
Sound design -	Peter Wells
Lighting Design -	Simon Wise with Nigel Kellaway
Costume/Stage design -	Nigel Kellaway
Collaborators: Publicity/Artwork -	Lisa Herbert/Scout
Production Manager -	Simon Wise
Production Assistant -	Marie Rockford
Publicity Photography -	Heidrun Lohr
Video Documentation -	Peter Oldham

The aims and outcomes of The opera Project Inc. in creating and producing **The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves** were various:

OPERATIC AND THEATRICAL FORM

The choice of a nineteenth century song-cycle as the musical starting-point for a theatrical work was consciously made to avoid the conservative processes too commonly employed in the writing of contemporary music theatre, and most particularly opera - namely, to employ a librettist and composer to explore a narrative structure, dressing up a seventeenth century form with contemporary themes, costumes and theatrical devices. We wished to explore the notion of opera as more than a collection of tricks and long-held assumptions. Our themes were clear from the outset - an exploration of the inherent eroticism of the voice and its relationship to the body, how the woman's voice (as opposed to her body) has been historically appropriated by a male homo-erotic aesthetic, how musical eroticism is driven not by carnal desires alone, and how a theatre work can be variously propelled by both narrative structures and abstractly musical dynamics.

THE SOUND

We invited Peter Wells to collaborate with the company, but as a sound designer, rather than as a composer per se. We were keen to maintain the tonal purity of the original Berlioz composition, but knew that an added aural density was required. Peter produced, in a process that was refreshingly unprecious, a remarkable sonic 'bed' in which to lay the live performance of the Berlioz songs. Many of our audience were surprised at how little we tampered with these songs, performing all six almost as written. In the rehearsal process we certainly did deconstruct them, but in eventually standing back to assess what we had produced, we could not convince ourselves that we had produced anything more effective than Berlioz had in 1834. We felt confident, after many years' experience, in not making a fetish of deconstructive techniques. Our manipulation of these "texts" was much more subtle in its discovery of the inherent (and perhaps unconscious) theatrical potential of Berlioz' own work.

SCENARIO

We invited Keith Gallasch to collaborate with us as a writer, but without a specific brief regarding what he was to provide the process. After initial brainstorming of issues such as vampirism and its associated literature, homo-erotica, opera, romanticism etc., he retreated for a few weeks and returned with a quite elaborate narratively driven scenario. This was some months before we were due to enter a rehearsal studio, and so proposed a quite different process to the more improvisational one we were accustomed to. Keith gave us complete freedom to alter his scenario as we wished, returning toward the end of the rehearsal period, in an almost dramaturgical role, which he continued throughout the performance season, suggesting changes and developments as the work grew. It was a most successful working collaboration. Beginning rehearsal with a strong yet flexible scenic structure and a defined musical score, gave us enormous confidence and the time and opportunity to retain an objective eye on our process. We have invited Keith to collaborate again on our third major work, **TRISTAN**.

LAUNCH OF THE oPERA PROJECT INC.

The launch of the new company as an ongoing concern was an important feature of the performance season. The funding from the Theatre Fund encouraged us to incorporate the company as an association and to seriously think of **The Berlioz** as a project with a future. A company structure exists not only in the way it operates its office, but most importantly in the recognition of its audience. We did not want Sydney to see this as a one-off experiment. It was important to explain that we have a far reaching mission, and are looking seriously to the future. We needed a vehicle to squash any ill-founded expectations regarding our aims and objectives. On Saturday 20th September we officially launched the new company after a performance of **The Berlioz**. This was a quite elaborately staged event, at which the company's artistic directors, Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway, explained their mission and Anthony Steel (in absentia) launched the company. Copies of our speeches are attached.

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

The composition of our audience was remarkably varied in age and evident concerns. They brought with them a multitude of different expectations and desires. Everyone working on the production have had a long association with The Performance Space, so obviously a certain proportion of our audience were literate in the developments of contemporary performance over the past fifteen years. Some were clearly delighted at what they saw as a technically accomplished and radical departure from our past output. There were, ofcourse, some who have certain staid convictions about what contemporary performance should look like, and seemed disappointed that we were not simply doing better what we have been doing for the last ten years. It was alarming to see some quite young members of the audience clearly unhappy to see mature artists questioning their own work and exploring new avenues. Perhaps certain conservative expectations ensured that some audience forgot (or were unable) to listen.

The Berlioz embraced, indeed celebrated, the tradition of the "fourth wall" in the theatre. We designed a space that purposefully suggested to the audience on entry that they would be physically participating in the action. And then we appeared to be totally unaware of their presence for the duration of the work. Did this offend people? We have all, throughout our careers, focussed on the real relationship that exists between the performer and our audience - and it continues to inform our work. We championed, in the past, the art of the "sideways wink", and it became the hallmark of sophisticated contemporary performance. Interesting now, that we are criticized for lack of irony when we deprive the spectator of this particularly over-indulged signal of overt acknowledgment - because we are tired of it and are searching for other informed ways to share an experience with our audience.

The response of the dance-literate audience was similarly varied. Many had come to particularly see Dean Walsh, and arrived with some ill-founded expectations. Dean's role in **The Berlioz** is one of his most extended creations to date. The subject matter, the fact that he was choreographing on himself in an environment of collaboration, and the intense response expected from him to the music and its performers, drove Dean into quite uncharted territory, both for himself and his regular audience. For an artist that usually creates his work as a very personal response to personally motivated subject matter, **The Berlioz** provided him the opportunity to consider a more fictionalized method of creation and performance. Dean happily embraced the view of himself as an actor in this work, with all the heightened melo-drama it demanded. His performance was an unsettling swing between artfully abstracted movement and blunt expressionism.

The classical music audience were largely strangers to The Performance Space and notions of contemporary performance practice. They were confronted with a familiar musical composition, performed by absolutely suited, experienced and accomplished recitalists. And yet some unexpected musical compromises were appearing to be made. The Berlioz song cycle is not written like other nineteenth century operatic music - it requests the singer stands still in close proximity to the pianist, who in turn should keep his eyes glued to the music or the keyboard and concentrate on matters of phrasing and musical balance. But here they were confronted with a lieder recitalist who threw herself about the stage, feverishly wrestling a near apoplectic dancer, and a pianist who appeared far more committed to his jealousy and lust over that same male dancer than his role as accompanist. And the dancer made so much noise! There were some in the audience perhaps able to embrace the idea that singers can move, but extremely perplexed by the question of whether they were watching an actor that can play the piano, or a pianist that can act. (Some were uncomfortable with either conclusion). They were being asked to listen to and experience familiar music in quite a new way - to accept that certain sacrifices in ensemble are necessary in that exercise - to reassess a normally demure work as a platform for virtuosic display, both musically and theatrically. It was with some pride that we accepted the compliments of a number of Sydney's most celebrated instrumentalists, who were grateful and invigorated by the

compromises we were willing to embrace - they share with us a confidence in their practice that saves them from preciousness.

A worthy experiment for us was to schedule a "straight" recital of the Berlioz songs each Wednesday before the theatrical performance. These were quite well attended and gave the audience the opportunity to concentrate first on the musical component of the work and then reassess it in the context of our theatrical vision. It was an educative exercise, as we foresaw the confusion our production may cause some of our audience. We will plan similar strategies for our coming works, as appropriate.

The contemporary music audience brought with them their own prejudices. A fair number of them believed that a new company that associates itself with the genre of opera, should see its principle purpose as supporting the development of new operas by contemporary Australian composers and librettists. Our response to this highlights our concerns in contemporary performance and is clearly explained in the launch of Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero, attached. It will take time to convince some people that we are not a small budget experimental alternative to Opera Australia.

A work advertised as exploring the relationship between opera and the homoerotic nature of vampire literature was obviously going to attract the gay and lesbian audience, particularly when two members of the cast have histories of visibility in the gay press and community. The response from this audience was interesting, if predictable. Once again, conservative attitudes played their role. **The Berlioz** was never intended to support the concerns of a minority group - it is not warm and cuddly - it is viciously ironic and uncaring for the sensibilities of the oppressed. **The Berlioz** declared that it wished to "out" opera. But of course the self-appointed "opera queens" really don't want opera outed at all - they want to keep it all for themselves. The review from the Sydney Star Observer was a stunningly predictable assessment of the work, and a copy is enclosed with Annette Tesoriero's response on behalf of The opera Project. The lesbian audience (indeed the female audience in general) was generally receptive to our thesis that, in a brave new world of music theatre, even the nineteenth century-styled diva can re-establish ownership of her body.

So there were some reservations about what we were attempting with our new company, but with such variety of response word-of-mouth travelled fast and audience numbers grew well in the last week of the season.

PUBLICITY AND PRESS RESPONSE

The season of **The Berlioz** occurred at a busy time in Sydney's entertainment calendar, coinciding with the Olympic Festival of the Dreaming, the Sydney Spring Festival, the Australian Women's Music Festival and Carnivale. We were, however, presenting a product quite different to the work in these other events. We were lucky in our appointment of Lisa Herbert as our publicist. She was able to secure feature articles in *Outrage*, *RealTime* and *New Woman* magazines, as well as substantial space in the gay press. Her skills in graphic design meant that we were able to affordably develop a successful marketing image, not only for the production, but for the new company. Lisa worked with such enthusiasm and energy that we have developed what we hope will be an ongoing relationship, enabling us to promote the company during our production down times. **The Berlioz** introduced certain performative practices to quite a new and varied audience. We embrace the word 'opera' with some relish in the prejudices it evokes, and are excited by the surprised and enthusiastic response our first production has inspired. We must pursue this new audience with vigour, whilst maintaining the support of our more established audience, developed over the past decade or more.

Enticing the mainstream press to review the production at such a busy time required patience and persistence. The results were, by and large, overwhelmingly positive. The reviews, particularly that of James Waites in the Sydney Morning Herald, helped secure a healthy build at the box office. The press seemed genuinely enthusiastic about the contribution our company promises to bring to Sydney's theatre scene in the future.

FINANCIAL POSITION, SPONSORSHIP AND VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE

The Berlioz was produced on a slim budget, with no guarantee against loss beyond the artists' personal earnings. Those responsible for budget allocations worked meticulously to stay within their budget. The success at box office resulted in a small surplus for the company, meaning that we can promote **The Berlioz** into the future, affording well edited videos and well presented promotional material.

The production was made possible by the generosity of several sponsors that contributed 'in kind'. Sidetrack Performance Group allowed us to rehearse free of charge in their theatre, as well as lending the company, over the past year a computer for our office. PACT Theatre also provided rehearsal space in the two weeks leading up to the season. BRASHS were our major sponsor in monetary terms, lending us a grand piano and providing cartage. A major expense was to be the piano tuning which Brashs insisted we had done before every performance. The piano tuner, John Jiang, was so impressed with the work, he eventually halved his expected \$2000 fee.

Considerable support came from an army of volunteers, most particularly Marie Rockford who worked for the full three weeks as stagemanager. The Saturday night launch was largely organised by her and another volunteer, Annette Hughes, marshalling a group of nine volunteer waiters. Merril Witt (formerly of the AGNSW, the MCA and BAM) offered considerable assistance in 'designing' the audience for the company launch.

Simon Wise (production manager) designed the Lighting for no extra fee, and Nigel Kellaway, designed the staging and costumes and administered the project inclusive of his performing fee.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Berlioz developed from a history of many years' collaboration between the artists - we were not working in a void. We approached the creative process with considerable understanding of each others' skills, artistic aspirations and processes, and shared a clear vision as to what we wanted the work to be and to achieve. The contribution of Keith Gallasch threw us into a liberating rediscovery of narrative devices in our work. Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway had the opportunity to spend several concentrated months in musical rehearsal before the theatrical components were explored. This resulted in a great freedom and confidence in developing the work. Such thorough knowledge of the source material meant that we could all take considerable risks in performance, and enjoy the discoveries and developments in our skills base.

INTO THE FUTURE

Robyn Archer was able to attend the show in the second week, and she was very enthusiastic about our work. We will be negotiating with her the possibility of presenting **The Berlioz** at her 2000 Adelaide Festival in tandem with our two upcoming works, **THE TERROR OF TOSCA** and **TRISTAN** - a season that would platform a unique approach to Australian music theatre practice.

VALUE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GRANT

The grant from the Theatre Fund enabled The opera Project to achieve several goals:

1. The development and production of a new work: **The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves.**
 2. The establishment of the new company as a legal entity.
 3. The launching of the new company, and the public expression of its aims and objectives.
 4. The beginning of the development of a new and varied audience base for the new company.
 5. The opportunity to present an alternative view of operatic process and contemporary performance practice to a wide audience.
 6. The amassing of a modest surplus, enabling the ongoing promotion of the work.
 7. The discovery of several new artistic and management contacts that can be developed in the future.
 8. The opportunity to consolidate the artists' personal visions, indicating a clearer direction for the coming years.
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THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves 1997

EXPENDITURE

Salaries

Kellaway	4600.00
Walsh	4600.00
Wise	2250.00
NK Admin.	450.00
Oncosts: Super	708.00
Work Cover	301.00

Fees

Tesoriero	4968.00
Gallasch	2000.00
Wells	2000.00
Herbert	2500.00

24377.00

Production

Theatre Hire	6600.00
Electricity	183.73
Sets & Properties	1340.62
Lighting	800.00
Costumes/Makeup	384.88
Sound	370.85
Freight/Travel	232.20
Piano Tuning	950.00

10862.28

Administration

General	345.25
Telephone	335.00
Incorporation	727.50
Photography	839.00
Video documentation	950.00
Entertaining and gifts	708.07
Program printing	389.00

4293.82

Advertising/printing

3628.10

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

43161.20

INCOME

Grant	38000.00	
Program Sales	465.00	
Advertising	100.00	
Box office	6557.24	
TOTAL INCOME		45122.24
SURPLUS		1961.04

Chapter 5: 1998

(The year of *The Terror of Tosca*)

Co-convenor and guest speaker at 1998 **Graduate Summer School for The Helpmann Academy for Performing and Visual Arts**, Adelaide SA.

FIRE BORN

Co-wrote and rehearsed a solo work for Padma Menon, to be performed in 1999.

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

Toured a restructured version with pianist Gerard Willems (performing the piano sonatas of Beethoven) and restaurateur Gay Bilson to the Telstra Adelaide Festival.

THE QUERY

Workshopped a new work for Urban Theatre Projects with performers Xu Fengshan and Rolando Ramos, writer Merlinda Bobis and co-director John Baylis for production in 1999.

dISTRESSING THE DIVA

Created, directed and performed in a work, the culmination of a ten-day workshop process with twelve performers of STOPERA, at the Street Theatre, Canberra, ACT.

BLOOD VESSEL

Provided additional direction for production by STALKER, prior to European tour. Initiating director Rachael Swain, music by Paul Charlier.

THE TERROR OF TOSCA

Created, directed and performed with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Annette Tesoriero, Nigel Kellaway, Xu Fengshan, Jai McHenry, Dean Walsh, Regina Heilmann. Music by Puccini and Kellaway. Costumes by Annemaree Dalziel. Lighting with Simon Wise. The Performance Space, Sydney.

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RealTime

@ The Telstra Adelaide Festival

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

March 1998

by KEITH GALLASCH

(Reproduced with permission)

Subversively sumptuous

The dark. Again. Then the dinner-suited upper body of a man hovers in the distance above a grand piano. Glimpsed through a fine curtain he looks like a ventriloquist's dummy, though an unusually elegant one, in white-face, awkwardly held, voice masked in stilted refinement. Will Leda in blonde wig and Calvin Kleins appear out of the dark, fuck him silly and discard him? It's possible. This seems the same universe of dark deeds, lies and evaporating truths we lived in (Needcompany's) *Snakesong /La Pouvoir*. This man would have something to say about being wounded and discarded. It's his birthday, he's noticed a patch of dead skin (the long dying has commenced), he speaks as if past his sexual use-by-date, lust preoccupies him (sex has become the imagining of the pornographic camera angle on his own engagements), outbursts suggest betrayal and recrimination, he's suicidal ("My last performance!") in the nicest way (pretty as a picture, *en pointe*, hanging by one hand from a noose, twirling slowly to the romantic piano) and announces to his captive confidante-audience: "I am totally cold". There's no mistaking it, this queen is a close relative of *Snakesong's* Queen bemoaning her loss of emotion, swinging between authority and panic, peering voyeuristically into a world of sexuality she no longer inhabits.

But the audience for *Wicked Body* is implicated in very different ways from *Snakesong*. For every apparent truth demolished, for every lie revised, the real constantly asserts itself, even when the plug is pulled. This man is playing himself, however much he quarrels with Identity (his own, the whole idea of It). He invites one of our number to join him onstage for the whole performance for a very real meal prepared by a very real and leading restaurateur, Gay Bilson (stage left) and served by Joel (who *is* Joel Markham) and the work magically lit and stagemanaged by Simon (who *is* Simon Wise). Wine is drunk, cigarettes smoked and oysters tongued as Nigel ogles and confides in his unsuspecting (but very accommodating) guest - on this night a 30 year old man celebrating his wedding anniversary. Will he ever be the same?

Real-er than the rest is concert pianist Gerard Willems, sublime master of Beethoven sonatas. He offers no mere accompaniment (though his playing is sometimes spoken through and his first curtain call shockingly denied), giving us complete works with astonishing focus (remarkable given what is going on about him) and beauty (amidst all that other contested and angst-ed over 'beauty' of the man-woman). As soon as it happens, you recognise the inevitability of the penultimate scene, the Willems-Kellaway (Schubert F minor Fantasie) piano duet (the latter initially on his way offstage for a piss): a coalescence of beauties, with Kellaway now focussed on the partnership,

emptied of cynicism and rage, a moment of refuge before the work's final burst of bewilderment and pain and its dying fall. Concert and performance merge as almost equal partners, an astonishing synthesis of performing realities. Although never said, *This Most Wicked Body*, is therefore also about music, most blatantly when dinner table intimacies are interrupted by a massive wall of light and a recording of a boy singing Bach. Kellaway screams as the passage repeats, "This has nothing to do with me. We're here to be pure. I wanted to be secular, now we have Bach and the singing of little boys".

In a festival of great synchronicities, *This Most Wicked Body* is no mere companion piece for *Snakesong/La Pouvoir*, it extends that work's dark vision and stands masterfully in its own right.

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

BUDGET for 1998 Telstra Adelaide Festival

PERFORMANCE FEES etc.:

Nigel Kellaway	director/performer	2625.00
	Living allowance	200.80
Gerard Willems	pianist	2538.00
	Living allowance	200.80
Gay Bilson	chef	648.00
	Living allowance	200.80
Simon Wise	lighting designer fee	350.00
	production manager/operator	750.00
	Living allowance	200.80
Joel Markham	stage manager/waiter	756.00
	Living allowance	200.80

Total fees etc. **8671.00**

PRODUCTION

Properties/Food	305.01
Music	20.00
Transport	131.10

Costumes / Makeup	37.03	
Total Production		493.14
ADMINISTRATION		
Oncosts for Work cover & Super	277.11	
General	51.75	
Telephone	100.00	
Photography	11.00	
Total Administration		439.86
TOTAL EXPENDITURE:		9604.00
TOTAL PERFORMANCE FEE:		9604.00
PROFIT/LOSS		00.00

developed for production with Padma Menon for the 1998 Canberra Festival
(production cancelled)

FIRE BORN draft 19/12/97

Scene 1 - DRAUPADI

Music 1: Grimethorp Colliery Band Track 8 - Paris le soir

(Padma appears in doorway in sari and shawl)

(Voice over): - I am not afraid. Nor am I as fond of wealth as you are. I do not believe in winning wealth by cheating. And, after all is said and done, this game is just cheating.

Yet, you know very well that I cannot refuse to play, once I am challenged. I will certainly play. Fate, I know, is more powerful than all the wisdom of a man.

(Padma's introduction to the Draupadi dance from the Mahabharata)

Music 2: Zakir Hussain Track 1 - Teentala

Dance Drama - back stage

Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 5 - 1998

(Draupadi enters)

Allow me to dress! I have only one robe and it is stained with my blood. What does this mean? What have I done? I despise you. I hate you. How dare you drag me in front of all these men!

In the presence of you all, my elders, I ask my husband for the details of this game. I want to know if he lost me first or himself. And I am given no reply. And you have the audacity to drag me here, bleeding. I will ask you all. My question is very simple. If my husband was lost before playing me, I am no longer his. And can one belong to a man who has lost himself?

Wait! Let me go! You can't do this to me. The wind has never seen me. The sun has never seen me in my palace. And here I am exposed before you all. What has been violated? Nothing is clear. Tell me, do you consider me a slave, or am I free?

Music 3: Regimental Marches Track 46 - The Boys of the Old Brigade

(Dance Drama continues backstage)

Music 4: Regimental Marches Track 39 - One Hundred Pipers

(Draupadi enters running)

Krishna, wherever you are, you see a woman treated with contempt. They will strip me naked. They say you are the last refuge of the helpless. Krishna, I surrender myself to you. Raise your hand to save me.

Music 5: Bhimsen Joshi Track 2 - Raga Bilawal

(The image of Krishna slowly appears on back wall)

May the way to heaven be closed to me if I break my word. When the battle comes I will smash my enemy's chest and I'll drink his blood. I swear I will. I will teach him terror. What else has he learned, but how to manoeuvre his cock into a cunt resembling the one he once fell out of, always with the same more or less pleasant result. And always deluded that the applause of those alien mucous membranes was meant for him, and only him. And those screams of lust were addressed to him, while he is nothing but a barren vehicle, indifferent and totally interchangeable, for the lust of the woman who is using him. He, the power drunk fool of her own creation.

(Devotional dance to Krishna)

Music 6: Regimental Marches Track

(Ute smashes through back wall of theatre)

Scene 2 - DOPDI

Name Draupadi, born 1946, age twenty seven, husband Dulna Hajhi (deceased), domicile Cherakhan, Bankrajarh. For information whether dead or alive, and/or assistance, one hundred rupees.

Music 7: *Berimbau e percussao Track 9 - Ponteio (first section)*

(Padma walks space explaining the dance of the whore and Krishna)

Music 8: *Shiv Kumar Sharma (Santoor)*

(Whore and Krishna dance)

(Voice over): Draupadi and her husband Dulna worked at harvests, rotating between Birhum, Burdwan, Murshidabad and Bankura. In 1971, in the famous Operation Bakuli, when three villages were cordoned off and machine gunned by the police, Draupadi and Bulna lay still on the ground, faking dead. In fact, they had been the main culprits, having murdered Duhsasana and his brothers, occupied upper-caste wells during the drought and not surrendering those other four young men to the police. They were the chief instigators. The next morning, at the time of the body count, the couple could not be found.

Later, one comes across hair-raising details in eyewitness records of police stations attacked, guns stolen, the killing of grain brokers, landlords, moneylenders, law officers and bureaucrats. The black-skinned couple ululating like police sirens before each attack.

Music 9: *Berimbau e Percussau Track 5 - Pono do caboclo*

(Voice over): DRAUPADI!!

Draupadi knows, has learned by hearing too often and for too long, how one can come to terms with torture. And if mind and body give way under torture, Draupadi will bite off her tongue. That boy did it. They caught him. When they catch you, your hands are tied behind you. All your bones are crushed. You sex is a terrible wound. Killed by police in an encounter ... unknown male ... age twenty-two ...

(Voice over): DRAUPADI!!

She doesn't respond. She never responds if called by her own name. But who calls?

SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

Music 10: *Berimbau e Percussao Track 7 - Igarape*

(Entering audience space)

Listen you guys! This is Phoolan Devi speaking! The Bandit Queen! Jai Durga Mata! Victory to Darga the Mother Goddess! In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the capitals of the world. In the name of all the victims. I eject all the sperm I have received. I turn the milk of my breasts into lethal poison. I take back the world I gave birth to. I choke between my thighs the world I gave birth to. I bury it in my womb. Down with the happiness of submission. Long live hate and contempt, rebellion and death. When she walks through your bedrooms carrying butcher knives you'll know the truth.

(takes gun to the archway))

I have been very fond of killing. If I suspect that someone - anyone of you - is a police informer, I will kill them rather than waste my time asking questions. I am a very impatient young woman. Yes, I can kill quite needlessly. If you are going to kill, then kill twenty, not just one. For if you kill twenty, your fame will spread. If you kill only one, they will hang you as a murderer.

(in the archway)

Oh! I've just been told - it's Saint Valentine's Day.

(automatic weapon fire - Dopdi exits)

The fear of the gun is a powerful thing.

INTERVIEW WITH DOPDI (Phoolan Devi-the Bandit Queen)

Music 11: Berimbau e Percussao Track 12 - A Ova

I'm sorry - I'm sorry I'm late.

(Quick demonstration of The Whore and The Sage)

(Padma dances the Whore and the Sage)

Music 12: Indian dance accompaniment

Music 13: Famous Souza Marches Track 2 - Hands across the Sea

I was born in Gorha Ka Purwa, a village much like 567,000 other obscure Indian villages, where half a billion or more people live. This is Gandhi's ideal - the "real India". And I was like any other "typical" Indian woman - 70% of us are born and die in villages like Gorha Ka Purwa. We receive our inheritance at birth - that of an unwanted burden, because we are not sons. In our life we rarely travel twenty miles from the village of our birth. Our entire value lies in our ability to produce sons, and our ability to work in the fields - for next to nothing.

I was born into a caste, a geography and a poverty from which, I was taught, there would be no escape. Once I was married, at twelve, my life was fixed. My future was my mother's past.

You ask me what is caste? Caste is that splendid form of apartheid we have spent two and a half thousand years refining. It tells me what I and my family may eat, how my marriage should be performed, the length of my sari and what ornaments I may wear, whether or not I may draw water from the village well, and through which door I may enter the temple - if, indeed, I may enter at all. It even decides whether or not my father, husband or son may carry an umbrella in the "real India".

(Voice over): Why does someone become a bandit, other than prestige?

Land is the key - we fight for it, we kill for it. Also, for revenge - if the system gives you no justice, then you take justice into your own hands.

(Voice over): Because you were raped?

How can I be portrayed as a snivelling woman, always in tears: a woman who never took a conscious decision in her life?! One who is simply raped and raped and raped, over and over and over again?!

You can call it rape in your fancy language. Do you have any idea what it's like to live in a village in India? What you call rape - that kind of thing happens to poor women in the villages every day. The daughters of the poor are for the use of the rich. We are their property. In the villages we poor have no toilets, so we must go to the fields - and the moment we arrive, the rich fuck us there. We can't cut the grass or tend our crops without being accosted by them. We are the property of the rich. They won't let us live in peace, and you will never understand what kind of humiliation that is. If they want to rape us, and our family objects - then they drag and rape us in front of our families - simple - there is no recourse.

Anger? No - But when I think back, I lose my balance, and sometimes I feel completely lost.

Those years in jail, I rotted! Everyone simply forgot I was there. Indira Gandhi, who had agreed to my terms, was dead. The chief minister had been assigned to another state. I had no money, and I couldn't get legal aid. And ofcourse I am illiterate, which can be terribly frustrating. And all the members of my gang were of far higher caste than I. They had ministers in the state assemblies to help them. In my caste there are only boatmen and fishermen. Are you surprised that I led a gang of upper-caste men? There is a lot you don't know about me.

Ofcourse I was the leader! And don't ever question me about that again. But let me ask you something: what's so strange about it? Wasn't Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister of India? Yes, if she hadn't been Nehru's daughter, she might not have been. But she lasted in office far longer than he did. It's not for money that a woman becomes a bandit - it's for retribution and revenge. I have absolutely no problem in being a leader of men. They clean my guns, cook my food. And every morning and every evening they bow before me - my men pay homage to me.

(Voice over): For every man this girl has killed, she has slept with two. Sometimes she fucks them before she bumps them off.

(Dopdi undressing?)

Well, for eight centuries we Indian bandits have been imbued with a roguish romance.

But it's not my character that matters - it's the trend that I represent. I am a creation of the worst aspects of a monstrous social structure. I can lead a quite credible challenge against a caste system that has defined India since the most ancient times.

Since those ancient times we have had an inordinate capacity to make a myth out of any story - and to demythicize the most epic into the most mundane. Perhaps I am the *do-it-yourself-goddess* who can rapidly demonize. And yet I am still also a Hindu fatalist. I was born that way. I reflect often on God - and I fear for my afterlife, should my dead body fall into police hands.

I have endless, boundless ways of reinventing myself. I know my past can never be absolutely corroborated now. So many of my close friends are now dead, killed in sticky

encounters; my family will change their story every day, just as I do. I have deliberately obscured much of my past.

DOPDI ARRESTED AND RAPED

Draupadi Mejhen was apprehended at 6.53pm. It took an hour to get her to camp. Questioning her took another hour, exactly. No-one touched her, and she was allowed to sit on a canvas camp stool. At 8.57pm the police inspector's dinner hour approached, and saying "Make her. Do the needful", he disappeared. And then a billion moons passed.

Music 14: Gurtu Track 6 (1 minute in)

A billion lunar years. Opening her eyes after a million light years, Draupadi, strangely enough, sees sky and moon. Slowly the bloodied nailheads shift from her brain. Trying to move, she feels her arms and legs still tied to four posts. **Something sticky under her arse and waist. Her own blood. Only the gag has been removed. Incredible thirst. In case she says "water" she catches her lower lip in her teeth. She senses that her vagina is bleeding. How many came to make her?**

Shaming her, a tear trickles out of the corner of her eye. In the muddy moonlight she lowers her lightless eye, sees her breasts, and understands that, indeed, she has been made up right. **Her breasts are bitten raw, the nipples torn. How many? Four-five-six-seven** - then Draupadi had passed out.

She turns her eyes and sees something white. Her own cloth. Nothing else. **Suddenly she hopes against hope. Perhaps they have abandoned her. For the foxes to devour. But she hears the scrape of feet.** She turns her head, the guard leans on his bayonet and leers at her. **Draupadi closes her eyes. She doesn't have to wait long. Again** the process of making her begins. Goes on. The moon vomits a bit of light and goes to sleep. **Only the dark remains. A compelled, spread-eagled still body. Active pistons of flesh rise and fall, rise and fall over it.**

The morning comes.

Then Draupadi Mejhen is brought to the tent and thrown on the straw. Her piece of cloth is thrown over her body.

Then, after breakfast, after reading the newspapers and sending the radio message "Draupadi Mejhen apprehended", etc., Draupadi Mejhen is ordered brought in.

Suddenly there is trouble.

Draupadi sits up as soon as she hears "Move!" and asks, Where to you want me to go?

To the Burra Sahib's tent.

Where is the tent?

Over there.

Draupadi fixes her red eyes on the tent. Says, Come, I'll go.

The guard pushes the water pot forward.

Draupadi stands up. She pours the water down on the ground. Tears her piece of cloth with her teeth. Seeing such strange behaviour, the guard says, She's gone crazy, and runs for orders. He can lead the prisoner out but doesn't know what to do if the prisoner behaves incomprehensibly. So he goes to ask his superior.

The commotion is as if the alarm has sounded in a prison. Senenayak (the police chief) walks out surprised and sees Draupadi, naked, walking toward him in the bright sunlight with her head high. The nervous guards trail behind.

What is this? he is about to cry, but stops.

Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds.

What is this? he is about to bark.

Draupadi comes closer. Stands with her hand on her hip, laughs and says, The object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen.

Where are her clothes?

Won't put them on, sir. Tearing them.

Draupadi's black body comes even closer. Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanyak simply cannot understand. Her ravaged lips bleed as she begins laughing. Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is as terrifying, sky splitting, and sharp as her ululation:

I am Ophelia. The one the river didn't keep. The woman dangling from the rope. The woman with her arteries cut open. The woman with the overdose. SNOW ON HER LIPS. The woman with her head in the gas oven. The object of your search - Draupadi Mejhen. You asked your subordinates to make me up. Don't you want to see how they have made me up? A new grimace. What is the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you then clothe me again. I will not permit you! There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. What more can you do? Counter me! Come on, counter me again!

Tonight I have stopped killing myself. I'm alone with my breasts, my thighs, my womb. I smash the tools of my captivity, the chair, the table, the bed. I destroy the battlefield that was my home. I fling open the doors so the wind gets in and the scream of the world. I smash the window. With my bleeding hands I tear the photos of the men I have loved and who used me on the bed, on the table, on the chair, on the ground. I set fire to my prison. I throw my clothes onto the fire. I wrench the clock that was my heart out of my breast. I walk into the street clothed in my blood.

(Dopdi mounts back of Ute - makes up as Krishna)

There is no man here whose member wouldn't stiffen at the thought of his dear flesh departing.

Fear breeds philosophers!

(EXIT)

distressing the Diva

presented by Stopera Inc.

directed by Nigel Kellaway

11 - 13 June 1998, The Street Theatre Studio, Canberra ACT

Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 5 - 1998

retrospective notes by Nigel Kellaway

1. Apology to audience

Theatre is a contrivance. It is about the tensions that underlie the evidently fiction and the 'real' experience an audience has of being in a space with one or more performers. Time and space are self-consciously and unashamedly manipulated by the artist. Events are conceived of and rehearsed in an exacting and time-consuming process, with the desired outcome that each action appears to occur spontaneously at the moment of performance. Opera, perhaps more so than many performative genres, flamboyantly celebrates the art of 'faking it'. It revels in the clash of the obviously contrived and a heightened emotionalism that we would like to believe we are all capable of in our 'real' lives.

The themes of *distressing the Diva* are sex (desire), death (loss) and violence (action) - all of which have to be faked, to varying degrees, in the theatre. Opera over the centuries has built its thematic vocabulary almost entirely around these three concepts. There is a lexicon that audiences are all too familiar with. They come to the theatre expecting a new set of variations - an elaborately constructed confection of unthreatening fiction and the known. We have set out to 'distress' these easy expectations by inventing an extra member of the cast - Matthew Tan. He is listed on the poster and in the program he has an aria listed to sing, and even his own concocted biography. The performance begins five minutes late, with the director of the work (a man whose role has obvious responsibility, integrity and authenticity) making a short, rather clumsy (unrehearsed) announcement in the foyer that Matthew has been seriously injured earlier in the evening, and that news from the hospital is expected later. The ensemble has, however, decided to proceed with the performance as a mark of respect for Matthew and has accordingly been making quick and major adjustments to the work. The director apologises for the short delay.

A simple trick, perhaps, but one that all the audience seems to fall for. From the very start, the device undermines the premise that theatre is a well practiced game played between consenting adults. It economically introduces the issues to be explored in the work - death (perhaps imminent), violence (accidental), desire (the audience's disappointment and concern) and theatrical contrivance. The announcement is convincing because it is 'staged' in the foyer by a performer that is apparently NOT a performer. The text is not "well-written". The action takes the audience by surprise - they have been given no background information and are left rummaging through their programs for the clues they feel they have missed.

2. Ich will, doch zume nicht Die Entführung aus dem Serail W.A. Mozart

Suspense / expectation. The audience enters the space, concerned that all is not well with the performers. They have also been warned that they will probably have no seats. The director greets them with a tense smile and encourages them to simply move into the space. But they have to negotiate all the performers, who are scattered across the entire space between cafe tables with trays of white wine - are they stage properties, or are they really intended for audience consumption. The whole environment is clearly meant to break down any sense of formality, but the singers are all too well dressed, their manner too aloof, too self-absorbed, unapproachable. All is not quite as comfortable as might be intended. The music is a short twelve bars of Mozart, repeated over and over. It seems to go nowhere, and yet is seductively beautiful. The pause between each repeat becomes longer and longer. The mezzo affects a mounting distress, collapsing to the ground, inexplicably weeping, at the end of each repeat. An event is taking place, but the story is utterly obscure. This is pure theatrical gesture, all aesthetic dynamics, with no apparent cause or effect.

It is unthinkable that her obviously staged grief could in any way relate to the 'real' tragedy of Matthew's accident. When almost the entire company leaves the stage, having contributed nothing to a wished-for narrative, the audience settles down for the evening with mixed expectations - but perhaps feeling a little less threatened.

3. Giusto ciel in tal periglio L'assedio di Corinto G. Rossini

The mezzo drags herself from her prostrate position to kneel at her cafe table. Is she "The Diva"? Her recitative is fraught with drama. She stands for her aria. What is she singing about? Where are the surtitles? She seems to have a message to impart. Why does she seem to address only the women in the audience? And who is the young man who sits alone on stage? Is he the cause of her apparent urgency/grief? The chorus of women appear through a door, carrying chairs (merely something to do with their hands, an 'action', or is it just an elaborate set-up for the next scene?). The female dancer contorting herself on the wall - is she involved in the inexplicable drama of the aria, or is she merely "wallpaper" - a bit of colour and movement? What are the rules for reading this kind of presentation? Ah! - perhaps, is this to be just a neatly blocked recital of greatest operatic hits, all dreadfully well intentioned, but not terribly insightful?

All seems to be (un?)resolved, and we are elegantly set up for the next aria/scene. The women appear to have "bonded" simply by singing together and being together on stage in the presence of a single uninvolved man.

4. Una donna a quindici anni Così fan tutte W.A. Mozart

Two basses in 6/8 time and the woman in the middle of a lineup of seven seated women sing *Uno Donna* (one woman). They all face the pensive young man from the previous aria - perhaps he has simply been waiting for them to arrive, a trespasser on the mezzo's territory. The women glare at him. Then they smile at him, treacherously. They taunt him, slowly exposing their naked calves, and then they leave. Are we in a Pina Bausch ballet? Not quite - one woman reveals a banana, which she peels, slices and then "castrates". Too cute for Pina. But the audience shifts, both physically in the space (to catch the faces of both the women and the man) and in their realisation that the work might at last be about something, quite inoffensively, and that they are permitted to laugh. Most of them have no understanding of Mozart's Italian or the aria's intended context, but they may now imagine that this is not essential to understanding *our* theatrical meaning. Perhaps the conventions of "opera" mean that we are allowed to read events at face value - we are allowed to surrender ourselves to the moment.

5. Scherza infada (recitative) Ariodante G.F. Handel

The mezzo (is she still 'The Diva'? She has still not declared her intentions) is at last left alone for a short but powerful recitative. The long piano introduction to the ensuing aria promises a dramatic progression. The mezzo summons all her energies for her opening phrase, but when the moment comes she collapses into tears and dashes to the windows that frame one wall of the space. At that moment a man enters what are best described as French doors - the mezzo dashes past him and exits into the night in tears, ignoring the bunch of chrysanthemums he offers her. The scene has promised much, but its opportunities are ruined - the diva has forfeited her rights - an awkward hiatus as the man confers privately with the pianist (director) and then draws back the curtains to reveal an entire wall of glass and the public world beyond - a lawn and Canberra's Family Court building.

6. Ich baue Die Entführung aus dem Serail W.A. Mozart

The man (a tenor) stands uncomfortably at the window, waiting. A drunk approaches from the distance and vomits on the glass. A warmly clad woman passes, peers in, and throws a raw egg at the window. A car drives past, stopping just short of the glass with headlights glaring into the theatre space. The mezzo runs past weeping hysterically, and climbs into the car. Another woman passes and stops to graffiti "FUCK YOU" on the glass in red paint. All these inappropriate gestures are cleaned away by a man who arrives with a high-powered hose. The tenor proceeds with his aria. But his vocal line is always being interrupted - it stops short at the end of each phrase. Performers enter - a young man talking maniacally about his neuroses, but it is difficult to make out his words in all the layering of sound. For want of his diva, the tenor eventually presents his flowers to a member of the audience, takes a newspaper and retires upstage.

7. Vedrai carino Don Giovanni W.A. Mozart

A soprano enters to massage the tenor and sings her aria about honesty and the merits of fidelity. A woman, dressed in a man's suit receives a gentle shoulder massage from a man dressed in a baroque bodice and flimsy tutu. She is overcome by desire and proceeds to copulate with him in a well lit edge of the room. The female dancer is back again, this time throwing herself repeatedly at the neurotic young man, who obsessively continues to air his worries. No-one could question the fidelity of these three couples, but their interpersonal communication skills are highly questionable.

8. Deh vieni alla finestra Don Giovanni W.A. Mozart

A baritone enters through the glass doors. He closes the curtains - the space once again becomes a safe theatre, the outside world forgotten. The perfect environment for a fast rendition of one of Mozart's most famous arias. Everyone is friendly again, if just a tad too cute. All so joyous that the tempos quicken hysterically, everyone joining in for a boisterous verse, and then it's all over before you can blink - the women (the originally intended object of this aria) have arrived and left almost before you have noticed.

9. The Beat The Berlioz-our vampires ourselves Peter Wells

The men are alone in the space, lit in cold blue. The sound of wind. A narrow beam of white light cuts through the space from the dressing room. At first nothing seems to be happening. Is this merely an over-long transition to the next aria? The men stalk each other, longing for but nervous of contact. Men in the audience are eyed suggestively - they unwittingly become players in the scene, avoiding glances. The women in the audience, as observers, seem to realise what is happening well before the men. All the overt heterosexual desire that underpins the operatic arias is subverted. We are now in an exclusively male territory.

10. Prendora del brunettino Così fan Tutti W.A. Mozart

The men continue to trawl the space as two sopranos appear on a raised platform, removed from the action, to sing of their preferences for either blonde or brunette boys. The men become more fervent in their pursuit of each other. Are they supposed to be on a gay park beat, or are they 'opera queens' trawling an opera house foyer at interval? The women's voices dominate the space, and yet are a distanced accompaniment to the action. Eventually three men move off for a rendezvous in the offstage toilets, leaving the tenor and the director / pianist at the piano for a very different kind of assignation. This is fervent territory for naive feminist criticisms of misogyny - they are certainly most 'correct', but they should wait ...

11. Il mio tesoro Don Giovanni W.A. Mozart

The tenor outrageously seduces the pianist with his promises to comfort his girlfriend's grief and to avenge her challenged virtue. This aria is all narcissistic posturing. Suddenly the full cast arrive on stage to confront the tenor's arrogance. He flirts with them inexcusably and eventually sweeps one of the more willing women (the Dancer) off to the dressing room shower for a noisy coupling. The other singers repeat endlessly the tenor's exiting high F in their disgust - a bit like a broken record. Then suddenly one of the women calls them to silence with the impassioned tirade of a broken record. She accuses everyone of having slept with a man, who can only be assumed to be the tenor. But at the end she screams "Matthew, you bastard!" Has there been an unfortunate oversight? Have we, in our haste, forgotten to rewrite the text after Matthew Tan;'s accident? Was the scene we have just watched intended to be played by Matthew? Or is the woman's screaming irrelevant to the ensuing scene? Some of the audience are alarmed, some are embarrassed, and a few snigger as they realise that Matthew may be just a hoax. The tenor reappears at the dressing room door, hot and steaming with just a towel wrapped around his waist. He taunts the others with his apparent conquest. They leave in disgust. The pianist is not impressed either, but busies himself at the keyboard, repeating over and over one bar of the accompaniment until a woman momentarily appears onstage and screams for him to "Shut up!" The female dancer emerges fully dressed from the dressing room. She dominates the stage briefly as she confidently makes her exit across the stage - in a meta-theatrical gesture she is empowered.

12. V'adoro, pupille Giulio Cesare G.F. Handel

Two sopranos enter quietly and share this aria, alternating phrases, whispering to each other, as they collect the empty wine glasses from the audience and clear the cafe tables to the edges of the space. They are quietly industrious - there is no overt presentation. They draw back the curtains to reveal through the windows an extraordinary scene. A set has been erected. On a bed lies the mezzo, apparently dead. Other actors dressed haphazardly in bits of period costume, a few odd buffoon animal masks, centurion helmets, variously weeping and comforting each other. Two play chess, apparently ignoring the drama. A man with an aerosol sprays passing moths and swats at them with a newspaper. A woman clutches a grave stone. It is as though we have arrived in a surreal Bergmannesque tragedy, but part way through. We have no clues as to what has happened. It is similar to watching an obscure romantic opera without surtitles - totally impenetrable, but oddly seductive. Nothing happens, just as in a baroque aria, and then the sopranos close the curtains and the dream is over, unexplained and utterly superfluous.

13. Ecco ridente in cieloll barbere di Siviglia G. Rossini

In the program it states that this aria will be performed by Matthew Tan. Will we cut it? Or will we replace him with another singer? A woman enters. She acknowledges the pianist/director and walks nervously to the centre of the now empty stage. The lights are unforgivingly bright. The audience stand around the perimeter of the space. She gestures to the pianist, who plays the introduction. She fails to enter. They try again, but in vain. The pianist exits, leaving her alone on the empty stage. She does nothing but sweetly smile at the audience for four and a half minutes. This scene is adapted from *The Pornography of Performance* by The Sydney Front (1988), but where originally it had been about ways of looking at the performer, here it becomes about ways of "doing" (or not doing) on stage. It is more clearly about every performer's worst nightmare - left on stage with nothing to do. The audience also have to deal with their own awkwardness, impatience, boredom. They are left with plenty of space in the action to assess their own reaction to such a scene, and their expectations about what constitutes a performed action on the stage. The agony is eventually relieved by the French Baroque convention (also a reference to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*) of three loud slow knocks from offstage. The woman bows meekly, smiles again and goes to open the outside doors.

14. Madamina Don Giovanni Mozart / Marcellino

The full cast enter, but they are not Mozart's Commandatore - judging from their lascivious smiles at the audience, they are clearly all don Giovanni's. An abrupt change of pace. The baritone leads the ensemble on a microphone in Raffaele Marcelino's wild Karaoke arrangement of the 'catalogue aria'. This scene is about sexual appetite. Just when the relationships between the men and the women were appearing unreconcilable, everyone is equally 'in on the game'. The dance is adapted from The Sydney Front's *Don Juan* (1991). The performers storm down the space in a phalanx, leering at the audience with carnivorous grins. Legs and arms akimbo, groins thrusting. Choosing a victim to kidnap and fondle across the floor. The performers co-operate with each other, happily in unison - there is now no sense of competition between them. This is all generous good fun. And after a short outrageous two minutes they exit. BLACKOUT.

15. Ah, nel sen di chi s'adoro La cambiale di m'atrimonio G. Rossini

In the Blackout two women's voices are heard - one singing a mad coloratura Rossini aria, while the other hurls into the space a venomous volley of obscene abuse. Totally inappropriate behaviour! As the soprano struggles with a superfluity of the notes the other viciously accuses her of the most sordid promiscuity. This is the sound of two duelling divas in mortal combat.

16. Zitto, zitto, piano, piano La Cenerentola G. Rossini

Tempo is becoming more pressed - hurtling toward some kind of climactic ending. The tenor and baritone enter quickly wearing pink rubber gloves and amidst much splashing of detergent bubbles wash all the wine glasses. The female dancer enters 'en pointe' and positions herself centrestage, grinning ecstatically. The other women enter briskly and cheerfully, wielding dead fish with which they dance across the space and slap the dancer's face - all very civilised! Three men enter, sprinting with fish - three enthusiastic high-kicking 'football jocks'. All this silliness culminates in a stagy tableau. Immediately into:

17. Finale Il Signor Bruschino G. Rossini

A very short and abrupt Finale, sung by the entire ensemble, finishing in a curtain call, acknowledging the accompanists and production staff. All exit to the dressing room.

18. Wenn die beste Freundin Spoliansky

Snap blackout on stage and spotlight picks up the director posing in the dressing room doorway. Is everyone going to take their individual curtain call? (spare us!) The music is recorded by Ute Lemper (yet another diva) - totally out of character with the rest of the work. The director is suddenly circling the space in time with the music - large spacious gestures reminiscent of Pina Bausch's earlier dance works. He smiles and flirts with his audience. The neurotic young man from scenes 6 & 7 enters again, trying to express his concerns to the dancer / director, who politely ignores him. The mezzo from scenes 2 to 5 crosses the space, ominously wielding a fish knife. The young man follows her, nattering maniacally, but she has her heart set on opening the front of house doors. But then suddenly she turns to confront the audience with the aria that she has been unable to sing earlier in the evening. For the first time in the evening, just when they thought it was all over, the audience has been handed some recognisable threads. Anonymous performers now appear to have some vestige of ongoing character, although with no sense of particular development, and their narrative purpose is not articulated. Though the style of presentation has shifted quite abruptly, components are strangely satisfying to the whole.

19. Scherza infida (aria) Ariodante G.F. Handel

The cast enter slowly, are passed a fish knife each, and then move to stand with the audience against the walls. Very softly, almost absent-mindedly, they turn to their neighbour and whisper that Matthew is dead. Some audience members are surprised, appalled by the insensitivity of the moment (odd that some still believe that Matthew is actually real - they have not fathomed his thematic relevance to the work as a whole) - others laugh. Slowly the cast assemble centre stage with their knives, and then slowly exit through the glass doors to the lawn outside, where they wait facing away from the theatre. The mezzo is the last to exit, followed by the director with deadly intent. He stops short of exiting. Trashy pop music is heard from a small ghetto-blaster in the distance as the ensemble wildly stomp their feet on the ground and thrash at the air with their knives. The director quickly closes the curtain on the scene, smiles and crosses the space to open the front of house and gestures a friendly "Goodnight".

IN CONCLUSION

distressing the Diva embraces the repertoire of eighteenth and early nineteenth century opera and acknowledges certain aesthetic sensibilities that this repertoire carries as baggage. Our treatment however sets out to explore this material in relationship to the rich heritage of twentieth century performance theory. We do not do this by choice, but because it is our responsibility to do so as contemporary artists. One of the legacies of post-modern thought is that we are able to (indeed wish to) embrace a multiplicity of reading of any one idea. This manifests itself in late twentieth century theatrical practice in a number of ways. Firstly, it encourages a layering of disparate elements in such a manner that their collision on stage enriches their discrete meanings. Secondly, it eschews the ideal of one authentic 'truth' - it permits, indeed encourages, an ironic position for both the artist and the audience. Thirdly, it unashamedly embraces an enormous legacy of theatrical conventions, where no one philosophical, aesthetic or political position has authority over another - eclecticism is the result of an educated and intelligent decision. We can choose to perform the enormous operatic canon in a manner that we imagine they were originally presented, however we can NEVER 'view' them in such a way again. Better surely, to acknowledge that the world and all that live in it moves constantly onward, and that we can never recreate an historical 'way of seeing'. Our task, as artists performing extant works, is to understand that 'interpreting' art necessarily means 're-interpreting' it - and this demands that we understand who we are, and how and why we think, in our own time. It is only then that we can begin to respect the initiating artist's intentions.

Nigel Kellaway

June 1998

The printed program acknowledged the sources of sound, music and theatrical material from past productions that Nigel Kellaway has been integrally involved in:

Peter Wells Electronic sound
from *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* by The opera Project 1997

Raffaele Marcellino Madamina Dance
from *Don Juan* by The Sydney Front 1991

Madamina Song - Annette Tesoriero mezzo-soprano
from *Don Juan* by The Sydney Front 1991

"Madamina" scene derived from *Don Juan* by The Sydney Front 1991

"Ecco ridente in cielo" scene derived from *The Pornography of Performance* by The Sydney Front 1988

distressing the Diva
Stopera Inc.
The Studio, Street Theatre, ACT
11-13 June 1998
directed by Nigel Kellaway

As we entered The Studio, we found the entire cast standing out on the floor, each bearing a waiter's tray filled with glasses of wine and singing *Ich will, docht zume nicht*, from Mozart's *Die Entfuhrung dem Serail*. We helped ourselves to drinks, found seats for those needing them and the rest of us arranged around the walls. The beautiful ensemble singing was thrilling in its dignity of presentation. What could follow? The evening was to examine 'the beast we call opera'.

Directed (brought together?) by Nigel Kellaway (who also played piano and performed), the whole production was the work of the cast who - 'firstly devised theatrical material around themes of sex, death and violence'. I had not read the program until after the performance, always preferring to accept what I see first. I wholeheartedly enjoyed the evening, waiting for each new quirky undersetting of an opera icon. For me, this outrageous treatment succeeded because the music and the voice remained untouched and sublime. My only doubt is whether those who are not opera freaks were able to get all the jokes.

This was the sharing of a joyful experience - one where we were invited to taste the fare: the sly nudge in the ribs, the alternative to po-faced operatic scenes, the outrageous stomping ensemble for a *Don Giovanni* number - and all without actively alienating the audience. Mild alienation was apparent when scenes took place outside the glass doors and some audience spread across the floor, blocking our view. For a longer run, this could have been forestalled by earlier instruction. I acknowledge that audience participation was improved by the somewhat ad hoc arrangement but (even though I did have a seat), I own to a wistful memory of *I, Fool of Fortune!*, when we were all seated in one block.

The stated aim of making singers move and actors sing was triumphantly achieved, aided magnificently by Vivienne Winther (musical director) and Nigel Kellaway. Singers Rachel James and Sharon Olde entranced us when carrying out chairs and trays while singing (from) Handel's *Julius Caesar* in our faces. Stopera favourites, Maria Danielle-Sete, Tupe Tam-Yam, Jennifer Mueller and Jason Scott-Watkins gracefully carried the 'serious' singing, and Simon Aylott, Liliana Bogotka (who held the entire audience in a slightly uneasy silence for a full ten minutes), Louise Morris, Emma Strapps and Timothy Wood more than complemented the ensemble. Nigel Kellaway, besides appearing as a prancing chorus member ended the night with one of the sauciest dances (?) it's been my luck to see.

reviewed by Stella Wilkie
MUSE MAGAZINE, July 1998 ([Reproduced with permission](#))

During the past month, a gem of a show challenging traditional forms was presented by Stopera and Nigel Kellaway. Opera is surely one of the most mysterious yet contrived art forms. So when Kellaway stands up at the beginning of *distressing the Diva* to tell the audience (in the foyer) that one of the actors has had a dreadful accident and please be patient with the cast who are putting on a brave face, you don't know whether to take him seriously or not. Of course you do, only to realise later how well he satirises opera to the quick, the audience and their responses included.

For Kellaway, the text of opera begs to be untangled. In this piece, the product of a ten-day workshop with music of Mozart, Rossini and Handel, Stopera and Kellaway flout convention (something Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was famous for himself,) deconstructing the form, while allowing that mystery Handel speaks of, to remain. No wonder capacity audiences enjoyed this eccentric and at times bizarre little wonder. Accessible, lively and intellectually rewarding.

Francesca Rendle-Short
Editor
MUSE MAGAZINE, July 1998

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Helen Musa
Arts Editor
CANBERRA TIMES, June 1998

NSW Ministry for the Arts

Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship - 1997-98

Artistic Acquittal

The award of the 1997 Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship was timely for me. I had reached a stage in my twenty-odd year professional career when serious assessment was necessary. The need as a freelance performing artist and director (working in alternative areas to the 'mainstream' in Australia) to produce an extraordinary volume of disparate work in a year does not change, but my 1st twelve months, with the assistance of the scholarship, have brought an enlightening change in my attitude to this workload. I have had the opportunity to seriously consider the type of work I wish to make, and to articulate that clearly to my collaborators and/or employers. I am becoming increasingly wary of being simply "a gun for hire". I can more confidently demand that when people engage me they take me on *my* artistic terms. (I have no interest in making work that looks like someone else's.) People have often used my name descriptively (ie. something looks very "Nigel Kellaway"), but I'm only now becoming confident in knowing myself what that means and appreciating it. If people like and understand my vision and aesthetic sensibilities they will buy me - if they don't like it, I hope they will stay well clear of me. Perhaps in my maturing reticence to compromise on these essentials, I am breaking the cardinal rule of a financially successful freelance director and performer. So be it - I don't like to waste other people's money and time, *nor mine*.

The Project

Assessing, understanding, developing the strengths:

At a certain age and time in their professional life, certain practitioners need to assess the predicament of the 'multi-disciplinary artist'. Is there merely a smorgasbord of talents available for sale, or is there a coherent package? How are these various skills more than merely complementary tricks?

The strategy

The piano

The Rex Cramphorn Scholarship, most importantly, bought me a piano - an exceptional piano - A Yamaha UX Model - an upright instrument that (tragically) is no longer manufactured. I bought the instrument second-hand. It has been sitting somewhere in Tokyo, unplayed, for around sixteen years. The Yamaha UX was a remarkable development in piano technology - cross strung and

exceptional for its clarity, depth and articulation of sound across its full range. I managed to secure (by all kinds of undeclared and shady deals) this very special instrument for a quarter of its original cost - I paid just \$5,500.

I was, so many years ago, trained on and accustomed to very fine instruments. What do I do with this now? A good piano shows up every technical flaw - it demands a great sound! Time to rediscover a technique - 12 months of 3 hours every day - scales arpeggios, Bach, Scarlatti, Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, etc., etc. WHY? I have theatre to make! To perform Hector Berlioz' great song cycle *Les Nuits d'Ete* requires a formidable pianistic technique. To truly understand the marvel of Puccini's *Tosca* from the piano reduction score can benefit enormously from a mastery of piano sound. The Yamaha UX has enabled me to refind a musical command, confidence, bravura that I neglected 20 years ago. It is this refound expertise that has enabled me to achieve two major theatrical works.

I have embarked on an odd quest - a quite different view of the piano as a performative device - not simply as a pianist performing at an instrument in a recital or accompanying role. How does the pianist take on a vital theatrical presence? We are trapped on a stool, rabbiting away with our fingers, a slave to every breath, twitch and grimace that it takes to produce a sound. Tadashi Suzuki rears his ugly head ... control, muscles, awareness, virtuosity. My task, as an actor, has been to discover and refine the act of pianism as a theatrical 'action' as performed by an actor immersed in the action (narrative?) of a theatrical work. I am striving to equate this action of pianism with the way a singer uses the voice on stage - not merely as an accompaniment to the action, but as an 'operatic' tool - speaking through the sound of the instrument / the physicality of the pianistic performance - alert and involved, with an 'actorly' attitude. This all requires a multitude of virtuosic techniques and considerable practice.

In both *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* and *The Terror of Tosca* my role as a pianist is a potent driving force for the action, enabling me to move to and from the keyboard with intelligent actorly conviction and dramaturgical integrity.

In the development of *distressing the Diva* for Stopera Inc. I selected and prepared the vocal repertoire at the piano before the rehearsal period - on a minuscule budget I was able to fulfil my promise to create a work "from the music-UP".

In the recreating of *This Most Wicked Body* for the 1998 Telstra Adelaide Festival all those aspects of myself as a musician/actor/director were made clear. When, toward the end of the performance, I join Gerard Willems at the piano for a performance of Schubert's F Minor Fantasia, I stop ranting, flirting, lying, posturing, confiding - I enjoy, at that moment of relief, an honest and mature dialogue with my collaborator.

All thanks to the acquisition of a very good piano, and a lot of sweat.

THE MAJOR PROJECTS

The period supported by the Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship involved three major performance projects:

The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves

The Berlioz was not simply another production. It was a launching vehicle - a new company, The opera Project, to facilitate the production of theatre works with a vision that is shared by myself, long-term collaborator Annette Tesoriero and a host of theatre artists that have collaborated with us over the past decade. Our backgrounds are in 'contemporary performance'. We are all, also,

deeply inquisitive about the positioning of the history and politics of sound (music) in our theatrical histories.

The opera Project is an incorporated company that requires an administrative centre, for its legal responsibilities and its day-to-day working and public profile. As the company expands the administrative workload expands also. The rex Cramphorn Scholarship has supported my solitary role as administrator of the new company. Project funding has afforded \$400 over the 1997-98 financial year for my administrative fee.

The opera Project was created to facilitate the creation of new works - the tool of a creative desire, not a device to earn a salary.

This Most Wicked Body

This was a landmark experience for me. The opportunity to complete a work - rarely have I felt a work was completed (with the exception of *Don Juan*, with that opportunity to tour internationally so extensively with The Sydney Front). I must acknowledge the extraordinary support of Robyn Archer, the director of the 1998 Telstra Adelaide Festival. Robyn has the task of producing festivals that promise to be popularly received (she has an ability to compromise her personal vision of the art she wishes to make and see - a role I am, pray God, not destined for) and yet embraces her responsibility to support the development of the dangerous edge of Australian contemporary theatre and music. She is the first director of a major Australian festival to buy my work (I must acknowledge Anthony Steel who has commissioned work directed, though not initiated by me, in the past). I can only feel pessimistic for all our futures, once Robyn has moved on. Where the similar national opportunities lie for Australian artists like myself who refuse to pander to the obviously accessible? We are all going to have to be brutally provocative "post-Olympics", and politically astute in the process. But, then again, look what the French achieved after the Paris Exposition at the end of the last century - let's be optimistic.

The process of remaking *This Most Wicked Body* was one of "knowing" the work, and that takes years - I have performed various versions of it over the past four years. I knew (and Robyn invited the fact) that I wanted to make it very difficult, very complicated, very virtuosic, very provocative.

I enjoyed an new and extraordinary collaboration with concert pianist Gerard Willems. He is a mature and demanding artist, virtuosic and opinionated, yet totally sympathetic to my theatrical and musical vision. The repertoire he agreed to perform for the production (on four consecutive nights!) was almost inhuman - requiring phenomenal experience and physical stamina. he took amazing risks for a pianist of his reputation, enjoyed them, and succeeded. I have no recollection of Gerard ever saying "no" to me - what a privilege!

The Terror of Tosca

The Terror of Tosca process began with script/score analysis. I made the early intuitive decision to adhere to the structure of Puccini's score - three acts and a fairly simple narrative outline. Why? Because it's fucking good theatre - perhaps one of the best in the operatic canon!

This was the work I promised the committee of the 1997-98 Rex Cramphorn Scholarship. Fourteen months (to date) of research, composition, writing and intense piano practice have been dedicated to the work. There has been time to conceive of the work as a physical creation - for me, that means how light falls on and reflects off bodies and objects - I have had the opportunity to conceptualise a lighting design and integrate that with the scenario. It takes a long time to make such a work. \$45,000 of Australia Council funding and \$11,000 funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts. affords a month and a half of rehearsal and very basic production and advertising costs. \$15,000 from the Rex Cramphorn Scholarship has been stretched to 12 months of one artist's

research, composition and writing. Will I again have the opportunity to prepare a work so thoroughly? In the present climate of arts support - NO! But I am now able to approach the rehearsal studio with my performers more confidently than ever before. Ofcourse, if it is universally received as a heap of shit - then who cares? Time will tell.

Back to the piano - the piano practice on *Tosca*. Hours every day for months of finding new ways of thinking the music and the text, the same as any actor who works and reworks his script, finding new ways of speaking the material. As a musician/actor this means finding new sounds, new tempi, new inferences, suggestions, richness. Asking myself how to understate, how to emphasise, certain ideas.

OTHER WORKS:

Fire Born

Padma Menon approached me in 1993, with the desire to have me develop and direct a work for her company. Funding and company board priorities have intervened over the years, but at last Padma came to me with a funded season of a new solo work for herself. The six weeks we spent together in Sydney were extraordinarily rewarding - Padma's generosity as a performer, and her ability to instruct me in the intricacies of Indian classical dance and its cultural implications. She showed no fear! Unfortunately, due to her ill-health, we were unable to complete the production, which was to be presented in the Canberra Festival in Feb 1998. However, a first draft scenario has emerged and we intend to present the work in 1999. The collaboration was a joyous experience we also intend to pursue further in the 1999 production of *Tristan* with The opera Project.

(NB. Padma subsequently moved to live in the Netherlands, and so neither project has eventuated)

Between parallels and meridians

This was a work that I was unavoidably committed myself to in early 1996 - thee direction of Gerardo Rodriguez-Brusezzi in a solo installation at the Art Gallery of NSW. It unfortunately eventuated in a totally unsatisfactory collaboration, bringing considerable grief to all involved, and does not warrant further discussion. It did, however, give me an opportunity to glimpse inside the workings of a large institution (the AGNSW) and a good relationship was forged with all the staff. I would certainly be keen to work in the gallery again.

The Interview (renamed The Query)

John Baylis invited me to collaborate with him on the initial 10 day workshopping of a work planned for by his company Urban Theatre Projects in 1999, with performers Rolando Ramos and Xu Fengshan. It was an enormous pleasure to work again with two fine performers from my past. I was particularly inspired by the interplay of their languages - Rolando spoke mainly Spanish and Xu, Mandarin, in the improvisations. Looking forward to our work together on *The Terror of Tosca*, it was invaluable also in learning what Xu is willing to do onstage, what he is not, and the personal cultural convictions that inform these decisions.

distressing the Diva

The director of Stopera, Vivienne Winther approached me in late 1997, asking me to conduct a two week workshop in Canberra, funded by ArtsACT. This turned out to be a workshop with a public

showing that grew quite out of control. I travelled to Canberra to audition for participants a few months prior to the workshop and was delighted with the talent I had to choose from. Then the publicists started contacting me with press release copy, poster designs, tec. I fast realised that a considerable season was being planned. And indeed that is what happened - so successfully that it had to be extended for an additional performance to accommodate the audience. I had a ball - I totally uncensored license to be frivolous, and discovered a valued new relationship with Stopera Inc. I will eagerly work with them again.

Blood Vessel

Rachel Swain, the director of the production by Stalker, asked me to assist her with the remounting from an upcoming European tour. She initially approached me to "choreograph" the work, but I explained to her that I don't work that way - I need to have a full input into the dramaturgy of any piece I work on. We agreed that my role would be to provide "additional direction". The material I was confronted with was a bit of a mess of cluttered technology, confused dramaturgy and impenetrable narrative. Despite my reticence for involvement, I fulfilled my "gun-for-hire" role and enjoyed a fruitful and painless eight days with the company. I think we ironed out a lot of the problems. (I subsequently helped stage it again at the 1999 Perth Festival.

IN CONCLUSION

When I reflect on the award to me of the Rex Cramphorn Scholarship, my only misgivings are experienced when I look at the budget. I realise that I now have to look once again at an income of \$12-15,000 a year. The past 12 months have been luxurious - I am one of the fortunate few in this country. The discoveries have been enormous. I have treasured the legacy of Rex, and hope that his scholarship will continue to be awarded to mature (and impoverished) artists dedicated to a passionate enquiry and dangerous practice.

Nigel Kellaway
14th August 1998

FINANCIAL ACQUITTAL

INCOME

1997 Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship	15000
The opera Project <i>The Berlioz-our vampires ourselves</i>	4600
G. Rodriguez-Bruzzesi <i>Between Parallels and Meridians</i>	5146
Padma Menon Dance Theatre <i>Fireborn</i>	4000
1998 Adelaide Festival <i>This Most Wicked Body</i>	2625
Urban Theatre Projects <i>The Interview</i>	2400
Stopera <i>distressing the Diva</i>	2400
Stalker <i>Blood Vessel</i>	2457
Total Income	38628

EXPENDITURE

Purchase of piano	5500
Gym fees	260
Telecommunications for business purposes	947
General Administration	639

Living Away Allowances (Adelaide and Canberra)	1350
Superannuation	1796
Workers' compensation insurance	599
Gross Salary 52 weeks x \$529.56	27537

Total Expenditure **38628**

The Terror of Tosca

Based on **TOSCA** an opera by Giacomo Puccini with libretto by G. Giacosa and L. Illica derived from the drama by V. Sardou

<i>Director:</i>	Nigel Kellaway in collaboration with the performers	
<i>Performers:</i>	Regina Heilmann	Nigel Kellaway
	Jai McHenry	Annette Tesoriero
	Dean Walsh	Xu Fengshan
<i>Music:</i>	Giacomo Puccini and Nigel Kellaway embedded by Peter Wells	
<i>Costumes:</i>	Annemaree Dalziel	
<i>Lighting design and Production Management:</i>	Simon Wise	
<i>Publicity:</i>	Morag White/Push Productions	
<i>Artwork:</i>	Lisa Herbert/Scout	
<i>Publicity Photography:</i>	Heidrun Lohr	
<i>Piano courtesy of:</i>	ALLANS	

THE TERROR OF TOSCA acknowledges the source of part of its inspiration in the 1995 production of **FRIGHT!!!** by Sidetrack Performance Group, directed by Nigel Kellaway in collaboration with James Berlyn, Geoff Cobham, Annemaree Dalziel, Keith Gallasch, Andree Greenwell, Regina Heilmann, Jai McHenry, Rolando Ramos, Neil Simpson, Meme Thorne, Dean Walsh and Xu Fengshan.

(Program Notes)

Let us tell you another story...

Giacomo Puccini based his 1900 opera on V. Sardou's famous drama. We have a slightly different story to tell...

It is probably no historical accident that the word 'person', in its first meaning, is a 'mask'. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere more or less consciously playing a role...It is in these roles that we know each other: it is in these roles that we know ourselves.

Irving Goffmann *BELIEF IN THE PART ONE IS PLAYING*

When Scarpia dons Tosca's dress, what part in our perception of the role of Tosca is he taking on? How much of Scarpia's desire for power also finds a home within the character of Tosca? How much of Tosca's emotional manipulation is exposed in Scarpia's more forthright cunning.

In *The Terror of Tosca* we take the relationship between Tosca and Scarpia as a primary focus. The powerful interaction between them is all the more intense because they are foils for each other. Tosca and Scarpia take up their roles (and at times, others) willingly. Our Mario/Angelotti is, however, assigned his role as "feminised" victim - an unwilling victim of the power play between Tosca and Scarpia.

This powerplay is reinforced by the strength of its sources. Scarpia draws his power from institutions: the Church and the State. Tosca's power is her femininity. Both can justify their positions by calling on God (and, in our case, particular performative traditions).

Puccini places the Church and its interests at the centre of his opera *Tosca*. Tosca's naive devotion, Scarpia's inquisition-like piety, Mario's irreverence and indifference all place the Church and religion as mainplayers in his drama. In *The Terror of Tosca* we not only acknowledge this position of the Church and the redemption and restoration of life through suffering (our own, or that of others), but we also draw upon the Medieval Christian notion of *meraviglia* in which the line between art and reality, or fantasy and verisimilitude, is not clearly defined.

Puccini's *Tosca* does not strictly follow the school of *verismo*, which derives from the traditions of theatrical "realism". It belongs, rather, to the traditions of romantic melodrama. Our task has been to compress, and yet keep coherent Sardou's original plot (an intricate example of what is ironically known as a "well-made play"). Ours and Puccini's texts are melodrama - raw responses to threats and violence, abrupt declarations of jealousy and desire.

THE TERROR OF TOSCA

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS of TOSCA

An opera in three acts by GIACOMO PUCCINI
Libretto by G. Giacosa and L. Illica
Based on the drama by V. Sardou

on which THE TERROR OF TOSCA is based

ACT 1 - The church of Sant'Andrea Della Valle

Mario Cavaradossi, an artist, is working on a painting of the Magdalen for an altar piece. Angelotti, consul of the outlawed Roman Republic and on the run from the police, enters the church. His sister, the Attavanti, has left some women's clothes for him in their family chapel, as a disguise for his escape from Rome. Mario is an old friend of their family, and so promises to aid Angelotti's escape. They arrange to meet at Mario's villa that night. Angelotti accidentally drops the fan as he rushes from the church with the clothes.

Tosca, operatic diva and Mario's lover, enters. Approaching, she had heard Mario whispering urgently with someone. She suspects that Mario has been meeting another woman. But he assures her of his fidelity. She insists that she meets Mario at his villa that evening.

Scarpia, the chief of police, enters the church. He is in search of the fugitive Angelotti, and suspects that Mario is an accomplice. He also desires Tosca, and so wishes Mario ill. He finds the dropped fan and

shows it to Tosca, as proof that Mario has been meeting another woman (the Attavanti) in the church. Tosca is enraged.

The act closes with the entrance of the choir and clergy for a celebration of the Te Deum, during which Scarpia reflects on his carnal desire for Tosca.

ACT 2 - Scarpia's private apartment in the Farnese Palace

Scarpia is alone, contemplating the situation of Mario, Angelotti and most particularly Tosca. He muses on the relationship between desire and power. Mario has been found and arrested. Through an open window we can hear Tosca singing a cantata at a concert for the Queen. Mario is dragged in and interrogated by Scarpia.

The concert ended, Tosca dashes in, having been notified by Scarpia of Mario's arrest. As Mario is tortured in an adjoining room, Scarpia tries to extract information from Tosca, who eventually tells him that Angelotti is hiding in the well in Mario's garden.

Scarpia now has a reason to hang both Angelotti and Mario, leaving Tosca available for his own desires. But he's cunning. Knowing that Tosca is not exactly enamoured with him in the present circumstances, he makes a deal with her: if she succumbs to his lust first he will make sure that Mario is saved and can escape with her from Italy. He will arrange a mock execution with blank bullets (he feels obliged to make a show of it, for political reasons) and signs a letter of safe conduct for Mario and Tosca. That done, he throws himself at Tosca in feverish desire and her response is to stab him to death.

ACT 3 - A parapet of the Fortress Sant'Angelo

Mario is languishing in jail, awaiting his execution at sunrise. Tosca arrives and tells him about the fake execution and their letter of safe conduct from Italy together. They imagine together their future life. At last the firing squad arrives, shoots Mario and exits. Tosca calls to Mario to get up, but Scarpia has fooled them by ordering that real bullets be used - Mario is dead.

The police have discovered Scarpia's body in the palace and know that Tosca is the murderer. They enter, searching for Tosca. She runs to the edge of the parapet - screaming that she will meet Scarpia before God - and plunges to her death over the battlements.

(THE TERROR OF TOSCA is performed without interval.)

The opera Project Inc.

THE TERROR OF TOSCA

**This is the working text for the production as performed at The Performance Space,
Sydney, in October 1998**

Initials refer as following:

**RH: Regina Heilmann
NK: Nigel Kellaway
JM: Jai McHenry
AT: Annette Tesoriero
DW: Dean Walsh
XU: Xu Fengshan**

THE TERROR OF TOSCA

ATTO PRIMO

OVERTURE - Front of house opens

CD 2 TRACK 1

audience enters - front of house closes

(NK opens hands on table)

LOWER VOLUME

JM: I have devised a daily routine- a game to defend myself from the enticements which the sight of that woman can exert on my senses. In the morning, as soon as I get up, and then at night before I go to bed, and also in the course of the day, if the memory of her becomes too insistent, I apply myself faithfully and methodically to a purifying exercise. This consists of imagining a Tosca gradually deformed by age, by death, and by corruption. I see the nakedness of the skeleton - I watch her dissolve into dust - and at the sight of this I feel great pity, but also great relief.

NK: I think of Tosca, of Mario, of Scarpia - I bring them to mind as remote figures, as characters in some imaginary happening represented on the stage of a theatre, in a blaze of false lights, surrounded by the truth of darkness. And I think that to bring them thus to mind is not altogether disagreeable.

(NK sits back)

CROSSFADE TO CD 1 TRACK 1

Angelottis (RH,DW) entering - Bursting through front of house and running to table via ramp.

RH and DW arrive at table

FADE OUT VOLUME CD OFF

JM: **You! Scarpia!!**

NK stands suddenly - removes coat.

RH/JM/DW: Ah! Mario Cavaradossi!

NK: And you are?

DW: You don't know me?

RH: Last year at your villa?

JM: Have the months in prison changed him so completely?

NK: Mario?
DW: But you are Mario!
NK: Perhaps. For the meantime, at least.

In which case you must be.....Angelotti.....The consul of the outlawed Roman Republic.

(first piano phrase - RH/JM threaten DW over the table)

JM(to RH): We know that this doesn't concern all of us, don't we.
RH(to JM): Yes. There are particular characters earmarked for certain destruction. They will know who they are and what they have to do, when the time comes.

JM(to DW): Remember: Avoidance strengthens fear.

RH(to DW): Perhaps you don't know what you're doing.

JM(to DW): It is sad to see you in trouble, but I don't help you by making myself miserable.

RH(to DW): Don't you remember? We rehearsed this, you moron!

NK: Can I help you, in any way?

RH/DW/JM: Yes!!

(AT offstage): **Mario! Mario!**

CD 1 TRACK 2

NK: Ah, Tosca! In church every day! Constant devotion. She's on our side, but when she goes to confession she holds back no secrets. Don't worry, I've told her nothing about you. But we must be very, very careful!

(JM/RH/DW: *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae, et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.
Ecce ancilla Domini; Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum
Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis*)

(NK plays piano)

FADE OUT CD

DW: Are we alone here?

JM/RH: Si. But tell us, what is your plan?

DW: Escape!.....(Whisper)....

RH/JM: Escape?! How?

DW: (Whisper).....

JM: A disguise?!

AT (offstage): *Ma nel ritra costei,* (DW parades dress)
il mio solo pensiero,
Ah! il mio sol pensier sei tu!
Tosca sei tu!

JM: She has the nerve to proclaim herself a fellow believer.

RH: Indeed. So what is the plan?

JM: To instruct her in the arduous path of TRUE belief.

RH: How?

JM: Convince her that the flesh -that ephemeral splendour she takes such pleasure in....

RH: Si! It is mere suffering and wretchedness -

RH/JM: **The living tomb of the soul!**
(JM and RH exit)

(NK finishes piano - DW is at piano)

CD 1 TRACK 3

NK: Scarpia?! Treach'rous hypocrite. He who mingles cruelty and lust with the practice of religion: a loathsome and lech'rous hangman!

I can save your life, I promise you! But to stay here would be madness!

DW: But someone will see me!

NK: No, listen: from that chapel door you enter a garden. Follow the path - it leads to my villa. Take the dress. I'll meet you there this evening

Tosca [AT offstage]: Mario!

NK: Tosca, again! Don't worry, I'll get rid of her.

Tosca [AT offstage]: Mario!
NK (To Tosca offstage) Tosca!

NK: Here take the dress!

DW: Put it on?

NK: Hurry!!!!

(NK attempts to dress DW in dress [as Tosca] - seduction dance)

DW (recognising NK): **Scarpia!!**

NK: No. I've told you - I am Mario - but, then again, I guess you could be Mario too - if you wanted to be.

DW: No!! I am??????

NK: Angelotti. Si. But you could be Mario, soon - Tosca would like that.

Presto! Adio!

(DW exits to dressing room.

NK takes fan to piano.

FADE CD

NK walks to table.

NK: TOSCA!!!!

(Doors open to reveal TOSCAS)

CD 2 TRACK 2

NK: Tosca?

RH/JM close doors

AT/RH/JM: What were you doing?!!!!

NK: I was playing the piano!

AT: Oh No! You were speaking to someone.

RH: I heard voices.

JM: Who were you speaking to?

NK: I was speaking to you.

AT, JM: Oh no!

JM: You were speaking to someone - I heard you!

AT,RH,JM: Where is she?

NK: Who?

AT,RH,JM: Confess!

JM: Where is that woman?

AT: I heard her footsteps plainly!

RH: I sense her hidden presence!

JM: I know she's here, somewhere!

NK: Nonsense!

AT,RH,JM: Liar!

NK: You know that I love you!

AT,RH,JM: Oh!!!

JM: Not in front of the Madonna!

AT: No, My beloved, let us first kneel in prayer. (Kneels, grabbing NK's groin)

ALL TOSCAS PRAYING - NK wanders the space anxiously

VOLUME UP

JM and RH approach NK seductively

Music finishes

CD OFF

AT: MARIO!! Listen closely. Tonight I am singing at the palace. But my part is a short one. Wait for me at the chapel door, and from there we'll steal away to your little villa.

NK: This evening?!! (aside) Angelotti is there!!

RH: The night is fragrant

JM: Sweet perfumes intoxicate the air

AT: They warm the heart.

RH: You are not eager?

NK: Sì, molto.

DW: (entering suddenly from dressing room) SAY THAT AGAIN!!!

NK: SÌ, MOLTO!

AT: (sung) *Lo dici male,*

RH/JM: you say it badly.....

AT (to DW): *Non la sospiri la nostra casetta
Che tutta ascosa nel verde ciaspetta?
nido a noi scaro, inginto ai mondo inter,
pien d'amore e di mister?*

AT: MARIO!! (Runs to DW)

*Al tuo fianco sentire per le silenziose stellate ombre,
salir le voci delle cose!*

*Dai boschi e dai roveti, dall'arse erbe
dall'imo dei franti sepolcreti odorosi di timo,
la notte esconbisbigli di minuscoli amori e perfidi consigli
che ammoliscono i cuori*

*Fiorite, o campi immensi, palpitate aure marine,
aure marine nel lunare albor.*

*Ah piovete voluta, volte stellate!
Arde in Tosca un folle amor*

(JM & RH run to table to ravish DW)

AT: **Ah! T'avinco ne miei lacci la tua, sirena.**

(JM,RH) Ah! I conquer once again! You remain my slave!!

AT: *Arde a Tosca nel sangue il folle amor!*

RH/JM: My love, until tonight!

AT: *O mio amore!*

CD 1 TRACK 4

Scarpia (Xu) arrives on ramp

JM & NK grab their Scarpia coats and joins him on ramp

XU (all in Mandarin): *(A government prisoner has escaped)*

JM: A prisoner of state has escaped from the Fortress Sant'Angelo. We are told
he took refuge here. He may still be here.

AT/RH: O God, have mercy!

JM: We made a blunder in firing the canons.

XU: *(Perhaps the bird was frightened and flew from the cage)*

JM: Perhaps the bird took warning and flew from the cage. What Accomplice
has aided his escape?

NK: (pointing at DW) Mario Cavaradossi!!

FADE CD - OFF

JM: He! The protector of Angelotti! The lover of Tosca!

XU: *(Arrest him!!)*

JM: Hold him!! (DW sits at table) Now, let the game begin!

RH AT: Scarpia!

XU: Tosca?

RH: Signore, I must speak with you at length....

AT (sitting): *in privo.*

JM(sitting): Are you referring to.....(er).....?

AT: His name is Mario Cavaradossi.

XU : *(Be quiet!)*

JM: Enough!! I attend to too many cases like this, and they are all the same.

RH: But this time, sir, the man is innocent.

XU: *(I will decide that.)*

JM: Of that, dear lady let me be the judge. Besides, he has attempted escape,
and that certainly does not count in favour of his innocence.

RH: Even an innocent man can fear your methods.

XU: *(Please explain)*

JM: What do you know about my methods?

RH: They are on everyone's lips.

XU: *(Everyone knows you also.)*
 JM: And you too, my dear lady, are on everyone's lips.

RH: What do you mean by that?

XU: *(You a good woman, honest. You serve God.)*
 JM: That your reputation as a pious and virtuous woman is so great that it has reached even my ears. And so it amazes me somewhat that you intercede on behalf of a man of so doubtful a reputation.

RH: You are very quick to judge him!

JM: The Lord will always guide the thoughts of whoever serves Him to perceive the truth, and guide the hand to carry out the good.

RH: And so you believe that God commands us to torture our neighbours?

JM (to RH): Yes! To mortify the flesh.

RH (to JM): Our own - not that of others.

JM (to RH):
 (to AT)
 origin
 it
 You sex excuses the lack of logic in your argument. Are not all creatures linked by some obscure sympathy, some common which allows each of us to be reflected in the suffering of others? You see, it is compassion that guides my hand. Without it, how could I interrogate the condemned? How could I know that in torturing them I am recognising their corrupt nature - and consequently, my own?

RH: It is a vicious circle.

JM (to RH): Indeed. But, unfortunately, a rather short circle.
 XU: *(My experience tells me that prisoners cannot tolerate pain)*
 JM (to AT): The majority of suspects do not display the least capacity for tolerating pain. Perhaps your Mario will demonstrate a greater talent, but personally I doubt it. Nowadays the vocation for martyrdom is becoming increasingly rare.

RH (to JM): I had no idea that a special vocation was needed to be tortured.

JM (to RH): O Yes!!
 XU: *(There is beauty in torture)*
 JM (to AT): You see, dear lady, there is an aesthetic of torture. And there is a particular genius - as much on the part of the victim as the blood letter.

RH: Will you not let me speak for my Mario? Is there no way of persuading you?

NK: What? Are you suggesting that if you could speak to me without witnesses, in the privacy of a small room, that you could convince me of Mario's innocence?

AT (to NK): Off-stage, sir, Tosca is not in the habit of proposing bargains of that kind!

NK: Indeed?

AT: (You are a pig!)

NK: Now please, don't upset yourself - obviously I have misinterpreted your words. But now let us allow justice to follow its course, however unbending its nature.

RH (to NK): If I were to beseech you, in the name of God...

JM: Dear Lady, do not utter His name - on your lips it sounds like blasphemy! You know no other god but your own vanity!

RH (to JM): And you, sir, give the Lord's name to your wickedness, to your thirst for blood!

JM: I thought, Madam, you were here to make an appeal to my clemency.

RH: I have been naive, dear Scarpia. I thought you a man.

NK (to RH): A man like the rest, you mean? Like those over whom you are used to exercising your feminine tyranny?

RH (to NK): Like those who are able to feel.

JM (to RH): Oh, my heavenly Tosca, I have misjudged you. How noble your heart, how free from guile.

RH: What do you mean?

JM: So unlike those wanton creatures that come here to church , shamelessly posing in garments of virtue, only to seek forbidden pleasure with your faithless Mario.

AT: Mario? *MARIO!!!!*

RH: Is it true?

AT: *NO!!!*

RH: No! Prove it!!

NK: Si, THE PROOF!! To arouse the flames of jealous passion, Iago used a handkerchief, and I, Scarpia, use this fan.

RH: A lady's fan?

AT: Where did you find it?

NK: Here. Someone must have surprised the cooing lovebirds, and when the hen took flight, she appears to have dropped some feathers.

AT (sung): *La corona! Lo stemma! La donna!*

RH: Angelotti's sister!

NK: Ah, my plan is working!

AT: *Io venivo a lui tutta dogliosa
per dirgli: invan stassera il ciel s'infosca
l'innamoata Tosca e prigioniera*

RH: Mario has betrayed me!

JM: The poison is working!
(to DW) O gentle lady....what grieves your spirit? What has caused your anguish?

DW: Nothing!

JM I'd give my life, could I but assuage your torment.

RH: In my grief, here I languishwhile Mario in her arms now betrays me!

NK: Soon I shall conquer! (Piano interlude)

AT: She shall not have him tonight!! I swear it!!!!

JM: Madam! You forget you are in church!

RH: God will forgive me..... He sees how I suffer!

Piano interlude - all reset stage for the **TE DEUM**

JM: Don't worry I'm a policeman.
(NK jumps up from piano)

JM: I said, Don't worry I'm a policeman!!!
(NK runs to table)

(XU slams down knife - all move to rigidity at the table)

XU: Someone wants to kill me.

JM: Ahhhhh!!!! (stab table with the knife)

XU: Someone wants to kill me.

(RH screams - XU drops tray and picks up chains - carries them to back wall -
THROWS CHAINS as all, except AT, leap away from table)

CD 1 TRACK 5

TE DEUM

6.15 mins

(END OF MUSIC)

CD OFF

Scarpia: (NK) (leaping up from behind the table - all others freeze)

ATTO SECONDO**OVERTURE****LOWER VOLUME AFTER FIRST PHRASE**

Scarpia: (NK) Without knowing, she leads me to my prey.
 Tomorrow at sunrise Angelotti and the handsome Mario will be swinging from the gallows. Tosca will come to me for the sake of her dear Mario. She will beg, and then she will submit to my desire. Love such as her's runs deep, and brings deep grief in its wake. 1,2,3,4....5..6 7 and!

NK PLAYS PIANO **Piano - Gavotte** all skipping **FADE CD TO OFF**

Scarpia: (NK) Did you know that the prisoner Angelotti has escaped?

Mario: (DW) No I did not.

Scarpia: (NK) And yet we have reason to believe that you concealed him here, providing him with women's clothing, and then later hid him at your villa.

Mario: (DW) Bullshit! Who told you that?

Scarpia: (NK) Basta! Don't waste my time! Where is Angelotti?

Mario: (DW) I don't know!

(CANTATA Women singing at the piano:

Women: *Sale, ascende l'u man cantica
 Varca spazi varca celi.
 Per Ignotiem pirei profitate dai Vangeli a te guinge o re dei re.)*

Scarpia: (NK) Dear sir, reflect a moment: your stubborn behaviour is most unwise, believe me. If you confess you will save yourself much trouble and much pain. Take my advice, tell us: where is Angelotti?

Mario: (DW) I don't know!

Scarpia: (NK) O, what a shame Perhaps you suppose that it gives me some pleasure to torture you? It is a common enough mistake - there are many who mistake my zeal for cruelty.
 However let me explain my position:
 Firstly: in condemning you I obey the will of God.
 Secondly: God's will is supreme mercy.
 And so in condemning you to death I act in accordance with divine mercy. I mean, if I were to pardon you I should be disobeying the will of God - violating His laws of mercy. God preserve me from committing such a sin, and God preserve you from wishing me to commit it.

Now, once again, where is Angelloti?!

Mario: (DW) I don't know!!

Scarpia: (NK) Perhaps you needs some urging (to women) *Andarte*

Women line up at piano:

NK: Ready.....set.....GO!!

Tosca:(AT) (running to DW) Mario!

Scarpia:(NK) Eccola!

Tosca:(AT) *Mario! Tu Qui?!*

Mario:(DW) SHUT UP, you'll destroy me!

Scarpia:(JM) Mario Cavaradossi! (strips naked) You judge awaits you!
(to RH) Take him away!!

PIANO INTERLUDE (NK)

DW is dragged away by RH to back wall -stripped to their slips and fondled.

Xu and Jai waiting scene begins

NK FINISHES PIANO INTERLUDE - Turns to look at AT

CD 1 TRACK 6

NK stalking AT - she runs to plinth and mounts as the Madonna.

Tosca: (AT) (softly) Basta! Basta! He is in the well at Mario's villa.

Scarpia: (NK) (softly) Angelotti? The well at Mario's villa?!!

Tosca: (AT) (softly) Si. Now let me have my Mario!

Light hits DW and RH at the wall

DW: Tosca, you have betrayed me!

AT: Mario!

DW: Scarpia, your doom is near!!

NK: Basta! Go to your doom!

AT: No!

NK: Va! Va!

NK stripping naked, into Tosca frock

AT to top of ramp

RH drags DW centrestage

ARIA **VOLETE CHE**

AS NK PLAYS PIANO

FADE SOUND

RH and DW start Ballroom dancing lesson

Tosca: (AT) *Volete che cerchiamo insieme il modo di salvarlo?
E allor... sedete... e favelliamo.
E intanto un sorso. E vin di Spagna...
Un sorso per rincorarvi*

(AT collapses on ramp)

CD 1 TRACK 7

PIANO INTERLUDE

(NK approaching At on ramp)

NK: Tosca - Let me help you.

Tosca:(AT) How kind!

Scarpia:(NK) Oh, merely a sign of my friendship. Come, let me take your hand.

Tosca: (AT) But your grasp is too tight!!

Scarpia: (NK) Yes! It suits me perfectly.

Tosca: (AT) You are torturing me!!

Scarpia: (NK) I never maintained otherwise - did you think that Scarpia would prepare for you a bed of roses?

Tosca: (AT) If you gave me a rose, I would look for the thorns.

Scarpia: (NK) A crown of thorns, as you should know, my dearest Tosca, is a far nobler reward than a crown of roses. Too lofty, I fear, for one like you.

Tosca: (AT) I don't need you help!!

Scarpia: NK) O Tosca, it grieves me that you find my charity so displeasing.

Tosca: (AT) You dare to speak of charity?

Scarpia: (NK) Ofcourse. Your sin is your pride. Who else, but me, could free you from it?

Tosca: (AT) Meaning that you can teach me humility?

Scarpia: (NK) If you have been unable to learn it in church, then, yes, perhaps I can.
The loveliest flower is humility, particularly when it blooms within a
prideful soul. But you kneel only before yourself.

Tosca: (AT) If you hope to see me on my knees before you, you will have to wait a long time!!

Scarpia: (NK) Well, I shan't hold by force. You are free to go. But nothing will save your Mario.

Tosca: (AT) You are a beast!

Scarpia: (NK) O Tosca, how you despise. And that is just how I want you.

Tosca: (AT) I loathe you!!

Scarpia: (NK) So? (moving back to keyboard) Hatred and love were never that far apart.

Tosca:(AT) Aiuto!

Scarpia: (NK) Mia!

AT: Aiuto!

NK: Mia!

AT: Aiuto!

NK leaps from piano to grab JM: **MIA!!!** (XU mounts plinth as the Madonna)

Scarpia: (NK) Listen! Do you hear the drums? Those about to die have come to the end of their journey. Your time is running out. Look how high the gallows stand. Because of you, (to AT) yes you!!, (XU laughs) the final hour approaches for your Mario.

NK PLAYS CHORD

FADE VOLUME TO OFF

ARIA VISSI D'ARTE XU (on plinth) AT (at table)

AT helps JM down the space - helps her into cape. AT sits at table.

JM returns to pray at the Madonna (XU)

Tosca: (XU) *Vissi d'arte, visi d'amore,
non feci mai male ad anima viva!
Con man furtiva quante miserie conobbi, aiutai...*

*Sempre con fe sincera
la mia preghiera ai santi tabernacoli sali.
Sempre con fe sincera, diedi fiori agli altar*

(After XU has finished singing JM moves to concert position at the piano)

(AT) *Nell'ora del dolore perche, perche Signore,
perche me ne rimunerai cosi?*

*Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto,
e diedi il canto agli astri, al ciel, che ne ridean piu belli
Nell'ora del dolor
Perche, perche Signor,*

(IN SILENCE)

NK and JM at piano, AT at table.

Scarpia: (JM) Well,what is your decision?

Tosca: (AT) (softly, distracted) Mi vuoi supplice ai tuoi piedi?

Scarpia: (NK) You are far too lovely, my Tosca, and far too devoted to your Mario.
My price, you will find, is quite modest: you may have your precious Mario,
alive, if you grant me but one instant.

Tosca: (AT) You disgust me!

Scarpia: (JM) Make your choice.

(long pause)

Tosca: (AT) You will have me.... but you must free Mario at once!

Scarpia: (JM) Good....but we must be very, very cautious. We cannot release him
openly.

NK: We must set the scene

JM: We will stage a mock execution

NK: Blank bullets

JM: It must be arranged that everyone believes he is dead, and then he can
escape.

Tosca: (AT) Mario and I will need a letter of safe conduct, so we may quit Rome together.

Scarpia: (JM) You really mean to leave us?

Tosca: (AT) Ofcourse.

Scarpia: (NK) Very well, then - your wish will be granted.
(to JM) Write the letter!!

PIANO INTERLUDE (NK)

Scarpia: (JM) (signing the safe conduct at table)

Tosca - the genius victim, she who takes the whole world into
herself. The only victim with whom the torturer can manage to
indentify.

Problem: what would become of the torturer, should she be
taken away from him?

AT moves slowly to the plinth.

Scarpia: (XU) Which path?
Tosca: (AT) The shortest.

XU gives AT a dagger. AT moves slowly the NK at the piano

Scarpia: (NK) (rising from the piano - to AT)
Tosca, now at last you are mine!

CD 1 TRACK 8

Tosca: (DW) (to RH) Don't fucking touch me!!

SCARPIA'S MURDER

AT: Look at me!
I am Tosca , O Scarpia!
Die with my curse!
Die!!

RH: He is dead. Now I can forgive him!

And before this man, all Rome trembled!!
(AT) (almost whispered) E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!!

AT, RH, JM arrange NK in the shape of the crucifix on the centrestage floor and exit quickly through front of house, leaving doors wide open.

MUSIC FINISHES

CD OFF

NK: O God.
In the middle of the desk, plainly visible and clearly signed, was the order for Mario's release. Tosca has taken it.
Mario's execution order, however, it tucked away on the piano, intended to read by my men - they'll find it.
Real bullets!!! - In this way I can be certain that the sinister fame of Baron Scarpia will outlive me..... perhaps forever.
O, GOD!!!!!!!!!!

CD 1 TRACK 9

ATTO TERZO

OVERTURE

NK stands and slowly moves to the piano

DEAN'S SOLO

DW SITS IN 2ND POSITION

FADE CD TO OFF

NK STAND AT PIANO

CD 2 TRACK 4 9.00 mins

Horror Sound RH and JM enter from foyer

DW is strung up above table by XU, RH, JM & NK.

Tosca (AT) enters from foyer, closing front of house

As Xu sits in chair

FADE OUT CD

AT: *Mario!!* You are safe at last! Here, Scarpia's signature on our free pass from Italy!

NK: Scarpia so friendly? This must be the first time he has shown mercy.

AT: And the last!

NK: You mean he is dead?!!

AT: Si! Morto!

ARIA **Il tuo Sangue**

Tosca: (AT) *Il tuo sangue o il mio amore volea.
Furvani scongiurie pianti.
Invan, pazza d'oror, alla Madonna mi volsi e ai Santi
L'empio mostro dicea:
Gia nei cieli il pantibol le braccia leva!
Rullavano i tamburi
Rideva, l'empio mostro rideva
gia la sua preda pronto a ghermir!
"Sei mia?"
"Si". Alla sua brama mi promisi.
Li presso luccicava una lama.
Ei scrisse il foglio liberator,
venne all'orrendo ampleso.
Io quella lama gli piantai nel cor!*

RH: Listen, the hour approaches!

ARIA **O dolci mani.**

*O dolci mani mansuete e pure,
o mani elette a bell'opre e pietose,
a carezzar fanciulli, a coglier rose,
a pregar, giunte, per le sventure,
dunque in voi fatte dall'amor secure,
giustizia le sue sacre armi depose?*

NK PLAYS DEEP BASS CHORD

CD 1 TRACK 10

Tosca: (RH) (To DW) The hour approaches. A carriage will be waiting for us. But first, Mario my dear, you must face execution. Do not worry - it will be with empty rifles. They will shoot, but in pretense. Blank Bullets. At the first shot you must fall. The soldiers will then leave us. And then to safety! Swiftly to the sea coast. We'll board a vessel, and then away from Rome!

PARADISE - TRITONFAL

AT: *United esulanti diffonderem pel mondo i nostri amori armonie di colori,
armonie di cantidiffonderem.*

*Tritonfal di nova speme l'anima freme in celestial crescente ardor. Ed
in armonico voglia l'anima va all'estasi d'amor.*

*Ah, when you shut your eyes I shall kiss them lightly, and call you by the
thousand names of love.*

INCREASE VOLUME

WOMEN SIT AT TABLE

FADE SOUND TO VERY SOFT

JM: Ah, how fearful this waiting!
AT: Why this delay?
AT: The sun is rising.
RH: Why do the soldiers move so slowly?
JM: It is a comedy, I know, and yet this agony seems endless.
RH: At last they raise their rifles!
AT: How handsome is my Mario!

CD 2 TRACK 5

FINALE

TUTTI: (after 5th shot) There! Down, Mario!

DW collapses dead on table on 6th shot

Ah, what an actor!

Tutti Toscas: Presto su! Mario! Su Presto! Andiam! (etc.)

Tutti Toscas: Ah! (Morto! Morto! Finere cosi?!)

General musical chaos (1 minute): XU begins his solo

Cresecendo to Extended tremolos. AT runs to parapet

Scarpia (NK): She's there! Ah, Tosca! You shall pay dearly for this!

Tosca: (AT) *With my life!!!*
O SCARPIA, AVANTI A DIO!!!!!! (doubled with Maria Callas)

Scarpia (NK) runs fast to Tosca (AT) on parapet.

AT stabs NK again and then pushes him over the parapet - endlessly extended final Ebm chord.

JM and RH rush to parapet to see Scarpia's corpse. Turn to bow. RH Suicides.

XU is left performing his Tosca summary. His final jump becomes an "assumption", as though flying. The lights slowly fade - time is slowed - echoes of Maria Callas singing Vissi D'arte.

Fine dell'Atto Terzo

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

October 23, 1998

by **STEWART HAWKINS**

Powerful portrayal of an obsession laid bare

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THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

October 26, 1998

by **PETER McCALLUM**

A postmodern Puccini

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THE AUSTRALIAN

October 23, 1998

by JOHN McCALLUM

Pastiche turns Tosca inside out

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CITY HUB

October 29, 1998

by BARBARA KARPINSKI

Orgasmic Opera

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The oPERA PROJECT'S latest production *The Terror of Tosca*, is a seductive, creative interpretation of Puccini's passionate opera of love and revenge.

Tosca is a diva on the loose, driven by lust, desire and dishonesty. Mezzo-soprano, Annette Tesoriero's, powerful voice combines with Peking Opera boy, Xu Fengshan. There is also the savagely sexy Dean Walsh, the deliciously dark Jai McHenry, the lasciviously luxuriant Regina Heilmann, and that most wicked boy and director, Nigel Kellaway. It is possible to enjoy these opulent operatics without having seen the big Opera version of *Tosca*. However, there is a danger that the deconstruction of a marginalised elite art form could become even more marginal than the art form itself. Kink kulcha is the element that makes the difference. If you are not an opera dilettante, I recommend you arrive early and read the story in the program notes. That way you won't be dazed and confused during crucial moments.

The oPERA PROJECT is the initiative of Kellaway and Tesoriero. They write: "We have chosen the word opera for its literal Italian meaning 'a work' as well as its culturally implied meaning. Our concerns are to develop a rigorous theatrical practice in which music is but one contributing component."

The most profound innovation of the production is not in the deconstruction of opera but in the use of theatrical space. The Performance Space is transformed into a magnificently elongated stage with a galvanised iron ramp at one end and a torture chamber at the other. The sloping ramp becomes a launching pad for grand entrances and exits. The audience is seated in avenue rows. The doorways are lit with a heavenly halo. Light beams down from the ceiling and is also reflected off the metal surface of the ramp. As in *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*, the lighting design is the brainchild of Simon Wise. The technical design of this production is its most extraordinary feature.

With its melodramatic thrusts and postmodern deconstruction, it is divine musical indulgence indeed. But there is little in terms of juxtaposition. It is all high camp and there is no respite from this excess.

The costumes by Annemaree Dalziel are sartorially superb. From the elegance of grey-suited faux Armani to the diaphanous splendour of blood-red fabric, the designs reveal heaving bosoms, bouncing balls and fabulous flesh.

Walsh and Heilmann brilliantly present a physical representation of Mario and Tosca via a passionate love/hate dance dichotomy. This interpretation plays on the notion of gender fuck. It

gives power to the diva victim by including her in the main power games of the men, thus acknowledging her own powers of corruption.

The victim is never completely innocent.

The Terror of Tosca takes on the relationship between Tosca and Scarpia as a primary focus. The play of power and passion is all the more volatile because they are foils to each other. Mario/Angelotti is assigned to the role as "feminised" victim, a non-consensual partner in the sadomasochistic exchange between Tosca and Scarpia.

There is much diversity within this operatic exploration. It does not sit within the safe territory of mainstream opera. It brings many of the concerns of experimental theatre and queer kink into play. It offers a beautiful and sumptuous night at the opera. Be allured by many voyeuristic delights. You will experience histrionic high camp, a dungeon of dark delights, much pernicious perversity, an anarchic firing squad and many other forbidden fruits and prurient pleasures.

There is a supreme excess of sexuality. Like porn itself, this excess becomes not a reason to jerk-off, but a reason to laugh. There is lots of grabbing, thrusting and writhing. These teasing aspects turn the opera into a parody of porn. Rather than being erotically enticing, the salacious is transformed into the comic. The audience giggles at the love scenes because they contain a bent in-joke beneath the languorous surfaces. Heterosexual exchanges in all their ardent fervour become like a mockery of true love itself. Love in raptures, love in chains, love in tatters, it's all there in *The Terror of Tosca*.

RealTime

December 1998

JOHN GLYNN traces the experience of The opera Project's latest challenge.

[\(Reproduced with permission\)](#)

THE TERROR OF TOSCA IN ONEIRIC SEMIOSIS

When the doors are finally flung open to allow the milling spectators into Sydney's Performance Space, The opera Project's expectant patrons step into the minimal set. To reach the banks of 3-tiered sets on either side of the auditorium, they pass within arm's reach of two silent performers, Nigel Kellaway and Jai McHenry, cloaked and seated at either end of a long table. Authority is intimidated by the cloaks and the performers' long-suffering demeanour. A few paces further and the spectators respectfully forks, to her back and his gaze. They trace trajectories through the scenographic space, parallel to the table. Seated they are close together. Close to the performers. Boundaries blur. Sitting passively and laterally denotes "auditorium". Is the space one? Is there safety in numbers?

Spectators settle into relative dimness. Performers loom larger, closer to their light.

A confluence of trajectories and spaces. Confrontation? Conventions withdrawn. Yet to be drawn. An uneasy anticipation. Suspense. Beyond one bank of seats, in lateral view, a piano. Beyond the other, a podium. Between them a long ascending ramp. A chapel is Santa Maria della Vella from *Tosca*, Act 1? The seated, cloaked figures? Scarpia's apartment in the Palazzo Farnese, Act II? The opening of *The Terror of Tosca* being drawn from *Tosca*, Act II? An ungendered Scarpia? Two of them? Mirroring? Fragmenting?

The authoritative dialogue that opens between Kellaway and McHenry focuses on the multifaceted Tosca. The name on everybody's lips. The woman on everybody's lips. The role. Multiple voices, spectators, actors, critics reverberate within the dialogue. Further interpolation. And who is to play what role? Faint echoes of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*.

Kellaway asserts that he has "the fan", Iago's handkerchief. He will play Scarpia. Goes to the piano. Regina Heilmann and Dean Walsh are flying up the ramp, a duo of besuited Marios. McHenry removes her cloak and then there are three. Conventionalising the signs: dark cloak/Scarpia; grey suit/Mario; red dress/ Tosca. Walsh is assigned the role of Angelotti and in an intense moment of homoeroticism is given a red dress by Scarpia/Mario/(Kellaway). Camouflage, cross-dressing, mirroring. "I know you are Angelotti, But you could be Mario. Tosca would like that."

From off-stage, Mario's aria, from Annette Tesoriero. He tries on the dress. Leaves. Kellaway/Mario goes to the piano and heralds Tosca's entrance. "Tosca, the door is open." A trinity of Toscas. The 3 females burst in; 3 more red dresses. "Non la sospiri", sung to Mario in *Tosca* in anticipation of the night's assignation is now addressed to Walsh, as Mario. Walsh in the other red dress. Formerly grey suited but assigned Angelotti's role, now in hiding, in the fourth red dress. Further gender blurring. Further role fragmentation. Role replication. Promiscuous polysemy. Vestigial connotations fluidly disperse across performers and roles. Blurring and fluidity.

Scarpia's entrance provides another trinity. The cloaked figures of McHenry, Kellaway and Xu Fengshan appear on the ramp. Multilingual conversation ensues. Mandarin, English, Italian. Fluency, fluidity, flux. Fragmentation, replication, interpolation. Boundary blurring. The stuff of dreams; and of challenging theatre. Transformation before your eyes. Meraviglia. "... We also draw upon the Medieval Christian notion of meraviglia in which the line between art and reality, or fantasy and verisimilitude, is not clearly defined." (Program notes)

The processes of fragmentation and replication enable assembling and disassembling of action on diverse sites. Mirroring and reversal. In Act II of *The Terror of Tosca*, when the 3 Toscas move about, spectators engage in a ceaseless shifting of their gaze. Kellaway is at the piano. Tesoriero is seated at the table. Heilmann is behind her with Walsh/Mario pinned to the wall of her chamber, tantalised, tortured. McHenry seated naked on a chair near the podium engages in mimed dialogue with the standing figure of Xu. Their cocktail party patter in gesture and proxemics is hilarious. A different suspense attaches to Xu's presence. His particular performance skills - yet further interpolation to come?

Tesoriero, a constant Tosca, aware of the torture of her Mario, in flight from Scarpia's attentions, steps up onto the podium. With iconic posturing and suitably blue cape she is the Madonna. Theatre in the church; church in the theatre. Tosca, virgin, whore. Is it the Magdelena or Madonna that Mario paints in the chapel? Podium connoted as chapel pedestal, Tesoriero descends. Xu of the mimed cocktail patter persuades the naked McHenry to take up the Madonna's cape and pedestal. Under the meticulous and humorous stage management of the cloaked figure of Xu, the naked but caped figure of McHenry becomes an iconically more perfect Madonna. With short-coming for the perfectionist Xu. He replaces her on the pedestal, draping himself in the blue cape. Xu/Scarpia transformed by associations through virgin/whore to blue caped iconic perfection. But wait. He sings from the pedestal. Statueque. "Vissi d'arte" in classical Peking Opera soprano. Tesoriero/Tosca, taking on the Madonna's gestures, responds from the table with her soprano.

In this work, fidelity to the narrative detail of that other work *Tosca* is not a concern for The opera Project. The themes here revitalised,, of republican, anti-church and irreligious sentiment are

presented with enormous energy. Intellectualising may extrapolate interesting meta-theatrical discourses from the complexities of this performance. However, the action, energy, spectacle and humour of it provide for a very timely return of lyric opera to the popular theatre. The stultifying 19th century conventions are here irredeemably lost. The sense of spontaneity and improvisation achieved through the rehearsal process euthanases melodrama and reinvigorates opera. The illusory anarchy is rightly underpinned by the evident discipline and virtuosity of the performers.

OPERA-OPERA

December 1998
by **DAVID GYGER**

[\(Reproduced with permission\)](#)

Bizarre reconstruction of Tosca

The latest offering of The opera Project Inc., entitled *The Terror of Tosca*, has even less blood brotherhood with Puccini's *Tosca* than Jonathan Larson's *Rent* has with *La Boheme*. Cynics, indeed, might with some justification have concluded it was Get Puccini Month in Sydney when both these spinoffs were staged, but not a single unbowdlerised opera of the master was on offer.

Both *the Terror of Tosca* and *Rent* are loosely connected, in a plotline sense, with the originals of which they are spinoffs, and contain snippets of Puccini's music, but there the similarity ends. Whereas *Rent* took up residence in the Theatre Royal prepared for a blockbuster run, *The Terror of Tosca* had a season of twelve performances in the barebones austerity of The Performance Space, Redfern, with a cast of a mere six including, ofcourse, the guiding lights of The opera Project enterprise, soprano Annette Tesoriero and dancer/pianist/ideas man Nigel Kellaway.

I'm not sure that the title of the piece was apt, though, for its scenario elevated Puccini's peripheral character of Angelotti the escaped prisoner to centre stage and combined him with Cavaradossi, introduced liberal dollops of sado-masochism into the action, gave voyeurs of all sexual

persuasions generous doses of nudity and at times indulged in wickedly inaccurate, but sometimes highly diverting, parody of the conventions of conventional opera.

There is undeniably a unique creative spark in the ongoing collaboration of The opera Project, which uses classical icons as a springboard for stimulatingly imaginative flights of fancy; however, when it turns its back on the original fount of its inspiration, as it were, to ridicule the works of established merit which spawned it in the first place it is on very shaky ground indeed.

Approaching *The Terror of Tosca* unburdened by resonances of Puccini's masterpiece, however, could undoubtedly help facilitate a first-rate performance experience, and quite clearly the overwhelming majority of those who attended my performance fell into that category. Even I, while deploring the disservice to Puccini in particular and conventional opera in general, found this work as absorbing and intermittently rewarding as I have found such previous efforts of this creative partnership as *The Berlioz - our vampire ourselves* based on the song cycle *Les Nuits d'Ete*, a year earlier.

Full marks and more must go to Kellaway and Tesoriero for grasping and infallibly keeping hold of audience attention, and forcing it to countenance goings-on which seemingly arise almost exclusively from their thoughts on the subtext of an original work rather than the original itself.

Ofcourse there is justification of the *Tosca* scenario for all the bizarre elements which surface in The opera Project's remake; but, like its Berlioz forerunner, it must be approached as a springboard work - one where the fertile imagination of Kellaway and his colleagues has been let loose to probe the inner reaches of the minds of the opera's characters.

As was the case with *The Berlioz - our vampire ourselves*, there were plenty of striking images achieved using the simplest of means: a large table, which sometimes seemed to be an altar, and sometimes a table accommodating a panel of judges in some courtroom or other, a few chains and bolts to attach torture victims to a wall, an open-ended ramp possibly leading to a parapet or a place of execution, and a small structure which could have been a pulpit or a niche in the wall of a cathedral.

And the six-member performance team, three of whom had to strip to the buff at one or more points, was overflowing with talent in various quarters. Apart from the multi-talented Kellaway, and the imposing presence of Tesoriero, we had an eloquent Angelotti/Cavaradossi from dancer Dean Walsh and a thoroughly menacing Scarpia from Xu Fengshan, who trained for the Peking Opera but has been associated with Kellaway in six projects since 19993. Two other women, Regina

Heilmann and Jai McHenry, completed the performance sextet whose teamwork was impeccable and whose body language was highly eloquent.

Though it would take a more daring commentator than I to try to pinpoint all the resonances of *The Terror of Tosca*, it was a fascinating, if sometimes scarifying and perplexing theatrical experience.

THE TERROR OF TOSCA - Acquittal

1. DETAILS ABOUT THE PROJECTS OR ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

THE TERROR OF TOSCA is a theatre work by **The opera Project Inc.**, written and directed by Nigel Kellaway in close collaboration with co-performers Regina Heilmann, Jai McHenry, Annette Tesoriero, Dean Walsh and Xu Fengshan, with music adapted from that of Giacomo Puccini by Nigel Kellaway (with the technical assistance of Peter Wells), costumes by Annemaree Dalziel and lighting by Simon Wise.

The work is a re-reading of Puccini's 1900 opera *TOSCA*. The opera Project's mission was to assess the theatrical and musical components that comprise *TOSCA* and to create a new theatrical interpretation that maintained the original's essential (though selective) narrative thread and three act structure.

The resulting production, **THE TERROR OF TOSCA**, was performed at The Performance Space, Sydney, previewing on Thursday October 15th, with two opening nights on Friday 16th and Saturday 17th October, and played until Saturday 31st October 1998.

2. VALUE AND BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT/ACTIVITIES

The aims and outcomes of The opera Project Inc. in creating and producing *THE TERROR OF TOSCA* were various:

THE INITIAL WRITING PROCESS OF THE TERROR OF TOSCA

A number of the collaborators first explored sections of the material for *The Terror of Tosca* in the 1995 production of *FRIGHT!!!* for Sidetrack Performance Group, directed by Nigel Kellaway. At the time we were fairly unconscious of the fact that the themes on which we were then working bore an uncanny relevance to the issues and narrative of Puccini's *Tosca* - we thought at the time that we were merely using some of his music. Our desire to complete the unfinished *FRIGHT!!!* led us to acknowledge this relationship, and our interests in examining musical/narrative structures proved the impetus for tackling, unashamedly, the full scope of Puccini's opera, discarding all the material of our original work that seemed irrelevant to the drama of *Tosca*, *Scarpia* and *Mario Cavaradossi*.

In 1997 Nigel Kellaway was awarded the Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship by the NSW Ministry for the Arts, specifically intended to support his research on the musical and theatrical structures employed by Puccini in *TOSCA*. This enabled an intense six months of score study, writing and recomposition. The aim was to create a new theatre work that discarded all minor characters; that traced the essential actions of the three principal characters; that could be carried by only six performers; that musically required only one singer and a solo piano supported by a recorded sound score; that could be performed on a single set without intermission, whilst maintaining the three-act structure of Puccini's opera; and that offered an original and daring interpretation of Puccini's intentions amongst a sea of conservatively predictable productions.

A valuable resource in the process was Paola Capriolo's 1992 novel *Floria Tosca*, a work that places *Scarpia* in the central role of narrator, and concentrates on the tensions between love and

hatred, piety and devilry, abstinence and desire. At the same time we wished to create a Tosca who was observed from within the work, rather than from a voyeuristic position of the audience. Tosca is an enormously attractive character for feminist critique - she is both naive and highly manipulative - a "heroine" (?) that does not easily earn our sympathy, who learns through traumatic circumstances the need to take eventual and drastic responsibility for her questionable actions and desires. Our mission was to energetically embrace the melodramatic essence of Puccini's work, rather than attempting the futile exercise of many productions in attempting to interpret in a tradition of *verismo* opera - a form that derives from the traditions of theatrical "realism".

In *The Terror of Tosca* we take the relationship between Tosca and Scarpia as a primary focus. The powerful interaction between them is all the more intense because they are foils for each other. Tosca and Scarpia take up their roles (and at times, others) willingly. Our Mario/Angelotti is, however, assigned his role as "feminised" victim - an unwilling victim of the power play between Tosca and Scarpia.

This powerplay is reinforced by the strength of its sources. Scarpia draws his power from the institutions: the Church and the State. Tosca's power is her femininity. Both can justify their positions by calling on God (and, in our case, particular performative traditions).

Puccini places the Church and its interests at the centre of his opera *Tosca*. Tosca's naive devotion, Scarpia's inquisition-like piety, Mario's irreverence and indifference all place the Church and religion as mainplayers in his drama. In *The Terror of Tosca* we not only acknowledge this position of the Church and the redemption and restoration of life through suffering (our own, or that of others), but we draw on the Medieval Christian notion of *meraviglia* in which the line between art and reality, or fantasy and verisimilitude, is not clearly defined.

(from the program notes to *The Terror of Tosca* 1998)

The Terror of Tosca is not a "deconstruction" of Puccini's *Tosca*, in the traditions of 1980's performance practice, but rather, a "reconstruction" of the essential structural components of an extant music theatre work, striving for a fresh assessment of its form and content.

THE MUSIC/SOUND

The focus for the initial development was Puccini's score. We did not even glance at the original Sardou play (which is ofcourse loosely based on historical fact). We were confronted by an enormous score, extraordinarily detailed and articulate in its intentions.

Richard Vella (the composer and co-founder of Calculated Risks Opera Productions, who first brought Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway together to work in 1987) commented that he would like to have seen a full-scale performance of *Tosca* performed in the same radical and inquiring manner. Kellaway responded, half joking, in pointing out that The opera Project would be more than happy to oblige, if only we had the required budget - we could never afford a full orchestra, massive chorus, extras and eight soloists. But the real issue is that we really have no desire to accommodate such resources, and neither are they necessary for our exploration.

Our resources were a cast of six performers comprising one (western operatic) soprano, one Peking Opera falsettist, one pianist, and other actor/dancers. The live component of Puccini's vocal writing was reduced to 3 major arias, short sections of recitative and snippets from other arias and duets, all arranged for the single voice of Tosca (Annette Tesoriero) with occasional spoken entries by the other performers.

We have approached the operatic form as being much more than an "associative art" in which a deconstructive finger is randomly pointed at known references, expecting that our audience will automatically sympathize (as in, for example Lindsay Kemp's 1964 *Flowers*). In a post-

postmodern age we need to challenge our audience to listen to the music for the "first time". This raises the same old problems of working with any "classic" text, whether it be the Greeks, Shakespeare, Moliere, Brecht or Mozart. The solutions must be radical, shake the dust, offend the preconceptions.

The narrative text we transferred to the spoken voice and action. At times we felt we were doing a play! But there were notable differences. The characters in *The Terror of Tosca* are not driven by psycho-dramatic logic. Rather, they are driven by external forces - narrative necessity, the music, the staging and lights, theatrical conventions. They do battle with these meta-theatrical forces. They recognise their own physical proximity to their audience and, acknowledging their own 1980's performative traditions, grapple with the realness of their actorly humanity.

The piano in *The Terror of Tosca* is much more than an accompanying tool. It carries a large proportion of the driving orchestral score. And, as it is played onstage by Scarpia (Nigel Kellaway), it becomes a powerful theatrical protagonist - at times almost a narrator, and at others almost a weapon that drives the action. This use of the piano/pianist was a considerable development on this that theme we first looked at in *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*.

We knew from the outset that we wanted to reference the original Puccini orchestral and vocal score - not only in order to enhance the grandly operatic sonority of the work, but also to highlight the theme that *Tosca* is an "opera about an opera", and any performance carries with it a history of other opera singers and their voices. From the most famous of recordings with Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano and Tito Gobbi at La Scala in 1953, we extracted and manipulated large sections of music. Other sections of Puccini's score, Nigel Kellaway, totally rewrote and recorded digitally. Assisting him in the recording studio was Peter Wells, who has collaborated with all the artists on many works over the past decade. He brought to the process not only his technical resources, but an enormous breadth of experience and skill. A full 80 minute CD of the proposed music was prepared in the two months before rehearsal began, and then in the week before the performance Nigel and Peter returned to the studio to master the final show CDs. This proved an extremely successful process, in contrast with the all too common situation in which the music arrives only days before opening night - we were able to seriously rehearse!

We were concerned that the recorded Callas (et al) performance could swamp the actors by mere virtue of its volume and orchestral richness, and that *The Terror of Tosca* could become a miniature "playing-out" of Callas' drama. Pianist and colleague Gerard Willems responded to the resulting score with a most astute reading. He thought of the recorded music as like a sepia snapshot - a nagging memory of a performance seen long ago. He considered the real drama as what was happening onstage before him in real-time, by real actors, and the 1953 performance as a potent context that heightened the immediacy of our unique reading of Puccini's drama.

THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

The artists of The opera Project (with the possible exception of Xu Fengshan) have built their reputations on work that involves a process requiring the ability to enter a rehearsal studio with little more than a concept and develop a theatre work "from scratch" - collaborative discussion, improvisation, shared overview of the large emerging structures. One might imagine that we were nervous about beginning rehearsal with a completed musical score, a solid scenic structure and a comprehensive dialogue script. Quite the opposite!! It was, in fact, enormously liberating to have such a thorough starting point. The process was totally demystified - every performer shared the same awareness of the evolving work from the first day of rehearsal. We brought to the process all those collaborative skills and welcoming of the unknown that alternative practices have taught us. The draft text was imbued with no more authority than was useful to the emerging reality of the work. (It was premeditated fortune that the preparer of the text and score, Nigel Kellaway, was

not only director but also just one of the performers who needed to share responsibility on stage for the work.)

The maturity, expertise and shared past experience of the performers meant that everyone could bring to the process their individual strengths, and support the product as a whole, as well as the performances of their fellow performers. Most of the performers in The opera Project have considerable directorial and dramaturgical experience, which overcame many of the problems associated with the lack of a single offstage director.

The themes of *The Terror of Tosca* interestingly complemented the process. The text concentrates on only three major characters that are swapped and shared between the actors. The issue of performative responsibility is potent in both form and content - desire and responsibility create tensions that grip Tosca, Scarpia and Mario, as powerfully as they do the actors in our production. One of the central themes that arises in *The Terror of Tosca* is the actors dilemma, not only in deciding their actions, but even the very character they either choose or is foisted upon them. These are complex meta-theatrical concepts that developed quite naturally in the rehearsal process, and were successfully resolved and articulated to the audience only because of the maturity and experience of the collaborators.

The draft text prepared in the six months before rehearsals began served its purpose admirably. Much of the spoken text had been lifted directly from the *Tosca* libretto in translation - arch, overwordy, oddly constructed. Once on the floor the actors' voices took over. What eventuated was a brutal edit - removing any word that did not contribute to the progression of the action. The resulting text is economical, tense, fast - serving the melodrama absolutely.

It took some time to discover a performative style. Dialogue, on the page, tends to encourage an attempted verisimilitude - absolutely inappropriate for *The Terror of Tosca*, as we discovered; totally at odds with other aspects of the piece (the singing voice, the dance, the rapid interchanging of roles between actors). It was only when we embraced and understood the melodramatic, that we found a language that we could all share onstage.

THE ENSEMBLE

At a time when prevailing economics are encouraging us to seek more ephemeral and less obligating models, The opera Project is vehemently committed to ENSEMBLE PRACTICE. We know, through experience, that the richest process is developed over several works. Substantial visions are not necessarily realised in a single theatre work (perhaps never!) The opera Project is not interested in auditioning for a soprano, actor or dancer for a single production - there is always the risk that they will, after six weeks rehearsal, simply look uncomfortably "at sea" and be able to offer little to the creative process beyond their own performance.

The ensemble offers riches:

In the case of the artistic directorship of a company, ongoing association with artists over several works provides a balance for that more singular artistic vision. Artists can share a concern, and adopt a responsibility for the future of the company - their ongoing involvement brings with it an ability and desire to contribute to the development of the company and overview of its progress and artistic needs.

Ensemble practice is an acquired and unique skill, taking years to develop and appreciate. Therein lies an invaluable resource of experienced, skilled and informed artists. When these artists share with their associates their skills they offer a deep understanding of and contribution to

each others' development. The subtle competitiveness that often accompanies artists on a single project can, when approached carefully, be replaced by constructive and intelligent challenge.

Although funded to produce work on a project-by-project basis, The opera Project is addressing its commitment for ensemble practice by associating their recent works under the umbrella of *THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY*. This is no aesthetic fancy - it is a pragmatic ploy aiming at a performing future for their output, and hence a life for the collaborative process. Three works will feature 14 roles performed by eight performers, sharing a single lighting designer, common technical crew, and staging arrangement. This comprises a very large production, enormously varied in its theatrical ideas and components, and yet quite presentable in a single season. (Refer later to the future plans for *THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY*.) Several artists will have contributed enormous energy and skill to these productions over three years and developed considerable professional intimacy with the company and its concerns. This is a great resource that The opera Project does not intend to squander.

THE DESIGN

The Terror of Tosca brought together a design team that has collaborated over many years and many productions - Nigel Kellaway, Simon Wise and Annemaree Dalziel.

The set and lighting design was developed collaboratively by Nigel Kellaway and Simon Wise, as have been scores of works over the past decade. Theatre, as a visual medium, required that Nigel Kellaway, from the outset, conceive the theatrical ideas and music with a clear visual concept in mind. Before a note or word was written, we needed to know where it was to be placed on the stage. Staging and lighting prescribe their own theatrical logic - their impact is just as strong as anything on the written page. One component of the set was inherited from *FRIGHT!!!* - a huge table that can suggest an altar as well. Around this table the entire drama unfolds. Extending half the length of the space was an enormous ramp, ideal for entrances and suggesting a possible parapet leading into darkness for the famous ultimate exit. The rest was the room, The Performance Space, unapologetically real, embracing the audience within its space.

The lighting concept prescribed the surfaces. It was agreed that the lighting for *The Terror of Tosca* should be conceptually the opposite to that of *The Berlioz*, in which the light sources were totally concealed from the audience and yet lit the performers absolutely directly and closely focussed. *The Terror of Tosca* was to be absurdly over-lit - many banks of parcels focussed onto reflective surfaces (the wooden floor and the galvanised iron on the ramp and table) that in turn illuminated the action. We were unconcerned whether light fell directly onto actors' faces - we wanted silhouette, shapes. We were confident that the voices would carry the drama. The space was created quite three-dimensionally and what would be normally perceived as traditional back lighting became merely an unprivileged viewer's vantage position, heightening the sense of the audience's participation in the unfolding drama.

Annemaree Dalziel considered her costume designs after the look of the environment had been determined. Bridging contemporary suits with Empirical diaphanous eroticism, her costumes embraced the detailing required by such close audience scrutiny. Annemaree once again proved how she can intelligently read a text and invent her fantasy in costumes that challenge an audience stylistically and demand acknowledgment from her actors.

3. SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF THE PROJECT/ACTIVITIES

AUDIENCE REACTION

The response of our peers was overwhelmingly positive. There were many that have known our work over the years and were perhaps a little confused by the formal departures we had made in *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*. They were working hard to reconcile our musical and theatrical concerns. Our gestures toward narrative perplexed them - were we being disloyal to our alternative traditions? In *The Terror of Tosca* they recognised an articulate theatre work that unashamedly embraced the melodramatic and the emotional, visual and aural opulence of nineteenth century opera. Many commented that they at last understood our mission. They were gratified by our handling of the "big issues" - the church and state, desire and responsibility, revenge and faith.

The Terror of Tosca took many audience by surprise. There were obviously many who were not expecting the proximity to such expansive performative style - the sweat, the smell, the volume. Audiences constantly commented on the calibre of the performers, their experience, virtuosity, range of skills and welcome maturity, and the great sense of ensemble. It was gratifying to be called back for two curtain calls every performance. Ofcourse we will never satisfy the more conservative opera audience - do they really expect a literal, fully produced Grand Opera?

PRESS RESPONSE

Attracting editorial publicity is becoming increasingly difficult in Sydney. We had been extremely well covered for *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* twelve months before, and it would appear that you don't warrant more than one article every few years. (Strangely, this rule does not seem to apply to the larger companies with larger publicity budgets!)

However, once we managed to get them into the theatre, the press response was again, by and large, extremely positive. Obviously, some reviewers embraced the complexities of the work more easily than others. We were faced with the challenge of a great operatic warhorse. The same old question arises - are we opera or theatre? If we are patient, the press will eventually solve their chosen conundrum. We have all been down similar roads before. (How many years did it take for the reviewers to happily embrace The Sydney Front as a theatre company and hence understand of references, rather than dismissing us as a bunch of larrikin performance artists?)

COMPANY ADMINISTRATION

The opera Project continues to grow, and with it the administrative work-load. Although supported well by the funding bodies on a project-by-project basis, the reality is of a company that must function twelve months of the year. Any production requires a full year of planning. Ensuring a future for the work in touring means at least two years of diligent negotiation on each project, which is hugely demanding in terms of materials as well as time and energy. The opera Project is in no position to afford office space or any administrative salary throughout the year, and so this work is the total responsibility of the artistic directorship. Farming off the occasional responsibility when finances allow is not a good solution, as any over-view and strategic planning suffers, and often leads to duplication of work, when others are unsure of whom to contact or who has the responsibilities for certain decisions. However, the pressures of creating, performing, administering and promoting are increasing, and the company will eventually have to find solutions to these problems if it is to survive and develop.

SPONSORSHIP AND OTHER SUPPORT

The opera Project attracted the support of The Italian Institute for Culture, Sydney, for the production, in the form of \$1,000 cash, in return for a half page promotion in our program.

Our relationship with Allans Music (formerly Brashes) continued, constituting our major non-government assistance. Allans donated a very fine grand piano and cartage for the season. Our only expense was the daily tuning of the instrument at a reduced cost. This support is equivalent to over \$6,000 in real terms. We will certainly be seeking to continue our relationship for our next production, *Tristan*, and further into the future.

The Performance Space offered us a reduced rent, saving us \$1,200 over the season.

We managed to secure a rehearsal space in the newly renovated hall at St Lukes Anglican Church, Stanmore. The rector, Dr. Mike Nixon, was extremely supportive of the company, and made the space available at absurdly low cost. The hall, most importantly, has a reasonable piano and sprung floor. We hope to continue working there in the coming year under similar arrangements.

The Enmore Theatre supported the company with extremely low hire costs on the sound system.

The opera Project continues to be supported by several individuals, without whom the work and its presentation would suffer considerably:

- Lisa Herbert, our publicist on *The Berlioz*, was unavailable this year, but assisted us in designing and printing all of our art work for an generously low fee.

- Our two opening night parties were co-ordinated by Marie Rockford with the assistance of Lisa Herbert and Annette Hughes, all of whom donated their time and expertise.

- Due to the sudden unavailability of Peter Oldham, who usually video documents our work for future promotion, John Gillies worked over three nights in the theatre and four days in the edit studio with Nigel Kellaway. His time was largely donated.

- Our relationship with Keith Gallasch was continued in the last weeks of rehearsal, when he kindly attended a number of runs with copious advise. As writer on *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* and the upcoming *Tristan*, his understanding of process, keen eye, musical and theatrical literacy, pragmatism and concern for the vision of *The Romantic Trilogy* was invaluable. He also attended performances regularly throughout the season.

BOX-OFFICE

Audience numbers and box-office takings were disappointing. A number of factors may have contributed to this. We have spoken to a number of producers across the country and many are experiencing similar problems. We sense a prevailing apathy toward live theatre that promises any degree of risk. Audiences, regardless of how much they enjoy the work, do not seem to be talking about it - "word-of-mouth" is not as dependable as in past years. The Performance Space appears to be experiencing a few teething problems as it embraces its new management, with a general downturn in audience figures. We are, however, committed to completing *The Romantic Trilogy* at The Performance Space, and hope that we may be able to play some part in raising its visibility. We have decided to employ Miranda Brown Publicity for *Tristan*, who are also the publicists for The Performance Space, hoping that we can link the promotion of our work with that of the space generally.

THE FUTURE

The work of The opera Project is hopefully destined for the festival circuits, nationally and internationally. Considerable time and money is invested in the creation and presentation of a

work, and it is unrealistic to think that the work can be played again and again in our home town. It is, however, essential that any good work has subsequent performances for its development and maturing. There are a number of possible structural changes that made themselves evident during the season. These will be pursued if the company has the opportunity to revisit the work. The three full-evening works that comprise *The Romantic Trilogy* make a daunting touring package, but one that is quite achievable for a festival.

Robyn Archer has expressed considerable interest in staging the trilogy at her 2000 Adelaide Festival. She has seen *The Berlioz* in performance in 1997, and was able to attend our final dress rehearsal of *The Terror of Tosca*. She also invited the company to present a "pitch" in Adelaide to the Confederation of Australian Festivals in September 1998 at her devised "Show and Tell". We are now pursuing other Australian Festivals regarding their interest in the project.

Joseph Melillo, of the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York, has been in discussion with us over the past two years, and we are negotiating the possibilities of presenting the trilogy at his 2001 Next Wave Festival.

Boris Kelly is at present negotiating to take the company's work to the Netherlands in 2000.

Recent discussions with the Sydney Opera House have looked at the possibility of presenting all or part of the trilogy in the new Studio in 2000.

Interest by other touring producers and agents in Sydney has been sadly lacking to date, most of whom have not seen the company's work.

Professional artists and artworkers employed or engaged in the project or activities.

Regina Heilmann	Performer
Nigel Kellaway	Performer/director/composer/co-designer/writer
Jai McHenry	Performer
Annette Tesoriero	Performer
Dean Walsh	Performer
Xu Fengshan	Performer
Simon Wise	Lighting designer/production manager
Annemaree Dalziel	Costume design and fabrication
Peter Wells	Sound engineer
Richard Montgomery	Stage Manager
Morag White	Publicist
Lisa Herbert	Graphics designer
Heidrun Lohr	Photographer
John Gillies	Video artist
Ian Bowie	Technical Crew
Finton Mahoney	Technical crew

The opera Project Inc.

The Terror of Tosca

EXPENDITURE**SALARIES**

PERFORMERS	N. Kellaway	4800	
	D. Walsh	4800	
	J. McHenry	4800	
	R. Heilmann	4800	
	Xu Fengshan	3600	
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Simon Wise	1700	
ADMINISTRATOR	N. Kellaway	1000	
COMPOSER/DIRECTOR		900	
BUMP-IN LABOUR	Finton Mahony		384
	Ian Bowie		368
ONCOSTS:	Super 7% of \$26400	1848	
	Workcover 2% of \$27152	543	29543.00

FEES

Peter Wells (Sound studio technician)		2500	
Annette Tesoriero (AMTW - Performer)		4800	
Simon Wise (Lighting Designer)	300		
Annemaree Dalziel (Costume designer)		2500	
Morag White (Publicist)		2600	
Richard Montgomery (Set builder)		1350	
Interpreter (for Xu Fengshan)		14	14064.00

PRODUCTION

Theatre Hire	3wks x 2000	6000	
Theatre Electricity		180	
Costumes		1441	
Sets and properties		1091.56	
Lighting		1593.80	
Sound production		500	
Piano tuning (daily)		975	
Rehearsal venue		175	11956.36

ADVERTISING/PROMOTION

Printing Flyers/Posters/Invitations		1235.50	
Printing Programs		610	
Design fee		800	
Distribution		400	
Advertising:	Realtime	300	
	SMH listings	1076.25	
Mailout		102.65	
Publicist's disbursements		358.84	
Travel (NK to Adelaide to promote <i>The romantic trilogy</i>)		394.40	
Photography		400.00	5277.64

ADMINISTRATION

General admin		764.74	
Public Liability		647.50	
Video documentation	918.90		
Entertaining - opening nights x 2		239.50	
Creditcard charges & Tix penalties		92.94	2663.58

<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>		63504.58	
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INCOME

Funding:	Australia Council Theatre Fund	45000
	NSW Ministry for the Arts Theatre Program	11000
Sponsorship:	Italian Institute of Culture	1000
TPS Launch fee		300
Choux Choux Manly fee (donated by Kellaway & Tesoriero)		765
Box office:		4636
Program sales:		495

TOTAL INCOME

63196.00**LOSS****(308.58)**

Chapter 6: 1999

(The year of *Tristan*)

Appointed to the Board of Directors of **THE PERFORMANCE SPACE**, Sydney.

CHOUX CHOUX BAGUETTE REMEMBERS

and **SONG CYCLE WITH CEMENT MIXER**

Performed for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival with Annette Tesoriero

BLOOD VESSEL

Toured as rehearsal director with STALKER to the Festival of Perth.

LITTLE GEORGE

Initial workshops for a new cabaret work with the SONG COMPANY, planned for production in 2001

TRISTAN

Co-created, directed and performed with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Annette Tesoriero, Nigel Kellaway, Jai McHenry, Regina Heilmann, Xu Fengshan and Michael Bell. Writer: Keith Gallasch. Lighting Design: Simon Wise. Music: Schumann and Wagner. The Performance Space, Sydney.

THE QUERY

Co-directed with John Baylis for URBAN THEATRE PROJECTS. Performers: Xu Fengshan and Rolando Ramos. Writer: Merlinda Bobis. Lighting Design: Simon Wise. Sound Design: Nicholas Wishart. The Performance Space, Sydney.

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1999 Works

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RELEASE PRESS RELEASE PRESS

THE oPERA PROJECT INC. in

CHOUX CHOUX BAGUETTE REMEMBERS

with Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway

Be seduced

by the all-encompassing voice and endless cleavage as you explore the phallic mysteries of French cuisine.

Be prepared

for a harrowing journey across continents of flesh and operatic desire.

Choux Choux Baguette is the Diva from Hell

Tosca, Carmen, Butterfly hurtling towards you in a frenzy of self immolation: suicide meets art again and again and again.....

Choux Choux's voice has been registered by the authorities as a lethal weapon, notorious for whipping audiences to pulp in cities across Australia and beyond ... first Sydney, then Perth, Hong Kong, Canberra, (even Wagga Wagga!) and now back to Sydney for Mardi Gras.

Choux Choux Baguette takes no prisoners

Tesoriero and Kellaway are renowned for their wit and irreverence. Remember The Sydney Front's *Don Juan*? Remember The opera Project's *The Berlioz* and *The Terror of Tosca*? Here they are back again with all the same humour, the same daring, the same musical and theatrical expertise, the same sweaty abundance that is -

Choux Choux Baguette Remembers

"Brava, Bella, Eccellenza and how sublimely silly ... glorious voice and a superb evening of humour and fun ... Choux Choux knows no limits. This is comic musical cabaret at its best. Inventive and even at times oddly moving in between the belly laughs"

The Australian

BURNS LIKE FIRE
Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

Seymour Theatre Centre - York Theatre
Sunday February 21st 6.30 pm

Initial Treatment: March 1999 for ABC Television (Producers: PhysicalTV)

The opera Project Inc. in *Le Spectre de la Rose* (working title)

based on a scenario by Keith Gallasch
 performers: Nigel Kellaway, Annette Tesoriero, Dean Walsh
 directors: John Gillies and Nigel Kellaway

This short work for television will propose alternative strategies for observing the male body in relationship to that of the woman. It will interrogate the inherent eroticism of the voice and its relationship to the body, and how the woman's voice (as opposed to her body) has been historically appropriated by a male homo-erotic aesthetic.

The Theophile Gautier poem of the title is famously associated with dance through the ballet that featured Nijinsky as the spectre with music by Weber (*The Invitation to the Dance*). We will continue this history of the male dancing body and the Gautier text, but with the music of Hector Berlioz, from his song cycle, *Les Nuits D'ete*, for mezzo-soprano and piano.

*Wake from your maiden sleep! I am the spectre of the rose you wore last night at the ball.
 You plucked me, still dewy from the garden, and wore me all through the glittering evening.
 You caused my death, and every night I will return to haunt your bedside -
 but have no fear - I need no mass of expiation..
 The faint perfume you sense is my soul, wafted to you from Paradise.
 My fate was an enviable one, to die on your breast;
 a poet once inscribed my grave with a kiss:
 "Here lies a rose that kings will long to emulate."*

Theophile Gautier translated and paraphrased by Dr. Christopher Allen

In 1997 The opera Project Inc. produced a full evening work, *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*, with actor/pianist Nigel Kellaway, actor/mezzo Annette Tesoriero and dancer Dean Walsh. Using all six songs from the Berlioz cycle it told a sparse narrative of a young man's evening with two dangerous vampires, and his eventual conversion to "the fold". It was a work that aimed at restoring the vampire's nineteenth century homoerotic nature and liberating degeneracy.

The proposed television work will condense the action of the complete work into the six minute duration of a single song, *Le Spectre de la Rose*. The work will concentrate on the skin of the three performers - the whiteness and abundance of the two vampires (Kellaway and Tesoriero) in stark contrast with the athletic

fleshiness of the human (Walsh). The emphasis will be on the corporeality of the body and voice. Video will be an ideal medium to capture the full range of demonstrated desires, tiny signals and outcomes that comprised the original stage version.

Synopsis:

A. LOCATION:

An empty derelict warehouse/factory - possibility - Everleigh Street Carriage Yards/Company B

1. **Sound - wind**

Daytime - sun streams through huge windows. Furniture lies around, draped in dirty dust cloths. Other detritus. An old grand piano, closed and partially draped. A large marble faux-Grecian urn lies on its side. Dead roses scattered around. A freestanding ballet barre under a shaft of sunlight.

A young boy (say, 12 years old) dressed in tights and ballet slippers, approaches the barre and steps into a demi plie :

Piano introduction begins

Zoom in to close-up on face - the boy smiles at the camera and licks his upper lip, suggestively.

2. Cut to mid-shot of Walsh, naked at the barre, back to camera, in the same demi plie. Zoom to close up of the back of his head. Walsh turns his head suddenly to camera, startled.

B. LOCATION:

Night in a city street - no people, only passing cars, a blur of light from shop windows, camera travelling fast.

3. Walsh running, in panic, pursued - dressed in frock coat, cravat, black trousers.

C. LOCATION:

The same warehouse - a worn brick wall, shadowy, night.

4. Walsh is suddenly cornered - terrified of the approaching camera - zooming into close-up of his face. Kellaway's whitened face enters the frame, smiling, inviting, wickedly suggestive. Walsh nervously returns the smile.

5. Camera panning around the warehouse:

Urn is now standing upright, full of rose petals that spill across the floor.

A few of the pieces of furniture are undraped - 19th century chairs - amidst the dust.

The piano is open, played by Kellaway in an almost identical costume as Walsh.

Walsh sits at a distance from the piano, intently watching and listening to Kellaway.

Tesoriero's voice is heard - camera zooms in to mid-shot of Walsh - he swoons

Camera swings wildly around the room

D. LOCATION:

the Camera swings into a shot up a huge staircase - possibility - the internal foyer staircase of Sydney Opera House.

6. Tesoriero descending the staircase, singing - backlit - in a crinoline of black velvet, emerald green satin and impressive decollete.

E. LOCATION:

The same warehouse.

7. Midshot of Walsh sitting on chair. Tesoriero appears behind him, approaching. Walsh is too afraid to look at her.

She passes him and moves to the urn of rose petals.

As Tesoriero frivolously tosses a handful of petals in the air, Walsh is thrown from his chair, as though by some unseen force.

8. Mid-shot of Walsh on the ground.
Tesoriero grabs him by the face, lifts him, as though about to kiss him, but then hurls him across the space. He lands, crumpled on the ground.
9. Tesoriero runs across the space to lift Walsh to his feet.
Kellaway throws himself between them, knocking Walsh to the floor again.
10. Kellaway and Tesoriero exchange quick jealous glances - and then subtle, knowing smiles.

11. Tesoriero sitting beside the urn - Walsh on the floor at her feet, his head in her lap.

Tesoriero feeds a long-stemmed red rose into Wash's mouth - he struggles a little.

12. Walsh, rose in his mouth, stands behind Kellaway at the piano. Walsh reaches over and tries to play a note, but Kellaway brushes away his hand.

Kellaway arches his head back, as he continues to play - Walsh leans over him and passes the rose from his mouth to Kellaway's.

Kellaway gently spits the rose out, reaches up and grabs Walsh's head and violently pulls him down to kiss him brutally on the mouth (Sound of Tesoriero laughing). Kellaway also laughs demonically.

13. Camera moving, wide shot to close ups, circling the space - Tesoriero and Kellaway have Walsh between them, running him around the space. They are laughing hysterically (though silently? Mix sound with wind). There is fear and confusion on Walsh's face.

14. Tesoriero grasps Walsh's face and buries it in her bosom - he breaks away, terrified, appalled.

15. Walsh runs to Kellaway at the piano, trying to escape Tesoriero
Kellaway leaps from piano, embracing Walsh, and moves to bite his neck, sensationally, vampirically - but instead he throws him away with superhuman force.

16. Cut to Walsh high on a window ledge, in shock, clinging for 'dear life' - and then we see him fall.

17. Shot from above - Walsh lying over the urn in a deep back arch, as though he has landed from a great height, strewn with rose petals - quivering, barely alive. As camera pans down, in the distance is Tesoriero singing at the piano with Kellaway playing.

18. Close/mid-shot of Kellaway at piano, playing.
Walsh moves into shot, once again, behind him.
Kellaway turns suddenly and grabs him, but this time in a ballroom-dancing embrace

Walsh thrusts his groin against Kellaway's. Walsh's expression is dangerous. He drives Kellaway across the space in a violent foxtrot.

19. Walsh is tearing the clothes from Kellaway - he is carnivorous, like a rampant tiger - yet imbued with mortal carnal desire.

Kellaway is cowering naked on the floor as Walsh tears off his own clothes.

20. (onward)
Walsh throws Kellaway around the space. He annally penetrates him against a wall, then on the floor - a vicious and desperate rape.
Constant referral back to a benignly smiling Tesoriero as she watches the adventure. (Perhaps she even momentarily enters the scene for a closer inspection. Perhaps, as in the original stage production, she brings a huge spot light in to light the scene.)

21. At the moment when it seems Walsh is about to ejaculate, Kellaway leaps upon him and buries his teeth in Walsh's neck - Walsh struggles furiously, thrashing, screaming, but eventually falls limp - a quivering corpse.

22. As Kellaway approaches the piano, Tesoriero runs to him and violently bites into his throat - as if to "share the booty".

23. Sound - A monstrous and hollow scream - Long shot of Walsh back on his feet, his naked body now vampirically white.

F. LOCATION:

The stairway

24. Close up on Tesoriero - a smile - she turns away

Zoom out to watch her ascend the staircase and disappear, as though into the ether.

G. LOCATION:

The warehouse

Music - the final vocal phrases of the song

25. Long shot over the shoulder of a seated and naked Walsh sitting at a distance from Kellaway, with the urn of roses between them.
Kellaway slouching back on the piano chair, languorously play the final phrases with one hand, studying Walsh with a knowing smile.

26. On the final three piano chords - a close up of Walsh's face turning to the camera, smiling and licking his upper lip, in reference to the young boy in the first shot.

We were unable to reach a satisfactory artistic relationship with the producing company, Physical TV, and so the project was not pursued.

April Fools' Fetish Symposium - UNSW - 1/4/99

I am not an academic and so I am not really willing or able to present a thesis. I went to university a quarter of a century ago to study how to play the piano - better than I already did. I was certainly not encouraged to talk about ideas - I was locked alone in a room with a piano and a mountain of authoritative musical scores for 10 hours a day - I just had to convince other people that I could play that stuff well.

Now, after having escaped that impossible responsibility 20 odd years ago, I have found myself the principal pianist of a contemporary music theatre ensemble, that tackles a monstrously demanding and once again threateningly authoritative repertoire - I am also a writer, director, actor and dancer with that company. I perform all these roles because some years of experience have enabled me to develop these skills. Consequently there are an awful lot of skeletal fetishes (according to the title of this symposium) in my wardrobe.

YES, I feel a little awkward in an academic forum - because I humbly make theatre, and it is in that, that I attempt to articulate my ideas. AND theatre is (for me at least) a non-prescriptive form - it cannot state authoritative outcomes.

And so I'll just throw a heap of ideas at you, in no particular order - and leave you to construct your own meanings - you are specialists.

SO - OPERA!!!! SCARY!!!!!!

Why, after all these years in the "mainstream" of radical contemporary performance - I mean, I'm one of the last middle-aged serving stayers!

Why have I suddenly called the work of myself and my long-term collaborators OPERA?

Listen, I have never had a problem with the big nominative generalisations - I have always been quite happy with the words "theatre", "ballet", to describe the work we've made.

And let's remember that the word "opera", which we spell in our name "The opera Project" with a small "o" means in Italian simply and literally "a work" - it's probably the most non-prescriptive naming of a company since, perhaps -- The Sydney Front!

But, ofcourse we know that our audience will bring with them all their culturally acquired baggage to our performances. And yes, indeed we will tease them with a spot of music and titles like "Berlioz", "Tosca" and "Tristan".

But our work is about a multiplicity of forms, histories, conventions - as much of past centuries as of our own contemporary times and very recent histories.

In accordance with contemporary Australian concerns, our work speaks as much about an archaic and contemporary European heritage as it does about the impact of Asian culture (read, theatre) on our current theatre.

Having a Mandarin speaking/Peking Opera actor trained and richly experienced an art of female impersonation, blithely portraying an evil, male Scarpia in "Tosca" makes a very different kind of statement to Puccini's writing of an Italian opera (nearly a century earlier) about an American sailor that does a Japanese girl wrong (that girl, incidentally, intended to be played by a European diva in a very suss. wig, kimono and body language (read, culture).

So why OPERA - I mean, everyone is expecting a big "O".

Why our interest in these ancient works by long dead male composers? - Well that is not really for me to say. The point is, performers still seem to want to perform them. And as for audience demand - how many more productions of Tosca and Tristan are going to be inflicted upon us in our lifetimes - our children's'?

These operas, on the written page do indeed bring to mind "a frozen, arrested, two-dimensional image, a photograph to which one returns repeatedly" - and indeed I do wish to revel in the dangerous consequences of movement!

It is the musical score, the libretto, the same tired old production of the big opera houses, that represent the fetish in my profession - and will return to that idea time and time again in the years to come.

But wait a moment -

Let's make one thing clear right from the start -
I am not an opera queen!

OK, I have a professional interest in a certain musical and theatrical canon called "opera", and I'm gay (I promise not to press that point any further) - but I AM NOT AN OPERA QUEEN!!

Opera queens bore the shit out of me.

I have read Wayne Koestenbaum's "The Queen's Throat", and unfortunately I've never met him - at least he is very self-aware, highly literate, scarily intelligent - and he's read his feminist theorists.

But from my experience the opera queens, in their millions worldwide, are mostly utterly fatuous in their idolisation of the form. I'm sorry, but I just can't pinpoint the equation that can speak the names of Maria Callas, Greta Garbo, Judy Garland (Connelli?) and Kirsten Flagstad all in the same intellectual breath.

The opera queen will to often extol the virtues of a certain production, and in the same breath trivialise it by describing it as "fabulously camp". Has he (or occasionally, though rarely, she) pondered the significance of this startling justification?

Susan Sontag describes "camp" as "the anarchic jolt we experience in the face of artistic artefacts that try to be serious and fail"

I, at times, strive to be successfully IRONIC - I am certainly not content with failure in my serious endeavours - and so would certainly not aspire to the "camp", according to Sontag - though I must admit I am rather keen on the "anarchic jolt" bit.

So, back to opera.

Let's remember that Opera's true intention, post 1632, has been to be a populist form - it is no more mysterious than a David Williamson play. It just has a different set of conventions. It tends to wear its history on its sleeve a little more evidently than our contemporary ideal of the conservatively well-written play - it is basically more honest in declaring its artifice.

Ofcourse, Opera does seem to demand a kind of naive assumption in the existence of a certain universal consciousness - that its audience is able to respond reliably to certain abstract expressions of emotional (read, political) states - grief, joy, desire, loathing, anger, impatience, hysteria - that all people share some naturally ordained lexicon of expression. Of course, this is rubbish - all these responses are socially, historically acquired - but let's not dwell on this - this is quite different thesis, and I have only 30 minutes.

The really good operas (I'm talking about the late Monteverdi, the Mozarts, Puccinis, even the occasional Britten) have never been about safe bourgeois entertainment (regardless of how their contemporary or subsequent audiences may have felt safe to view them) - they are problematic, in their subject matter and their structure - they possess a seering radical edge.

Is it possible to separate the theatre and the music in contemporary examinations/performances of opera?

NO!! What's the point? - If we are not interested in the problems/themes of these extant works, then we should simply chuck them in the bin, and buy the highlights CD to enjoy as background of a glass of sweet sticky wine.

This is an ongoing dilemma for The opera Project - how do deal with the moment when the music becomes a comfort zone? (or in today's definition, a fetish). The music we use is very beautiful - it does not overly challenge its audience with the unknown. But how do we ensure that the audience is not luxuriating in an innocuous complacency - lulled by so much easy beauty?

Well - HIT 'EM IN THE FACE!

On its admittedly most simplistic level (just a good place to start) - in the process of creating our most recent work, THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY, we examine C19th European opera and question its relevance on the cusp of a new millennium. What defines the form - a marriage of music and narrative.

Narrative - the designation of particular roles to particular actors, their actions and subsequent outcomes, creating a linear narrative logic - it is narrative, as a device, through which C19 theatre proposed its political stance - narrative as a readable tool.

I am critically aware of this phenomenon because I have spent the best part of the past 25 years working in non-linear narrative forms. Consequently, the linear narrative in theatre becomes a fetish for me - because in playing with it I long to ruminate far beyond it, teasing my audience with its seductive power, but challenging them to explore within/around/beyond it. Inviting them to acknowledge the discrete sensuous power of theatre - to acknowledge that theatrical narratives are not meticulous representations of our perceived lives, but are fictions that can stimulate us, can challenge us to surrender our imaginations and political consciences, can enable us to imagine for a moment notions that might seem highly suspicious in our everyday thinking and functioning lives.

So, music in this context of our narrative assault on our sensibilities can no longer be the wallpaper of our leisure time (post recording and reproduction technology) but a potent weapon - it pricks our conscience - it surprises us by our response - it can fool us, seduce us - we are pleasurable, problematically vulnerable.

Let me draw your attention to an example. But first let me quickly paraphrase a portion of our program note to THE TERROR OF TOSCA:

In *The Terror of Tosca*, our interpretation of Puccini's opera of 1900 *Tosca*, we take the relationship between the characters of Tosca, and her tormentor, Scarpia, as our primary focus. The powerful interaction between them is all the more intense because they are foils for each other. This powerplay is reinforced by the strength of its sources. Scarpia draws his power from the institutions of the Church and the State. Tosca's power is her femininity. Both can justify their positions by calling on God (and in our case, particular performative traditions).

Puccini places the Church and its interests at the centre of his opera - Tosca's naive devotion and Scarpia's inquisition like piety place the Church and religion as mainplayers in his drama. In our version, we not only acknowledge this position of the Church and the redemption and restoration of life through suffering (our own, or that of others), but we also draw on the Medieval Christian notion of "Meraviglia" in which the line between art and reality, or fantasy and verisimilitude, is not clearly defined.

Puccini's opera does not strictly follow the school of "Verismo Opera", which derives from the traditions of theatrical realism. It belongs, rather, to the traditions of "romantic melodrama". Our own text, which we derived from Puccini's rather than Sardou's originally intricate example of what

may be ironically known as a “well-made play” - our text is melodrama - raw responses to threats and violence, abrupt and shocking declarations of jealousy and desire.

We are talking here of freedom from some of the worst habits of C20th theatre, or at least those habits we have acquired through a lazy interpretation of some very exciting but really not particularly fecund discoveries of the late C19th - yes, a brazenly self-conscious attack on theatrical verisimilitude.

We were looking to a theatrical expression that could ostentatiously and proudly revel in its conventions, histories, aesthetics, constructions, passions - sharing its joy, its obscenity with its audience - rather than piously instructing it in some kind of moral order.

VIDEO 1 - Mario execution to End

Those who know the original opera will have noticed that neither the music nor a particular written theatrical structure or narrative outcome are overriding concerns in our examination of opera as a form. We will not let them prescribe the outcomes of our work.

(a quick precis of the story of Tosca)

You will have noticed that there is a certain absence of the sung voice in this section of our opera - what you have heard is merely a recorded and treated version of an ancient Maria Callas recording

What about the voice?

If we are to approach the entire four hundred year canon, we have to consider the problems of vocal technique. There are all those notes! - a certain intended sound is prescribed on the page.

The opera Project concerns itself very seriously with the voice, and particularly its attendant body - the politic of the voice - sexual - its gender specificity - its driving force - the breath - its physicality - desire for expression.

What of the canon? - Who is allowed to portray Tosca - How are we to vocalise Scarpia - when can the singing voice become an expressive spoken voice - when do music and articulated spoken ideas become compatible? How can the physicality of the spoken voice segue convincingly to the physical commitment of pianism? In our version, Scarpia runs the piece from the piano - but why does everyone associate Tosca with Maria Callas, and not Tito Gobbi, the legendary Scarpia? What are the departures from the original text that could respectfully/intelligently reinterpret that text?

VIDEO 2 - AT/NK scene on ramp to end of Scarpia Murder

I'm sorry , I need more than half an hour to talk about all this - actually I need 25 years. But I am grateful to have had the opportunity to throw into the arena a handful of ideas and images that you may be able to associate with your examination of “the Fetish”.

But more importantly, I hope you may be intrigued by both the small ‘o’ and the Big ‘O’ of opera - they have a dangerously obscene relationship.

And catch TRISTAN.....Wagner!!! Eck!! _

It opens at The Performance Space on May 14th

Sorry, just a plug - that wasn't part of my contract.

TRISTAN

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This new work by The opera Project Inc. will complete a trilogy, including ***The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*** and ***The Terror of Tosca*** that assess the impact of romantic literature, music and theatre on late twentieth century performance practice. These are no museum pieces, but contemporary works created by artists who have made considerable contributions to the development of Australian performance over the past two decades.

In *TRISTAN* The opera Project turns once again to the notion of "the feminine" in opera. However, in contemplating Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, we will not be looking exclusively at the nature of the transgressive heroine (Isolde), but also at the nature of the "feminized" hero (Tristan). This coupling will be theatrically explored within the context of "romantic love" and illness.

In opera there are betrayed, wounded men: men who have women's troubles happen to them: men who have the status of Eve as if they had lost their innate Adam. These men die like heroines; down on the ground they cry and moan, they lament. And like heroines they are surrounded by real men, veritable Adams who have cast them down. They partake of femininity: excluded, marked by some initial strangeness, they are doomed to their undoing. They are mad

prey to frenzies of mysticism or love. In Tristan's case he is the hero marked by death. He has ... deadly hallucinations, the suicide he dreams of and finally commits.

Catherine Clement *Opera, or the undoing of women*

Tristan suicides by ripping off his bloodied bandages and allowing his blood to flow - an anarchic menstrual gesture.

Taking its source from the medieval myth of the fated lovers, Wagner's opera is not so much a narrative of events as a conceptual journey into desire and narcissism. A story, in which a nephew goes to find a wife for his royal uncle and subsequently falls in love with her, has become a magnificent myth whose heart rending strains have helped construct our expectations of romantic lovers.

Every man is Tristan, the tristful knight, willing himself motherless, seeking the generous breast of the childless woman capable of poisoning with love. Every woman is Isolde, odorous and seductive, above all chromatic, dedicated to small intervals, small moments even in death.
(Catherine Clement)

Every woman, as Isolde, is sorcerer - as much the dispenser of life with her beneficial herbs and love potions, as the dispenser of death, with the evil philtre that she has in store for Tristan.

Our notion of romantic love, being born from the chivalric codes, is transmitted through this ancient tale of Tristan and Isolde. Wagner's treatment of it through his music, his verbal text and his truncated narrative will provide fertile ground to examine contemporary notions of romantic love, which in heterosexual terms is too often pretty much the same as in Wagner's time! In a letter to Liszt apropos Wagner's own love affair with Mathilde Wesendonk he claims:

The love of a tender woman has made me happy: she dared to throw herself into a sea of suffering and agony so that she should be able to say to me "I love you!" No one who does not know all her tenderness can judge how much she had to suffer. We were spared nothing- but as a consequence I am redeemed and she is blessedly happy because she is aware of it.

Wagner's influence in the wider areas of philosophy should not be underestimated. Otto Weininger, contemporary of Freud and a notorious Viennese anti-feminist and anti-Semite thought that Wagner was the greatest man since Christ. (Inevitably, Weininger suicided at the age of 24.) The opera Project will look at Weininger's (and early Lacan's) thesis that "woman is a symptom of man" in relation to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Woman exists not in herself, as a positive entity with full ontological consistency but only as a symptom of man. We will place this thesis in opposition to Lacan's last writings in which he speaks of the reversal so that man exists because of his symptom. - woman is a symptom of man, meaning that man himself exists only through the woman qua his symptom. All his ontological consistency hangs on, is suspended from, is "externalised" in his symptom. In other words, man literally ex-ists - his entire being lies out there in the woman. Woman on the other hand does not ex-ist - she in-sists - which is why she does not come into being through man only.

Taking the "symptom" analogy further, The opera Project wishes to view this love story within a context of malady. Does Tristan and Isolde's relationship operate in the realm of malady and symptom, affliction and projection.? Is this relationship healthy? Is it unhealthy? Is it a relationship of co-dependency (in today's analytical speak)? Is Isolde a projection of Tristan's fears and desires, or is Isolde sorceress enough to exist beyond the influence of man? The legacy of Freud's psychoanalysis is a handy tool to prize open this treasure chest of neuroses, fears and projections. These lovers do not die together, as our commonest love myths would

prescribe - Tristan suicides first, and Isolde, as created by Wagner, is a symptom of man and therefore does not exist of her own right - and so must subsequently die of love. How do we characterize the relationship between Tristan and Isolde when Isolde can be seen as chromatically defying the tonal (and thus ordered) world of opera and Tristan operates as the feminised operatic male?

Wagner has an interesting pertinence for The opera Project's mission. Firstly, he was the first to consider breath not merely a pre-requisite for the voice, but as a psychological and physiological entity in itself, and to use it and refer to it as such in his works. He was the first European musical dramatist to consider the voice as more than a virtuosic tool in service of the written word: he saw the voice as an overt expression of life-force. These concerns we share, rather than fussing over what kind of voice should be permitted to sing Wagner's music.

In *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* we explored, amongst other things, the theatrical relationships between the bodies of the singer, dancer, piano accompanist and actor. In *The Terror of Tosca* our target is the work that signalled the birth of contemporary musical dramaturgy, Puccini's *Tosca*. It will examine notions of narrative in contemporary performance practice. In ***Tristan*** our attentions are drawn in quite a different direction. Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* was perhaps the first opera composed that did not concentrate primarily on strong narrative structures. Its interests are far more metaphysical. Wagner sought a liberation from the mundane through the spiritual, and hence, the musical. His is a theatrical and musical heritage that we must acknowledge (if only in our yearning to escape it).

TRISTAN - program notes

<i>Performers:</i>	Michael Bell (Pianist) Nigel Kellaway (Tristan) Annette Tesoriero (Soprano)	Regina Heilmann (Actor/Isolde) Jai McHenry (Doctor) Xu Fengshan (Dancer/Isolde)
<i>Writer:</i>		Keith Gallasch
<i>Co-Director with the writer and performers:</i>		Nigel Kellaway
<i>Music:</i>		Richard Wagner (1813-1883) <i>Wesendonck Lieder</i> (1858) (Lyrics <i>Fünf Gedichte</i> by Mathilde
Wesendonck)		Robert Schumann (1810-1856) <i>Dichterliebe</i> (1840) (Lyrics by Heinrich Heine) Bob Ostertag <i>A Dreadful Thing</i> (voice: Justin Bond)
<i>Costumes:</i>		Jane E., Sharon Hay and Nigel Kellaway
<i>Lighting design and Production Management:</i>		Simon Wise
<i>Stage Management:</i>		David Williams
<i>Publicity:</i>		Miranda Brown Publicity
<i>Artwork:</i>		Lisa Herbert / Scout
<i>Publicity Photography:</i>		Heidrun Lohr
<i>Piano courtesy of:</i>		ALLANS

TRISTAN

The popular medieval legend of the love between Tristan and Isolde, and their adulterous betrayal of King Mark to whom Isolde is betrothed, was transformed by Wagner from a tale of love, cunning and repeated sexual encounters into a mystical adventure, a prolonged cry of yearning and woundedness, and a hymn to transcendence through redemptive love.

Wagner was inspired to create *Tristan und Isolde* (first performance 1865), both by his affair with Mathilde Wesendonck (as always with Wagner another man's wife, but one who provided the lyrics for the *Wesendonck Lieder* composed mid-*Tristan*) and by the early 19th century philosopher Schopenhauer whose great influence reached late into the century. The philosopher's rejection of the everyday as a bright veil of illusion was fuelled by Eastern philosophy. Transcendence, he argued, required a surrender of the Will, a letting go of our innate driving force, akin, much later, to Freud's notion of the Id. In Wagner's opera the surrender of the Will is enacted by the protagonists, but the framework is of romantic love and a music that is sensual and passionate - too 'this-earthly' for Schopenhauer himself, if his dislike of an early draft of *The Ring* sent to him by Wagner is anything to go by ... and for him it was the male of the species that embodied the best of the Will and its creative passions, the female merely the lesser attributes of intellect and common sense.

It is not uncommon for *Tristan und Isolde* to be cited as the beginning of the Modern with its radical move away from tonality - the ambiguous opening chord and its long, restless journey to resolution. - as a transition between romantic expressiveness and expressionism in its agonised

celebration of the subjective. The deathwish of its protagonists also anticipated late 19th and early 20th century works of a darker, non-idealistic hue. As Peter Conrad notes in *Modern Times, Modern Places* (Thames and Hudson 1998), Isolde's descendants were as powerful as this daughter of a sorceress, but were more dangerous, murderous and anarchistic - the nameless woman in Schoenberg's *Ewartung*, the clown in the same composer's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Lulu in Berg's opera of the same name.

Equally, Schopenhauer's surrender of the Will transformed into Nietzsche's reappraisal of the Will in terms of power and into Freud's naming of the Id and, later, the Deathwish. The preoccupation with breakdown and death that pervaded the 19th century arts and philosophy intensified in early 20th century expressionism and its odd bedfellows, like Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* in which transcendence is achieved in part by the exercise of the will to power, but mostly in the evidence of that power left behind - great ruins (a theory that appealed to Hitler, with his dream of his own twilight of the gods). In the scenario for this **opera Project** performance, Tristan (the hero and the Wagner opera) is a 19th century ruin, one we visit over and over, compulsively - except we call such works classics.

This ruin still has a powerful effect. In dozens of works of literature right up to the present (including some by Joyce, Cocteau, Martin, Updike, Henze) *Tristan und Isolde* is reworked and qualified, satirised, dismissed as romantic, psychologically inadequate, as failing Isolde, but is also celebrated for its 'religious' redemption through love in Messiaen's *Turingalila* Symphony and in Michael Tanner's recent commentary - "Along with Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, [*Tristan und Isolde*] is one of the two greatest religious works of our culture". (*Wagner*, Harper Collins 1996). And with his wound, Tristan reminds us too of other sacrificial heroes. Like the risen Christ in Carravaggio's *The Incredulity of St Thomas*, Tristan in the opera offers his wound for all to hear and feel.

For less spiritually inclined searchers through the ruins, *Tristan und Isolde* is rich in psychological possibilities, providing intriguing 'case studies' for Freudians and Jungians, not least in the nexus between Wagner and his protagonists. For Tristan (his father dies in the act of conceiving the hero; his mother dies giving birth to him) and Wagner (deaths in the family, childhood nightmares of the dead, beatings for waking the family), the pre-Oedipal sense of loss and consequent introspective narcissism is as important to their respective dramas as the more obvious Oedipal tensions. (Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, Princeton University Press 1993). The reversal of gender role expectations in *Tristan und Isolde* reminds Catherine Clement in *Opera, or the undoing of Women* (Virago Press 1989) that "In opera there are betrayed, wounded men: men who have women's troubles happen to them ... These men die like heroines; down on the ground they cry and moan, they lament ... they partake of femininity: excluded, marked by some initial strangeness, they are doomed to their undoing. They are mad prey to frenzies of mysticism or love. In Tristan's case he is the hero marked by death . He has ... deadly hallucinations, the suicide he dreams of and finally commits."

But *Tristan und Isolde* is also about Isolde, the soprano. "It's as if the intensity of the musical orgasm overcomes the singer's body. Like Jacques Offenbach's Antonia (in *The Tales of Hoffmann*) the very act of singing brings bodily dissolution. The more sexually charged the music, the greater the danger of the singer's demise." (Paul Abel, *Opera in the Flesh*, Westview Press 1996). Antonia appears to be suffering tuberculosis and is advised not to sing, but the mysterious Dr Miracle arrives and encourages the singing that kills her, as it did her mother before her. "Isolde's death as she sings the *Liebtestod* does not technically result from an act of violence ... But the *Liebtestod* still performs a kind of rape: the agency of Isolde's death is sex, as performed on her body by Wagner's orgasmic music" (Abel). And, in a curious link with her tubercular peers, it is Isolde who, early, cries out for air, and later describes her relationship with the universe in terms of the World-Breath.

Illness and malady are recurrent terms when discussing the feminised hero, the suffering soprano role and the conjunction of sex and death in opera. Peter Conrad cites Thomas Mann who “referred to the noble malady of the *Tristan* music ... for Mann this music, which he so much admired, incubated an ailment. It warned of social collapse, which preceded and predestined the modern nervous breakdown.” He saw the music as having a narcotic power. Conrad also cites a character in Robert Musil’s novel *The Man Without Qualities* who “connects ‘the small nostalgic compact we make with death when we listen to *Tristan* and the secret fascination that most sexual crimes have for us even though we don’t yield to it.’ “ It is easy now to be entranced by *Tristan und Isolde* and in the same moment to speak of Tristan’s narcissism and the wound that won’t heal, and to wander through the ruins, wondering if we still inhabit them, and ail in them at the end of the 20th century.

The only doctor on hand to address this malady in The opera Project’s *Tristan* is an expressionist collage of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Offenbach’s Dr Miracle, Freud, Dr Caligari, Spengler and others, a spectre of shifting 19th century concerns rooted in death and power and dreams of transcendence in a culture committed to reason and progress. This doctor too dreams of his own ascent to peace and oblivion, but he is, in part, Tristan’s creator, and minder, and another part of the ruin.

Save for a piano transcription by Franz Liszt of the *Leibestod*, The opera Project’s *Tristan* is a juxtaposition of recitals of Wagner’s *Wesendonck Lieder* and Robert Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* (*A Poet’s Love*; 1840, to poems by Heine). While *Tristan und Isolde* yearns and agonises over and transcends pain through death, the *Wesendonck Lieder* more joyfully shares some of the same sentiments, images and music (and Schopenhauerian underpinnings). The Schumann cycle, however, enacts in song a descent into self-torment, despair and death (metaphoric but grimly wrought) over unrequited love. Nature offers no solace (nor can it in Wagner) and the loved one becomes a monster. (Tristan’s self-pity is relieved by Isolde’s love for him, and his love for her is resolute: but he is impatient to die and tears off his bandage on her arrival, the journey is solitary still.) While Schumann mocks his protagonist here and there with quaint tunes and nigh operatic self-pity, an interplay of the plangent and the mock-heroic against a relentless piano part enacts male suffering with a powerful subjectivity. But in The opera Project’s *Tristan* the *Dichterliebe* is performed by a woman, the soprano places her finger in the male wound.

Keith Gallasch May 1999

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

May 21, 1999

by STEWART HAWKINS

Wagner's Image Problem

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THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

May 17, 1999

by PETER McCALLUM

Never get better if you pick at it.

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SYDNEY

STAR OBSERVER

May 20, 1999

by LEIGH RAYMOND

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In *Tristan*, the third of The opera Project's production about romantic classics, they take apart *Tristan and Isolde*.

Wagner's opera is everywhere but almost nowhere to be seen (or heard). The soprano sings off stage (really on) sitting down, sipping from a water bottle, then later in a straight jacket. But she is not singing from the opera.

Two actors perform Isolde, one a woman, the other a Chinese opera female impersonator. Sometimes they perform together; only one speaks. A doctor, played by a woman, is philosopher, director, master and Wagner. To some extent she controls the action, the language and the music. But people rebel. Isolde storms off, denying the doctor's rule.

Tristan is wheeled in, appropriately enough, on a bed. He is wounded, dying, seeking oneness through love and transcendence. He is romantic hero, dying myth, misogynist wuss and tiresomely self-obsessed. With him the doctor is bullying and playful. Tristan is pliant, but ultimately he too is unable to realise what the doctor, or even he or anyone else actually wants. So much for desire.

Accompanied on piano, the soprano (Annette Tesoriero) sings Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*, written when Wagner was writing *Tristan*, set to poems by his mistress. She also sings Schumann's *Diechteliebe*. Liszt's transcription of the *Liebestod* and Bob Ostertag's *A Dreadful Thing*, with Justin Bond's voice, also make an appearance. (Ostertag was here for this year's Mardi Gras Festival, Bond played Kiki in *The Kiki and Herb Show*, at the Mardi Gras Festival Club.

Like other opera Project works, *Tristan*, written by Keith Gallasch, is ambitious. It sets out to challenge the way "the work" functions as a classic, the way it represents romance, sex and gender, what makes it tick.

Theatrically, the production is lively, occasionally funny and features some striking moments. The set and costumes are stylish, the performers are obviously committed and in this production seem to perform with greater range than in earlier opera Projects.

But what does it add up to? Perhaps it's the wrong question to ask of deconstruction, however engineered. Perhaps it's better to keep asking questions. How effectively does the production integrate romantic song cycles, surrealism, psychoanalysis, French theory, wit, Western and Chinese performing styles, German history and more?

Script: copyright Keith Gallasch 1999

TRISTAN

I don't understand the eternal.

(Robert Ashley)

Personae

Tristan-Wagner (Nigel Kellaway)

Isolde (an actress) (Regina Heilmann)

Doctor (a mix of Schopenhauer, Miracle, Nietzsche, Freud, Caligari, Spengler et al) (Jai McHenry)

A dancer (another Isolde) (Xu Fengshan)

Soprano (Annette Tesoriero)

Pianist (Michael Bell)

Act 1

Scene 1

IN THE DARK

The voice of the Doctor:

Ladies and gentlemen. Your attention please. The soprano is indisposed.

LIGHTS ON STAGE

THE SOPRANO, HEAVILY PREGNANT IN PYJAMAS AND STRAIGHTJACKET WALKS ACROSS STAGE, DROPPING THE SOPRANO'S COSTUME AND SCRIPT CENTRESTAGE. SHE WALKS TO THE PODIUM, BEHIND THE PIANO.

She will, however, be singing this evening's performance of TRISTAN from the wings.

Her onstage role will be indicated by a dummy...

ISOLDE ENTERS, NAKED, AND RUNS TO HER COSTUME

(CRACKLE) My apologies. The onstage presence of the soprano in tonight's performance of Tristan will be indicated by...an actor. Thank you.

ISOLDE STARTS DRESSING.

Doctor: Pssst. Isolde! (STRETCHING IT OUT) I..s..o..l..d..e.

ISOLDE RUNS HER FINGER UP AND DOWN THE OPENING PAGE SEARCHING FOR HER ROLE.

Isolde: (DEEPLY, ABSORBING IT) Is - ol - de?

Doctor: Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. In the tradition of performances of Tristan und Isolde, to which this evening's performance pays...homage, the conductor has had a giddy spell and been sent home.

THE PIANIST ENTER IN A RUSH AND SITS THE PIANO

Doctor: Tonight's...recital will be accompanied on piano. Thank you.

ISOLDE RUSHES TO HER POSITION AT THE PIANO.

THE PIANIST PLAYS THE INTRODUCTION TO DER ENGEL

Doctor: Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. In tonight's performance, the part of Tristan will not be sung. Thank you.

THE PIANIST RECOMMENCES THE INTRODUCTION.

IN THE DISTANCE, TRISTAN-CUM-WAGNER APPEARS BEHIND A SCRIM ON A BARGE. HE IS BRILLIANTLY, PAINFULLY LIT. HE'S IN SUNGLASSES, OUT OF IT, NODDING SLIGHTLY, OCCASIONALLY MOUTHING WHO KNOWS WHAT.

HE IS PALLID, HIS EYES DEEP PITS. AN ELEGANT, PLUSH GOWN OF A FEMININE CUT LIES OPEN REVEALING A TRISTAN SWATHED IN BANDAGES—A PATCH OF DRIED BLOOD ON THE BANDAGE BENEATH THE RIGHT RIBCAGE.

THE SCRIM OPENS AND THE BARGE GLIDES SLOWLY TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE, PUSHED BY THE BENT AND WIZENED DOCTOR

ONCE THE BARGE HAS COME TO REST, TRISTAN PLUCKS OFF HIS SUNGLASSES AND SQUINTS AT THE ROOM.

TRISTAN SUDDENLY SCREAMS AT GREAT LENGTH, 'HYSTERICALLY', ON AND ON— HE HAS FOUND HIMSELF BACK IN THE WORLD AGAIN AND, HAVING ASSUMED HIMSELF DEAD AND AT ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE, HE DOES NOT LIKE IT. THE SOPRANO AND THE PIANIST STOP. ISOLDE CONSULTS HER SCRIPT QUICKLY FOR DIRECTIONS.

TRISTAN'S SCREAMING SUBSIDES. HE SHADES HIS EYES, PUTS HIS SUNGLASSES BACK ON, AND SUCKLES AT HIS SPORTS WATER BOTTLE.

THE SOPRANO NODS TO THE PIANIST WHO RECOMMENCES THE INTRODUCTION. SHE SINGS.

Song 1 - DER ENGEL (3:25)

(Wessendonck Lieder, lyrics Mathilde Wessendonck, music Richard Wagner)

ISOLDE AGAIN SHAPES HERSELF INTO A SINGLE POSE FOR THE SONG, HER MOUTH WIDE OPEN, FIXED, *NOT* MOUTHING THE LYRICS.

THE DOCTOR APPEARS OVER THE BACK OF THE BARGE.

HE CREEPS SLOWLY ACROSS THE SPACE BETWEEN TRISTAN AND ISOLDE.

DESPITE HIMSELF, TRISTAN HAS BEEN LISTENING TO THE SOPRANO, MOUTHING THE WORDS OF THE SONG.

Scene 2

AT THE END OF THE SONG THE DOCTOR CUES TRISTAN TO APPLAUD

Tristan: Your words **touch** me. (HE CLUTCHES HIS SIDE) *My heart too **bleeds** in silence. Still bleeds...Are you an **angel**?*

Isolde: Der Engel.

Doctor: (HISS) Isolde.

Isolde: Isolde. (IMPROVISING) Der engel...Isolde.

Tristan: (MOVED, SENTIMENTAL) Isolde... der engel. (MAD, DISTURBED) No. I am Isolde. Tristan is Isolde, Isolde Tristan. We are **one**, we are **nothing**. Where am I? This is not what I had in mind.

We cannot be **two** again.
(TO ACTOR) You are **not** Isolde!

(TO DOCTOR) If you're doing this to make me **happy**...it won't work. It's **cruuuuuuel**.

(TO ISOLDE) If you are an **angel** bear me up from this...shit!

Isolde: "Fürst er, ferne jedem Schmerz,
Meinen Gesit nun himmelwärts." *
(*...bears my spirit away from all torment/Heavenward. Der Engel)

Tristan: (GROANS) I expected **nothing**. I wanted **nothing**.

Doctor:(COMFORTING) Stehe still.
(TURNS TO ISOLDE AND WAVES TO THE SOPRANO) "Stehe Still!" Sing it.

ISOLDE IS CURIOUS ABOUT TRISTAN AND MOVES QUICKLY TOWARDS HIM, LEAPING ONTO THE BED.

Isolde: Tristan!

Tristan: Doctor!

Doctor: Isolde! Not yet!

Later, my angel. Sing. Sing.

The poor **boy** is "the mere **echo** of the meaningless, useless **noise** he once was", "the **backwash** of expiring being."

A **ruin**, a beautiful **ruin**...about as immortal as he'll get.

Sing, Isolde, of the great wheezing body of time. Throttle it.

Isolde: "Ende, des wollens ew'ger tag."

Doctor: Yes. Turn our lips blue, mute, amazed, with your song. "End, eternal day of the Will!"

Sing. Sing **eye to eye**, that blissful gaze "when soul drowns in soul".

Isolde: "Seele ganz in Seele versinken..."

(MECHANICALLY REPEATING TRISTAN AND TURNING TO HIM) Tristan is Isolde, Isolde Tristan. We are one, we are nothing..."Seele ganz in Seele versinken..."

THE PIANO INTRODUCTION BEGINS - THE DOCTOR PULLS HER BACK TO FACE THE AUDIENCE.

Song 2 -Stehe Still! (4:11).

TRISTAN, LIKE A COBRA RISING OUT OF A BASKET, PERFORMS A STRANGE HEAVENWARD-YEARNING, BLIND DANCE. THERE IS SOMETHING FAINTLY ORIENTAL ABOUT IT (ANTICIPATING A LATER ARRIVAL). HIS ARMS REACH OUT TOWARDS ISOLDE BUT THEN RISE UP, AS LIFTING HIS LANGUOROUS TORSO. HIS GOWN FALLS TO THE BED.

TRISTAN'S DANCE IS INTERRUPTED BY PAIN, OR RATHER THE VERY IDEA OF IT—HIS WOUND PULLS HIS HANDS TO HIS SIDE. HE SINKS. HE RISES AGAIN. HE SINKS. HE IS STILLED. ONE HAND CREEPS THROUGH HIS BANDAGES TO HIS WOUND AND CARESSES IT SENSUALLY. HE GROANS. HE SWOONS. THE DOCTOR TRIES TO DRAGS TRISTAN'S FINGER FROM HIS WOUND.

Scene 3

(Piano ployout)

TRISTAN TRIES TO APPLAUD.

Doctor: Sssh. Sssssh.

(TO ISOLDE) **The script. My script.**

Isolde: What's your problem?

Doctor: I made you. I will unmake you.

Isolde: **I am Isolde.** I die of my own accord.

Doctor: Good. That's it. That's what you must do.

Isolde: Who are you?

Doctor: Call me Doctor ... doctor of philosophy, medicine and everything.

Isolde: What are you?

Doctor: A soprano-killer. I made one sing herself to death. And her mother before her.

Sing! I said to her.

Even if it kills you.

And it did.

The perfect surrender of the Will.

Too easy really. She had a chest condition. Tubercular. Ran out of puff. So many did.

Roses in their cheeks, hitting the top notes ... beauty in death, took *my* breath...away.

Isolde: Isolde has no chest condition!

(QUOTING FROM SCRIPT)

Love in death, death in love. **Expiring**...into the **World-Breath**.

Doctor: It's all breath...singing...expiring...dying.

Isolde: Isolde is not sick.

Doctor: Exactly. She decides to die. She dies. The perfect surrender of the Will. I infected Wagner with a sublime deathwish and murdered Isolde with **philosophy**. 'Ende, des wollens ew'ger tag.'

And now we sing it again, and again, in this...limbo. In this...**hothouse**...**Im Treibhaus!**

THE PIANIST PLAYS THE FIRST CHORD, THE INTRODUCTION OF **IM TREIBHAUS**, AGGRESSIVELY, AND THEN CONTINUES QUIETLY.

Doctor: (ANGUISHED) ...our clapped-out hands are yet **warm**, our lips not yet **blue**...we have not ascended...to the bliss of zilch...we are still here...but not here...neither inside or out...or above or below...we are sound...decaying...

(RAGES) **Unsre Heimat ist nicht hier!**

THE DOCTOR SITS, HEAD IN HAND.

THE SOPRANO SINGS:

Song 3 - Im Treibhaus (A Study for Tristan & Isolde)

ISOLDE POSES WITH THE SONG BRIEFLY, BUT HER ATTENTION DRIFTS TO TRISTAN. DAZED, HE WATCHES HER MOVE IN A WIDE CIRCLE ROUND THE BED.

BUT IN THE DISTANCE A SOFT BLUE LIGHT REVEALS A MERE GLIMPSE OF A DANCING FIGURE, ORIENTAL, TRANSCENDENT.

TRISTAN SITS UP IN HIS BED. HE'S ON ALL FOURS STUDYING ISOLDE AND THE DANCER.

HE CRAWLS OFF THE BED AND ACROSS THE FLOOR TOWARDS THEM. LEAVING HIS GOWN BEHIND, HE IS CLAD ONLY IN AN UNFURLING BANDAGE.

THE LIGHT FADES ON THE DANCER. TRISTAN STOPS.

HE STAGGERS TOWARD THE SOPRANO, OFFERING HIS WOUND BUT HE REDIVERTED BY THE DOCTOR TOWARD ISOLDE WHO LIES ON THE BARGE.

Scene 4

A TABLEAU (A LA CARAVAGGIO'S THE INCREDULITY OF ST THOMAS):

(Music: Bob Ostertag - "A Dreadful Thing") (1:34)

TRISTAN TAKES ISOLDE'S HAND AND DRAWS IT VERY SLOWLY TO HIS WOUND. SHE IS WARY, BUT FASCINATED AND LETS IT HAPPEN, HER INDEX FINGER POINTING THE WAY. HER FINGER TOUCHES THE WOUND (A BLACK AND BLOODIED GASH PAINTED BELOW THE RIGHT HAND RIBCAGE).

THE DOCTOR PEERING OVER THEIR SHOULDERS, HIS BROW WRINKLED. LIGHT HALOES ABOUT THEM; IN THE DISTANCE THE ORIENTAL FIGURE MOMENTARILY DANCES IN SILENCE, RECOILING IN HORROR. THE DANCER FADES.

ISOLDE WITHDRAWS HER HAND. SHE TAKES TRISTAN'S HAND EVER SO SLOWLY TO HER CROTCH, HOLDS IT THERE, BREATHE IN AND EXHALES FROM THE DEPTHS. HE SHUDDERS. SHE LIFTS HIS HAND TO HER BREAST AND BREATHE AGAIN. SHE TAKES HIS HAND TO HER MOUTH AS IF TO PLACE A FINGER IN IT...TRISTAN RECOILS

THE PIANO INTRODUCES SCHMERZEN. (PAUSES ON BAR 3)

Tristan: Isolde? Isolde! Sing to me. To **me**.

Isolde: I **am**.

Tristan: No. To me. To **me**. **Eye to eye**.
You're singing to **me**, but you're looking at **them**!

Isolde: (LAUGHS). Pornography. It's just like pornography.
I fuck you while looking at them. (LAUGHS FURIOUSLY)

Tristan: (SHOCKED) Isolde!

Isolde: (GRANDLY) Yes, and **they pay!** To see the **execution.** (LAUGHS)

Tristan: (PATHETIC, CHILD LIKE) Tristan's Daddy died fucking Mummy making me. They were eye to eye. Tristan's Mummy died giving birth to me. We were eye to eye.

Isolde: Alright. Alright. Come here. You can watch...

You can watch...(DETERMINED AND LOUD) You can watch my cunt while I sing. (AS IF THE WORDS ARE COMING TO HER)The healing wound.

Tristan: (MORTIFIED, TO DOCTOR) That's not...transcendent!

Doctor:(GRABBING THE SCRIPT) It's certainly not in here! But it's interesting.
(PROUDLY) She has a will of her own. What kind of monster.....?

ISOLDE GRABS TRISTAN'S HAND AND PLACES IT ON HER FROCK AGAINST HER CROTCH.

Isolde: Tristan. (HE RECOILS AT THE MENTION OF HIS NAME)
(GIGGLING) Feel my voice rise from the very depths, the wound that sings.

Tristan: No... no touchies, please...Don't make me touch.
A nipple, maybe, would be alright. I like a good breast.

SHE BEGINS TO LIFT HER SKIRTS.

THE SOPRANO SINGS:

Song 4 - Schmerzen

Br 14:

Tristan: (HANGING ONTO THE SKIRTS, FONDLING THE MATERIAL) This is good. This is enough. This is everything. I do like a good frock and this is a very nice piece of cloth. My sisters—

Doctor: —the actress, the singer.

Tristan: Yes, they used to dress me up, and Mutti said No! No. No. No.

Doctor:But they did.

Tristan: (ALMOST SWOONING) And I did.

ON bar 22 OF THE SONG, ISOLDE LIFTS HER SKIRTS, STUFFING TRISTAN'S HEAD UNDER THEM, HOLDING HIM IN PLACE, EMBRACING HIM WITH HER 'BREATHING CUNT'.

Isolde: Here, look. Eye to eye. Träume. Träume.

Doctor: (LOUDLY) But to make so much **noise** in the search for eternal **silence!!!**
 (HUSHES HIMSELF) Sssh. Sssh. Such...carnal noise. I have heard that people **copulate** to the **Liebestod**. I'm not surprised. It's not my idea of transcendence

Actually, I do not like his music. It is too sensual. Too heavy. It drags me **down**. Transcendence is a lonely aim. It is not for couples or company or social clubs. A **poodle** is enough - a good **poodle**. Aah. BEGRUDGINGLY But...when she sings, she sings like heaven, she **stops** the heart. But I don't **come**...and nor would I want to. Altogether wrong. Or him (GESTURES AT TRISTAN). He wouldn't. Never.

I must admit I prefer Mendhelsson. Don't you? With Adolf it was Wagner, Wagner, Wagner...but it was **really** Lehar he loved - Oom pah pah Oom pah pah. It's true. I understand.

I think in Wagner, Adolph could see ruins,

(THE PIANO BEGINS INTRODUCTION OF *TRAUME*)

hear echoes, great immortalising ruins...the backwash of history...

Poor Tristan doesn't know his inside from his out, whether he is maker or made...SNIGGERS. Poor boy. Poor girl of a hero. Poor half-man of a composer.

(LYRICALLY) Dream, Tristan...Träume. Träume. 'Forgetfulness of all, remembrance of one!' The blossom on the snow, on your breast, in the grave. Träume.

Scene 5

THE SOPRANO SINGS:

Song 5 - Träume (A study for Tristan & Isolde)

ISOLDE, IN A RAPTURE, SWAYS TO THE SONG.

PART WAY INTO THE SONG, A DAZED TRISTAN, EYES WIDE, ROLLS OUT FROM UNDER THE DRESS.

BEHIND ISOLDE, IN THE DISTANCE, HER ORIENTAL DOUBLE DANCES PAST. TRISTAN ESCAPES BACK TO THE BED AND EXPIRES.

AS IF POSSESSED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE 'REAL' ISOLDE, THE ACTOR ISOLDE INTONES THE TEXT FROM THE LIEBESTOD OVER/WITH THE SOPRANO'S SINGING OF TRÄUME . TRISTAN SCRAMBLES BACK TO THE COMFORT OF HIS BED.

Isolde: In dem wogenden Scwall
 in dem tönenden Schall
 in des Welt-Atems

wehendem All -
 etrinken,
 versinken -
 unbewußt -
 höchste Lust!

(*In the surging swell,/in the ringing sound,/in the vast wave/ of the world's breath -
 /to drown/to sink unconscious -/supreme bliss!)

AS THE SOPRANO FINISHES SINGING (BAR 67), ISOLDE BEGINS TO FALL, AS IF ROMANTICALLY EXPIRING ONTO TRISTAN BUT AT THE VERY LAST HE EXPLODES FROM BENEATH HER, HOWLING IN HORROR.

Isolde: We are not **one**. We were never were **one**. First you rip off your **bandage** and then you **die**. You don't wait for me to die with you. And then I have to die on my own, fantasising like some suicidal school girl on heat pretending that I can see your eyes still flickering, your mouth breathing, your cock still swelling! I am **not** Isolde. (RISING FROM THE BARGE) I am **not** Tristan. I am... I am...

ISOLDE BACKS AWAY FROM TRISTAN AND RUNS TO EXIT. THE DOCTOR ATTEMPTS PURSUIT:

Doctor: ISOLDE! ISOLDE!!!!

THE DOCTOR PURSUES HER OFFSTAGE

Tristan: (MAD) This is **my** wound but it **does not bleed**. It does not sing. I am risen. But I am still here. I am **next** to nothing. **Almost**...nothing. But **not** nothing. (SCREAMS) Let me go!

Doctor: (KINDLY) I am sorry, Tristan. You have not let go. You must let go....T-r i-s-t a-n.....!!!

Tristan: Do not **name** me!! What do you mean Let Go?!! Let go what? What? What!!?

Act 2

THE PIANIST COMMENCES THE FRANZ LISZT PIANO TRANSCRIPTION OF *The Liebestod*.

ISOLDE APPEARS ON STAGE, TRANSFORMED, SEATED IN A LONG RED GOWN, LEGS ASTRIDE. HER RED DRESS UNFOLDS ACROSS THE STAGE.

SHE SWAYS, INTONING HER TEXT, GATHERING UP POWER FROM WITHIN, ON HER WAY TO ORGASM.

THE SOPRANO PROVIDES THE SOUNDS—AN EERIE, EROTIC DUET - SUNG, SPOKEN, INTONED, GASPED, SHRIEKED ACROSS THE SPACE.

TRISTAN SITS ATOP THE BARGE, SURVEYING HIS SURROUNDINGS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Isolde: (INTONING) **Do not** touch the genitals, or the **nipples**. Do not put **fingers** in the **mouth**. Allow for appreciative sounds. Aah. Ooh. Yes. **Loosen** the jaw, the **root** of

the tongue. Delay, hold back. **Do not** crave penetration or orgasm or final notes. Rechannel your energies. **Support**. Push up. **Perhaps** one of you will gently stop and hold the other at arm's length...look deeply into one another's eyes...eye to eye...soul to soul...**breathing** until you are inhaling and exhaling in unison, intoning together (DOES SOME OF THESE)...listening, breathing and **being breathed** by your body...**From the depths** energy is released, pushing its way through the chakras to the 3rd eye and crown chakra to **ignite** the union of pituitary and pineal **secretions**...bright white light ...oneness... **Nirvana**...the voice moves up, transcendent, purifying...healing...until orgasm, climax, a streaming ejaculation of notes **comes**.

Tantric lovemaking is also a tool for dying gracefully into the cosmic bliss beyond.

You can do all of this **by yourself**...if **your Tristan** has already **jerked off!** Penetration is not necessary.

THE DOCTOR LOOMS OVER ISOLDE. BLACKOUT. ISOLDE SCREAMS.

THE DOCTOR APPEARS SITTING ON ISOLDE'S CHAIR. TRISTAN IS SITTING ATOP THE BARGE.

Doctor:Traume. Dreams of the grave. Entropy, entropy forever ... but not decay ... please not the stench of fragrance and sweet perfumes ... nor this fullness of frocks and cunts and bosoms and throats like vaginas and mere orgasms! Liebestod indeed. Hochste Lust! Hochste Lust! "Great physical Bliss", indeed!! Eeck!

Tristan: You said, Let go. Let go of what? What?!

Doctor:Fate? Tell me about fate.

Tristan: "To what fate was I destined when I was born. To yearn and die? No. to yearn and yearn." *

Doctor:Hmmm. The light?

Tristan: I whom in death my mother conceived, in death she let go into the light. Turn out the light!

Doctor:Hmmm. Love?

Tristan: I called it that. But it was something else. A look, a glance.

Doctor:A potion?

Tristan: Yes! But not the love potion. Not the one Isolde gave me.

Doctor:Which one then ?

Tristan: My own "The terrible draught which brought this anguish on me I, I myself did brew from father's grief... "

Doctor:Yes, he died as he came.

Tristan: ...from father's grief and mother's woe...

Doctor: She expired as you fell into the light.

Tristan: ...from father's grief and mother's woe,
from love's tears, through the ages,
from laughing and weeping, rapture and grief, did I distil the draught's poison ...
accursed be he who brewed it. Tristan.

Doctor: The night?

The dead—my father, my grandmother, my sister—would haunt my sleep every night and I'd wake screaming...for which I'd be beaten ... severe scoldings. Corporal punishment seemed redeeming kindness.

Doctor: The voices of the dead?

Tristan: "...the orchestra's tuning up excited me fantastically: I remember particularly the striking of a 5th on the violin as a greeting from another world...when I was still scarcely beyond infancy the sound of these 5ths had been associated with the ghosts and spirits that always excited me...like a call from the dead..

I think my mother wished me dead..."

Doctor: The poison that never quite kills, that keeps the wound suppurating.

Tristan: It does not bleed. I am risen.

Doctor: It still bleeds. Internally.

Tristan: But it doesn't kill.

Doctor: It keeps you...here. Keeps me here

Tristan: "I thought, with bleeding I would capture Isolde. She would close my wound forever."

Doctor: It is still open.

Tristan: I let go. I gave myself to a look, to a potion, to a sword, to a wound.
I surrendered my Will.

Doctor: A mere suicide.

Tristan: Suicide? Suicide!!!!??? You never called it that before.

Doctor: Times change. I changed my mind.

Tristan: I am wounded so sore, where most tender, soft and open...

Doctor: Stop playing with it. Stop playing the woman.
Stop pretending the story is finished...when you know it isn't.

THE DANCER APPEARS - TRISTAN LEAPS UP TO FOLLOW THE DANCER, BUT SHE VANISHES.

Tristan: Tristan? Tristan? Is that me. It's me. It's me.
 I am risen!! It is finished!!!

Doctor: It's nothing. Nothing! An Illusion!

TRISTAN LEAPS ONTO THE DOCTOR, ATTEMPTING TO STRANGLE HIM. THE DOCTOR THROWS HIM OFF. THE DOCTOR BEATS TRISTAN.

Tristan: Thankyou. Thankyou.

Doctor: I think that's enough for today. You are doing well. "this world is poor for anyone who has never been sick enough for this voluptuousness of hell"
(TO SELF) You fucking little narcissist.

Now, where's **my** Isolde?

THE DOCTOR GOES UPSTAGE AND REVEALS ISOLDE IN THE DOORWAY.

Act 3

The doctor creates a scenario to demonstrate to Tristan, and actress and the soprano the progress and pathos of male wounding. In a mocking attempt to develop empathy for the male, he has the women play out the male role in Schumann's *Diechteliebe* ("a poet's love") song cycle, with Tristan (harpist and minstrel in medieval mythology) accompanying the singer on his journey into despair and the language of death.

In the course of the cycle the oriental dancer appears, again the image of the unobtainable beloved. The Doctor, sardonically aloof from his scenario, finds himself sucked into it, taken with the idealised dancer but spurned by her, and turning to the actress who plays the other side of the goddess - the dangerous whore, a Lulu to his Dr Schon in Berg's opera *Lulu*. Instead of encouraging Tristan to "let go" of his psychological wound, the Doctor secures one himself and enters the male condition.

Scene 1

THE DOCTOR, NOW THE STAGEMANAGER, LEADS ISOLDE FROM UPSTAGE IN THE SAME BLUE DRESS FROM ACT 1, BUT NOW THE BODICE IS A BRACED CORSET WITH NECK SUPPORT. IT'S AS IF HE HAS CAGED HER.

Doctor: (THE MAD SCIENTIST)

An experiment! A little experiment. I want you to put yourself in another mind, another body - a man's soul, a man's flesh.
Live out these songs, these little cuts and scratches, these lieder, these infections, neuroses on the way to psychoses, **man** songs.

GUIDING THE SOPRANO ACROSS THE STAGE TO ANOTHER POSITION,
AND LIGHTENING HER STRAIGHTJACKET.

And you, my soprano, reach down into you bowels, sing from the depths,
penetrated by these **man** songs.
(POSITIONS A MUSIC STAND WITH THE SCORE OF THE SCHUMANN IN FRONT OF HER)

Soprano: I'm sorry, I'm not a baritone.

Doctor: You want to bet?

THE DOCTOR STEALTHILY APPROACHES THE PIANIST, SUDDENLY
THROWS A BLACK BAG OVER HIS HEAD AND DRAGS HIM TO A STOOL
BESIDE THE SOPRANO, TO ACT AS PAGE-TURNER.

DRAGGING TRISTAN TO THE PIANO - HE LIFTS TRISTAN'S HANDS TO THE
KEYBOARD.

And you, Tristan, ancient hero and lyre plucker ... play this little dance of death ...
play the little woman accompanying this man on his dark journey into love ...
see the wound open and grow ... in another.

Enter the wounds of the other, become one, and let go!!

Scene 2 (SCHUMANN'S **DICHTERLIEBE**.)

1. Im Wunderschönen

DURING THE SONG, THE DOCTOR ENCOURAGES THE ACTRESS TO MIME THE MAN'S
IMPASSIONED HEART TAKING WING

Doctor: Oh, he's in love, in love in the springtime. It begins.

2. Aus Meinen Tränen

Doctor: Yes, my man, tell nature your sorrows. Oh do! (SNIGGERS)

3. Die Rose

THE DOCTOR DRAWS MOUSTACHES AND BEARDS ON BOTH THE SOPRANO AND THE
ACTRESS

Doctor: Sublime! So ... masculine.

(CLAPS & LAUGHS) Ah ha, now you rail against nature! What say you?

Isolde: "I love nature no more....."

Doctor: Mezzo!

Isolde: (DEEPENS) "I love it no more, only her - small, exquisite, chaste, unique - she is all."

Doctor: And how long will that last? You are ready to be cut!

TRISTAN, SOPRANO AND ACTRESS ALL GASP IN UNISON.

Doctor: Play!!!

Tristan: But I've got blisters on my fingers!

Doctor: Play or never learn!

Scene 3

4. Wenn Ich

THE DANCER IS REVEALED UPSTAGE, ASLEEP ON THE BARGE. THE ACTRESS IS PROPELLED BY THE DOCTOR INTO THE ROLE OF THE ADORING LOVER OF THE DANCER.

SHE SEPARATES HERSELF FROM THE DOCTOR AND PLAYS THE ROLE TO THE HILT, REPEATING THE IMAGES OF POUNDING HEART AND WEEPING FROM THE FIRST TWO SONGS...AND THE TWINGE IN THE SIDE.. THE DOCTOR IS IMPRESSED AND JOINS IN A LITTLE HIMSELF.

THE DOCTOR NOTICES THAT THE DANCER IS WAKING. HE SEATS THE ACTRESS ON THE BARGE.

5. Ich Will

AS THE DANCER RISES AND FALLS WAKING FROM THE BARGE, THE ACTRESS RESPONDS, MIMICKING TRISTAN'S DANCE FROM ACT 1, EXCEPT THAT HER 'ADORING' ATTENTION IS ON THE DANCER.

THE DOCTOR IS EXCITED, VERY TAKEN WITH THE DANCER, AND IS PLEASED WITH THE ACTRESS' PERFORMANCE.

AT THE END OF THE SONG, THE ACTRESS TURNS TO THE DOCTOR:

Isolde: Show me your wound.

Doctor: I don't have one!

Isolde: I'm sure you do.

Tristan: (RUNNING TO THE DANCER) Isolde!!!

Doctor: (TO TRISTAN, PANICKY) Play for God's sake (TO SOPRANO) Sing!!

6. Im Rhein

THE DANCER STANDS. THE BARGE IS PUSHED FORWARD. THE ACTRESS CONTINUES TO PLAY THE ADORING LOVER, BUT AS SHE MOVES WITH THE BARGE SHE PULLS UP HER DRESS AND SHOWS HER TEETH. THE DOCTOR, NOT KNOWING WHICH WAY TO TURN, IS HORRIFIED BY THE ACTRESS, ECSTATIC OVER THE DANCER.

AT THE END OF THE SONG TRISTAN LEAPS FROM THE PIANO AND RUNS TO THE PIANIST:

Tristan: There's blood on the keyboard!!

Doctor: Good! More blood! More passion! Play!!!!

AND HE STORMS OVER TO THE ACTRESS

7. Ich Grolle Nicht

THE DOCTOR HITS THE ACTRESS AND FORCES HER TO KNEEL, AS HE DOES HIMSELF, TO THE DANCER AS SHE STEPS DOWN FROM THE BARGE. THE TWO CROSS THEMSELVES.

THE DOCTOR DRAGS THE ACTRESS FORWARD AND FORCES OF HER SKIRT TO THROW IT CHIVALROUSLY IN THE PATH OF THE DANCER. THE DANCER ARRIVES AT THE PIANO.

8. Und Wessten's Die Blumen

THE DANCER PLAYS WITH A MASK, FASCINATING AND DISTURBING THE DOCTOR WHO CRAWLS NEAR AND GRASPS AT THE MASK, AS IF WITNESSING AN UNEXPECTED TRANSFORMATION IN HIS BELOVED. HE LOOKS BACK TO THE ACTRESS AS IF FOR REASSURANCE. HE SHUDDERS HE CLUTCHES HIS SIDE.

AT THE END OF THE SONG, AFTER THE DANCER HAS MADE A SPEEDY EXIT:

Soprano: I need a doctor! I need a doctor!!!!

Doctor: She is not what it seems. Oh, love is infected, the bitter tears are toxic. My wound opens. No. THE wound... THE wound opens!

Tristan: My wound BLEEDS!

Isolde: "I want to sink my soul in the cup of the lily."

Doctor: My beloved...our beloved...HIS beloved is like our Lady, but ... she has a viper that gnaws at her bosom".

Isolde: I do not complain.

Doctor: Oh, he keeps it inside. Tch. Tcch. (TO SOPRANO)The wound fattens. (TO TRISTAN)The puss builds. Faster! Faster!!!!

Scene 4

9. Das Ist Ein Floten

THE DANCER MAKES REPEATED RUNNING ENTRANCES AND EXITS, EVENTUALLY ARRIVING CENTRE STAGE.

THE ACTRESS IS SLIPPING HER DRESS BACK ON. THE DOCTOR FIGHTS WITH HER OVER IT. HE FAILS. THEY ARE LOCKED IN BALLROOM DANCING STRUGGLE. EVENTUALLY THE ACTRESS MOUNTS THE DOCTOR LIKE A MATING DOG.

Tristan: Oh, aren't we finished yet?

Doctor: No we are not!!

10. Hor'ich

THE DANCER APPROACHES TRISTAN AT THE PIANO, WHO VALIANTLY ATTEMPTS TO IGNORE HER.

THE DOCTOR THROWS THE ACTRESS OFF AND PURSUES THE DANCER ONLY TO WITNESS THE DANCER FLIRTING WITH TRISTAN. HE CLUTCHES HIS WOUND, COLLAPSES AND CRAWLS BACK TOWARD THE ACTRESS.

Tristan: (TO PIANIST) You know, I am finding this very difficult.

11. Ein jungling

THE DANCER APPROACHES ISOLDE, ATTEMPTING TO FLIRT WITH HER, BUT IN VAIN. THE DOCTOR RISES AND DANCES JAUNTILY TO THE MUSIC, BUT WITH DANCER'S ATTENTION DIRECTED TO THE ACTRESS, THE DOCTOR IS AGAIN RACKED WITH THE PAIN OF HIS WOUND.

Doctor: I am unmanned. Mount me. Mount me, my...my...Who are you? Where is Lulu?
My poodle Lulu. A poodle is a good thing... Lulu?

12. Am Leuchtenden

THE DANCER SLOWLY EXITS IN A VIRTUOSIC DISPLAY OF SLEEVE DANCING.

CLUTCHING HIS WOUND THE DOCTOR THE DOCTOR CRAWLS AFTER THE DANCER. HE LOOKS BACK TO THE ACTRESS, WHO HOISTS UP HER DRESS. THE DOCTOR CRAWLS UNDER IT.

Doctor: Lulu. Lulu. My little poodle. Lulu

DURING PIANO PLOUT THE DOCTOR ROLLS FROM BENEATH THE SKIRT:

Doctor: What are we?

Isolde: Miserable

Doctor: And?

Isolde/Doctor: Angry

Doctor: And?

Isolde/Doctor: Savage.

Tristan: "Dream, Tristan", he said. "Traume, Traume."

Scene 5

13. Ich Hab'im Traum: RE-WRITTEN TO INCORPORATE THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE PUNCTUATED BY TRISTAN ON THE PIANO:

Doctor: What do we dream?

Isolde: We dream she's in the grave.

Doctor: Of course we do. "We can't have her" means "she might as well be dead."

Isolde: And the flood of our tears streams on.

Doctor: And on and on...the wound has burst...we are all that flows, male turned female, alien.

Tristan: Am I finished, yet?

Doctor: No! Play on until you fall! Til the wound heals or swallows you like a black hole.
Die. DIE!!!

Isolde: The songs says: She gave me "a sprig of cypress and a whispered word."

Doctor: What is the word?

Isolde: I can't remember...the song says..."the dream dissolves".

Doctor: **What** is the word?

Isolde: (DRAWING A GUN AND POINTING IT AT THE DOCTOR) Die is the word,

Doctor. Die, she said, Dr Schon! Let me out of this mantrap! Dr Schon!!

Doctor: Lulu! Oh, my love. No! Lulu, don't! I love you, Lulu.

Isolde: Die!

Die! So we can all die! You are what keeps us here, doctor. You!! Let go Let us go!!! DIE!!! (ISOLDE SHOOTS HIM ON THE FOREHEAD)

Tristan: Put out the light!!!!

14. Allnachtlich Im Traume

ISOLDE SHOOTS THE DOCTOR REPEATEDLY.

Soprano: (TO PIANIST) Let me out of this mantrap!!!

THE PIANIST UNTIES THE STRAIGHT-JACKET

Scene 6

16. Die Alten

ISOLDE IS ABOARD THE BARGE WITH THE DEAD DOCTOR AS IT MOVES DOWNSTAGE, TO THE PIANO.

TOWARD THE END OF THE SONG THE SOPRANO MOVES TO THE DOCTOR ON THE BARGE, AND WITH ISOLDE, TIES UP THE DOCTOR

THE SOPRANO FINISHES HER SONG - SHE EXITS.

DURING THE PIANO PLAYOUT:

ISOLDE STANDS OVER THE DYING DOCTOR

Doctor:(DYING) old...evil songs,
 dreams...evil...bad,
 bury them...
 ...an enormous coffin...
 ...12 giants to carry...
 ...deep in the sea
 ...sink my love...sorrow
 ...me... in it

ISOLDE EXITS, LEAVING HER COSTUME ON THE STAGE.

THE DANCER REAPPEARS AND CIRCLES THE SPACE BEFORE EXITING.

THE BARGE BEGINS TO MOVE UPSTAGE.

Scene 7

THE SOUND OF A DISTANT RECORDING OF THE LIEBESTOD IS HEARD OVER THE LAST BARS OF THE PIANO PLAYOUT. TRISTAN SUDDENLY THRASHES THE KEYBOARD IN FURY.

Tristan: Doctor!!!!

TRISTAN LEAPS TOWARD THE BARGE AND IS SUDDENLY CONFRONTED WITH THE VISION OF THE DANCER. HE IS OVERAWED.

Tristan: Isolde?.....Tristan?.....

 Yes, we are one! We are one, at last!!!

 (LAUGHS DELIRIOUSLY)

I am in agony. Agony.
Such exquisite agony!!

HE EMBRACES THE DOCTOR AS THEY FLOAT OFF TOGETHER

LIGHTS FADE.

END.

TRISTAN - Acquittal

1. DETAILS ABOUT THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

The project was a development process leading to production by The opera Project Inc., co-directed by Nigel Kellaway with the writer Keith Gallasch and co-performers Michael Bell, Regina Heilmann, Jai McHenry, Annette Tesoriero and Xu Fengshan, with music by Richard Wagner, Bob Ostertag, Franz Liszt and Robert Schumann, costumes by Jane E. and Nigel Kellaway and lighting by Simon Wise.

The work refers to Wagner's opera *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*, but rather than following Wagner's narrative, it explores the early nineteenth century philosophies that impacted on his composition and the ramifications this period had on early twentieth century psychoanalysis and Expressionist theatre.

The resulting production, ***TRISTAN***, was performed at The Performance Space, Sydney, previewing on May 13th, opening on May 14th and played until 29th May 1999.

TRISTAN completes The opera Project's 'romantic' trilogy, a reassessment of nineteenth century 'grand' opera traditions and aesthetics, that includes *THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves* (1997) and *THE TERROR OF TOSCA* (1998).

2. VALUE AND BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT/ACTIVITIES

The aims and outcomes of The opera Project Inc., in creating and producing *TRISTAN*, were various:

The impetus for creating *TRISTAN* came very much from our desire to complete a trilogy of works that explored our heritage of nineteenth century European opera, with a view to assessing it from a literary and theatrical, rather than entirely musical, perspective. Having already put Berlioz and Puccini through the mangle, we needed our German work and, as feminist themes of gender representation were strongly emerging in the two previous works, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* was the obvious choice for our next study.

Unlike *THE TERROR OF TOSCA*, we were not so concerned with the melodramatic machinations of an inherited narrative. We knew from the outset that *TRISTAN* was to focus on tortured philosophies (how very German!) rather than plot - a clear tension between the cerebral and the carnal, proposing them almost in opposition. Our concerns were in the nature of the 'feminised' hero and the 'transgressive' heroine.

As was the case with *THE BERLIOZ - OUR VAMPIRES OURSELVES*, our starting point was in totally non-theatrical musical repertoire. We did not want to play around with Wagner's monster operatic score - our resources could never do it justice (and having studied the work 25 years before at university, Nigel Kellaway was not greatly interested in playing with it - better left well alone!) The choices made more than twelve months before work began on the project were two

contrasting song cycles - the *Wesendonck Lieder* that Wagner wrote some years before his opera and that begin to touch on all those Schopenhauerian philosophies that consume *Tristan und Isolde*. They were written for soprano and piano - ideal for our resources.

The second song cycle was a bit more obscure to our project - Schumann's *Diechlerliebe* (Poet's love). This was written very much for a male voice and piano. The piano part is a pianistic 'dance of death' - unceasing, virtuosic, a true high point of German romantic pianism. The vocal part is fiendishly 'simple' - almost a spoken delivery of Heine's poetry - superbly elegant, meticulously notated and demanding phrases. We are unaware of many women ever having performed this cycle of 16 songs (certainly not recorded) and so were perversely challenged to include them in a work that would contemplate the feminised hero. They presented an enormous technical challenge, musically, for both Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway - 8 months of concentrated practice was dedicated to them before the 'writing' process proper commenced on TRISTAN. This process of creating a new theatrical work is an unusual one, when so much of the resulting work is defined by the extra-theatrical and quite intuitive artistic decisions made so long ahead. Realistically this music takes a long time to learn, and so one is forced to trust one's intuitions in a process that can only afford a couple of months involvement by the entire creative team.

Writer Keith Gallasch valiantly embraced the challenge of incorporating these two very substantial (and lengthy) song cycles as the defining structure for the scenario and text, and dedicated a lot of preparation time to research and listening before setting 'fingers to his keyboard'.

Still more perversely, from the outset we decided that we did not want to perform the cycles in their most obvious chronological order - we placed the Wagner cycle at the beginning, introducing the grand themes of Wagner's story, and then turned it on its head with the earlier Schumann, informed by a much earlier philosophical agenda. This challenge presented all kinds of dramaturgical problems, that we fully appreciate, though perhaps have not been totally successful in resolving in this initial version of the work.

The writing process was further complicated when two intended performers (Padma Menon and Tyrone Landau) were unable to be involved. Through a long and fairly torturous train of events we assembled a very different ensemble of performers, all of whom had years of experience working with each other, were all part of THE TERROR OF TOSCA ensemble, and who brought very different skills to the project. Consequently the resulting work was very different to that initially envisaged, as was the process of creating it. It was highly collaborative, and Keith Gallasch continued the writing process during rehearsals - every day he brought a new version of the script to learn. This was a very challenging process - most of us had the opportunity to explore and develop performative skills we had not visited for many years. Working with a cast all over forty years of age and highly experienced, enabled us to take considerable performative and structural risks. (The exception to this scenario was Michael Bell, a young pianist studying at the Conservatorium of Music and majoring in accompaniment. He was suggested by his teacher Gerard Willems, who has been associated with The opera Project as a consultant since its inception and performed in the 1998 Adelaide Festival production of THIS MOST WICKED BODY.)

TRISTAN is a textually and musically dense work, highly cerebral, demanding of its audience's concentration, rich in its visual range, diverse in its stylistic references. Such challenges were very much sustained by the considerable experience and skills of the performers. The opera Project is committed to presenting work that reflects a rich and lengthy heritage of 'contemporary performance', and to ensure that this work is created and performed by mature artists experienced in the field. The eventual casting of TRISTAN reflects The opera Project's commitment to 'ensemble practice'. We know, through experience, that the richest process is developed over several works. Substantial visions are rarely realised in a single theatre work. Ongoing association with artists over several works provides a balance to a more singular vision.

Ensemble practice is an acquired and unique skill, taking years to develop and appreciate. Therein lies an invaluable resource of experienced, skilled and informed artists. When these artists share with their associates their skills they offer a deep understanding of and contribution to each others' development. The subtle competitiveness that often accompanies artists on a single project can, when approached carefully, be replaced by constructive and intelligent challenge.

Although funded to produce work on a project-by-project basis, The opera Project is addressing its commitment for ensemble practice by associating their recent works under the umbrella of *THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY*. This is not just an aesthetic fancy - it is also a pragmatic ploy aiming at a performing future for their output, and hence a life for the collaborative process. Three works feature 14 roles performed by eight performers, sharing a single lighting designer, common technical crew, and staging arrangement. This comprises a very large production, enormously varied in its theatrical ideas and components, and yet quite presentable in a single season. (Refer later to the future plans for *THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY*.) Several artists will have contributed enormous energy and skill to these productions over three years and developed considerable professional intimacy with the company and its concerns. This is a great resource that The opera Project does not want to see squandered.

3. SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF THE PROJECT/ACTIVITIES

Audience reaction:

The response from our peers was by-and-large most positive. Many have now seen all three works that comprise THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY, and now understand and are more comfortable with our musical concerns - they are learning how to listen and watch (the audience equivalent of an actor learning to 'walk and talk' at the same time!) Some admitted to not having a clue of what TRISTAN was about, but were very happy to simply surrender to the work moment-by-moment - the spectacle, the heightened acting style, the richness of the songs. It was gratifying to hear how many would now like to see all three works performed again, together in a single season or even a single night.

A common response from members of the audience experienced in our work over the past few decades was how much they appreciated watching Jai McHenry, Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann 'acting' - grappling with text, dialogue and character - all those elements they are not so used to seeing us play with, unaware of our closeted 'mainstream' skills. They also recognised that we were embracing these devices within a 'performance' tradition of fluid structure. And then there were some who were appalled that we would stain our reputation (?!) with such conservative (and demanding!) techniques. We were like traitors. But we are all too old and confident to worry about others' youthful inhibitions. We can draw from a wide palette of performance genres because we have spent the years honing a multiplicity of skills.

There was the usual division of opinion from the 'music audience' - some hated the idea that we should tamper with such important song cycles, compromising the odd moment of musical ensemble and pitch for a theatrical moment (yes, we have all heard a perfect recording of the Schumann at some time in our life!). And there were others who seemed incensed that we were not performing Wagner's TRISTAN UND ISOLDE (my only possible reply to that, was that we weren't playing RICHARD III, either). But then there were many who were evidently intrigued and delighted by our exploration of the music, our offering of an alternative study of Wagner's themes, a fresh approach to an operatic warhorse, our daring to find a 'theatre' in this concert music - it is this audience that we make our work for.

Press response:

Pre-publicity for the production was excellent. We employed Miranda Brown Publicity in Melbourne to promote the work, who agreed to do the job for her lowest possible fee. We were initially nervous about our ability to co-ordinate interstate, without a manned office during the rehearsal weeks here in Sydney, but with a fax and message machine, a mobile phone in the studio and her understanding that most discussion would have to take place late at night, the whole campaign went very smoothly and painlessly. It was a great pleasure to work with an organisation with such a good national profile, and such established contacts in the press and electronic media. Miranda was also handling Chamber Made Opera's production of IPHIS in Melbourne at the same time, and successfully sold stories on the two companies together to several 'glossies' and other national press.

The response of the reviewers was the usual mixed bag. As a theatre company we understandably pushed for theatre reviewers to cover the work. It is disappointing how many editors are so badly informed about the work we do, and insist on sending music reviewers who have little idea of how to approach the work or the history of its artists. Still, the results were not too bad.

Company Administration:

As the body of work produced by The opera Project increases in size, and negotiations for its ongoing life become more demanding, the company is barely managing the pressures of creating, performing, administering and promoting the work. The company is in no position to afford an office space, nor an administrative salary for the ongoing management, planning and promotion of the work. Creating and producing three new major works, the remounting and touring of another to the 1998 Adelaide Festival, the continuing negotiation required to tour the work locally and internationally in the future, and day-to-day 'housekeeping', all in two short years has created enormous pressure for the directorship of the company. We desperately need to find solutions to this work-load if the company and its artists are to survive and develop.

Sponsorship and other support:

Our relationship with Allans Music Piano Department continued, constituting our major non-government assistance. As for THE BERLIOZ and THE TERROR OF TOSCA, Allans donated a fine grand piano and cartage for the season. Our only expense was the daily tuning of the instrument at a greatly reduced cost. This support is equivalent to well over \$6,000 in real terms. Our relationship with Allans has been extremely successful over the past two years, and we will certainly endeavour to maintain it in the future.

Once again we secured rehearsal space at the newly renovated hall at St Lukes Anglican Church, Stanmore. The rector, Dr. Mike Nixon, is extremely supportive of our work and makes the space available to us at absurdly low cost. The hall, most importantly, has a quite playable piano and a well sprung floor.

The opera project continues to be supported by several individuals, without whom the work and its presentation would suffer considerably:

Lisa Herbert, our original publicist on THE BERLIOZ, once again designed and printed all our promotional artwork for a generously low fee.

Our opening night party (always a production in its own right!) was once again co-ordinated by Marie Rockford, who donated her time and expertise.

Photographer Heidrun Lohr and video-artist Peter Oldham continued their many years association with the artists for almost no financial reward.

Gerard Willems, pianist, once again assisted us in checking the performance regularly for piano and vocal balance and musical coaching.

Box-Office:

Audience figures and box-office income were disappointing. It is alarming to see the figures persistently decline since THE BERLIOZ. There are several factors that should prescribe the opposite: our publicity has a far wider reach and is greater (and more expensive!) in quantity; the company is a slightly better known identity after three productions; we are more carefully balancing our free invitations with potential paying audience figures.

Some questions: Where is the audience in Sydney that wants to pay money to see experienced (older?) artists examining difficult boundaries of genre? Is there any longer an unofficially subscriber base for venues in Sydney such as The Performance Space? (Nigel Kellaway nervously declares a conflict of interest as a concerned and very recent appointee to The Performance Space's board.) Where have the 'alternative' audience of the '80s and '90s gone? It is disappointing to see this particular audience we once recognised not coming to this work. Are they at home with the spouse, kids and a mortgage? Are they watching a good video? This is a problem we must address, if we want to encourage them back to the unique immediacy of an intelligent live performance. What resources do we need to achieve this?

On a cheerier note, there was an audience out there that we had not seen before at The Performance Space - the demographic was weirdly wide (ages, evident incomes, social proclivities, generic experience). Somehow we need to hunt these newcomers down - we need to provide them with constant access to this work.

TRISTAN is clever, problematic, often funny, incomplete, and NOT a 'feel good' show. It is demanding, perhaps even promising. There was a time when we saw a maturing of Sydney audiences, when they were excited by the problems of unresolved questions, when an obvious discussion about theatre created 'word-of-mouth', when they showed an interest in the development and maturing of artists' work. The opera Project will continue to work for a culture nurtured in this country that appreciates that art, history, (in)comparable genres are all essential and humbling to a nation's self-realisation.

Budget Surplus:

The opera Project management was wise to prepare for a pessimistic box-office. As a project-by-project funded company losses cannot be risked, and now with the responsibility of curating a substantial body of funded works with no ongoing financial security it conservatively and responsibly reassessed its production budget to ensure a future for the company, however meagre. The commitment, sacrifice and expertise of all those assigned budget points secured a modest overall surplus. This will be immediately dedicated to the ongoing promotion, nationally and internationally, of THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY, of which TRISTAN is a part.

The Future:

Now that TRISTAN is made, it is quite impossible to see it other than in the context of THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY, ie, in relationship with THE BERLIOZ and THE TERROR OF TOSCA. The three works create a dialogue with each other, in their themes, the progression of the individual actors from role to role and the works' complementary discussion of 19th century romanticism in the late 20th century. They have been carefully devised so that they can be performed in a single night's marathon sitting - an ideal package for an interested festival. Close to \$180,000 of government funding has been invested in them (if you include Nigel Kellaway's Rex Cramphorn

Scholarship that was awarded for the research and development of THE TERROR OF TOSCA in 1997). It would be a shame to think that such enormous resources and energy were dedicated to just three short seasons in Sydney.

The company has been in negotiation with Robyn Archer since mid 1997, planning to present THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY at the 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival. She has been to Sydney to see all three works, was instrumental in arranging our 'spotlight' presentation of THE BERLIOZ at the 1998 Australian Performing Arts Market and later that year invited us to pitch THE ROMANTIC TRILOGY at the 'show-and-tell' to the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals. At the opening night of TRISTAN she asked us to review (ie, trim) our touring budget and enthusiastically indicated that she still wanted the trilogy for her program. On that basis we prepared a detailed application (due two weeks later) to the Australia Council for a modest budget to re-rehearse the productions. This application was to be made in the light of continuing interest from Joseph Melillo at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York and Boris Kelly's negotiations in Amsterdam for later in 2000. This application was ofcourse dependent on Robyn Archer's letter of support and clear intention to present the work. Unfortunately it was not forthcoming by the application closing date (1/7/99), and so The opera Project was unable to make application to the Australia Council. When funding deadlines coincide with performance season a company such as The opera Project (performers = administrators = directors) has no human resources to prepare a contingency application.

Robyn Archer has in the past week finally informed the company that she is unable to take the trilogy for 2000. This will no doubt impact considerably on our ability to prepare the work for New York or Amsterdam. It also prescribes (due to funding rounds) that the company will not be able to present a new production in Sydney (or elsewhere) until late 2000. It has been a cruel train of events, an unfortunate glitch in The opera Project's efforts to create a reliable presence in Australia's theatre environment. We hope that this does not influence the funding bodies' estimation of the value of the company's work.

It has been an intense two and a half years since The opera Project's founding. We are extremely proud of the three new works created and our success in touring and presenting other extant work. It is unfortunate that the degree of commitment it has demanded of all involved has conflicted unmanageably with Annette Tesoriero's other professional commitment's and that she has had to resign her position as Co-Artistic Director of the company. The remaining management looks forward to a period of serious reassessment of the direction of the company in its ongoing commitment to present challenging new theatre that showcases the work of mature and experienced artists.

Name

Position/Role

Nigel Kellaway	performer/director/co-costume designer/company administrator
Annette Tesoriero	performer
Regina Heilmann	performer
Jai McHenry	performer
Xu Fengshan	performer
Michael Bell	performer
Keith Gallasch	writer/co-director
Simon Wise	production manager/lighting designer
David Williams	stage manager
Jane E.	co-costume designer
Sharon Hay	costume assistance
Miranda Brown	publicist
Catherine Oddie	publicist
Heidrun Lohr	photographer
Peter Oldham	video documentation
Finton Mahoney	rigger and bump-in labour
Ian Bowie	bump-in labour
Lisa Herbert	promotions designer

TRISTAN BUDGET - 1999

EXPENDITURE

SALARIES

Performers:	N Kellaway	4550		
	R Heilmann	4550		
	J McHenry	4550		
	Xu Fengshan	4000		
	M Bell	2500		
	A Tesoriero	2300		
Production Manager:	S Wise	3000		
Lighting designer:	S Wise	500		
Stage manager:	D Williams	787.50		
Administrator	N Kellaway	4500	31237.50	
Oncosts:	9% of 31237.50		2811.40	
Bump-in Labour		684		
Oncosts:	2% of 684	14	698.00	

FEES

Writer:	K Gallasch	3000		
Publicist:	M Brown	3000		
Costume designer:	Jane E.	500		
Bump-out Labour		54	6554.00	41300.90

PRODUCTION

Theatre Hire	6900			
Theatre Electricity	174.10			
Rehearsal Venue Hire	200	7274.10		
Sets and properties	1189.84			
Lighting Hire	915.55			
Costumes and Makeup	705.80			
Sound hire/purchase etc	517.10			
Piano hire and tuning	975.00	4303.29		11577.39

ADMINISTRATION

Postage, Telecommunications, Stationary, etc.	752.60			
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Public Liability Insurance		647.50		
1998 Deficit		650.00		
Child Care (A Tesoriero)		1050.00		
Computer costs		850.00		
Credit card charges/Tix penalties		103.44		4053.54
<u>MARKETING AND PROMOTION</u>				
Printing:		2021.05		
Design fee	Lisa Herbert	900.00		
Poster and Flyer distribution		530.00	3451.05	
Advertising:	SMH	866.25		
	Realtime	300.00		
	OperaOpera	150.00	1316.25	
Disbursements for M Brown			494.65	
Photography			888.80	
Video documentation			1200.00	
Opening night/ entertainment			286.00	7636.75
<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>				64568.58
<u>INCOME</u>				
Australia Council Theatre Fund		48000.00		
NSW Ministry for the Arts Theatre Program		15000.00		
Bank Interest		293.82		
Program Sales		260.00		
BOX OFFICE		4070.00		
<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>				67623.82
<u>PROFIT/(LOSS)</u>				3055.24

**At the end of the production of *TRISTAN*
Annette Tesoriero resigned as co-artistic director of The opera Project Inc.
She remained on the board until 2001.**

Chapter 7: 2000

(The year of earning a crust, in the wake of funding failure)

Co ordinator of **PERFORMANCE SPACE**, Sydney. (March - September)

EL INOCENTE

Two development processes and presentations of new work for THE oPERA PROJECT INC., for production in 2001.

STRANGERS IN A THEATRE and **CRISS-CROSS**

Two short works co-produced, created and performed for the HITCHCOCK FORUM and CROSS CUTS FORUM, Performance Space, Sydney

Contents

2000 Works

Selected Texts from Marquez' *Innocent Erendira* for El Inocente

Marquez' farewell letter, December 2000

El Inocente - Financial Statement - January development

El Inocente - Financial Statement - October development

Letter to One Extra re Mardi Gras Program

Strangers in a Theatre - Text

Australia Council eligibility battle re El Inocente application

Invitation - 'at home' recital with Annette Tesoriero and Lynne Murray

Selected text from GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ - a starting point for *EL INOCENTE*

INNOCENT ERENDIRA

A house far away from everything, in the heart of the desert, next to a settlement with miserable and burning streets, where even the goats commit suicide from desolation when the winds of misfortune blow. Erendira had just turned fourteen and was languid, soft-boned and far too meek for her age. She was bathing her grandmother when the wind of her misfortune began to blow. Naked and huge in the marble tub, her grandmother looked like a handsome white whale, floating through the swamps of her past. Erendira then busied herself sweeping the dark and motley house. There was bizarre furniture, statues of invented Caesars, chandeliers of teardrops, alabaster angels, a gilded piano, and numerous clocks of unthinkable sizes and shapes. The house had been built by the grandmother's husband, a legendary smuggler whose name was Amadis, by whom she had a son whose name was also Amadis, Erendira's father. No one really knows where they came from, or why they were there, but the popular story tells of how Amadis the elder had rescued his beautiful wife, Erendira's grandmother, from a house of prostitution, killing a Greek sailor in a knife fight, and then taking her to live forever into the desert. When the two Amadis men eventually died, the grandmother buried their bodies in the courtyard. She sent away the fourteen barefoot servant girls, and then continued to ruminate on her dreams of grandeur in the shadows of that furtive house, thanks only to the sacrifices of her bastard granddaughter, Erendira, whom she had reared since birth.

"Erendira! Take advantage of tomorrow to wash the livingroom rug. It hasn't seen the sun for years. And iron all the clothes before you go to bed, then you'll sleep with a clear conscience. And remember to check the closets carefully - the moths get hungrier on windy nights. And then, with what time you have left, take the flowers out into the courtyard: a breath of fresh air. And whilst you're there, remember to feed the ostrich. And do give the graves some water, my dear. And if the Amadis arrive, tell them not to come in - There's a gang waiting to kill them!"

Erendira didn't answer her anymore: she knew that her grandmother was getting lost in her delirium, but she obeyed every order. When she had finished checking the window bolts and putting out the last lights, she took a candle stick from the dining room and lighted her way to her bedroom. Overcome by the barbarous chores of the day, Erendira didn't have the strength to even get undressed. She put the candlestick on the night table and fell onto her bed asleep. A short while later the wind of her misfortune came into the bedroom, like a pack of hounds, and knocked the candle over against the curtain.

"My poor child, life will not be long enough for you to repay me for this mishap - look, we have nothing left!"

Erendira began to pay it back that very day, when she was taken to the village storekeeper, a skinny and premature widower, who was quite well known in the desert for the good price he would pay for virginity. He examined Erendira with scientific austerity. He considered the strength of her thighs, the size of her breasts, the diameter of her hips: "immature - not worth more than a hundred pesos."

“One hundred pesos for this girl? No sir, that shows a great lack of respect for virtue! Look, she’s completely new!! Besides, this girl has caused me damages amounting to more than a million pesos. At your rate she’d need two hundred years to pay me back.”

“OK - 200 pesos”

“In cash - plus provisions!”

And so he led her by the hand to the back room as if he were taking her to school. She lost consciousness, and there remained as if fascinated by moonbeams from a fish floating through the storm air.

And then, when there was no other man left in the village who could pay again for Erendira’s love, her grandmother took her to where the smugglers were. They made the trip on the back of a truck in the open, with what little had been left by the fire. And men came from far and wide to be acquainted with the newness of Erendira! Behind them - more men, gambling tables, food stands and a photographer on a bicycle!

Six months soon passed.

“And, if things keep going as well as this, she will have paid back her debt in eight years, seven months and eleven days.”

“That’s all for today, boys. Tomorrow morning at nine. I said, that’s all! What do you reckon the girl’s made of, iron? I’d like to see you in her place, you perverts!”

And then she saw him as large as life, all by himself in the dark empty space. He had an unreal aura about him - a furtive and gilded adolescent with lonely maritime eyes. He seemed to be visible in the shadows only because of the very glow of his angelic beauty.

“What happened to your wings?”

“The one who had wings was my grandfather, but no-one believed it.”

“Well I do. Put them back on, and come back again tomorrow morning - 9 o’clock - first in line.”

“My name is Ulises.”

“So?”

“I’ve got money.”

“You were supposed to wait in line.”

“I did! I’ve waited all night!”

“And now you’ll have to wait again, until tomorrow.”

“It’s twenty years since it last rained. Such a terrible storm: the rain all mixed with sea water. The next morning the house was full of fish and snails. I saw a giant glowing manta ray floating through the air.”

“Don’t worry. She’s always crazy when she’s asleep.”

“I was going crazy wanting to see you. You know they’re right what they say, you are very pretty.”

“But I’m dying.”

“My father says that people who die in the desert don’t go to heaven, but to the sea.”

“I’ve never seen the sea.”

“It’s like the desert, but with water.”

“Then you can’t walk on it?”

“My father knew a man that could, but that was a long time ago.”

“Listen, if you come very early tomorrow you can be first in line.”

“But, I’m leaving with my father at dawn.”

“Won’t you be coming back this way?”

“Who can tell?”

“All right, then. Give me the money. What’s the matter? Is this your first time? Then breathe slowly. It’s always like this the first time. And then, you don’t even notice. What’s your name, again?”

“Ulises.”

“That’s a gringo name.”

“No it’s not, it’s a sailor’s name.”

“It’s like you were made of gold all over, but you smell of flowers.”

“That must be the oranges. We carry the birds to throw people off the track, but what we’re really doing is smuggling oranges across the border.”

“Oranges aren’t contraband.”

“Our’s are. Each one is worth fifty thousand pesos.”

“What I like about you is the serious way you make up nonsense.”

The grandmother ranted on with great shouts and stubborn passion for several hours. But Ulises didn’t hear her as Erendira loved him so much and so truthfully. And then she loved him again for half the price while her grandmother was raving, and kept on loving him for nothing until dawn.

A group of missionaries holding up their crucifixes stood shoulder to shoulder in the middle of the desert. A wind as fierce as the wind of misfortune shook their habits. Behind them was the mission.

“You shall not pass beyond this line!!”

“The desert doesn’t belong to anyone”

“It belongs to God, and you are violating His sacred laws with your filthy business.”

“I don’t understand your mysteries, my son.”

“That child is under-age.”

“But she’s my granddaughter.”

“So much the worse!! You will put her under our care: for we have the legal and holy right to keep the girl until she comes of age. Or until she marries.”

Three days after that encounter, the grandmother and Erendira were sleeping in a village near the mission. A group of stealthy, mute bodies creeping along like an infantry patrol, slipped into the tent. Novices, strong and young, their rough cloth habits seeming to glow in the moonlight. Without making a sound they cloaked Erendira in a mosquito net, picked her up without waking her, and carried her off like a large fragile fish caught in a lunar net.

“You’ll rot in hell !!!”

Ofcourse, the grandmother didn’t rot, did she? - NO!!

She set up her tent across from the mission, and sat there waiting, like a solitary warrior laying siege to a fortified city.

Let’s see who get tired first, you or me!

Erendira, however, had not lost a single night’s sleep since they had taken her to the mission. They’d dressed her in a hermit’s rough cassock and given her a bucket of white-wash and a broom so she could whitewash the stairs everytime someone went up or down. It was mule’s work, but Erendira felt as every day were Sunday, after the fearsome galley that had been her bed. Then, one morning she heard music that was like a light even more diaphanous than the light of the desert. With no one to hear her, she spoke for the first time since she had entered the mission: “I am happy.”

During that time the missionaries were combing the desert in search of pregnant concubines, in order to get them married. For several days the grandmother saw their little truck return, loaded

with pregnant Indian women heading for the mission, but she failed to recognise her opportunity. She recognised it on Pentecost Sunday, when a boy passed, innocent of heart, dressed in rags, carrying an Easter candle with a silk bow in his hand, about to take his first communion.

“Tell me, boy, how much are they paying you?”

“Five pesos”

“Well, I’ll give you twenty. But not to make your first communion - to marry my granddaughter.”

And so Erendira was married in the courtyard of the mission in her hermit’s cassock, and without even knowing the name of the boy her grandmother had bought for her. She had found herself once more under the spell that had dominated her since birth. And when they asked her what her free, true, definitive will was, she didn’t even give a sigh of hesitation: “I want to leave. But not with him with my grandmother.”

“ULISES!!!! No, don’t look at me! I’m horrible! GO AWAY!”

“I only came to show you this. Look here, Erendira! With three of these we could take a trip around the world. Erendira, come with me! We’ll leave tonight, I’ll be out there calling like an owl.”

Erendira and her grandmother stayed in that border town under the protection of the public forces until the grandmother’s treasure chests were bursting. And then they left the desert and headed toward the sea. Never had such opulence been seen gathered together in that realm of poor people. It was a procession of ox-drawn carts on which cheap replicas of the paraphernalia lost in the disaster of the mansion were piled - not just the imperial busts and rare clocks, but also a second hand piano and a gramophone and the records of nostalgia. A team of Indians took care of the cargo and a band of musicians announced their triumphal arrival in every village. The grandmother travelled on a litter in the shade of a church canopy. Erendira was beside her, dressed in gaudy fabrics and trinkets, but with a dog chain on her ankle that her grandmother had used to hitch her to the bed ever since she had last tried to run away.

“You’ve got no reason to complain! The time will come: I will die - and you’ll never again be at the mercy of men. You’ll have your own home in an important city. You’ll be free. You’ll be happy. You’ll be a noble lady. A lady of quality, favoured and honoured by the highest authorities. Ships’ captains will send you postcards from every port in the world. Your house will be more important than the presidential palace - the affairs of government will be discussed there - the fate of the nation will be decided.”

Ulises woke suddenly in his house on the orange plantation. He had heard Erendira’s voice so clearly that he was looking for her in the shadows of his room. He made a bundle of his clothing and left quickly. He didn’t need to ask anyone where Erendira was. He crossed the desert hiding in passing trucks, and found her in a seaside town. Erendira was asleep, chained to her bed, like a drowned person on the beach.

Her grandmother raged on, lost in her memories.

“That was when the Greek ship arrived - sailors! - Greek sailors!!

It was a crew of madmen who made the women happy and paid them with sponges, living sponges that walked about the houses moaning like patients in a hospital and making the children cry so they could drink up the tears. I was singing with the sailors that night and I thought it was an earthquake when HE arrived. Stronger, taller, much more of a man than my Amadis! With a parrot on his shoulder and a cannibal-killing blunderbuss. I felt his breath of death as he stood opposite me and said: ‘I’ve been around the world a thousand times, And seen a thousand women of every nation, And so I can tell you on good authority, that you are the haughtiest, And the most obliging the most beautiful woman on earth.’”

“Would you dare to kill her?”

“Who knows? ... Would you?”

“I can't. She's my Grandmother.”

And so, Ulises bought a pound of rat poison.

“I went crazy! My God, I went crazy!! I put bars on the bedroom door so he couldn't get in. I put the dresser and table against the door and then the chairs on the table. But all he had to do was give a little knock: the defences all fall apart, the chairs fall off the table by themselves, the table and dresser separate by themselves, the bars move out of their slots by themselves. I thought I was going to die, soaked in the sweat of fear: Begging for the door to open without opening, For him to enter without entering, for him never to go away but never to come back either, So I wouldn't have to kill him. I warned him and he laughed. Until he opened his eyes in terror, saying 'Agh, queen! Agh, queen!!' But his voice wasn't coming from his mouth - It came from the cut my knife had made in his throat. Erendira, what day is it?”

“Thursday.”

“Thursday?.....but I want to put on a Sunday frock! I have never had such an urge to have my photograph taken!”

“She's eaten enough rat poison to kill an elephant!”

It was only then that Erendira noticed the gunpowder wick running from the piano, through the underbrush, and then into the darkness. She ran to where Ulises was, and with tight hearts they both watched the little blue flame.

“It's the work of the evil one! Pianos don't explode just like that. A shipwreck!
Now we'll have to begin all over again!

“The only thing you've managed to do is increase my debt!”

Ulises eyes clouded over with anxiety, looking over the things in the kitchen: the hanging pots...the strings of garlic....THE CARVING KNIFE.....

Erendira leant over her grandmother, scrutinising her, but not touching her. When she was convinced that she was dead, her face suddenly acquired all the maturity which her twenty years had not given her. With quick and precise movements, she took the vest containing her grandmother's gold and left the tent. Ulises shouted to her, but he got no answer. He dragged himself to the entrance of the tent and saw Erendira running along the shore away from the city. He made his last effort to chase her with painful shouts (no longer those of a lover ... those of a son.) But he was overcome by the terrible effort of having killed a woman... alone. The grandmother's Indian servants found him lying face down on the beach, weeping from solitude and fear. Erendira was running into the wind, swifter than a deer, and no voice in the world could stop her. Without turning her head she ran past the saltpetre pits, the talcum craters, the torpor of the shacks, until the natural science of the sea ended and the desert began. And she kept on running beyond the arid winds and the never-ending sunsets, and was never heard of again. Nor was the slightest trace of her misfortune ever found.

From the Web:

Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 7- 2000

Date: Tuesday, 5th December 2000

Gabriel Garcia Marquez has retired from public life due to health reasons: cancer of the lymph nodes. It seems that it is getting worse. He has sent this farewell letter to his friends, which has been translated and posted on the Internet. Please read and forward to any who might enjoy it. This is possibly, sadly, one of the last gifts to humanity from a true master. This short text, written by one of the most brilliant Latin Americans in recent times, is truly moving.

If for an instant God were to forget that I am rag doll and gifted me with a piece of life, possibly I wouldn't say all that I think, but rather I would think of all that I say. I would value things, not for their worth, but for what they mean. I would sleep little, dream more, understanding that for each minute we close our eyes we lose sixty seconds of light.

I would walk when others hold back, I would wake when others sleep. I would listen when others talk, and how I would enjoy a good chocolate ice cream! If God were to give me a piece of life, I would dress simply, throw myself face first into the sun, baring not only my body but also my soul.

My God, if I had a heart, I would write my hate on ice, and wait for the sun to show. Over the stars I would paint with a Van Gogh, dream a Benedetti poem, and a Serrat song would be the serenade I'd offer to the moon. With my tears I would water roses, to feel the pain of their thorns, and the red kiss of their petals...

My god, if I had a piece of life... I wouldn't let a single day pass without telling the people I love that I love them. I would convince each woman and each man that they are my favourites, and I would live in love with love. I would show men how very wrong they are to think that they cease to be in love when they grow old, not knowing that they grow old when they cease to be in love! To a child I shall give wings, but I shall let him learn to fly on his own. I would teach the old that death does not come with old age, but with forgetting. So much have I learned from you, oh men...

I have learned that everyone wants to live on the peak of the mountain, without knowing that real happiness is in how it is scaled. I have learned that when a newborn child squeezes for the first time with his tiny fist his father's finger, he has him trapped forever. I have learned that a man has the right to look down on another only when he has to help the other get to his feet. From you I have learned so many things, but in truth they won't be of much use, for when I keep them within this suitcase, unhappily shall I be dying.

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ 2000

A QUICK BIO ON THE MASTER:

Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez began his career as a journalist for a series of liberal South American newspapers in the late 1940's. Although he toyed with fiction as a young man, his first true efforts were incited by the negative reviews of contemporary Latin-American writers. The result was the short story *The Third Resignation*. The reviews of the story were positive and the impact strong; the press heralded *The Boom*, a second generation of Latin-American writers. Garcia Marquez followed with a compilation of short stories (*Big Mama's Funeral*) and three novellas (*Leaf Storm*, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, and *In Evil Hour*). These dark, eerie, and sad works were influenced heavily by Franz Kafka yet they reveal the voice of an intelligent young writer preparing himself for larger things.

Larger things came to Garcia Marquez in 1967. While suffering from writer's block several years earlier, the author suddenly had a vision of his next novel -- as he has said, the first chapter was as clear as if it had already been written. The idea was to tell the story of several generations of a Colombian family as his grandmother might have told it: supernatural occurrences and unbelievable events described with unblinking sincerity.

After eighteen months of seclusion, Garcia Marquez produced his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which has been called one of the greatest novels in history. Gabriel Garcia Marquez was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1982.

EL INOCENTE - BUDGET - JANUARY 2000

EXPENDITURE

SALARIES

Nigel Kellaway	10 wks research/writing/arranging x \$400	4000	
	3 weeks workshop (full time) x \$650	1950	
Katia Molino	3 weeks workshop (full time) x \$650	1950	
Regina Heilmann	3 weeks workshop (full time) x \$650	1950	
Simon Wise	3 weeks workshop (full time) x \$650	1950	
	Nigel Kellaway (Administration)	1200	13000
Oncosts:	Work Cover/Super \$13000 x 9%		1170
Lynne Murray- fee			1400
Joel Markham - fee			500
Bump-in labour			34
SUBTOTAL			16104

PRODUCTION

Rehearsal space			120.00
Theatre hire	1 week (The Performance Space)	2500.00	
Theatre electricity			121.00
Lighting			1512.00
Set			513.37
Properties & costumes manufacture			267.36
Cartage			105.50
Piano hire/cartage/tuning			450.00
CD burning			20.00
Sound Hire			125.00
Entertainment (opening night)			161.60
SUBTOTAL			5895.83

ADMINISTRATION

General administration			306.13
Printing and Postage (invitations / programs)			301.35
Video documentation			449.00
Photography			400.00
Scores etc. for research			48.62
SUBTOTAL			1505.10

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

23504.93

INCOME

Australia Council Funding

24000

Box office/donations/program sales	342
Performance Space Launch fee	200

TOTAL INCOME	24542
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PROFIT	1037.07
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EL INOCENTE - semi staged concert performance (October 6 - 7 2000)

Salaries	Nigel Kellaway (Director/Performer)	5000		
	Regina Heilmann (performer)	1000		
	Simon Wise (Lighting/Prod Mnger)	1300	7300.00	
	10% Oncosts		730.00	
Fees	Richard Vella (Composer)	5500		
	Lynne Murray (Performer)	1000	6500.00	14530.00
Production	Venue Hire	1500.00		
	Piano Cartage/Tuning	422.50		
	Sound Production	20.00		
	Sound Hire (Speakers & Mics)	385.00		
	Video Projector hire (TPS)	220.00		
	Sets/ Properties/Costumes	395.33		
	Lighting	185.90		
	Theatre electricity	245.30		
	Video edit	100.00		3474.03
Administration	Public Liability 2000	727.38		
	General Admin costs	97.83		
	Invites/Programs/Postage/Printing	192.55		
	Presentation entertaining	180.00		1197.76

Total Expenditure **19201.79**

INCOME

NSW Ministry	20000.00	
Donations	366.00	20366.00

SURPLUS **1164.21**

Nigel Kellaway

The opera Project Inc. 72 Margaret Street Newtown (Sydney) NSW 2042 Australia
Tel/Fax: +61 (02) 9516 3762

17th February 2000

Annette Shun Wah
Chair
of the Board of Directors
The One Extra Company Ltd.
PO Box 553
BROADWAY NSW 2007

Dear Annette,

We greeted each other in quick passing at the opening night of your *FOURSOME* program at the Seymour Centre.

You short introductory program note humbly and generously mooted a “provocative”, innovative” and “challenging” evening. Regardless of my long friendship with two of the choreographers and my admiration for the work of all four, I am afraid I did not find the program quite measuring up to any of these intentions. However, the evening did encourage me to reflect on the crucial role The One Extra Company has played in the development of innovative dance over the past two

decades and more, creating opportunities for exceptional artists to expand their experience and creative output.

My present dilemma lies in the role The One Extra Company plays in producing such a season. These are (by and large) mature, experienced and respected artists that are quite capable of presenting their work under the auspices of the Mardi Gras in their own rights. I am not at all critical of The One Extra's desire to bring them together under a single umbrella, but I am wondering whether this is a valuable contribution to the development of dance practice in this city, or a mere duplication of production resources and naming rights.

I am ofcourse quite aware of how such production collaborations may function financially, but there does not appear to have been much attention or concern paid to the actual product presented, once the artists' contracts were signed. The four choreographers do not appear to have been challenged or nurtured artistically by their association with The One Extra. Is this not, surely, the paramount objective of the company? If so, how could this be better achieved? As it is, I am left wondering how the season furthers the reputations or artistic endeavours of either the artists or the company.

I hope you take my misgivings in their intended good faith. Over many years I have remained sincerely concerned about the development of both dance practice in this country and the role The One Extra Company plays in this.

I understand that you are in the process of appointing a new Executive Producer to guide the company into its next period of artistic endeavour. I wish the company well, and would be more than happy to express and discuss with you my interest in the new directions you may be considering.

My sincere best wishes,

Nigel Kellaway

cc. Members of the Board, The One Extra Company Ltd.

presented at the Performance Space "Hitchcock" conference

STRANGERS IN A THEATRE - NIGEL KELLAWAY

(Blackout).....

(Nigel appears on video).....

(Nigel crosses legs at table - opens briefcase).....

(Nigel moves to audience)

Got a light? Thanks

(Nigel returns to seat).....

I beg your pardon, aren't you Guy Haines?

Oh sure you are, I saw you blast Faraday right off the centre court last season.

Made the semi-final didn't you?

Oh, I certainly admire people who do things.

By the way, my name's Nigel - Nigel Kellaway

See? (show ring)

I suppose you think it's corny, but my mother gave it to me, so I have to wear it, just to please her.

CD 1 - TRACK 5 / WITH VIDEO

..... LIGHT ON PROSC

..... LIGHTS FOLLOW NIGEL TO TABLE

..... LIGHT ON AUDIENCE FRONT ROW (SLOW)

..... **CD FADE TO SILENCE**

Oh look, I really don't talk that much - you go ahead and watch.

I'll just have a look at my script.

It must be pretty exciting to be so important.

People who do things are important.

I mean - me - I don't seem to do anything.

But I guess you're going to South Hampton to play the doubles.

Gee, I wish I could be there to watch you, but I've got to get back to Washington tomorrow.

Family business in Arlington, you know.

(Stub out cigarette - take another - offer to Guy)

No? ... Me, I smoke TOO much.

(Light 2nd cigarette)

From A to G? A to Guy. I bet I can guess who A is - Anne Morton.

You see, I sometimes turn the sports page and see the, ah, society section, and the pictures.

She's very beautiful.

She's senator Morton's daughter, isn't she?

Oh yes, I'm quite a reader. Ask me anything, I've got the answers. Even news about people I don't know. Like who wants to marry whom, once his wife gets her divorce.

Oh, there I go again - too friendly! It always happens - just when I meet someone I really like and admire - and then I open my big mouth.

So, when's the wedding?

You and Anne Morton. It was in the paper.

Bigamy?

Well, I have a wonderful theory about that - someday I'll tell you about it.

But right now, I suppose divorce is a fairly simple operation... No?... I am sorry.

Well, it sure is wonderful having you as company all the way to New York.

Medcaff? Who'd want to stop off at Medcaff?

Oh, I get it - Medcaff, the home town - a little chat with your wife about the divorce.

Well, here's luck - hey, why don't we have lunch sent up to my dressing room - just the two of us - whisky - doubles - the only kind of doubles I play!

We'll drink to the next Mrs Haines.

(stub out cigarette - contemplate another - No!)

Sure, I went to college. Got kicked out of three of them - drinking and gambling.

Not like you, eh?

So - I'm a bum

Nigel says I'm a bum - he hates me.

He thinks I ought to catch the 8.40 bus every morning, punch a time-clock somewhere, and work my way up from the bottom selling paint or something.

Now, what do you think of a character like that?

I can tell you, I get so sore with him sometimes, I want to kill him.

Well I want to do something.

And everything.

You know I've got a theory that you should do everything before you die.

Have you ever driven a car blindfolded at 150 miles an hour? I did.

And I flew a jet plane. Phewww!!! Man, that was a blast! Almost blew all that sawdust out of my head! And I'm going to make a reservation on the first rocket to the moon.

(sulky)

Oh, I'm not like you, Guy.

You're lucky. You're smart.

Marrying the boss's daughter. That makes a nice short cut to a career, doesn't it?

Hey, take it easy, Guy. I like you, remember? I'm your friend.

I'd do anything for you.

What did you say your wife's name was?

Miriam. That's right - Miriam Joyce Haines

I suppose she played around a lot.

Hey, want to hear one of my ideas for a perfect murder?

The busted light in the bathroom, or the carbon-monoxide in the garage?

Hey, what's a life between two guys? Some people are better off dead.

Like Nigel and your wife, for instance.

Oh, that reminds me of a wonderful idea I had once. I used to put myself to sleep at night figuring it out:

Now, let's say, you wanted to get rid of your wife.
No, no - just suppose - let's say you had a very good reason .

Now, you'd be afraid to kill her - you know why - you'd get caught.
And what would trip you up? The MOTIVE.

Now here's my idea.
Listen - It's so simple:
Two fellows meet accidentally, like you and me -
No connection between them at all - never saw each other before.
Each one has somebody he'd like to get rid of.
SO THEY SWAP MURDERS!

Each fellow does the other fellow's murder, so there's nothing to connect them.
Each one has murdered a total stranger.
Like: you do my murder, I do your's.
For example - your wife, my Nigel.
CRISS-CROSS

Oh, we do talk the same language, don't we, Guy! You think my theory is okay, don't you?
You like it! CRISS-CROSS!

(Take out icecream - unwrapping it)

I like my hands to look just right
Oh, I'm alright - don't worry about me.
I took my vitamins yesterday, Ma - a whole bottle.

I'M SICK AND TIRED OF BOWING AND **SCRAPING!!**.....

CD 2 TRACK 4
BACK RED LIGHTS BUILD SLOWLY

(Eat icecream)

(Draw theatre plan)

(Smash glasses).....

SNAP OUT BACK REDS
CD 2 OFF

Guy! Guy! over here, Guy!

Hello Guy.
You don't seem very pleased to see me.
I've brought you a little present. (*show glasses to Guy*) Recognise them?

It was very quick, Guy.
She felt no pain. It was all over in no time.

I knew you'd be surprised.

Now Guy, there's nothing for us to be worried about - noone saw me. (Only Miriam)

And I was very careful, Guy - even when I dropped your cigarette lighter, I went back to pick it up.

But Guy, you wanted it. We planned it together in the last scene, remember?

You can't call the police. Guy. We'd both be arrested for murder.

You've just as much to profit in it as I have.

We planned it together - CRISS-CROSS!

Can I get away with it?

Oh, come on Guy, Why should I go to Medcaff to kill a total stranger?

Unless it was part of a plan, and you were in it.

You're the one who benefits.

You're the free man now.

I didn't even know the girl.

Guy, if you go to the police now, you'd be turning yourself in as an accessory -

You see, you have the MOTIVE!

Don't call me crazy!!

Oh, you must be tired, Guy. I know I am - I've had a strenuous morning.

Is that your telephone ringing? Someone has some news for you, Guy.

But first - about Nigel.

I've got the plan of the theatre and his dressing room already made.

And I have an old Luker pistol I picked up in a pawn-shop.

(place gun on table)

(running to Guy)

Guy! Guy! Wait a minute! We've got to talk! We have to arrange things!

Oh, you're not yourself, Guy. You're tired.

Now, when you've thought things over, you'll see I'm right.

(pack up briefcase)

Nigel should be in his dressing room any minute now.

(walk to proscenium stage - turn back to audience)

Guy!.....

SNAP BLACKOUT

LEAVE VIDEO RUNNING

AS HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP

An eligibility battle

**Australia Council
for the Arts**

22nd June 2000

Mr Nigel Kellaway
72 Margaret Street
NEWTOWN NSW 2042

Dear Nigel,

I am writing concerning your application to the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council for assistance towards the final stages of rehearsal and production of *El Inocente*.

During the initial processing of your application it became clear the application is ineligible for consideration as you did not submit the required support material. (Please see page 112 of the Support for the Arts Handbook).

Applicants seeking support for the workshopping or production of a script must provide two complete copies of the latest draft and five pages of the text chosen by the applicant to best display the quality of the writing together with the application form.

The support material submitted with your application, a selection of reviews of former productions by The opera Project, does not fulfil these requirements.

I am, therefore, returning your original application and support material. A copy of your application has been retained for our records. It will not be assessed, nor will it count as one of the two applications you may make to the Council this year.

If you would like further clarification as to why this application is not eligible, please contact Senior Program Officer, Kim Hanna on 9215 9103, or ring toll-free on 1800 226 912.

With regards to any future applications to the Australia Council, I encourage you to contact Theatre Fund staff to discuss your proposal prior to the closing date.

Yours sincerely,

Rosalind Richards
Acting Manager
Theatre & Dance

The opera Project Inc.

ABN 26 591 699 574
Nigel Kellaway - Artistic Director
72 Margaret Street Newtown NSW Australia 2042 Tel/Fax +61 (0)2 9516 3762

30th June 2000

Rosalind Richards
Acting Manager - Theatre and Dance
Australia Council
Box 788
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Dear Rosalind,

I am writing to appeal the decision of the Theatre Fund staff to return The opera Project's latest application for *EL INOCENTE* as ineligible for funding on the grounds that it omitted a draft script, as required support material. As I explained to you on the telephone yesterday, such a document does not exist.

Your letter states that "applicants seeking support for the workshopping or production of a script must provide two copies of the latest draft and five pages of the text chosen by the applicant to best display the quality of the writing together with the application form". I can understand the relevance of this to applicants that are creating and producing "plays" and other text generated work, but the history of The opera Project, the associated artists and the substance of our latest application clearly suggests that our concerns are not with the production or realization of "a script".

In our telephone conversation you quoted from our application that the January 2000 development process had "produced a detailed textual and scenic draft of the new work". Obviously there is confusion as to how the words "textual" and "draft" are understood. The history of contemporary performance practice (strongly supported by the Australia Council over the past two decades) has defined these words in very particular ways. The "texts" and "drafts" of particular new works in the early stages of development are difficult to articulate. They are part of a 'corporate' memory and understanding of the intertwining elements of a performance shared by the collaborating artists - recorded in a body shorthand, privy only to the artists. They do not constitute a "script", but to deny their authenticity would be a denial of the process of much that has been valued in Australian theatre practice (and by the Australia Council) over the past twenty years. In my seventeen years of application to the Australia Council (to the Theatre Board, then the Drama Committee of the Performing Arts Board and now the Theatre Fund) I have never been asked to submit a script (draft, or otherwise). Neither I nor The opera Project have ever created a work instigated by a text, nor am I (we) ever likely to do so.

Any possible spoken "text" for *EL INOCENTE* is yet to be created (and we make no apology for this in our application.) The existing "text" is a technical lighting plan; a detailed lighting plot with exact lamp positions, channel numbers, focus specifications, physical cues and timings; a piano reduction score of the six Handel arias (in Italian) used in the initial development workshop; the stage plan drawings and the physical memory of the collaborating artists. None of this is privileged material, but it is indecipherable to those outside the process. In the past, I have never cluttered my applications with such mysterious material, which would be cognitively unrepresentative of the proposed work. Our grant application, in the prescribed three pages, addresses ideas and rationale, as was recommended by Tony Wright in my conversation with him prior to applying.

You mentioned in our telephone conversation that some applicants, namely those concerned with 'contemporary performance practice', are not expected to support their application with any draft script. Perhaps those responsible for the processing of our application have not tallied the full body of the application text against the artists' histories, as outlined in the submitted biographies.

In 1999 we submitted the first application for the production of *EL INOCENTE*. It was rejected by the Theatre Fund for the normal reasons, but at least they assessed it. In now resubmitting ostensibly the same application (subsequent to an initial development process funded by the Theatre Fund in 1999) it is denied access to the Fund peers. The reasons relate to a clause in the Australia Council handbook (identical to the clause in the 1999 handbook, which presented no apparent problem in our previous application) referring to "script" or "text". However, "script" is in

no way defined in the handbook. And so one is left to assume a definition with several centuries of history and to decide on its appropriateness to the concerned application. If a “script” (or draft) is mandatory, the application guidelines clearly need to be reviewed, and definitions articulated (dangerous territory, indeed!). If a draft script is the required outcome of a creative development workshop (New Work) grant, this should also be stated in the Australia Council guidelines and criteria.

And so I ask for a review of the processing of our application, and its chance to be presented to and considered by our peers on the Theatre Fund. Our application is for the final stage of a process that has consumed the energies of several respected artists over a long period. I am clearly concerned that a technical detail regarding notions of “text” could result in these artists being denied the right to have their work assessed by the Theatre Fund. Such a procedure would mean yet another six months in creative limbo for The opera Project, its supporting artists and its audience - a purgatory of development with no fair opportunity of outcome.

yours sincerely,

Nigel Kellaway
Artistic Director

(Email 3/6/00 from tps@culture.com.au)

re: Australia Council procedures

Dear colleagues,

We are aware of two recent applications by contemporary performance ensembles to the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council (The opera Project directed by Nigel Kellaway and David Williams’ Version 1.0) having had their applications returned to them by the staff of the Australia Council as “ineligible” on the grounds that they have not submitted “draft scripts” as support material. Their applications will not be assessed by the Theatre Fund. Both ensembles have appealed these decisions, detailing the inadequacy of definitions of “script” as outlined in the Australia Council guidelines and criteria. They await an outcome of their appeals.

Performance Space (an organisation that has presented, supported and actively promoted the development of contemporary non-text-based theatre/performance over the past 18 years) is understandably concerned about these recent procedures and the signals being sent to contemporary theatre/performance practitioners in Australia.

It is possible that other applications have been returned on the same grounds. We ask that, if you are aware of similar circumstances regarding non-text-based project applications in the CURRENT round to the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council, you email us immediately with the details. Performance Space has the well-being of both the artistic practice it represents and Australia Council policy and procedure sincerely at the heart of its concern. We hope we can support the concerns of contemporary artists in a positive and progressive dialogue with the Council.

Please forward this message to any peers you imagine we might have missed on our email list.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Winning
Director

**Australia Council
for the Arts**

4th July 2000

Mr Nigel Kellaway
72 Margaret Street
NEWTOWN NSW 2042

Dear Mr Kellaway

I am writing in response to your letter dated 30 June 2000 and have reviewed your request that your New Work application for *El Inocente* be deemed eligible for assessment by the Theatre Fund.

Your argument as to what you believe comprises a script has been re-evaluated and on this occasion I find that the application may be assessed by the Fund.

Your application will be forwarded to the Fund along with the other New Work applications and will not be prejudiced in any way.

Yours Sincerely

Kim Hanna
Senior Program Officer
Theatre

fax

The opera Project Inc.

ABN 26 591 699 574

Nigel Kellaway - Artistic Director

72 Margaret Street Newtown NSW 2042 Australia Tel/Fax +61 (0)2 9516 3762

To: KIM HANNA
SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, THEATRE

By Fax: 9251 9111

From: NIGEL KELLAWAY

Date: 05 / 07 / 00

Pages (including this): 1

Dear Kim Hanna,

Thankyou for your speedy and positive response to my letter of appeal of 30 June 2000. I am, ofcourse, confident that The opera Project's application will be now considered without any prejudice by the Theatre Fund.

May I ask that you assure that the letters of support for the application (from Sarah Miller, Fiona Winning and Don Mamouny) that I posted last week be attached to our application as promised support material.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Kellaway
Artistic Director

Federal funding:

It's not what it once was.
But I am not nostalgic for some imaginary 70's paradise.
I accept now that the decisions are made
by a handful of politically appointed arbiters,
guided somewhat inadequately by the salaried bureaucrats of the funding bodies.

Take the recent appointment of Ian McCrae
to the chair of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council.
He is the ex-General Manager of the Australian Ballet,
and the Minister for the Arts was looking for a position for him -
a vacancy was up and it was filled.
I hope Ian has a broad experience of and concern
for contemporary theatre practice in Australia,
though that was NOT the basis on which he was appointed.
He clearly has good contacts in the Coalition government
and probably at the top end of town,
and knows how to befriend an "arm's length" statutory body.

The opera Project Inc.

ABN 26 591 699 574

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

PART 1

This agreement is between **The opera Project Incorporated** (hereinafter called the Producer) and:

Name: _____ (hereinafter called the Invitee)

Name of Work: *Let's 'Hector Dick' in the
suburbs*

Whereby the Producer agrees to engage with the Invitee under the terms and conditions shown below:

PART 2

1. The Invitee will attend the Work.
2. The engagement will be for the specific date and time of:

Saturday 12th August 2000
at **6.30 pm**

3. The venue for the Work will be:

44 Dremeday Street, Northmead 2152

4. In consideration of the agreement herein the Producer will provide a performance of:

LES NUIT D'ETE by *Hector Berlioz*
and
THE 'FOUR LAST SONGS' by *Richard Strauss*
performed (respectively) by
ANNETTE TESORIERO and *LYNNE MURRAY*
with *NIGEL KELLAWAY*

5. **The Invitee will bring a plate of Indian cuisine and drinks of choice.**
6. **The Producer will provide rice, pappadams and roti.**
7. The territory over which this licence has application is the world.
8. This agreement is made subject to the laws in force from time to time in New South Wales, Australia.

For the Producer:

For the Invitee:

rsvp 9686 8931 or 9516 3762

.....
(signature)

Chapter 8: 2001

(The year of *El Inocente*)

LITTLE GEORGE

Created and directed for THE SONG COMPANY. Paddington United Church, Sydney

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE VIRTUAL GODDESS

Directed and co-performed with Rakini Devi, a work in progress presentation. Perth Institute for Contemporary Arts, WA

EL INOCENTE

Co-created, directed and performed with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Regina Heilmann, Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino, Lynne Murray. Composer: Richard Vella. Lighting and video design: Simon Wise. Performance Space, Sydney.

THE BERLIOZ - OUR VAMPIRES OURSELVES

Toured with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. to Salamanca Arts Centre (Long Gallery) Hobart and Brisbane Powerhouse for the Live Arts (Powerhouse Theatre), Brisbane.

Workshop teacher at **Salamanca Arts Centre**

MY LIFE AS A TAX DEDUCTION

Solo presentation examining the works I have made and performed at Performance Space in the 20 years since 1981. As part of a series entitled SCRAPBOOK LIVE - AS REMEMBERED BY THE ARTIST for the ANTISTATIC DANCE PROGRAM

THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

Co-created, directed and performed a work-in-progress with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Karen Cummings, Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino. Co-writer: Amanda Stewart. Composer: Stephen Adams. Video Artist: Peter Oldham. Lighting design: Simon Wise. Performance Space, Sydney

FA'AFINE

Directed for URBAN THEATRE PROJECTS. Writer/solo performer: Brian Fuata. Dramaturg: Damien Millar. Composer: Liberty Kerr. Costume design: Carlos Gomes. Lighting and video design: Simon Wise. Performance Space, Sydney

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2001 Works

Lecture - The Vision Thing - Performance Space/RealTime Forum

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Keith Gallasch - RealTime

Little George - Full Text

El Inocente - Press Release

El Inocente - Program Notes

Reviews - El Inocente - Peter McCallum - SMH
Deborah Jones - The Australian
James Waites - RealTime

El Inocente - Final Text

El Inocente - Australia Council acquittal

El Inocente - Financial Statement

Lecture - AGNSW - Outrageous Fortune

The Berlioz - Interview with Glenn Murray (Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart)

Reviews The Berlioz - Jane Rankin - The Australian
Wal Eastman - The Mercury
Sue Moss - RealTime

The Berlioz - Touring scenario

The Berlioz - Touring Financial Statement

The Audience and Other Psychopaths - Description

The Audience and Other Psychopaths - Draft Text

The Audience and Other Psychopaths - Australia Council Peer Assessment
Nigel Kellaway's response

The Audience and Other Psychopaths - Acquittal

The Audience and Other Psychopaths - Financial Statement

Scrapbook Live - Text

Fa'afafine - Program Note and Full Text

Review - Fa'afafine - "Will Rollins" - RealTime

Urban Theatre Project's response to RealTime Review and reply

Report to the Ministers on Small to Medium Performing Arts Sector

The opera Project Mentorship Program - Acquittal

THE VISION THING - Performance Space/RealTime Forum Paper 2001

Heiner Muller once said something like “we make art to avoid death”

I like that - it brings out the fighting spirit in me - there’s nothing quite like tackling the inevitable / imminent.

It reminds us about how theatre responds to our "world" - the world, here and now, before we die - our experience of that, and our histories, generally and personally / culturally and professionally.

The opera Project - despite its history, it is now a platform for my own quite singular vision - and also, most importantly, how that intersects with the visions of other artists - my chosen collaborators.

We don’t make “OPERA”! I can talk at length about what “opera” literally means - and its history as a development from the last years of the 16th century (just another radical fin de siecle), when certain music and theatre artists (the “academia”) in Northern Italy dreamt of a neo-classical music/theatre recreating an imagined authentic ancient Greek classicism, in which the music was the servant to the word (now ofcourse, we all know how far the history of opera has strayed from that ideal over the subsequent 400 years.)

BUT, OPERA has another meaning in the popular lexicon - a cheap meaning, a meaning carrying a lot of cultural baggage - but we have to daily accept its currency - it means big sets, a musical supremacy, a particular relationship between music and word, a particular aesthetic of the human voice, really big casts, endless singing, orchestras, certain entrenched performance mannerisms, entrenched repertoire, expensive tickets, ridiculously overpriced bubbly in the foyer during numerous intervals - these are all just accidents of history - but combating this is a perverse challenge - Annette Tesoriero and I were perverse enough to call the company The opera Project - a red rag to several sacred bulls. (Sometimes I regret the decision!)

However, much of our audience now know what kind of theatre The opera Project makes - and it ain’t OPERA, in that popular sense. But how many people have said to me that they wish “OPERA” was more like our work. It’s a very small imaginative leap across a very wide gulf between our work and an Opera Australia production. Will that leap ever be made? At the moment, in this country - NO. (Sorry to disappoint everyone.)

The ongoing argument in OPERA regards a conflict between a director's vision and the "authenticity" of composer's vision (often long dead). WHAT IS THE ARGUMENT?!

A **good** opera director is a **good** musician - they have to be - why else would they be interested in making opera? (Other than a big budget, prestige and very lavish parties.)

It's a bit like discussing the rights of a living playwright (ie, someone who "apparently" knows nothing about making theatre) to enter the rehearsal room. THIS IS ALL A SERIOUS YAWN!

This is a vision of paranoia. If the collaborating artists are truly serious about the artefact that is being made, these discussions are surely irrelevant.

I've been guilty of the crime myself on a few occasions, and desperately unhappy in the process - but I hate practitioners who are watching their backs. I want to collaborate with people who are confident in their vision, and so flexible to the visions of others.

A fulltime company is not part of my vision. I choose to work with largely established artists that have a number of strings to their professional bows. The opera Project, which is so closely associated with my own personal vision of a theatre, cannot possibly satisfy the needs of these artists, alone.

In a fulltime situation you inevitably attract young artists wanting a couple of years experience and a salary. They must move on to fulfil their own ambitions, and then you replace them with others, and start all over again - it's the dance company syndrome - not for me!

I am interested in the notion of a more flexible ensemble of artists, who come together for projects over many years and allow a relationship and inscription to develop.

eg: AT over 14 years, RH over 10 years, RV over 20 years. The Sydney Front was such an ensemble, that grew over 8 years, though we were never a fulltime company - we all worked outside the ensemble.

Can I imagine my practice without the **Performance Space**? Twenty years in which a good 70% of my work has, at least, premiered here.

In that kind of situation the bricks and mortar of a space "inscribes" the work - and inscribes the bodies and minds of the performers. I cannot but help compare every other space I make work in with this room (it's always "wider than the P Space" or "shorter than the P Space" or "higher than the P Space")

My work is always "associated" with this particular space in the public's mind, and that is not a bad thing. A space can provide a community for dialogue - and that doesn't just mean preaching to the converted - it means creating a context for challenge to make better and better work. It writes a history of the development of work, in relationship with others' work.

The P Space for me, has been like a laboratory that I keep returning to. It demands that I constantly reassess it as "a stage". It demands that the content of what I place in it is constantly developing.

The danger with always working in new spaces is that we might keep making the same piece over and over, that looks somehow different or original in a new context - we start kidding ourselves about our enquiry / about the progress of our vision.

I find it difficult to imagine a vision that does not include the P Space, or some similar home, as an important component.

My vision is of a theatre community (practitioners and audience) that doesn't think in "**oppositions**" - that might see that certain forms are no more valid than others - that art is not a

competition - that when "that artist is not interested in what I do" that they are not therefore the enemy!

It's not just a matter of a battle over the funding dollar - it's about "seeing" and being stimulated but what exists beyond our own navels - a generous and more critical environment.

There is no opposition between new digital mediums and the human body in the live space - just a different way of realising ourselves, and so they are complementary.

If we happen to make work that is non-text based, or eschews linear narrative, that does that mean the "well-made" play is an inappropriate expression. NO - it's just another way of looking at theatre. Other critical standards are brought to bear.

I make theatre - live theatre - fleshy objects on stage in front of a sweaty audience. And about the consciousness that propels those fleshy bits across the space. It's an old fashioned concept, I admit, but it continues to interest me - I can still imagine new things to do with the genre. And there seems still to be people who want to watch it.

But let's be honest - In this city that audience is diminishing in numbers, year by year.

Why? I don't think we're here tonight to necessarily answer that question. But it has to do with a variety of issues. A certain contemporary social consciousness - about priorities for survival - about how we are seduced to order these priorities. It's a global dilemma, and we in Australia have particular readings of that dilemma.

Probably these issues will be addressed obliquely this evening. We all have to be aware of the application of our visions to the broad scheme of things. We should be open to suggestion. We need to keep listening, and not to blame everyone else for the possible failure of our vision.

I don't dream of a theatre about "the bottom line" - we must embrace financial pragmatism in the process of making our work - but must we make work ABOUT it?

Should I be making theatre about the "already discussed"? I find that issues that are so interestingly discussed in a newspaper or on the TV, are so often really boring when translated to the stage - theatre can sometimes be a really inappropriate and lazy forum for the discussion of certain issues.

If we can "**imagine the extraordinary**", shouldn't we be making art about that?

We'll never escape the issue, and we must constantly answer it - IS OUR VISION IMPORTANT ENOUGH?

If we want to be valued as artists with vision and relevance, we have to play some part in the nurturing of a culture that is conscious of our value. It is NOT totally in our hands as individual artists, or even as a community of artists. But we all live in, function in and contribute to the mainstream of Australian culture. Our roles are multi-faceted - they have to be if we expect to be entitled to "a voice". Our artistic VISIONS do not exist in a privileged aesthetic vacuum.

Like it or not - we will always have to argue to prove ourselves daily, if there is not a wad of money or a vague notion of respectability set aside for our particular vision.

MEDIA RELEASE

LITTLE GEORGE

A NEW THEATRICAL WORK BY THE SONG COMPANY

The supreme vocal artistry of Australia's premier professional a cappella ensemble collides with the meticulous yet anarchic vision of director Nigel Kellaway and the divine sounds of Josquin des Prez (c. 1440-1521), "the prince of music".

Nigel Kellaway, notorious for his ground breaking work with The Sydney Front (1986-93), challenging all artistic and moral sensibilities with his ambitious 240 hour solo performance THIS MOST WICKED BODY (1994-1998 Adelaide Festival), outraging operatic expectations with his current ensemble The opera Project Inc. (1997-2001). A leading identity in contemporary Australian performance and theatre further explores his passion for the processes and reasons for performing great music.

Director: Nigel Kellaway
Dramaturg: Anatoly Frusin
Musical Director: Roland Peelman
Lighting Design: Neil Simpson

LITTLE GEORGE, kicks off the 2001 season of The Song Company which will see the ensemble take its Old Masters Series to Bathurst, Armidale, Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne and Ballarat as well as Wollongong, Newcastle, Hawkesbury District and Sydney. In June the company presents its Modern Art Series in collaboration with Marshall McGuire, before embarking on three overseas tours including Singapore, Malaysia, Belgium, Portugal, Germany, Estonia and Hungary.

This group-devised project is a 'first', a unique opportunity for audiences to see the singers of The Song Company in a different guise. Listen as you have never listened before! The ensemble sings sublime Flemish chansons by the greatest composer of his generation whose work influenced the music of the 16th century in a way comparable to that in which Beethoven influenced the music of the 19th century.

Ruth Kilpatrick & Nicole Thomson, sopranos
Jo Burton, alto
Paul McMahon, tenor
Mark Donnelly, baritone
Clive Birch, bass

LITTLE GEORGE - four performances only - Wed 7, Thu 8, Fri 9, Sat 10 February, 8.30pm in Paddington Uniting Church, 395 Oxford St. (site of Paddington Markets).
Tickets: \$30 full/\$25 concession /\$20 under 26 years

For further information contact Eugene Ragghianti, General Manager of The Song Company on 9351 7939, fax 9692 8581 or email: songcompany@flex.com.au

A few cul-de-sacs in brave detour

LITTLE GEORGE

Reviewed by Peter McCallum

Sydney Morning Herald, 9th February 2001

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Dirty angels, odd angles

Keith Gallasch

RealTime, May 2001

(Reproduced with permission)

Exquisitely sung, engagingly acted, here is a comically realised Song Company performance of a rehearsal that feels both real and fantastical. It's replete with interrupted songs, aesthetic differences, indifferences (one singer reads a magazine while the others perform, a mobile phone takes over), the letting down of hair (literally), awe (all at one on a huge lounge, singing while bathed in golden light pouring through a church window), a sudden rapturous will to dance (hands raised like paws, legs prancing in unison), a nervy edge of danger (some recurrent gun business), comic turns (a la Mr Bean, alongside company jokes at their own expense) and an interplay off the singers both as themselves and fictions. Subjecting the 15-16th century Belgian composer Josquin DesPrez to various stresses inflicted by physical and spatial demands wrought by director Nigel Kellaway is perfectly legitimate. Most of them are secular compositions about lost love and other grievings, some are remarkably existential, almost heretical. The singers might not talk

sensibly about the songs, but their immersion in and commitment to them is palpable, conveying the everydayness of rehearsal and the magic of their art.

Although movement tests the perfection of the singing it amplifies the dramatic in the songs without any literalising, though some occasional connection between song and action might have been nice ... or did I miss something? It's a pity that the spoken dialogue is too often unwieldy, rendering the singers (whose physical presence is expertly and confidently framed and projected) sound unnecessarily awkward and sometime downright quaint. Some rescripting, a more focussed sense of purpose (some routines seem surplus) and other economies, could make *Little George* (an affectionate diminutive of DesPrez) a popular addition to the Song Company repertoire. The final image, of the company all in bed, one with gun in hand, is a reminder that even in the most genteel of arts, risk is a virtue. *Little George* is a risk worth taking.

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Little George The Song Company

(22/01/01)

Text by: Nigel Kellaway
Anatoly Frusin (dramaturg)
The performers

Music: Josquin Des Prez (Musical Director - Roland Peelman)

Scene 1

*Clive sitting alone, in dinner suit, at music stands - reading recipe book - "Party Nibbles"
Mark serving wine - general ushering. Paul on couch, reading TV Guide.
Jo on mobile phone, upstage of music stands*

Ave Verum (*Ruth and Nicolle offstage*)

Paul moves to music stands to read his TV Guide

Clive: I know - I'm wearing a dinner suit!! Well, no-one told me the dress code. Josquin - I assumed formal. But the rest of you obviously came to some other agreement, and left me out - typical, really!

Paul: Don't worry, Clive, I think it looks quite smart.

Clive: Why, thankyou. Actually, Paul, you know Basiez Moy ("Bissy Moi")...

Paul: I think we're pronouncing it "Basiez Moy" - It's the old French.

Clive: Right! And which part are you singing?

Paul: Good point, Clive. I think I start the bar after you.

Clive: So you're singing the 4th line down.

Paul: Probably.

Clive: Can we try it through?
Jo, could we have a note?

Jo: (*distracted form phone*) mmmm

Clive: Was that just any note?

Jo: Yes (*sitting*)

Clive: I could have given myself that. Could we have an E, please Thanks.

Basiez Moy (*Clive and Paul parts / half of song*) *Jo checking her phone messages.*
(*Nicole enters and addresses the audience*)

Nic: Perhaps some of you standing would feel more comfortable sitting on the floor down the front - we're keeping it fairly informal, this evening.
Please don't sit on the couch, though - it's part of the set.

Clive: Well it's a bit thin.
What are the other parts doing?
Jo, could you sing your part?

Jo: Yes, sure. Mark, can we sing through our canon?

Mark: If we must.

Basiez Moy (Jo and Mark parts)

Nic and Ruth join them at music stands

Clive and Paul chatting and laughing throughout

Jo and Mark stop part-way through.

Paul: Thanks Guys, that was great!

Clive: I'm sorry, but I don't have any more clue about what's happening in this piece than I had this afternoon.

Nic: You seem a bit depressed today, Clive

Clive: Well I've had a terrible day, Nicolle. I left my umbrella on the bus, this morning.

(Jo gets phone call)

Jo: Hello, yes it's Jo here.....oh really?!.....I've got no idea, honestly.....

Clive: I've been losing quite a few things recently.

Mark: But you're normally so well organised, Clive.

Clive: Yes, but lately the structures are becoming very shaky. Sometimes I have no idea what key we're in.

Paul: Don't worry, Clive, I've no idea what key we're in either, most of the time. Just concentrate on the timbre.

Jo: *(on phone)* I know... I know! It could take forever! ... Right! Look, I'll ring you back.

Ladies and gentlemen. Unfortunately we've had a bit of a hold up, but we will be starting very soon, once we've sorted the problem. And may I ask you all to turn off your mobile phones. Thankyou. *(Exit answering her phone - Hello!)*

Long pause (30 secs, at least - all eyes on music

Jo enters and sits - another ten seconds pause

Mark questions Jo - song begins

Faulte D'argent

Ruth hunting in bag - pulls out gun momentarily - takes out book (Crimes of Passion) to read - gargling water

bar 40 - Jo gets a phone call

final bar - Ruth warms up voice with a few scales

Jo: *(on Phone)* mmm mmm look I'm going to have to go - do you want to leave a number?.....yes ... mmm ... got it ... mmm ... touch you soon..... yeah, bye.

Ruth: Who was that , Jo?

Jo: Don't know - a wrong number.

Mark: What did he want?

Jo: He just wanted to talk to someone.

Clive: Anyone in particular?

Jo: No, he just sounded pretty lonely.

Paul: Did he give a name?

Jo: no..... oh, yes.....George

(General Alert!! - a Pause!!)

Paul: Was that his first name or last name?

Jo: First name, I think.

Nic: What was his voice like? Old or young?

Jo: Sort of.....hard to tell, really

Nic: Authoritative?

Jo: Could be.

Clive: Did he have an accent?

Jo: No.....maybe - depends how you define.....

Mark: Was it a local number?

Jo: Um.....yes.

Ruth: Was the call being monitored?

Jo: How would I know if a call was being monitored, Ruth?!

Ruth: *(Pause)* What did you say, Clive?

Clive: What? Nothing!.

(A naughty giggle from Ruth)

Jo: Oh, I don't know why we bother!

Clive: Bother with what, Jo?

Jo: All this practice. I mean, we really do spend far too much time in rehearsal.

Clive: You seem to spend more time on the phone.

Jo: Well listen, I've worked really hard on this stuffand we're all on salary. I reckon now we could just coast along on our reputation.

Ruth: But Jo, don't you get artistic satisfaction from working on the music?

Jo: No, Ruth, I do it for the money - I get my satisfaction from other things. *(EXITS to prepare chairs)*

Ruth: Oh.....*(pause)* Paul, did you say something?

Paul: What? No.

Paul: You know, Clive, I've heard that most people who claim to have sung at Glyndebourne, were actually just sweeping the stage between the acts.

Clive: Yes, there's a lot of career inflation out there.

Mark: So was that what you were doing, Clive?

Clive: Absolutely not. (The cheek!) Well at least not between scenes! Only when the roles required it.

Mark: So you were actually singing roles at Glyndebourne, were you Clive?

Clive: Yes, all the big sweeping roles - Figaro, Leporello*(music riff)*

Ruth: So why did you give it up?

Clive: Got jack of it. Too much singing.

Mark: So what did you do then?

Clive: You mean before I came to Australia?
Well, I'd developed a bit of a reputation in the serving roles, so I spent some time "in service".

Mark: A cleaner?

Clive: No, Mark - a 'gentleman's gentleman'.

S'i Jay Perdu (Paul, Mark, Clive)

Women setting 3 chairs for audience - Jo chooses and seats her Pierre

Women approach couch, and drape themselves over it, eyeing-off the audience - eventually focussing on Pierre.

Jo: Hi, I'm Jo. And you are? George? Non don't tell me *continental* Let me channel a bit
..... something a bit more Pierre! I'm right aren't I? - I'm very intuitive. Some people
say I'm a bit psychic..... mmmmm..... oooh! I'm getting something now!!!
..... Sorry, it's just my phone vibrating.

Hello Oh, Hi Mum - No I can't talk - I'm in the middle of something - yeah, a really big
engineering contract ... oh Millions, Mum, Billions! - yet another bridge over the Seine ...
Paris, Mum, the River Seine?! ... Yes sure, I'll be home for dinner tomorrow night
ummm.... the carrots Bye!

Oh, Mum - I might be bringing someone with me ... yes, his name's Pierre ... yes, he's
really talented... oh, something innovative - metallurgy or something ... Got to go, Mum ---- Yeah,
bye-bye. (*Hangs up*)

I'll just give you my card, Pierre. You can call me tomorrow morning to arrange things.

<p style="text-align: center;">Jo artiste 0411 696 969 (24 hours)</p>

Scaramella *All but Jo - PIZZICATO*

*Paul Clive and Mark moving behind couch and then off
Jo skipping to music stands, flirting with Pierre*

Ruth and Nicolle settle on couch - turn on TV

Scene 2

Ruth: In 1994 I was a witness to a terrible crime - it was the kind of crime only a criminal could commit.
And so, two years later in 1996 I was brought to Sydney and placed in the Song Company as part of the Witness Protection Scheme.

Nic: Shouldn't you be keeping a low profile?

Ruth: Yes, that's why they put me in the Song Company, Nicolle.
Independent studies have shown that criminals aren't interested in classical music. They thought I'd be quite safe here.

Nic: It must have meant a big change for you, Ruth.

Ruth: It certainly did, Nicolle - a total change of identity. I used to be quite short and plump, so I had to slim down and grow about a foot.

Nic: Really?! You must have had help?

Ruth: Oh yes. The government gave me money, the relocation to Sydney, and they gave me my voice, ofcourse. And Roland was terrific - he spent a couple of weeks teaching me the lingo - how to say words like legato and crescendo and second-system-bottom-of-page-two.....

Nic: Cantus firmus.

Ruth: What?

Nic: Nothing *(moves away, offstage for a few wall pushups)*

Ruth: Listen, Nicolle - I really don't talk about it much. It's all in the past, now - it means nothing to me!

Mille Regretz

(Clive Mark Jo Ruth.

Ruth watching TV - Paul slowly approaches and sits on couch - glued to TV)

Paul: I've seen a few crimes myself, Ruth.

Ruth: What? Bank robberies?

Paul: No - never seen a bank robbery - just muggings on the beach ... I used to be a lifesaver on the Sunshine Coast It was a good life.

Nic: Oh really Paul? I used to be an animal wrangler!

Mark: Clive was a valet.

Jo: Really, Clive? You never told me that.

Clive: Where do you think I got my accent from?. Yes, I suppose I had a bit of a calling for it. All those servant roles at Glyndebourne - Figaro, Leporello. *(Music riff)*

Jo: Glyndebourne? Is that a big theatre?

Clive: Huge....Huge.... enormous sets!

Mark: Lots of windows?

Clive: Well yes, Mark, since you mention it, I guess there were a tremendous number of windows.

Mark: We had windows at the Queensland Opera too.

Jo: That's right - you used to sing at the Queensland Opera, didn't you Mark?

Mark: Yes, I used to carry a hammer on stage, just in case anything needed fixing.

Jo: During the show?

Mark: Yes. I had a full tradesman's belt by the end of the season. I would cleverly incorporate it into the costume - or hide it.

Jo: You know, I used to work in the building industry.
Did you have a Philips-head screwdriver?

Nic: RRRFFFFFFFF!!!!!!!

Clive: What did you do that for?

Nic: What?

Clive: You barked.

Nic: No I didn't.

Clive: Yes you did.

Nic: No I didn't...I was just giving you a note -----deeee (*on an E*)-----see?

Clive: That was an E.

Basiez Moy (6 part - 3 bars only)

Clive: Oh God!!! I was there for years!!!!

Nic: Where? Glyndebourne?

Clive: No, Morocco - in service with the "Maestro", as we all used to call him.

Nic: You valeted for a maestro?! Who?

Clive: Georgio Spagnatelli Extraordinary "Baton Technique"!
Jo, give me a note, will you?

Jo: Any note?

Ave Virginum **6 Part - Move to couch - Repelled by TV**

Paul turns off TV at end of song - all move into place

Scene 3

Mark/ Ruth/ Nicolle on Couch

Mark: Why did we just do that?

Nic: I think we were just repositioning ourselves for the next scene, Mark.

Mark: Well, I must say Nicolle, you've been looking very nice these days.

Nic: Why thankyou, Mark. Jo's been working on a new hairstyle for me - highlights.

Mark: And they're coming along very nicely, too.
And you're beginning to look almost reasonable too, Ruth.

Ruth: Oh thanks Mark! I have to say, you've been looking a lot healthier lately, too.

Nic: Hasn't he Ruth? Cutting down on the cigarettes, Mark?

Mark: Yes, a little bit. But mainly, just getting out in the fresh air. Taking an evening stroll, window shopping

Ruth: For what?

Mark: Oh windows.

Nic: You should get a dog, Mark.

Mark: I really can't imagine why.

Nic: Exercise, Mark! - brisk exercise!

Ruth: But Mark lives in Kings Cross - dogs make an apartment filthy!

Nic: No they don't - not if you look after them properly - shampooing, daily brushing - discipline.

Ruth: But they sniff around all sorts of nasty things. - The plague was spread by rats, you know!

Nic: Oh, really Ruth! - Dogs are not rats

Mark: Well, thankyou girls, as you both seem so interested in my new healthy lifestyle - I must say that lately I've developed a bit of a passion for the weekend rip into the country on a Kawasaki 750.

Ruth: A motorbike?

Nic: What's wrong with a horse?

Ruth: Oh no, Nicolle. I like motorbikes. You wear a helmet for that, don't you Mark? Incognito, Disguised! You could get away!

Mark: Definitely! from whom?

Ruth: Oh anyone.
(Thinking aside) You'd have to take your helmet off when you went into a bank. They've got those little signs.

Nic: Mark on a motorbike? I'm sorry, I really can't see it.

Mark: How rude! You really are a nasty, nasty piece of work, Nicolle!
I happen to do a very good motorbike!!

(RRMMMMM)

Nic: No Mark - that's you on a motorbike. Can we see the actual motorbike?

MARK'S MIME BEGINS

That's a lot better!

Now, can we see you riding the motorbike on a country road.

Winding roads.

A few hills.

Ruth: And running down a dog!

Nic: Mark! Mind the dog!!!!

Ruth: Not quite dead yet, Mark - reversing over it a few times.

(Ruth applauds - Nicolle is horrified)

And we're out on the open road!!!!

A l'ombre d'ung buissonnet

(Jo (on phone) Paul Clive at music stands - troubadour / masque / Canterbury Tales)

Nic/Ruth: MIND THE CATTLE GRID!!!!

Mark has a bad crash - collapses centrestage

Jo: *(on phone)* mmmmmm..... it's about big handfuls of ... mmmmm Look, I'd better go.... what did you say your name was?....oh, nice!....touch you soon.

Clive: Jo, you spend an awful lot of time on the phone.

Jo: Well, yes Clive, I find it's very good for the voice.
I learnt that when I was a hairdresser.

Mark: A hairdresser, Jo? It shows.

Jo: You're supposed to be dead, Mark!
That's how I met Roland. He just happened to come into the salon one day for a haircut - well actually a soft perm and a little feathering around the fringe and to have his tips done - and we got chatting. He said something, and I went mmmmm, and he just froze, our eyes locked in the mirror, and he offered me a contract on the spot.

Clive: What, without even hearing you sing? Well that explains a lot!

Jo: He was very taken with my mmmms

Paul: That's very impressive, Jo. How farsighted is that man?! *(move to couch)*

Jo: Yes, I think he made a wise decision.

Paul: Are you okay there, Mark?

Mark: Yes, fine thanks, Paul - just waiting.

Clive: Now Mark, we'd like you to imagine yourself in a forest.

Ave Verum (2nd section Ruth, Nicolle, Paul)

Clive: Birds singing

Jo: Wind in your hair.

Clive: Dangerous birds!

Jo: Dead dog!

(dog funeral - Mark grieving - Jo sobbing)

Jo: That's so emotionally compelling!
But now I think we should try some birthing - your full obstetrics range.

Clive: Birthing in a forest.

Ave Verum (3rd section Ruth Nicolle Paul)

Clive: And from the baby's point of view?

Jo: Contractions are getting closer, Mark!
Waters breaking!

Clive: And from the baby's point of view?

Jo: Dead dog!

Clive: Dangerous birds!

Jo: Oh dear - we might have to consider a caesarean!

Clive: No! - Nurse! - The Forceps!!!!.

(Mark is born. A little cry as the music finishes.)

Ruth: It's a baritone!

ALL APPLAUD

(Mark exits for a cigarette)

Jo: Listen Clive, actually I'm lying. Actually, I wasn't a hairdresser - I was a midwife.....
.....
Did you have an good agent in London?

Clive: Yes - a very good one - she specialized in "the unique valet".

Jo: So how would I have found you, if I'd been looking for a valet?

Clive: Well you couldn't - I worked exclusively for gentlemen.

Jo: But, hypothetically.

Clive: Through friends, professional contacts, the Yellow Pages.

Jo: Under 'v', for valets?

Clive: Yes, or "n".

Jo: "n"?

Clive: "n" for "nude" - nude valet.

Jo: So you were a nude valet?

Clive: Yes, actually I was the only one on my agent's books at that time. There was a huge demand for me around Mayfair and Kensington North Africa.

Jo: Hence all those years in Morocco? Do you miss it Clive?

Clive: Valeting? Well yes, a bit. I particularly miss the cooking.

Jo: Canapes?

Clive: Yes, "party-food-preparation-in-the-nude"

Jo: Housework?

Clive: Oh, yes - I particularly enjoyed "ironing-in-the-nude".

Jo: But it's a bit dangerous, isn't it, Clive?

Clive: Years of experience, Jo - you develop a technique. A bit like "pot-plant-maintenance-in-the-nude"....insecticides Just practice, really - like singing Josquin - "support".

Jo: mmmm.....

Ruth: *(moving to music stands)* Sorry - I hope I'm not disturbing anything personal.

Jo: No, that's fine, Ruth. Clive was just telling me about when he was a nude valet.

Ruth: Really? I used to have a house minding job in Adelaide - until it got burgled.

Clive: Well, Ruth, I think nude valeting is probably a little more specialist than that!

Jo: Clive, I'm really interested in the "nude cooking" - Shallow frying must be a bit hazardous, surely?

Clive: No, I wear a motorbike helmet.

Ruth: Oh Clive, how wonderful! Full-face?

Clive: Well ofcourse, Ruth. "Perfect Ocular Protection".

Jo: And the other bits?

Clive: Technique.

Ruth: I'll just make a note of that.

(Mark enters to music stands after his cigarette)

Jo: Feeling better, Mark? (After a little puff?)

Mark: Much calmer thanks, Jo.

Jo: How's the baby?

Mark: Great.

Nic: That makes me really angry, Paul!!!!!!

Paul: What?

Nic: Jo's in a lot more pieces than me.

Ruth: But, I think you'll find I have even less than you, Nicolle.

Nic: I think you'll find that that's not the point, Ruth. Anyway, that you've got most of the top notes.

Jo: Well maybe it's just that me and the men are a tad more functional than you, Nicolle.

Mark: Who knows, perhaps Josquin simply preferred men. Sorry Jo.

Jo: That's fine, Mark - I'm fairly fluid.

Nic: I gave up a really lucrative wrangling career to take this on!

(Long pause)

I'm just sitting around doing nothing all night.

(Long pause)

Come on, everyone! Something we're all in! Let's get some shape into this!

On your feet! Come on Paul, drag yourself away from the TV!

Stay!

Shake hands!

Note, Jo!

And.....Heel!

Scaramella (skipped with words)

Nic: Very good! I feel so much better!!

Get behind!!!

(All scamper to music stands)

Scene 4

Mark: Plusieurs Regretz, Clive?

Clive: No, not really, Mark. I just take things as they come.

Mark: No, Clive, may we sing it through? *Plusieurs Regretz*.

Clive: Oh sorry, Mark. Certainly. Who starts?

Jo: Ruth.
Page 30, Ruth. You'll need a G for that.

(Ruth gives note - false start)

Nic: Sorry, have we decided on the pronunciation yet?

Clive: Yes, Nicolle - Paul tells me it's all in Old French.

Paul: Just take your Oldest French ...

Jo: and then make it even Older.

Nic: Thanks. Sorry Ruth.

(Ruth gives note - false start)

Clive: I'm sorry, but I don't seem to have the music for this. Do you mind if I look on?

(Ruth gives note)

Jo: Look, Ruth, I really don't need to be given a note every ten seconds. I have excellent pitch retention.

Ruth: Sorry, Jo. I'd better make a note of that
(Ruth makes a note)

(false start)

Clive: Don't breath with your arms, Ruth - it's vulgar.

Jo: Yes, it's a bit 'heave-ho'.

Paul: Breath through the soles of your feet

Clive: Like you've got holes in them.

Nic: Didn't Roland explain that to you?

Jo: I guess it works best in bare feet.

Mark: Absolutely. Why do you think most early music singers wear sandals?

Ruth: *(experimenting)* It's quite good, really, isn't it? everyone, I'll remember that!

(False start)

Nic: Ruth, can we have a note - it's been a while.

(Ruth gives note - False start)

Clive: Arms, Ruth!

Ruth: Sorry Clive. Could you hold them for me, till I get the hang of it?

Clive: No.

Jo: Yuk!

Mark: We don't touch each other in the Song Company, Ruth.

Clive: It could lead to other things.

Ruth: What? Other kinds of music?

Clive: No, on tour.

Ruth: *(Ruth makes a note)* "No touching"

Nic: Note please, Ruth? *(Ruth gives a wavering note - false start)*

Clive: I'm not in this one anyway. *(Moves back to seat - Ruth collapses)*

Jo: Well in that case, Clive, show us something you're good at!

Clive: There are so many things!

Mark: Oh yes, Clive. Show us something from your past - there must be a wealth!

Clive: There certainly is!

Let me think..... Oh, I know.

I'm actually particularly skilled at doing "very little".

Ruth: Come on Clive, show us!!!

Clive: Well, okay! I think I'll do it down there on the couch.

(Moves to couch - warms up)

Jo: Ofcourse, Clive. Wherever you feel the most comfortable. You take your time - anything you need to do to prepare - a few deep breaths - shake out those limbs

Clive: Right! Now what I'd like to present are three short, but quite contrasting scenes, that I think best demonstrate my full range:

- The first is one that I developed in my early years in service with the Maestro - I call it "baking scones".

- The second scene is rather clever, as it collides two quite contrasting scenes as performed by the 'mechanicals' in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream". I think you'll all guess the references once I get into it.

- And then I think I should finish with my own interpretation of “Apocalypse Now - the director’s cut” - it’s fairly spectacular.

Ready?

(Ruth gives note)

Jo: No heave-ho, Ruth, mind the arms.

Plusieurs Regretz - Clive’s scene (all clap softly between scenes)

(at end of song - HUGE APPLAUSE - all run down to congratulate Clive)

Jo: Come on Guys! Big hugs in a circle!!!!

(Big Hugs)

Nic: Come on guys! Let’s run it through again!

Ruth: I know how you must feel, Clive! When the adrenalin cuts in you can do amazing things! You can run really fast!

Jo: Ruth! Drop!
A bit more “horny” this time!

Scaramella

Play Dead *(into harmonics)*

Fetch! Where'd it go????

*(All look around and move into places - on couch - Clive knitting
Paul watching
Jo braiding Nicolle’s hair
Nicolle reading (“Whelping Bitches”)
Mark doing some woodwork*

(Ruth running on spot)

Ruth: Run, run run run, run!!!!!! Ofcourse, at the time of the incident, I didn’t actually run because I was standing in a queue at the bank, and it might have looked like I was trying to jump the queue. But I know I could have run really fast if I’d wanted to.

(Move to music stand)

Scene 5

Ruth at music stand, alone: taking out gun and putting on a bicycle helmet.

Douleur me bat - “*angel wings*” scene whilst singing.
Ruth approaches couch wearing helmet.

Ruth: And they took everything! They really cleaned it out - all the money, the gold, the jewels - all my savings. I must say, though, that it looked much better empty - cleaner, fresher - all those surfaces - sparkling with potential!

Faute D’argent (3 women)

Jo: This comes very naturally to me - I used to be a classical ballet dancer.
You guessed?
Mmmmm - yes, most people can pick it.

I’ve got a peculiar shape for ballet, but I was much in demand.

Particularly for my arms, and my contemporary ballet work (*cough, cough, cough...*)
Ofcourse, I was much better known in Europe than here in Australia. My life was a whirlwind of international travel, gala openings, presscalls, endless bouquets of flowers - I used to donate them to my charities of choice - all very high profile.

Ruth: Victim support groups?

Jo: Yes and Dyslexics Anonymous Amputee Hairdressers International I left a trail of flowers all across Europe.

Nic: Why don’t we get flowers on opening nights?

Jo: Nicole, the Song Company is an ensemble. In the ballet I was a principal.

Pierre, would you like to see my “dying swan”?

(*Dying swan*)

It’s still pretty good, isn’t it? Even though I haven’t done class for years.

It was those kind of emotional parts I was particularly famous for. Interpretive roles - “communicating” with my audience. Very personal, really!

But it was such a hard life!

Practice, practice, practice - the constant scrutiny, the constant attention.

Giving, giving, giving (so much to give!!!!)

But then I’d be dragging myself from every triumphant performance, locking my dressingroom door, looking in the mirror (*scream*) “Where am I? ... I’m all gone ... I’ve given myself away!!!” (*more contemporary cough-cough-coughs...*)

I was ofcourse much better at solos than duets - all that touching can be a bit intrusive.
“whizzies”!!!! (*chenees*) QUICK!! CATCH ME!!!!!!

(Grande jete - fall in a heap beside Pierre)

That was fabulous!

It's all in the arms, isn't it?

I've got very strong arms, too - want to feel them?.....

God, you've got really strong arms!!!! I can see you're really experienced!

My legs are really strong, too you can feel them if you want to - I really don't mind. They've lost a bit of tone, just sitting around singing with the Song Company for the past five years. But I bet your legs are really strong.....mmmmm..... they're REALLY, REALLY strong!!! Do you wax? You know I'm qualified, - I got the Madam Korner "depilation certificate".

(Phone rings)

Shit, sorry - I've got a call - sorry, Pierre.....

Oh hi, George - I didn't realize you'd call back so soon Look, no, It's a bit inconvenient at the moment - I'm with a client. Can I ring you back? mmmmmm Yeah mmmmmyes, got your number mmmmm touch you soon!

Petite Camasette

All approach Pierre, voraciously.

Nic: She's a good girl, isn't she Pierre? Tummy rub, Jo? Roll over!

Mark: Have you had her desexed yet, Nicolle?

Nic: No - it's a job for after the next season.

Now come on everyone, up the other end. Walkies, everyone!
Jo! Come! COME!!!

Jo: See you tomorrow night - Mum's really looking forward to meeting you.
(Move to group)

Nic: Trust me guys -
You're all going to look fabulous!
Note lease Jo

Revere!!! *(All growl at her)*

COME!!!!

Scaramella *(barking - chasing Nicolle to music stands all exit except Nicolle Ruth and Nicolle)*

Ruth: How are you feeling, Nicolle?

Nic: Terrific!

Ruth: Got it out of your system?

Nic: I think I've resolved quite a few things!

Ruth: Life?

Nic: Yes!

Ruth: Love?

Nic: Yes!!!!

Ruth: Relationships?

Nic: YES!!!!!!

Ruth: Why you sing with us?

Nic: yes...? I'll just take myself off for a run! Just once around the block!
Back before you know it!!! RRRRFFFF!!!!

(Exit at a sprint)

Scene 6

Ruth: She's great isn't she, Paul!

Paul: Yes....amazing.....*(into reading TV Guide)*

Ruth: Sometimes I get this funny feeling that my house is going to get robbed - a sort of expectant feeling, almost like intuition, like when you're thinking of someone and the phone suddenly goes, and it's them! Ringing to talk to you!

Paul: What about?

Ruth: Oh, anything. It doesn't matter. *(Paul returns to TV Guide)*.....Paul?

Paul: Yes.

Ruth: Would you.....

Paul: Look, Ruth, I can't - I'm really busy, sorry.

Ruth: You don't even know what I was going to ask you!

Paul: Yes I do!

Ruth: Well, what was it then?

Paul: Ummm... you wanted me to ... to do ... something ... No, sorry, you're right, I've got no idea Ruth, it was just a reflex reaction.

Ruth: Well, what I was going to ask you is a bit personal - I mean, something I think I can trust you with I don't think you'll think it's too unusual.

Ruth: Yes, but I realized that it wasn't very likely that a burglar would come to rob my house with all my lights on and the TV going - so I tried turning off all the appliances and all the lights and sitting on the couch, waiting in the dark.

Paul: You turned the TV off as well?

Ruth: Yes, Paul, I've just explained that I didn't want anything to reveal my human presence in the house.

Paul: You could have just turned the sound down.

ALL: Paul! The light!

Paul: What light?

ALL: From the TV!

Mark: Through the window!

Nic: So what happened?

Ruth: Nothing. I fell asleep.

Paul: You see, if you'd had some interesting program to watch, that wouldn't have happened.

Ruth: The next night, I hid in the closet with a torch and a book. It was very exciting!

Clive: The book?

Ruth: No, the waiting! Wondering what it was going to be like when I heard the sound of breaking glass and the footsteps coming up the stairs. Ooh! I'm getting goose-bumps just thinking about it! Do you want to feel?

Clive: Not really, thanks.

Mark: So Ruth, has Paul given you a definite "NO" yet?

Ruth: Paul?

Paul: It's bad enough having to come here, day after day, and work with you, without being asked to go to your house and do things to your furniture!

Clive: But Paul, you always look like you're having such a nice time in rehearsal.

Paul: That's just my singing face.

Jo: Oh, I've got two of them. Sort of jolly peasant for the fast stuff, and sad nun for the slow bits. I find that covers pretty much all the repertoire.

Clive: And there's what I call the "Song Company Neutral" before you start, and then the look of slightly exhausted satisfaction when you've finished.

Ruth: Could I see that Clive? (*Clive stands, in preparation*)

Mark: No need to get up Clive - it's only us.

Jo: What do you do when you sing, Ruth?

Ruth: Oh, I'm not really sure. I guess I just try to think about the words.

Nic: That sounds far too complicated! (*To Paul*) I haven't got the foggiest idea what I'm singing half the time, have you? (*Paul shrugs*)
What about you, Mark?

Mark: Well I like to think of each piece of music as a sort of window into the human soul. Some are like tiny jewelled stained glass windows tucked away, high beneath a cathedral roof. Others, enormous expanses of plate glass - with a view! - perhaps of snow-capped mountains, or a vast troubled ocean, or perhaps a tiny bay window with a lattice of cascading white roses, and a seat where you can read as the sun sets beyond an inestimable horizon.
(*Pause - all look at him*)

Nymphes, Nappes

Chair dance

Ruth: Well that's all very well, but it still doesn't solve my problem! Paul would make a great burglar - he was a lifesaver - you can trust lifesavers - they're very thorough.

Paul: (*moving to couch to watch TV Ruth*) I really don't mean to be unkind, but you're seriously clogging up my airwaves.

Ruth: Oh, sorry, Paul (I think.)

GUILLAUME (*all exit with chairs except Paul on couch - music fades as they exit*)

Paul: There's nothing like settling down for an evening - just me - and the TV - and my trusty guide. I don't have to think about anything, or work out what to do.
And they give me little breaks so I can get rid of the pins-and-needles, or get a cup of tea..... white with two sugars. And then - BANG!!! - I'm straight back into it! - all alone with the lights and the noises, and it's such a ... such a... RELIEF!

GUILLAUME (*Song begins again, offstage. Ruth enters, unplugs TV and carries it off, as Nicolle enters*)

Paul: Ruth, if you had another interest or a hobby, or even just something decent to watch on TV, you wouldn't have these problems.

Nic: Up you get, Paul. (*Opens out bed*) Beddy-byes!

(*All entering with doona and pillows.*)

Paul: Do I have to?

Jo: Yes, Paul. We're in season. We've got a really big day tomorrow.

Nic: Paul. Bed!

(All get into bed as song finishes and lights fade - only bedside lamps)

Ruth: Paul?

Paul: Yes, Ruth.

Ruth: I though we were friends.

Paul: Not really.

Ruth: Oh, what about last week when we went for coffee?

Paul: When was that?

Ruth: Last Wednesday! In that cafe in Newtown. We had cake.

Paul: Oh, was that you? I thought it was Clive.

Clive: Don't be ridiculous - you know I have a savoury palate.

Ruth: No, it was me! You had that nice **chocolate** cake, remember?! - with **cream**!

Jo: I used to be a pastry chef.

Paul: I remember the cake. I was sure it was Clive.

Petite Camasete

(Singers turn out bedside lamps at end of song)

Lights up for curtain call

Media Release Media Release Media Release

The opera Project Inc.

presents

El Inocente

an incredible and sad tale of innocence and heartlessness

"Not only intriguing. It is also compelling...this is certainly powerful theatre... stylish, surprising, gutsy and intelligent and, as a result, thoroughly engaging."
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Director: Nigel Kellaway
Music: Richard Vella and G.F. Handel
Lighting: Simon Wise
Costumes: Annemaree Dalziel and Nigel Kellaway

Dates

Preview: Tuesday 1st May - all tickets \$10

Wednesday 2nd May - Saturday 12th May

8pm (Sunday 6th at 6pm)

Prices

\$22/\$11 (Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th - all tickets \$10)

Venue

Performance Space - 199 Cleveland Street Redfern

Bookings - **9698 7235** or boxoffice@performancespace.com.au

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every time a world premiere is mooted."* Opera Opera

The opera Project Inc.

Opera / 'opra / opara (It .from L: service, work, a work)

Founded in 1997, The opera Project, is dedicated to the trashing of easy assumptions,
challenging the way we watch, we listen to, we think about our theatre and music -
finding a contemporary voice for our various histories.

All Media Enquiries:

Michaela Coventry on 9698 7235 or 0412 535 548 or michaela@performancespace.com.au

program note:

EL INOCENTE

**an incredible and sad tale
of innocence and heartlessness**

EL INOCENTE is the result of a two year development process exploring contemporary theatrical spectacle in relationship to the opera of the Baroque period (1600 - 1750). Although one of its emphasis is on the musical shape of a 'baroque' work, it in **no** way endeavours to reconstruct a Baroque Opera, in form or content.

The idea of 'facade' concerns us in this project - in which less attention is paid to a 'story revealed', but more to the task of 'enactment' as an aesthetic experience in itself. Our task has been to draw attention to the discrete components that make up the performative act, eschewing the illusion of 'reality' or (more accurately) 'totality' that has been a concern of much of western theatre since the Renaissance.

Like the dramaturgy, the music collides many styles and genres as one would find in opera or feature film. It has its genesis in specific Handel operatic arias, but now the original music by Richard Vella interacts, complements, ignores or collides with Handel's music creating a complex musical web. We are simultaneously experiencing a Baroque opera based on Handel's music and a more contemporary approach to music theatre making. In a certain sense, the music is similar to that found in a road movie. It is neither pastiche nor parody, but is multi-referential - placing the listener into strangely familiar contexts, enabling the work to have multiple layers for interpretation.

Performers:	Regina Heilmann Nigel Kellaway Katia Molino Lynne Murray
Director:	Nigel Kellaway
Original Music:	Richard Vella
Lighting Designer and Production Manager:	Simon Wise
Costumes:	Annemaree Dalzeil and Nigel Kellaway
Assistant to the Director:	Melita Rowston
On-Stage Manager:	Paul Cordeiro
Sound Operation:	Andrew Mackonis
Publicity:	Michaela Coventry
Original Video Footage:	Peter Oldham (edited by Simon Wise)
Photography:	Heidrun Lohr
Publicity Design:	Gail Priest

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

May 7, 2001

by **PETER McCALLUM**

Questions amid theatrical intrigue

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THE AUSTRALIAN

May 14, 2001

by **DEBORAH JONES**

Subversively sumptuous

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El Inocente: A smash of a different kind

James Waites

Realtime June/July 2001

(Reproduced with permission)

If you think of a Handel opera as something akin to an excellent German car model, then *El Inocente* resembles the aftermath of a car smash where the fragmented bits are creatively reassembled, somewhat Frankenstein-like given the mad results. Or, with the campery involved, should that be Frank'n'furter?

The Burgermeister here is ofcourse Nigel Kellaway, our avant-garde's own Colonel Sanders / Krusty the Clown, all Bumptious Bravado, Buggery and Baroque, who decided some years ago that he wanted to cut up the tuneful bourgeois meal we call opera into tiny bits before devouring and then regurgitating it with relish in front of a paying public. 'B' is the new 'D' cup that runneth over in the consuming passion we call cutting-edge theatre, where Braggadocio and Bullshit is laid at our table in a bedazzling feat of D for Deconstruction.

I know this for a fact because a couple of hours before I saw the final performance of *El Inocente* I drove straight through an intersection and into the side of a flash BMW. I staggered into the Performance Space (a bit like a stand-up comedian looking for a skit) only to walk back through the experience under the august helmsmanship of the bewigged Burgemeister himself.

El Inocente collides the spirit of the baroque (more exactly the music of Handel reconsidered by Richard Vella) was the tragic tale of an innocent girl who could well be Erendira from the famous Marquez short story. In the very least, Kellaway admits the 'fabulist' story-line has a South American literary influence.

Collaborating closely with Kellaway in the creation of this new work are performers Regina Heilmann, Katia Molino and Lynne Murray; composer Richard Vella; Simon Wise on lighting design and production; with Melita Rowston and Paul Cordeiro assisting. Most of them have worked with him before, along with other substantial talents, on this series of productions exploring the nature of the artform we call opera.

One attends a Kellaway event with a very real sense of anticipation. He has been one of the leaders of our avant-garde for at least 15 years and in that time participated in the creation of some astounding events. Among them I would include his work with The Sydney Front (*the Pornography of Performance, 1988; Photocopies of God, 1989; Don Juan, 1992*), *The Nuremberg Recital, 1989; This Most Wicked Body, 1994* (a 240-hour performance marathon involving among others restaurateur Gay Bilson, and in a shorter version at the 1998 Adelaide Festival). He also directed for the Song Company the opera *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior* (1997) and has worked with a range of other companies including Stopera, Stalker and Urban Theatre Projects. Since 1997, he has been working on this series called The opera Project. With co-founder Annette Tesoriero and dancer Dean Walsh, they began with *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*, a production I still think to be one of Kellaway's best ever works. It was successful because the story was played out in the actions, the action vivified the story. Even the overt campery had a vital role to play.

Remarking on the inspired convergence of dramatic idea and physical gesture in that work, I noted that Kellaway had "never shied away from the risks and on many occasions he has been punished for the results. While never less that imaginative, it is understandable that not all the experiments would hold".

El Inocente is perhaps more fairly viewed in that light.

For days after seeing the last performance of *El Inocente*, I have been struggling with what to say. It is easy to be smart and parody Kellaway's felicitous imagination and taste for over-the-top imagery (see my introductory paragraphs).

But scouring through dozens of pages of commentary and reviews of his many works I see few have ever been able to adequately grasp what is actually going on. That's fine when we like the work - praise rarely demands (certainly from the artists) the same level of critical interrogation (they're just relieved someone liked it!). But when a new production seems less successful than others we have seen, it's quite a daunting challenge to speculate why?

Having only a short time earlier just missed killing myself and possibly several other people, I could not be sure whether I had been professionally alert enough to pass judgement on this work of art. Was I paying enough attention? Was I really there? The short answer ofcourse is: If the production had enough going on, it would have insisted itself upon even the most distracted imagination. It did not.

What characterises this latest production is the heavy emphasis on story-telling. Large slabs of the action are literally read bey the actors sitting at a long table. These segments actually hold most of the key elements of the narrative which, if enacted, would be seen much more clearly and convincingly to push the story forward.

This displacement might have been deliberate but, so disorientating is it for the audience in this instance, we leave the theatre wondering if we have actually seen anything true. The secret to the art of the stage lies in its 4 dimensions - actor/audience/time/space. Despite thousands of plays written over the centuries, words are not a 'core promise' when budgeting for a work for the stage. Even in Shakespeare, the words decorate the dance upon the ever forward-moving 'pattern action'. While comparing one with the other can prove illuminating, it is not what people say on stage that counts, it's what people do.

We are convinced of a work's veracity because we see the events enacted. We have all experienced bad theatre and wondered why it made so little impact. Denying the audience living breathing 'evidence' of what happened is, unwittingly, an attempt to deny the existence of time as a fundamental component of the artform. And why call on time if you don't need it? Okay, the material has been 'deconstructed', but in this context what is it supposed to mean? Deconstruction is a very powerful tool which calls on a philosophical system to be judged by its own terms. It is based on the idea that no system can embody 'absolute truth' not matter how often this claim may be made. And the only way to test the authenticity of sch claims is to turn the internal critical mechanisms of the system (such as they are) on the system itself. Inevitable the system's grandiose claims at infallibility fall short, and the relative nature of all the truths is the only truth confirmed.

To apply such an endeavour to a genre, as in 'opera', is not so different to the current meaning of 'deconstruction' in the fashion industry where it indicates the showing of seams, flaunting re-bag assembly and op-shop scraps posing as haute-couture. The theoretical 'application' really means 'applique'. What we have in both the frocks of Michelle Janke and *El Inocente* is collage - show and tell, an endeavour of a much lower intellectual order.

I am also bothered by the claim that The opera Project is a project. It implies that some useful by-product exists outside or alongside the actual works produced. If project implies progress, how do we explain that the final work is so much weaker than others in the series? What are we, those in the stalls, meant to have taken away from this research experiment?

This work identifies itself as brave, radical and cutting edge. Unfortunately it is bogged down with formalist cliches - quotation, parody, dislocation, collage, collision, distancing, camp.

To return to the car crash, vehicles are made these days to crumple on impact. So even when one does run straight into a late model German vehicle, there is actually very little impact on one's own body. I drove straight into that car at a considerable speed, but I felt almost nothing. The shock was absorbed by the design components. That is how it was with *El Inocente*. It made almost no impact, almost no lasting impression. This is a far cry from *The Berlioz*, which still lives in my body/mind.

I few days earlier I witnessed an incident on the Jerry Springer show that will also remain buried in my memory (alongside the Mike Tyson ear-bite which I saw live - the still shots were not able to capture the full horror of this momentary descent into the animal kingdom!). On Springer was a man who had, after being turned away by the medical system, cut off his own penis in a desperate attempt to have a body that even faintly resembled the woman he felt himself truly to be.

It wasn't the theatricality of that gesture which struck me as so extraordinary (he had rushed from the family dinner table and hacked it off with a steak knife). It was his preparedness to face his ranting and abusive wife and family, Springer himself, Springer's 'doctor' (a PhD in TV journalism, I think) and a hostile and mocking studio/world-wide audience.

El Inocente is about a young girl, Helena, also forced to suffer at the hands of society (personified by her cruel grandmother and thee many men to whom she is sold for sex). But never once during the production did I feel for her or her predicament. This man who cut off his penis had suffered so much in his life that nothing more could hurt him. He had moved to a new level of existence beyond pain. He went on the show clearly in an act of revenge, to humiliate his wife and family in front of the rest of the world to expose them for what they were. It was an extraordinarily courageous, dare I say it, cutting-edge performance.

Scene 1 - The House

1. HANDEL - HARMONIOUS BLACKSMITH VARIATIONS

Nigel Playing - Audience entering

(Katia Molino, Regina Heilmann, Lynne Murray, Paul Cordeiro sitting at table) BLACKOUT

RH: A light centre stage reveals a house.

2. THE HOUSE

(NK move to table - slow light up)

NK: A house far away from everything, in the heart of the desert, next to a settlement with miserable and burning streets, where even the goats commit suicide from desolation when the winds of misfortune blow.

RH: Helena had just turned fourteen and was languid, soft-boned and far too meek for her age. She was bathing her grandmother when the wind of her misfortune began to blow.

NK: Naked and huge in the marble tub, her grandmother looked like a handsome white whale, floating through the swamps of her past.

(LM/RH move to table cloth - NK move texts/mics - PC offstage for props)

RH: Helena then busied herself sweeping the dark and motley house.

There was bizarre furniture, statues of invented Caesars, chandeliers of teardrops, alabaster angels, a gilded piano, and numerous clocks of unthinkable sizes and shapes.

3. TABLE MUSIC (4mins 30secs)

RH/LM/KM/PC Setting table (NK making up) -

NK: The house had been built by the grandmother's husband, a legendary smuggler whose name was Amadis, by whom she had a son whose name was also Amadis, Helena's father. No one really knows where they came from, or why they were there, but the popular story tells of how Amadis the elder had rescued his beautiful wife, Helena's grandmother, from a house of prostitution, killing a Greek sailor in a knife fight, and then taking her to live forever into the desert.

(NK move to piano)

RH: When the two Amadis men eventually died, the grandmother buried their bodies in the courtyard. She sent away the fourteen barefoot servant girls, and then continued to ruminate on her dreams of grandeur in the shadows of that furtive house, thanks only to the sacrifices of her bastard granddaughter, Helena, whom she had reared since birth.

4. HANDEL - O SLEEP

(RH /KM/LM making up)

(LM/RH/KM exit to change)

5. RECITATIVE

NK: She called to her Granddaughter: Helena!

NK: Take advantage of tomorrow to wash the livingroom rug. It hasn't seen the sun for years. And iron all the clothes before you go to bed, then you'll sleep with a clear conscience. And remember to check the closets carefully - the moths get hungrier on windy nights. And then, with what time you have left, take the flowers out into the courtyard: a breath of fresh air. And whilst you're there, remember to feed the ostrich. And do give the graves some water, my dear. Helena!

KM: (Yes Grandmother)

NK: If the Amadisises arrive, tell them not to come in - There's a gang waiting to kill them!

RH: Helena didn't answer her anymore: she knew that her grandmother was getting lost in her delirium, but she obeyed every order.

When she had finished checking the window bolts and putting out the last lights, she took a candle stick from the dining room and lighted her way to her bedroom.

Overcome by the barbarous chores of the day, Helena didn't have the strength to even get undressed. She put the candlestick on the night table and fell onto her bed asleep .

NK: A short while later the wind of her misfortune came into the bedroom, like a pack of hounds, and knocked the candle over against the curtain.

ALL: FIRE!!!

Scene 2 - Fire

6. FIRE MUSIC (5mins 19secs)

Video 1 - Fire scene

Scene 3 - The Deal

NK: My poor child, life will not be long enough for you to repay me for this mishap - look, we have nothing left!

RH: Helena began to pay it back that very day, when she was taken to the village storekeeper, a skinny and premature widower, who was quite well known in the desert for the good price he would pay for virginity. He examined Helena with scientific austerity. He considered the strength of her thighs, the size of her breasts, the diameter of her hips: immature - not worth more than a hundred pesos.

NK: One hundred pesos for this girl? No sir, that shows a great lack of respect for virtue! Look, she's completely new!! She's gorgeous!! Besides, this girl has caused me damages amounting to more than a million pesos. At your rate she'd need two hundred years to pay me back.

RH: OK - 200 pesos

NK: In cash - plus provisions!

I'll wait for you over there. *(Throw KM the sheet)*

RH: And so he led her by the hand to the back room as if he were taking her to school.

7. NE MEN CON L'OMBRE

Video 2 - The deal / Rape scene Intro 22sec - Aria 2.13 - Playout 26sec

(LM on back rostra, back lit)

(Playout)

RH: She lost consciousness, and there remained as if fascinated by moonbeams from a fish floating through the storm air.

Scene 4 - On The Road

RH: And then, when there was no other man left in the village who could pay again for Helena's love, her grandmother took her to where the smugglers were. They made the trip on the back of a truck in the open, with what little had been left by the fire.

And men came from far and wide to be acquainted with the newness of Helena!
Behind them - more men, gambling tables, food stands and a photographer on a bicycle!

8. ON THE ROAD (2 mins) RH singing

LM slowly appearing on ramp, moving to seating - joined by KM

NK bicycle solo across seating

RH: Six months soon passed

NK: Well, if things keep going as well as this, she will have paid back her debt in eight years, seven months and eleven days.

9. ARIA - O JOVE!

LM moving slowly criss-crossing seats, sleepwalking, and finally exiting behind seating

NK playing piano obbligato

KM solo - left exhausted on seats

NK: That's all for today, boys. Tomorrow morning at nine.

I said, that's all, you fuckers! What do you reckon the girl's made of, iron?
I'd like to see you in her place, you perverts, arseholes!

Scene 5 - Ulises

10. LOVE SCENE (*Strings and harp*)

RH: And then she saw him as large as life, all by himself in the dark empty space.
He had an unreal aura about him - a furtive and gilded adolescent with lonely maritime eyes.
He seemed to be visible in the shadows only because of the very glow of his angelic beauty.

NK: What happened to your wings?

RH: The one who had wings was my grandfather, but no-one believed it.

NK: Well I do. Put them back on, and come back again tomorrow morning - 9 o'clock - first in line.

Video 3 (final murder scene in slow-motion - 3 mins)

RH: *(on mic)* My name is Ulises.

KM: So?

RH: I've got money.

KM: You were supposed to wait in line.

RH: I did! I've waited all night!

KM: And now you'll have to wait again, until tomorrow.

NK: It's twenty years since it last rained. (*screams*) Such a terrible storm: the rain all mixed with sea water. The next morning the house was full of fish and snails. I saw a giant glowing manta ray floating through the air.

KM: Don't worry. She's always crazy when she's asleep.

RH: I was going crazy wanting to see you. You know they're right what they say, you are very pretty.

KM: But I'm dying.

RH: My father says that people who die in the desert don't go to heaven, but to the sea.

KM: I've never seen the sea.

RH: It's like the desert, but with water.

KM: Then you can't walk on it?

RH: My father knew a man that could, but that was a long time ago.

KM: Listen, if you come very early tomorrow you can be first in line.

RH: But, I'm leaving with my father at dawn.

KM: Won't you be coming back this way?

NK: Who can tell?

KM: All right, then. Give me the money.

(NK add live piano)

KM: What's the matter? Is this your first time?

KM/RH: Then breathe slowly.

RH: It's always like this the first time. And then,

RH/KM: you don't even notice.

RH: What's your name, again?

NK: Ulises.

RH: That's a gringo name.

NK: No it's not, it's a sailor's name.

RH: It's like you were made of gold all over, but you smell of flowers.

NK: That must be the oranges. We carry the birds to throw people off the track, but what we're really doing is smuggling oranges across the border.

RH: Oranges aren't contraband.

NK: Our's are. Each one is worth fifty thousand pesos.

RH: What I like about you is the serious way you make up nonsense.

NK: The grandmother ranted on with great shouts and stubborn passion for several hours. But Ulises didn't hear her as Helena loved him so much and so truthfully. And then she loved him again for half the price while her grandmother was raving, and kept on loving him for nothing until dawn.

(Slow fade of video and sound - then sudden blast of white light and sound)

Scene 6 - The Mission

11a. THE MISSION

RH: A group of missionaries holding up their crucifixes stood shoulder to shoulder in the middle of the desert. A wind as fierce as the wind of misfortune shook their habits. Behind them was the mission.

RH: You shall not pass beyond this line!!

NK: The desert doesn't belong to anyone

RH: It belongs to God, and you are violating His sacred laws with your filthy business.

NK: I don't understand your mysteries, my son.

RH: That child is under-age.

NK: But she's my granddaughter.

RH: So much the worse!! You will put her under our care: for we have the legal and holy right to keep the girl until she comes of age. Or until she marries.

11b ABDUCTION

RH: Three days after that encounter, the grandmother and Helena were sleeping in a village near the mission.

A group of stealthy, mute bodies creeping along like an infantry patrol, slipped into the tent. Novices, strong and young, their rough cloth habits seeming to glow in the moonlight. Without making a sound they cloaked Helena in a mosquito net, picked her up without waking her, and carried her off like a large fragile fish caught in a lunar net.

PC: You'll rot in hell !!!

NK: Ofcourse, the grandmother didn't rot, did she? - NO!!
She set up her tent across from the mission, and sat there waiting, like a solitary warrior laying siege to a fortified city.
Let's see who get tired first, you or me!

Scene 7 - The Wedding

12. HARP

(LM appears on bridge, backlit - moving to seats)

RH: Helena, however, had not lost a single night's sleep since they had taken her to the mission.

They'd dressed her in a hermit's rough cassock and given her a bucket of white-wash and a broom so she could whitewash the stairs everytime someone went up or down. It was mule's work, but Helena felt as every day were Sunday, after the fearsome galley that had been her bed.

Then, one morning she heard music that was like a light even more diaphanous than the light of the desert. With no one to hear her, she spoke for the first time since she had entered the mission:

"I am happy."

(LIGHTING CHANGE)

NK: *(at table)* During that time the missionaries were combing the desert in search of pregnant concubines, in order to get them married.

For several days the grandmother saw their little truck return, loaded with pregnant Indian women heading for the mission, but she failed to recognise her opportunity. She recognised it on Pentecost Sunday, when a boy passed, innocent of heart, dressed in rags, carrying an Easter candle with a silk bow in his hand, about to take his first communion.

NK: Tell me, boy, how much are they paying you?

RH: Five pesos

NK: *(moving to piano)* Well, I'll give you twenty. But not to make your first communion - no, no, no, no, no! - to marry my granddaughter.

(KM appears on Bridge)

13. HANDEL - A MIO COR

(Intro):

RH: And so Helena was married in the courtyard of the mission in her hermit's cassock, and without even knowing the name of the boy her grandmother had bought for her.

She had found herself once more under the spell that had dominated her since birth.

And when they asked her what her free, true, definitive will was, she didn't even give a sigh of hesitation:

KM: I want to leave. But not with him with my grandmother.

ARIA - A SECTION

Interlude:

Bar 1 KM: ULISES!!!!
 2 No, don't look at me! I'm horrible!
 3 GO AWAY!
 4 RH: I only came to show you this.
 5 Look here, Helena!

(Playout):

With three of these we could take a trip around the world.
Helena, come with me!
We'll leave tonight,
I'll be out there calling like an owl.

NK: NO!!! SHE'S MINE!!!!

Scene 8 - Back on the Road

14. DESERT AND WIND

(Chase scene - RH/NK from table to wall) 4 sets of 8 beats

NK: Welcome home Helena!

(LM to KM - KM onto table - draping her in shawl - 3 sets of 8 beats

Video 4 - Table set up (2.00 mins)

RH: Helena and her grandmother stayed in that border town under the protection of the public forces until the grandmother's treasure chests were bursting. And then they left the desert and headed toward the sea.

Never had such opulence been seen gathered together in that realm of poor people. It was a procession of ox-drawn carts on which cheap replicas of the paraphernalia lost in the disaster of the mansion were piled - not just the imperial busts and rare clocks, but also a second hand piano and a gramophone and the records of nostalgia. A team of Indians took care of the cargo and a band of musicians announced their triumphal arrival in every village.

(NK dance begins)

The grandmother travelled on a litter in the shade of a church canopy. Helena was beside her, dressed in gaudy fabrics and trinkets, but with a dog chain on her ankle that her grandmother had used to hitch her to the bed ever since she had last tried to run away.

NK: You've got no reason to complain!
The time will come: I will die - and you'll never again be at the mercy of men. You'll have your own home in an important city. You'll be free. You'll be happy. You'll be a noble lady. A lady of quality, favoured and honoured by the highest authorities. Ships' captains will send you postcards from every port in the world. Your house will be more important than the presidential palace - the affairs of government will be discussed there - the fate of the nation will be decided.

15. TORNAMI

(RH setting sparklers)

(Playout):

KM: ULISES!!

RH: Ulises woke suddenly in his house on the orange plantation. He had heard Helena's voice so clearly that he was looking for her in the shadows of his room. He made a bundle of his clothing and left quickly. He didn't need to ask anyone where Helena was. He crossed the desert hiding in passing trucks, and found her in a seaside town.

RH: Helena was asleep, chained to her bed, like a drowned person on the beach. Her grandmother raged on, lost in her memories.

NK: That was when the Greek ship arrived - sailors! - Greek sailors!!
It was a crew of madmen who made the women happy and paid them with sponges, living sponges that walked about the houses moaning like patients in a hospital and making the children cry so they could drink up the tears.
I was singing with the sailors that night and I thought it was an earthquake when HE arrived. Stronger, taller, much more of a man than my Amadis! With a parrot on his shoulder and a cannibal-killing blunderbuss.
I felt his breath of death as he stood opposite me and said:

NK: "I've been around the world a thousand times,

RH: Are you awake?

KM: Yes.

NK: And seen a thousand women of every nation,

RH: What's she doing?

KM: She's just raving.

NK: And so I can tell you on good authority, that you are the haughtiest,

KM: Go back to sleep.

RH: I can't!
NK: And the most obliging the most beautiful woman on earth."
My man!
KM: Would you dare to kill her?
RH: Who knows? ... Would you?
KM: I can't. She's my Grandmother.
RH: *(taking cake)* And so, Ulises bought a pound of rat poison.

Scene 9 - The Birthday Party

16. PARTY MUSIC PRELUDE (1 minute)

(KM set up end of table for party - LM catch NK - takes off his blindfold - RH to table - light candles on cake)

NK: *(grabbing KM)* You brazen devil! How dare you set foot in this place!
RH: Happy Birthday!

17. FELLINI WAITERS

*(LM /RH/KM as waiters. (PC with props on trolley)
RH lighting sparklers, KM at far end of table, LM standing behind her.)*

18. STRING LAMENT

(RH lighting sparklers)

NK: I went crazy! My God, I went crazy!! I put bars on the bedroom door so he couldn't get in. I put the dresser and table against the door and then the chairs on the table. But all he had to do was give a little knock: the defences all fall apart, the chairs fall off the table by themselves, the table and dresser separate by themselves, the bars move out of their slots by themselves. I thought I was going to die, soaked in the sweat of fear:
Begging for the door to open without opening,
For him to enter without entering,
For him never to go away but never to come back either,
So I wouldn't have to kill him.
I warned him and he laughed.
Until he opened his eyes in terror, saying "Agh, queen! Agh, queen!!"
But his voice wasn't coming from his mouth - It came from the cut my knife had made in his throat.
Helena, what day is it?
KM: Thursday.
NK: Thursday?.....but I want to put on a Sunday frock!
I have never had such an urge to have my photograph taken!

RH: She's eaten enough rat poison to kill an elephant!

KM: You couldn't kill a hamster!

RH: It was only then that Helena noticed the gunpowder wick running from the piano, through the underbrush, and then into the darkness. She ran to where Ulises was, and with tight hearts they both watched the little blue flame.

(Light from under table lighting NK in photo pose)

(RH slams piano lid)

NK: It's the work of the evil one! Pianos don't explode just like that.

A shipwreck. A fucking shipwreck!

Now we'll have to begin all over again - *(to LM)* Helena, you owe me!

KM: Ulises!

NK: Stupid boy! The only thing you've managed to do is increase her debt!

RH: Ulises eyes clouded over with anxiety,
looking over the things in the kitchen: the hanging pots...

KM: the strings of garlic....

RH: THE CARVING KNIFE.....

Scene 10 - Murder

19. DA TEMPESTE (A section only)

(LM on seats)

NK: Boy! Have you gone mad?!

You fucking son of a bitch! Oh yes, you do have the face of the traitor angel!

Scene 11 - The Final Escape

RH: Helena leant over her grandmother, scrutinising her, but not touching her. When she was convinced that she was dead, her face suddenly acquired all the maturity which her twenty years had not given her. With quick and precise movements, she took the vest containing her grandmother's gold and left the tent.

NK: Ulises shouted to her, but he got no answer. He dragged himself to the entrance of the tent and saw Helena running along the shore away from the city. He made his last effort to chase her with painful shouts (no longer those of a lover ... those of a son.) But he was overcome by the terrible effort of having killed a woman... alone. The grandmother's Indian servants found him lying face down on the beach, weeping from solitude and fear.

RH: Helena was running into the wind, swifter than a deer, and no voice in the world could stop her. Without turning her head she ran past the saltpetre pits, the talcum craters, the torpor of the shacks, until the natural science of the sea ended and the desert began.

NK: And she kept on running beyond the arid winds and the never-ending sunsets, and was never heard of again.

Nor was the slightest trace of her misfortune ever found.

20. *FREEDOM* - harp solo

Video 5 Industrial, Beach etc

(NK and RH covering table with sheets and then exiting)

LM and KM left on stage as lights fade - KM washing off her makeup.

Australia Council Acquittal

1. DETAILS ABOUT THE PROJECTS OR ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

EL INOCENTE

an incredible and sad tale of innocence and heartlessness

The project evolved over three stages - two of the earlier development processes took place in 1999 / 2000:

a. In 1999 we received initial development funding from the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council for the first stage of the project. The director (Nigel Kellaway) selected a short story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The incredible and sad tale of innocent Erendira and her heartless grandmother*, and spent several months savagely editing the forty page story and restructuring it for theatrical treatment. His interest was not in enacting the story, but treating it as a narration of the story - a structure on which to build music and visual elements, but not literal representations. Kellaway selected a random collection of operatic arias (with English and Italian lyrics that were largely irrelevant to the Marquez text), overtures and keyboard music by George Frideric Handel, and structured them into the text. As the arias were to be performed live by a coloratura soprano, their accompaniments required considerable rearrangement for the available instrument (in this case a stylistically inappropriate piano). Nigel Kellaway and soprano Lynne Murray rehearsed these arias well before the main development period began in the rehearsal room and theatre. It was the intention of the process to pay a lot more attention to the development of the lighting as an integral component of the work. Lighting designer, Simon Wise and Nigel Kellaway met often in the very early stages of the process to discuss concepts, many of which impacted on the development of the draft text. The performers Regina Heilmann and Katia Molino joined the process, spending just five days in a rehearsal room further developing and editing the text 'on the floor'. What evolved was a largely read narration of the story, with the performers acting almost as stagehands, occasionally moving into specific character portrayal. The emphasis was on the 'industry' of performance, rather than psychologically coherent roles. Simon Wise was present for every moment of this rehearsal week, and the lighting and staging developed in tandem with the physical and vocal material. The company moved into the Performance Space on 3rd January 2000 for a 12 day Bump-in. The focus here was on the lighting and production. The performers worked literally as stagehands in this central period of the process. Once the simple staging had been built, we began at page 1 of the text and slowly assembled the theatrical elements of word, music and lighting. The time available to us meant that short cuts and quick solutions to problems were unnecessary - we had the luxury of trying many alternative staging and lighting solutions, sometimes spending up to eight hours on a single two minute section. The performative material was further developed in the context of the technical solutions. The results of this process were publicly presented at The Performance Space to an invited audience of 135, after which feedback was encouraged, and enthusiastically proffered by the audience.

b. We received funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts under the 2000 Theatre Program to complete the work later in 2000. However this was effected by the company's inability to attract funding from the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council in the round that impacted on that particular

project application. In order to acquit the NSW Ministry funding in 2000, we continued development on the project as follows:

Composer Richard Vella had seen the first development showing in January 2000, watching it with a keen eye on the musical potential of the emerging work. Richard and Nigel had immediate and lengthy discussion on the future directions. Richard began composition on the score in early March. When news was released that the Australia Council was not to fund the production in 2000, we decided that the Ministry funding would be best spent in the development of the musical content with an eye to future production. A decision was made to retain a lot of the originally used Handel arias, and to embed them in an expansive original sound score. What emerged was an almost through-composed score, somewhat like a feature film score

Richard Vella explained his approach in his program notes for the October showing:

The music for El Inocente collides many styles and genres as one would find in opera or feature film. The music in the previous development presentation of El Inocente relied heavily on Handel's operatic arias. In tonight's presentation the original music interacts, complements, ignores or collides with Handel's music creating a complex musical web. The listener is simultaneously listening to a Baroque opera based on Handel's music and a more contemporary approach to music theatre making. In a certain sense, the music is similar to that found in a road movie. It is neither pastiche nor parody, but is multi-referential, placing the listener into strangely familiar contexts. This enables the work to have multiple layers for interpretation.

As the music began to take shape, it had an inevitable impact on the development of the text. Several sections were condensed, re-ordered, re-written - whilst careful attention was made to articulating the extant narrative. An expansion of the already elaborate lighting design of the January showing involved the introduction of projected video images onto the set, sourced from Peter Oldham's footage of the January showing and digitally edited by Simon Wise and Nigel Kellaway. The results are a "ghosting" effect of the stage action, as well as providing additional colour texture to the lighting design. For the purposes of the presentation the company employed only three performers - Nigel Kellaway, Regina Heilmann and soprano Lynne Murray - for a two week period of rehearsal and further development in the theatre with Lighting Designer Simon Wise. We were careful not to waste money in replicating the discoveries of the January development process. The outcomes of the development process were presented publicly at the Performance Space on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th October, to an invited audience totalling approximately 150.

C. The full production of *EL INOCENTE* staged in May 2001, supported by the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council and herein acquitted, developed as follows:

Composer Richard Vella completed his radical resettings of all the selected extant Handel arias (only two had been treated in 2000) He also rewrote much of the "scene music" to include some of the previously spoken narrative material with Regina Heilmann's singing voice, at times in duet with the soprano voice. The result was a through-composed score for the production.

Designer Annemaree was brought in to create the costume for soprano Lynne Murray - a massive 18th century "construction". This was made financially possible only by the assigning of her students from the School of Contemporary Arts, University of Western Sydney, the hundreds of hours of detailing as part of their course work under her guidance. The theatre foyer in the week before the season looked a sweatshop, with ten students at work on the single costume.

The rehearsal period enabled a developing of the soprano role - integrating it fully into the production, detailing its relationship with the actions, whilst retaining its "outside/observer's" role to the narrative - almost like a Greek chorus, reflecting the Baroque opera traditions of the work.

In reintroducing Katia Molino into the project, we were able to further refine the text, shifting still further from the structure of the Marquez original. We are now in a position to address the appropriate copyright issues.

The completed production saw a drawing together of all the components that had been developed in relative isolation over the previous two years - the lighting technologies, music, video, scenography and the full range of Katia Molino and Nigel Kellaway's physical performance.

The development and production season was an ideal project with which to introduce Melita Rowston to the work and workings of the company as Assistant to the Artistic Director (as a beneficiary under the Music Theatre Mentorship Initiative of the Theatre and Music Funds). Having now remounted and toured *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*, Melita is working on *The Audience and Other Psychopaths* in a strong dramaturgical role (as well as managing the director's flights of fancy and general workaholism).

Performers:	Regina Heilmann, Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino Lynne Murray
Director:	Nigel Kellaway
Composer:	Richard Vella (and G.F.Handel)
Lighting Designer / operator / Production Manager:	Simon Wise
Costume Designers:	Annemaree Dalziel and Nigel Kellaway
Assistant to the Director:	Melita Rowston (funded under a joint initiative of the Theatre and Music Funds - Mentorship Program)
"on"stage Manager:	Paul Cordeiro
Sound Operator:	Andrew Mackonis
Video:	Peter Oldham (footage) Simon Wise and Nigel Kellaway (Editing)

PERFORMANCE SEASON:	PERFORMANCE SPACE 199 Cleveland Street Redfern NSW Wednesday 2nd - Saturday 12th May 2001
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2. VALUE AND BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT / ACTIVITIES

The principle value of the grant was in seeing the final development and production a new work. One of the dangers of long professional experience is that, when time runs short on a process, old 'tried and true' solutions creep into the finished product - the work begins to look formulaic. At the outset of this long process we set ourselves particular problems to explore, and glanced past many components that would be essential to an immediately finished product. By this final stage of the development we were absolutely prepared to assemble the many parts of our exploration and present them to an audience.

The performance season of *El Inocente* meant that The opera Project were able to rebuild its audience after a two year period of "darkness" (the last public season was *Tristan* in May 1999).

The response by both our audience and the press was fairly extreme. Many felt that it was the most accessible work to date. This is probably due to the strong linear narrative of the work. The

Marquez text was a 'hook' on which to hang our exploration. Any text might have done the trick, but we appear to have chosen wisely. The mechanics of the narrative are simple, and the emphasis of Marquez' writing is on description rather than dialogue. He draws such a richly evocative scene that we were able to leave such description to the words and create our own theatrical space in juxtaposition. This handling of the narrative has drawn most favourable feedback from our audience - the autonomy of the text (but eschewing primacy), the sparseness of the actors' performances, the independence of the theatrical space and technical exploration from the narrative.

Once again The opera Project has been able to assemble an ensemble of mature, virtuosic and highly experienced artists, that are able to take absolute responsibility for their various roles in the process. The calibre of the company's performers continues to draw praise from our audience. The continuity of personnel over the years also enables an ongoing development of process shared by and benefiting all participants. Our audience is also beginning to recognise, understand and appreciate our mission.

The response to the musical component was interesting. Richard Vella's score has a gigantic impact on the space and the overall structure of the work. It drew appreciation from the music audience, but some consternation from some of the more theatre and performance oriented audience. Some had problems with the filmic nature of the music - how it proactively supports the action and text. Perhaps they expect more irony. Perhaps they want the music to play a more secondary role, not intruding on "the theatre". To answer these problems candidly - they missed the point.

Press response was certainly mixed as the attached reviews demonstrate. But it seems that the work of The opera Project continues to draw passionate comment.

3. SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF THE PROJECT/ACTIVITIES

El Inocente is the first work of The opera Project to feature such a strongly through-composed original musical score. Although it should be noted that this is not necessarily the highest priority (or even an interest) for all our work, *El Inocente* succeeds in its examination of Baroque opera. The completed score contains all the wild juxtaposition of stylistic extremes that encapsulates the theatre of the Baroque period, translated across centuries to find its position in contemporary culture.

Over the first development process in January 2000 we concentrated much more on the technical aspects of the staging and lighting. A valuable outcome was in how the lighting designer, Simon Wise, was able to contribute to the overall development of the work, rather than 'pointing lights at other artists' work'.

The success of the project has been very much due to Simon's many years experience of our work and the maturity of the all the artists involved, and their patience and ability to take responsibility for their own tasks and to respond to the input of all their collaborators.

Although The opera Project tends to eschew "sets" in their design, preferring to feature the "room" in which they and their audience meet, design is a crucial part of the work. In this final stage of development all the design components were highly refined - stage properties, simple structures, projection surfaces and video, lighting and costume.

The work is now in a "logical" and economical state to tour.

The budget on the project was carefully monitored. The efficiency of Simon Wise as production manager and Nigel Kellaway as company administrator, brought several budget points in well under budget. The resulting surplus will enable The opera Project to keep its office open in the

several months before its next public season, and to promote the completed work nationally and internationally, so insuring the investment of the funding bodies in the project. Peter Oldham filmed the production over two nights and an edited video will soon be ready. After the season we were also able to take the live music components into a recording studio, and a complete CD of the sound will be completed soon. The Video with the CD will be valuable promotional tools.

As is too often the case, houses were initially disappointing. Our publicist was also appointed as publicist for Performance Space, at the time she was working on our show. There were problems and benefits in this situation. Certainly it meant that The opera Project was well featured in all Performance Space general publicity, but there were early teething problems in reconciling responsibilities for a number of different projects' exposure. These problems have been examined closely, and lessons learnt.

The opera Project does not feel that *El Inocente* has played anywhere near its optimum audience in Sydney and we are endeavouring to remount the work in 2002, at an alternative venue that might attract a strong music theatre audience. The management of Performance Space is keen to support us in this endeavour. We will be meeting soon with Performing Lines, to discuss the current opportunities. The Brisbane Powerhouse (to which we recently toured *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*) has expressed strong interest in the work. We have also made recent contact with producers in the USA who are keen to promote the companies work to several cities.

The opera Project Inc.

EL INOCENTE
May 2001
FINANCIAL REPORT

EXPENDITURE

Salaries	N. Kellaway (Performer)	3250	
	R. Heilmann (Performer)	3250	
	K. Molino (Performer)	3250	
	S. Wise (Production Manager)	3250	
	P. Cordeiro (Stage Manager)	2150	
	A. Mackonis (Sound operator)	832.50	
	N. Kellaway (Director)	2200	
	Administrator	1200	
	Bumpin/out crew	1020	20402.50
Fees	L. Murray (Performer)	2550	
	R. Vella (Composer)	2000	
	S. Wise (Lighting Designer)	500	
	M. Coventry (Publicist)	2500	
	A. Dalziel (Costume Designer)	500	8050.00
Production	Theatre Hire	7500	
	Rehearsal Venue	200	
	Theatre electricity	433.09	
	Sets and Properties	531.03	
	LX hire & costs	2355.10	
	Video creation & hire	372.23	
	Costumes	336.61	
	Piano moving and tuning	440	
	Music and sound hire	495	12663.06
Administration	Postage/Tel/Stationary	2551.03	
	Public liability	984.50	
	Oncosts 10%of \$20402	2040	5575.53
Advertising	Advert/distribution	862.95	
	SMH ad	882	
	Postage	130.91	
	Design fee/Printing	2307.55	
	Photography	600	
	Video documentation	943.25	
	CD Dubs	124.00	
	Opening night entertainment	175.70	6026.36
TOTAL EXPENDITURE			52717.45

INCOME

Box Office	4154
Program donations	317.85

Interest
AUSTRALIA COUNCIL - THEATRE FUND

906.89
49800

TOTAL INCOME

55178.75

SURPLUS

2461.30

**I have often been criticised for not bringing a director onboard
when I am performing in a work.
Why would I want to? I trust myself.
I have a particular vision for a work,
and what director would want to be constrained by my vision?
Ofcourse, I am assuming that any interesting director thinks as an "auteur".
Then I am criticised for performing in the works that I am directing.
This is necessity. I am an actor, and I want to perform.
And so I devise works that I can perform in.
In the past 20 years I have been invited only twice
to perform in works by other directors -
one experience (in 1986) was collaborative and good;
the other (in 1995) was a disaster.
I would love to be directed by a strong director, but I am not asked.**

**I am so often asked to direct works authored and performed by other artists.
Sometimes they are also directors in their "other life".
Do they trust their vision and technique?
Are they caught up in that "division of labour"
ethic that insists that you are either an "actor" or a "director"? - how very NIDA!
The "director/actor/manager" makes many creative compromises.
But there are many many actors that have worked with me over the years
that trust that I really understand what is happening onstage because I join them there,
and they are willing, trusted, able and honoured to take that added responsibility
for what they are doing each night.
My philosophy on this:
"you win some - you lose some", "swings and roundabouts".**

LECTURE

AGNSW - MAKING CONNECTIONS - OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE - MAY 9, 2001

The development of theatre, contemporary performance and the visual arts over all of history (including the past 100 years) are parallel stories. Theatre ofcourse involves many mediums - literature, music, design, physical movement, to name just a few - and so ofcourse has enjoyed or suffered a dialogue with the changes and developments with those discrete art forms. I am not here today to deliver a quick potted history of theatre in relationship to contemporary visual arts practice. I am not an academic - and, anyway, there libraries full of books that address the subject much more learnedly than I could in an hour.

No - I am here to talk briefly about the things that interest or concern me in my job as a theatre maker. It's nice to be talking about these things outside a theatre - in a building dedicated largely to another art genre. And so I will probably reflect on how the visual arts impact on my work. This will not be a thesis - merely a series of reflections, in no particular order. A bit like the theatre I make, the meaning of what I have to say will be in the chance resonances that these ideas might have for you individually.

My journey in the world of theatre has not been a simple linear narrative. It has been a road determined by chance, sudden interests, frustrations, slowly emerging patterns, reacquaintances with lost practices.

My initial explorations into arts practice were at a very young age as a serious young piano student. Music was my first "language-other-than-English" It spoke on its own terms, had its own grammar and vocabulary and was a readable/written language. But it was untranslatable - a totally abstract form that spoke only about itself. I still speak the language fluently, and I often find myself thinking in "music", rather than in some other language. I pursued this particular linguistic study through to university, where I majored in piano performance ("spoken" music) and composition ("creative writing")

At the same time I was studying dance - the usual culprits of classical ballet and 'so-called' contemporary dance. In those early days I tended to keep the worlds of the body (dance) and the intellect (music) fairly separate.

At the age of round 23, I realized that my career as a pianist and composer was not coming even close to paying the rent. Also I was beginning to feel that I had other things to say, that music couldn't adequately express alone. At that ridiculously late age, I found work as a dancer, and with that a whole new range of challenges and frustrations. Making beautiful shapes became a tad boring. I began to feel I was losing part of my voice. I was then lucky to score a job for 4 years in Sydney with Kai Tai Chan's ONE EXTRA COMPANY. This was a revelation. It wasn't like dancing at all, though that was the discipline we rehearsed every day. It was a hyper-theatrical approach to dance - where the ideas being discussed were infinitely more important than a beautiful body line and a pointed foot. It was much more conceptual. Also the voice was freely employed - but not quite like an actor attempting emotional verisimilitude. What I discovered was an economy of expression. You have something to say - you choose the most effective mode of expression - whether it be a gesture, a word, a song, a change of light focus, a sudden lifting of the "fourth wall" that can fictionally separate the performer from their audience. There was suddenly a whole smorgasbord of devices that I was permitted to choose from, quite freely.

Now I don't call my work dance, though I might employ dance technique in a particular work. I call my work more generally "Theatre". I call myself an actor. As a director, I tend to make my work from scratch, rather than interpreting other people's "writing" - so I could borrow from the world of film, and call myself an "auteur". I am still a pianist, and some of my work might involve me as an actor at the keyboard. My own company, an ensemble of virtuosic artists specializing in a variety of skills, is called THE oPERA PROJECT. But we don't make work that most would describe as "opera". We spell our name with a lower-case "o". In our case "opera" means simply and literally "a work" - from the same Latin root shared by words such as "operation" - exactly what those Italians had in mind in 1600 when they called their new theatre work "opera".

One often important component of our work is, indeed, music and the human voice, but that is not our only or primary concern. We are a contemporary performance ensemble that interrogates both operatic and wider theatrical forms.

SONS OF CLOVIS - TRISTAN

Upstairs in the Gallery at street level, there is a particular painting. It is certainly not the greatest work in the collection, nor is it a contemporary work. So what is it that draws me to it, and why do I want to talk about it in the context of a contemporary art course?

SLIDE of SONS OF CLOVIS 11

The painting I refer to is SONS OF CLOVIS 11 - painted by the French artist Evariste Luminais in 1880.

It is a large painting - nearly 2 x 3 metres. The frame is like looking through a window or into a proscenium arched stage - how extraordinary that there is sea and coastline within the walls of an art gallery. Two brothers lying injured on a raft, their Achilles tendons slashed. And what a raft! A bed head with princely cushions - a small shrine with a Madonna and child. The background, depicting the shore line and far in the distance a monastery on a cliff top, is a bit like a roughly painted stage backdrop of the late 19th century. The water becomes less and less naturalistic as it recedes into the background. It has none of the emotional drive of a Turner - it is all quite cool, in fact.

What attracts me to this painting? The deep shadows cast over the two principal characters, whilst the backdrop is brightly lit. How the image captures the poignancy of a moment that communicates to the viewer, who does not necessarily understand the exact plight of these boys. In fact ignorance of the story heightens the dramatic moment - something bizarre is going on, but the possibilities are endless. All we know is that young boys don't normally float around on bed-like rafts with their feet in bandages.

In 1999 I very loosely interpreted Wagner's opera TRISTAN UND ISOLDE. The central design element of the work was of a dying Tristan and his doctor/psychiatrist floating on a barge around the open stage. The barge looked remarkably similar to the one we have here.

Some audience, who happen to know the painting, immediately recognized the reference. But they received the image very differently. It was now three dimensional, a pliable "interactive" sculpture, and it physically entered the theatre space in which they were sitting. Over the space of an hour and a quarter very little happened narratively - Tristan and Isolde certainly never made love, nor did they bother to die. Ideas were fought over, a lot of music was performed. I suppose it was a bit like an operatic "Waiting for Godot".

VIDEO - TRISTAN - opening barge entrance

My favourite theatre space is a large room. The audience enters this space to share it with the performers. The traditional theatre space with its separation of seated auditorium and stage is such a different experience. It allows the audience to retreat into its private space and play as voyeurs, much like the cinema. In my shared space, the audience are much more protagonists. They are aware that the theatrical act cannot exist without their presence. I tend not to favour theatrical sets that seduce an audience into believing they are in some "other" space. I prefer simple furniture that reminds the audience that they are in a real space on this particular evening, and the performers are sharing that space with them. In this way my work is partly self-reflective - it talks about itself as a real occurrence - a moment in real time in which extraordinary things happen, and extraordinary things are discussed.

Theatre is a visual medium - first and foremost. It is not like a poem that operates solely in the internalised space of the reader. It is not a novel that demands the visual imagination of the

reader. It is a place of physical dialogue between the performer and the audience. The most immediate of the senses employed in the theatre is that of sight. A light reveals a performer. At the moment of a blackout on stage the audience is abruptly reminded of how they perceive action and events - through their eyes. The stage black-out is not just a way to disguise the getting from one place to another, or moving the furniture or signalling the end of a scene - it is a visual assault.

Why do I want to make theatre? I am obsessed with the idea of a real body physicalized in a constructed space and reality.

I want to invent an extraordinary space - a space that is so foreign to that which my audience experiences in their daily lives, in which ideas are thrown around that would not normally be contemplated. I don't like to use the word "escapism", as it suggests laziness and irrelevance. The theatrical act is utterly real! It can be confronting because it is alternative, surprising.

The theatrical moment is an ephemeral event. No physical remnant survives the moment. It exists only because an audience witnesses. Still, I might suggest it is not much different to what exists in this building. When the front doors close and the lights go out at night, what do all these artefacts mean? - nothing. They may hang silently on the walls or sit in the space quite permanently, but for me they only exist at the moment someone sees them. After that they are merely memories of the experience of "being there" - like vapour.

The process of making a work for the theatre is an interesting one, because the all important protagonist (the reason for it all) is absent in the rehearsal room. But for me, the audience at this time is a powerfully imagined presence - I have to be constantly creating them in the rehearsal room. This means that when the moment of real performance comes, I (the performer) feel myself strongly present amongst the audience. I find myself watching myself, chatting with myself, discussing each moment with my fellow audience members.

I've mentioned the dark onstage. But what about light? In an enclosed windowless room - the theatre space - we have darkness. The purpose of light is not merely to point it at the actors so we can see what they are doing. It is about shaping the entire space, creating illusion, and constructing a sense of the passage of time. Light in the theatre is not static, as we experience in most of our loungerooms at home - we have the ability to constantly move light sources, intensities, types, colours. For me lighting is so closely related to the use of music in the theatre - not because they provide atmosphere (a kind of visual and aural wallpaper), but because they both shape the delivery of theatrical information through their manipulation of time. They can alter the audiences perception of normal time. Think about the time you may sit and ponder a Rosco black painting - what fills that time? It is that experience of reflected light on the painting - it is never quite static - our eyes seem to play tricks, and so we become aware of the passage of time - rapid moments of perception, slow shifts of awareness. Exactly what we experience in the theatre space. These are powerful forces to bring to bare on the delivery of text in the theatre. It's what excites me about theatre - there are so many things happening at once, so many mediums of experience. My craft as a theatre maker is to balance the dialogue of all these sensory experiences - manipulating their many possible readings.

THIS MOST WICKED BODY

In 1994 I set myself a daunting task. As a self-deviser of performance work, and a performer myself, some of my work must be seen as a vehicle for myself. Hence I have made a number of solo works for myself - ensemble works as vehicles to share with others

THIS MOST WICKED BODY was a quasi-solo work devised to push my technique to the limit. I have always been concerned in how an actor is perceived. We do strange things, sometimes

monstrous, on stage - we are licensed to do so - under the veil of acceptable fiction. However, much of my work over the years has not been in mainstream narrative theatre, where I play a role that is protected with a mad-up name (Hamlet, The Marquis de Sade). The fictional character I'm playing has no other name than, for instance, Nigel Kellaway. So in the foyer after each show, I am constantly being approached by total strangers who think they know something about me - the fact is they know no more about me than I do about them - they only know the fictitious creation. I sometimes think that even some of my close acquaintances have a rather odd idea of who I am - where does the artefact end and Nigel begin. They see me on stage too often, to be sure - there are too many public versions.

And so I decided to make a work about this - about what I do for a living. **THIS MOST WICKED BODY** was a 240 hour marathon performance, in which I was confined to a theatre space for ten days and nights. I slept, ate, and performed onstage 24 hours a day. I introduced myself as Nigel Kellaway, but created a monstrous, impossible version of myself - in fact there was very little of the real me in that role - just the drive and stamina that keeps me going. But the experience was for real. As the audience came and went throughout the 10 days, they could witness the growing fatigue, the moments of inspiration that comes from exhaustion.

VIDEO - THIS MOST WICKED BODY - opening scenes

Now there were obviously references in this work to the work of certain performance artists (notably, Joseph Beuys, and just recently Mike Parr at Artspace) who have made endurance installations - "time-based art". But in those cases it was "themselves" that they were exhibiting. The audience sees Mike Parr, the artist. In my work it was an actor performing a fictional role in a real space. The tension for the audience was in reconciling the reality of Nigel Kellaway and what he was enduring, with the obviously fictional artefact of the role he was playing - his technique proudly worn on his sleeve - it was unashamedly a bravura performance. What interested me was how the audience still could not sort the real from the fiction - but at least they were strongly aware that the blurring existed - my point was made. Theatre does not work very well as a "slice of life" - it is a construction. And that is its purpose in our culture - a endlessly inventive and varying ritual that is shared between the artist and their audience. The theatre has been described as a cross between the temple and the brothel. The performer is both the shaman and the prostitute - the audience their congregation and their client. Civilization has long proved that it needs both its places of worship and contemplation as well as its houses of carnal revelation.

OPERA - EL INOCENTE

As you've probably all realised by now - I come from fine POST-MODERNIST stock. I am a child of 70s and 80s experimental theatre, who has continued to grow. I've done all the requisite things like span disciplines, lived in Japan for 2 years studying brutally rigorous and exotic contemporary forms, returning to embed them in contemporary Australian practice. My deconstructive tendencies are infuriatingly evident. My irony quotient is palpable. Yep - my credentials are impeccable.

So why on earth does someone like me turn to enquire into the operatic form and canon? - so often regarded as reactionary? Because I'm also a romantic at heart, a hedonist and a musician. Opera is the most degenerate theatrical form - and I mean that in the best possible way - it's about wanting everything at once - a bit like a Mardi Gras for all seasons. But "everything" also includes, for me at least, an intellect - and so I am never going to be content with any "tried-and-true" reading of opera, any more than I am going to be interested in a formulaic David Williamson "genre" piece.

Opera is the liberal thinking post-modernist's dream. It is, and always has been, multi-referential. It has always questioned, in its inherent decadence, rationalist truth. It has always embraced the pull that history has on us - reassessing the familiar (both historical and contemporary) - "re-arting" received truths in the process of pulling them apart.

TRISTAN (of which you saw an opening excerpt of before) was part of a 3 year project by The opera Project, examining aspects of 19th century opera. We called The Romantic Trilogy, and it included 2 other works - the first was THE BERLIOZ - OUR VAMPIRES OURSELVES, which used the French song cycle LES NUITS D'ETE by Hector Berlioz to revisit early 19th century Vampire literature in the process of exploring a possible voice for the woman's body in male homo-erotica - heady material, indeed.

The climax work in the Trilogy is THE TERROR OF TOSCA - a radical reshaping of Puccini's masterpiece of 1900 - a work that ushered in the 20th century - Puccini's truly modern take on 19th century romanticism. It is perhaps my favourite opera. But not merely because it has fabulous music. Puccini was playing with all the aspect of theatre that appeal to me. Most importantly, a radical stretching and compressing of time on stage. In the best traditions of opera it is a viciously anti-realist theatre work - the heightened emotionalism is truly expressionistic. It is an outrageous take on melo-drama. Puccini's TOSCA was a massive assault on his contemporaries' perception of theatrical etiquette. Our task was to revitalize that assault at the end of the 20th century. And in that I suppose is the key to my approach - the theatrical ammunition need to be constantly updated if we want to achieve the intended effect.

The opera Project's current work is EL INOCENTE, presently playing at the Performance Space. This is our foray into the opera of the Baroque period - most notable that of Handel. Rather than talk about the specific work today - you can all catch the real article before it closes on Saturday night - I want to briefly close by discussing the processes of making the work.

The opera of the Baroque period was a true "grab-bag" of influences. In the past 250 years we have codified what we think constitutes a Handel opera - particular musical structures, staging devises, dramaturgical structures etc. The experience of the audience of the time was a very different affair. Baroque opera at its best was a heady mix of radical innovation and archaic references. What emerged over 150 years, from 1600 to 1750, was an extraordinary multi-disciplined form.

Our new work, does not sound like a Baroque opera - it doesn't particularly look like one. I'll quote from our program note to briefly explain our aims:

The idea of 'facade' concerns us in this project - in which less attention is paid to a 'story revealed', but more to the task of 'enactment' as an aesthetic experience in itself. Our task has been to draw attention to the discrete components that make up the performative act, eschewing the illusion of 'reality' or (more accurately) 'totality' that has been a concern of much of western theatre since the Renaissance.

Like the dramaturgy, the music collides many styles and genres as one would find in opera or feature film. It has its genesis in specific Handel operatic arias, but now the original music by Richard Vella interacts, complements, ignores or collides with Handel's music creating a complex musical web. We are simultaneously experiencing a Baroque opera based on Handel's music and a more contemporary approach to music theatre making. In a certain sense, the music is similar to that found in a road movie. It is neither pastiche nor parody, but is multi-referential - placing the listener into strangely familiar contexts, enabling the work to have multiple layers for interpretation.

The “discrete components” are what interest me here. And what are the components of EL INOCENTE? LIGHT. MUSIC and SOUND. NARRATIVE and POETRY. A variety of PHYSICAL VOCABULARIES and VOCAL VOCABULARIES. All the requisite parts for an opera. What sets this work apart from the norm, and what is the hallmark of my work, is the manner in which these components interact. In EL INOCENTE they all take equal prominence. No part is there to merely serve another. The Lighting is not there merely to illuminate the actors - it creates its own narrative structure that works along side “the story” of the work - as does the music. It is an egalitarian form - an intricate jigsaw puzzle of at times complementary, and at times conflicting parts.

EL INOCENTE reflects what is suggested on the front page of the brochure for your CONTEMPORARY ART COURSE here at the Art Gallery:

Art in the 2nd half of the 20th century remains a progressively encompassing project. It won't stand still, it keeps jumping around looking for synergetic combinations to extend its power to enchant and transport. It fastens onto other disciplines or technologies and plays unofficially with them as only art can.
Sounds like OPERA to me!!

The opera Project Inc. Nigel Kellaway interviewed by Glen Murray (Salamanca Arts Centre)

THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves

1) What/who was the original inspiration or genesis for the work?

In 1995 Annette Tesoriero mentioned to me that she wished to learn the Berlioz song cycle *Les Nuits D'ete*. Would I like to work with her on them. They had long been favourites of mine, and I thought they would be perfect for her - I said yes. Six months later, we had still not found any time to start work on them, but Annette came back to me with another idea - why not a theatre work utilizing them. Perhaps with a male dancer. (She suggested a possible dancer, who I vetoed swiftly, though I could not think of another). Then working for the first time with Dean Walsh on Sidetrack Performance Group's production of *FRIGHT!!!*, I realized we'd found the ideal dancer. But still no real concept for a work, beyond the music which is thankfully non-narrative. Dean gave me a gift at the end of *FRIGHT!!!* - Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. Trashy airport literature, I thought until I got into it. What a hoot! (The best pop junk I've read in many years). Ideas started brewing, we approached Keith Gallasch, Peter Wells and Simon Wise to work on the piece, applied for OZCO funding, and soon there was a work with which to launch the new company. A work that announced that The opera Project's primary brief is not to support contemporary Australian composers (any more than most other theatre companies). A work that demonstrated our recognition of our theatrical and musical histories - and that contemporary art is literate - that it need not fetishize “the new” in the process of interrogating future possibilities. We also wanted to launch the company with a work that utilized “historical” music, but that was not a “chamber opera” ensemble - we were not doing a scaled down version of a 19th century “grand opera”.

2) The who? how? and why? of the creative process.

Keith Gallasch - we left him for a month to research, think and write. I had worked with him often before and expected an initial list of ideas to provoke improvisation. He surprised us in our second meeting by handing over a quite detailed scenario for the 3 performers - an almost narrative structure. He left it with us for a month to play with, and then collaborated with us in the rehearsal studio, developing the various strands of narrative and performance style.

Peter Wells - I had collaborated with Peter on numerous projects since 1990. He is not only a composer of notes, but a formidable sound artist with enormous theatre experience. The Berlioz song cycle has a hell of a lot of notes, and we wanted the discipline of leaving them intact. So I commissioned a sound environment that avoided specific pitch or tonal structures, in which to imbed the Berlioz.

Simon Wise - my working relationship goes back over nearly 15 years and more than 20 works. (His first lighting design was for me with The Sydney Front). Simon is involved with those works from their inception. My work has a keen visual concern. The components of the work are given considerable authority. Lighting, sound, design - are all discrete narrative devices - never "wallpaper" for the performers.

3) Directing and performing - how does that split work?- and what effect does it have on your work firstly as a director and then as a performer?

To put it bluntly, The opera Project is a vehicle for performers and other theatre artists. And I am a performer (amongst other things) - so I perform. I am also the director. I've been doing both jobs together for nearly 20 years, and developed some skills in combining the jobs. The most important thing I do is to choose extremely experienced collaborators with virtuosic techniques in their own areas. Because I have to leave a lot of the "outside eye" stuff to trust. Sure, sometimes a single detail is lost in the process, but something unique emerges: the work does not look like it has been inflicted on the performers. Everyone is demonstrably responsible for their own performances. Hence the development of an ensemble - the more years we work together the more we share a particular flavour for the work - a lot of teaching role of the director is no longer necessary. It also means that the performers all have a much stronger stake in the work, and ownership of it.

4) Why vampires ourselves? What is the intended interpretation of these words? Is it allegorical? Is the interpretation essential to the audience's understanding of the work?

5) Is the work of specific or identified genre?

SEE ATTACHED DOCUMENT FOR A MAJOR BLURB ON *THE BERLIOZ*

6) Can you explain the structure of the work? Considering the director's perspective, the performer's and the audience.

Dancers, pianists, singers, writers and actors create narratives in quite different ways - and sometimes these methods can become habitual. All the work of The opera Project is set up to challenge the "received truths" of theatrical structure - and to get the audience to get working on their habits as well. By throwing so many methods into the pot together, something different will emerge. And part of the excitement is in watching how performers embrace structures that are foreign to their discrete medium. The opera Project is interesting probably because it defies the pigeon-hole, even though all the components appear familiar.

7) What is the relationship between the various design elements. Setting? Lighting? Sound? Costuming?

The "discrete components" of theatre are what interest me. And what are the components of The opera Project's work? LIGHT. MUSIC and SOUND. NARRATIVE and POETRY. A variety of PHYSICAL VOCABULARIES and VOCAL VOCABULARIES. All the requisite parts for an opera.

What sets this work apart from the norm, and what is the hallmark of my work, is the manner in which these components interact - they all take equal prominence. No part is there to merely serve another. The lighting is not there merely to illuminate the actors - it creates its own narrative structure that works along side "the story" of the work - as does the music. It is an egalitarian form - an intricate jigsaw puzzle of at times complementary, and at times conflicting parts.

8) What skills are required of the performers for this production? During rehearsal? During performance?

REFER TO OTHER ANSWERS

9) Where do you think the Berlioz is placed in the context of Australian theatre? Historically? Current theatre practice? The future?

I come from fine POST-MODERNIST stock. I am a child of 70s and 80s experimental theatre, who has continued to grow. I've done all the requisite things like span disciplines, lived in Japan for 2 years studying brutally rigorous and exotic contemporary forms, returning to embed them in contemporary Australian practice. My deconstructive tendencies are infuriatingly evident. My irony quotient is palpable. Yep - my credentials are impeccable.

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10) What is it that you want the audience to experience? To remember?

11) How do you think a patron might explain the work to someone who has not seen the production?

Audiences come to our work with all sorts of expectations. Is it to see a chamber opera, a new piece of Australian music theatre, a contemporary performance work, a performance of the Berlioz song cycle? They get all these things - and none of them - well not as they would expect them. If the audience surrenders their more precious expectation at the box office, the rewards can be exciting

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NOW!!

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THE AUSTRALIAN

June 25, 2001

by **JANE RANKIN-REID**

Between the blood lines

THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves

The opera Project

Director: Nigel Kellaway

Long Gallery

Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart.

Touring to Brisbane

July 4-7

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THE MERCURY

June 20, 2001

by **WAL EASTMAN**

Night to set the pulse racing

The Berlioz -

our vampires ourselves

The opera Project Inc

Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 8 - 2001

The Long Gallery Salamanca

Two long double rows of shrouded seats await the audience in the semidark and cavernous Long Gallery - and a soundscape suggesting the flight of lost souls embellishes the mood (Remember the soundtrack of that vampire classic movie *The Hunger*?)

Then the first of the three who will present this singular evening of drama and music, Nigel Kellaway, makes his pale and trance-like entrance (Remember that other silent vampire classic *Nosferatu*?)

And so the scene is set for a night of very adult fare where fun and flirtation mix with red roses and bloodlust, and desire has free rein while the luscious music transports you.

The drama of the night is built on this music - Hector Berlioz's exquisite song cycle *The Summer Nights*, performed by divine diva Annette Tesoriero with Kellaway at the piano. Completing the trio is lithe dancer Paul Cordeiro.

The melodramatic tale they spin is loosely tied to Gautier's lyrics, but their vigorous use of the whole performing space gives it an operatic air of gothic proportions.

Exploration of passion leads to a homo-erotic scene of astonishing frankness and power.

All in all, under the dynamic direction of Kellaway this mainland group delivers a night to be remembered - original and inventive drama driven by glorious music.

THE MERCURY

June 25, 2001

by ANDREA BREEN

Intriguing piece distorts pre-held notions

The Berlioz -
our vampires ourselves
The opera Project
The Long Gallery

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RealTime 44

Sue Moss

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Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 8 - 2001

Hector Berlioz's song cycle *Les Nuits D'été* (The Summer Nights) Opus 7 (1834) provided the musical impetus for The opera Project's production of *The Berlioz—our vampires ourselves*. Winter solstice wind roared around the timbers of the Long Gallery enabling an imaginative connection with Bram Stoker, Count Dracula and the shadow-seep of Transylvania.

The performance by Nigel Kellaway, Annette Tesoriero and Paul Cordeiro was preceded by weeks of warnings about operatic sensationalism, nudity, and adult themes. The other considered warning was: 'beware, you will either love or hate this show.'

Kellaway's production features his pale and trance-like appearance (a homage to Nosferatu?), the matching opulence of gown and jabot, the waft of perfume, and the performer's intoxicatory responses to a Grecian urn brimming with scarlet rose petals.

The lure and fall of notes from Kellaway's Bösendorfer is assured, and captures the lushness of Berlioz's score. *Les Nuits D'été* is both fantasy and romantic song cycle. Sound mesmerises and tempts Cordeiro in his alternating role of victim and seducer. The performance is a pulsation of vulnerability and dominance. His languid looks, panting breath and sexual allure inevitably seek the double snarl of rose and wound. Tesoriero's potent mezzo voice fills the performance space. She is an able partner in collusion.

Our vampires ourselves recreates and exploits the territory of fantasy and affirms familiar (homo)eroticisms. Opera is traditionally associated with the realms of desire, obsession, love and death. Melodrama invites parody and our vampires ourselves uses a panoply of theatrical clichés to enhance the ridiculous. The enactment of vampiric obsession through gorgeous music, stylised movement and over-statement hovers at the border of comfort-zone theatre.

There is room in this production to lull the audience, then introduce serial inversion to destabilise the familiar. If vampiric obsession is a parody then conversely it can be used as a theatre of relinquishment which involves letting go and settling accounts with both the parodic ease and the musical sumptuousness of a former century.

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THE BERLIOZ - OUR VAMPIRES OURSELVES

Update 30/5/01 for touring purposes

Scene 1.

Audience enters, the stage in darkness, their chairs lit. The piano is closed and draped in a white dust cloth.

Sound A - room noise - glasses clinking, voices, footsteps etc.

In pin spots in the distance, Nigel and Paul's faces appear and disappear in the light; they watch the audience through the smog.

Paul enters and sits prompt downstage of the curtains.

He is waiting, on guard - not sure.

The audience lights dim.

Sound Fades. Silence.

Scene 2.

Time passes.

Sound B builds slowly

Nigel is revealed upstage standing.

He walks down stage, stops to observe Paul (who glances nervously at him) and then walks to the bowl of roses.

He picks up a bloom and brings it to his nose, head back, inhaling deeply.

He drops the rose and moves to the piano. He quickly uncovers and opens it, playing a lingering F#.

Sound fades to silence

Paul quivers slightly. With his eyes on Paul, Nigel plays

Phrase 1.

Paul responds with a pronounced sigh. His body quivers. He holds his breath.

Nigel stops to observe. Paul holds his breath until

Nigel smiles then Paul relaxes.

Nigel leaves the piano and sits on a chair OP downstage facing Paul across the space.

Nigel appears bored, Paul mirrors the boredom.

They look at each other - not much is revealed, a small smile.

Sound C - a de / reconstruction of small boys screaming

Paul subtly hints that Nigel should return to the piano.
Paul is turned on by the music; this is a compliment for Nigel.
Paul finds Nigel irresistible because of the piano; he is surprised by the power of the music, which is doing things to him that he has never felt before.
Nigel walks slowly round to piano, he studies the keyboard.
Then takes Paul by surprise with fast music that then slows down.

Nigel is playing **Phrases 1&2.**

Paul trembles in his seat, he takes a few small breaths in, responding to each note.
Nigel glances at him, pausing at times to appreciate his control.

Scene 3

Phrase 3

Nigel stops. Paul calms; Nigel recommences Paul leans back and swoons.
Nigel takes control, then tires. He stops playing.
Stillness. Distraction, an emptiness, a hunger.

Phrase 4

Nigel recommences with conviction. Paul arcs his head round looking down into his lap.
He responds in convulsions and is thrown from his chair.
He stands and runs towards the urn, thrown into it - finally seeing what it contains.
He staggers around the urn and falls backwards into Nigel's rasping gasp.
Nigel has placed his hand across his chest below his throat, his mouth is open wide as if biting the air. Paul is horrified, glances back and goes to stand at the urn.

Phrase 5

- a dangerous if tentative provocation
Paul picks up one petal and sniffs it, he is overwhelmed by the smell.
As the music picks up in pace and volume he swoops up handfuls, forces them into his mouth, he arches his head back and spits the petals out with a cry.
He spins round the urn, the music getting louder and more dramatic, he can't stand the noise.

Phrase 6.

Paul dashes to the piano and thrashes the keyboard.
Stillness
Nigel rises to confront Paul, Paul rises to look at him,
Nigel clasps Paul's neck as if to kiss him, instead Nigel swoops down and tries to bite his neck.
Paul escapes the bite and rushes to his seat, tidying himself, wiping his mouth,
Nigel moves to his seat, in angry frustration.
Their heads turn to each other.
Stillness. Distraction.
Nigel opens his crossed legs with a finger.
He displays his intention and Paul responds with a knowing smile.
But Paul suggests that it is the piano that turns him on.

If Nigel wants anything from him he will have to play more music.
Nigel understands and agrees.
Nigel slowly moves to the piano he plays the opening 10-bar introduction of:

Scene 4.

Sound D - a distant wind blows.

Paul looks away from the piano, his hands moving to his ears.
In the distance, Annette's voice is heard.
Nigel stops in shock. Silence. Paul and Nigel exchange a glance - what have they created?
Nigel repeats the single bar arpeggio over and over, drawing Annette into the space.
The song continues as Annette glides like a spectre.
Paul dares not look back as if in fear of being overwhelmed

Le Spectre De La Rose

17 Au bal	AT stops opposite piano at other end of the space and changes direction, she moves away from PC towards the urn
Fete	AT moves back to centre spot opposite piano
25 Tout me promenas	AT goes to move behind PC
Ma mort	PC leaps off chair
30 Le chasser	AT at urn
37 Mais ne crains	AT throws 5 petals behind her on each word. Each petal hits PC
Je ne reclame	PC grabs chair and runs to opposite corner and sits. He uses the chair as a shield when running
De Profundis	PC has chair in place. AT grabs a fistful of roses
42 Ce Leger	AT turns and moves toward PC on chair
Mon Amie	AT's arms around PC as he has run to her
45 Et j'aime	(2nd word 1st phrase) AT throws PC to the ground
Et j'aime du paradis	(2nd phrase) AT drawing PC up to her face, singing into his open mouth

NK slams keys. **(Bar 49 slam F# discord)**
AT drops PC.

She looks at NK, AT goes back to draw PC up to her a 2nd time.
NK slams piano lid
AT drops PC again and goes to stand by piano in recital pose.
Song recommences from bar 42.

45 Du paradis	PC drawn up from floor by AT's gestures
J'arrive	(2nd one) PC has moved to urn
50 Mon destin fut digne	PC + AT close to each other
Et pour avoir	AT spins away from PC and backs up to urn,
55 Plus d'un aurait donne	PC + AT close again
Car sur ton	AT's 1st stagger
Mon tombeau	PC puts chair in place by urn AT sits
Et sur l'aba	PC starts plucking words out of AT's mouth
60 Ci git une rose	AT swings head around
Une baiser	AT pulls head away from PC and changes movement direction
Ecrivit	AT takes big breath and turns face to lap moving it on other direction
Le rois	PC hits floor to lie in AT's lap

Paul finishes with his head in Annette's lap, an image of The Pieta.

Pause

Scene 5

L'Absense

5 Du soleil	AT caressing PC's chin
10 Loin de ton	PC turns in facing AT's stomach
17 Entre nos	AT turns away from PC to her right
20 Tant de distance	AT pushes PC to the ground Absence AT stretches her arms outward
25 Reviens	AT turns back to PC his head placed back on her lap
35 Loin du soleil	AT strokes PC's back
Di ci la bas closed	PC leans back between AT's legs, looking up towards her face eyes
50 A lasser Chevaux	AT puts rose into PC's mouth PC rolls away along floor
Reviens	PC stands playing rose like a flute
Ma bien aime	PC runs behind piano
Comme une fleur	PC tires to touch piano, NK swats him away. PC must remove jacket
60 La fleur de ma vie	AT sings to PC
Loin de ton sourire	PC pulls flower stem out of his mouth
65 Sourire	PC moves behind NK
Revermeil	PC goes to kiss NK

Paul leans over Nigel and transfers the rosebud from his mouth to Nigel's.
Nigel removes it, and grabs Paul's mouth, violently kissing him.
Nigel and Annette laugh hysterically.

SOUND E - "blue scene" Frantic - Loud

Snap to blue lighting state

Nigel takes Paul by the arm and walks him around the urn.
Annette takes Paul's other arm and they all do another round of the urn.

Paul is drunk on the laughter and energy.

Nigel moves back to the piano and Annette takes Paul on one more round of the urn.
She then stops Paul and grasps him to her bosom, she makes to bight his neck.
Paul escapes to the piano.

Scene 6

L'ille Innconue

Piano music starts PC turns + backs away from NK

5 Dites	PC turns to face AT
5La voile	AT begins to move - circling PC
15Souffler	PC runs away from AT and hits one corner wall
La voile - souffler	PC ends up on chair. AT pins him down on beat 7 after souffler PC jumps up + runs down the length of the space
20J'ai pour l'est en orange	AT turns + moves to PC
30Le gouvernail	PC goes to urn and picks up a petal
35Pour mousse un seraphin	AT comes up behind PC and scares him - he leaps up
J'ai pour l'est une orange	AT at urn coaxing PC to come back to urn
40Un seraphin	AT throws petals over shoulder at PC on following notes, PC staggers back as if hit
45Dites la jeune	PC circles behind AT to corner chair
55Souffler	AT encompasses PC with her dress whilst leaning over his chair
60Est-ce dans	AT turns from PC + faces NK she moves towards piano. PC goes to urn and goes to pick up a petal.
75Dites	AT + NK turn to look at PC who drops petal - PC is encouraged to play with petals
85Menez moi	AT spins across piano + stands next to NK's chair
95Cette rive	PC is thrown back from urn by smell of petals
100Au pays des amour	PC runs to AT they hug, then AT pushes him back to urn he crawls across and picks up petal
110Des amours	NK says "l'amour" and PC drops petal and collapses - his body tremors on last few piano notes.

Paul has finished his dance of death and collapses by the urn of roses. A petit morte.

Nigel and Annette smile to each other, their mission almost accomplished.

AT: "Ma belle amie est morte"

Scene 7

Sur les Lagunes (details of action during song still to be added)

AT shifts to another world in her head, she is remembering a ghost - a past lover.
AT stands at piano.

10 Sous la tombe	AT starts to walk to PC + stops
15Dans la ciel	AT walks again along the length of the space
36La blanche	PC begins to wake rolling along the floor
40Cercueil	AT goes over to PC who rolls around and behind dress
55La colombe	PC does arm dance from behind AT
61Mon amie	PC drops down and crawls through AT's legs
65 Que mon sort est	(On piano notes b4 this line) AT holds PC's neck + drops him to ground
75Sur moi la nuit	PC gets up and walks over to AT
84 linceul	PC kneels at AT's feet
85 Je chante	PC rolls fast down the space
89 Ah, comme	AT picks up PC

103 Ah sans
97 qu''elle
110Ah..ah

AT leaving
Annette snaps Paul's neck Paul slides to the floor.
PC begins to roll under piano

Nigel plays the final piano tremolos over and over; Paul is dragged by each note under the piano)

Annette breathes easily,
Nigel relaxes they've had their fun. It's over - finished.

Sound F - music and wind

Slowly Paul emerges from the darkness standing behind Nigel.
Paul has changed ñ no longer submissive, he means business, its payback time, he wants what he came for.
Annette moves to the shadows

Nigel leaves the piano, sensing Paul.
He chews a rose bloom and angrily spits it out as Paul stalks him around the urn.
Nigel returns to the piano.
He will play music to draw Annette back into the space and help him.
Paul goes to the urn and picks up some roses

Scene 8

Villanelle

Annette begins to sing.
Paul hears her and goes to her.
He tries to bite her neck - but fails.
Annette moves to the piano.
Paul is playing cat and mouse between the two.

Paul rehearses the rape scene playing Nigel's role - the role of the victim.
The music stops as Paul spins on the spot and finishes with arms raised in the air.

He conducts Nigel into the song, moving his fingers as if playing the piano keys.
Paul circles the length of the space and ends up at the piano.
Paul goes to bite Nigel's neck.
Nigel leaps up and moves to the urn.
Paul takes Nigel's seat - side-saddle and looks at the keys.
He now has the power.
Nigel he picks up a rose, and is pricked by a thorn.
He sucks at the wound.

Paul strikes a note as Nigel sucks at the wound.

Nigel moves to Paul and grabs his hand away from the piano,
He draws Paul up to face him.

Interlude - Rape scene

Nigel and Paul foxtrot around the urn.
Nigel is leading, but at then at a turn, Paul takes the lead.
They increase speed;
Paul pushes Nigel to a side wall and rips off his jacket.
Nigel spins around;
Paul picks Nigel up and carries him over to the back wall.
Paul throws Nigel to the floor, jumps on top of him and takes off his shoes, socks and pants. He pushes him around the floor.
Nigel escapes and cowers at the sidewall. Paul rips his clothes off.
Annette wheels a spotlight around to illuminate the rape.
Paul pushes Nigel to the back wall and rapes him up against the wall.
He throws him to the floor and rapes him on the floor.
Annette takes the spotlight to the piano and thrashes out a **Bb double-octave**

Sound G - sound cuts to an ominous rumble.

There is a shift of power and all of a sudden Nigel is standing over Paul.
He plunges his fangs into his neck and Paul collapses to the floor dead.

Annette accompanies herself (sung down an octave) to **Au Cimetiere**.

Nigel redresses away from Paul's corpse.

Annette leaves the piano and moves towards Nigel at the urn.
She bites Nigel's neck, sharing in the "booty" of Paul's blood.
Annette thinks Paul is dead, but Nigel knows better

They return to the piano.

Scene 9

AU CIMETIERE

(Bar 98) Paul, who has been dead, throws himself to his feet with a terrible howl.

Sound H reverberates

Nigel stops playing.

Annette turns inquisitively to Nigel, who innocently shrugs "yes I turned him into a vampire - so what?"

Nigel resumes playing.

Paul moves to the wall experiencing himself - his sensations for the first time as a vampire. He watches Nigel and Annette.

On her closing vocal phrases Annette moves slowly toward Paul.

Nigel plays the arpeggio introduction of **Le Spectre de la Rose**.

Annette takes Paul by the hand to his chair.

Paul sits rigidly /formally he watches Nigel playing, enjoying it.

She exits looking contentedly at Nigel.

The theme of **Le Spectre de la Rose** is played high on the piano, until she has gone

Sound D- A distant wind blows toward the space

Nigel completes the final notes of his melody;
he leans back in his seat.

Silence.

Paul initiates a slow circular lick of his lips Nigel follows.
A long half-smile passes between them.

Slowly they turn to each side of the audience
They each meet the eye of an audience member, raise an eyebrow - who's next?

Fade to black.

2001 The Berlioz - re-rehearsal and tour

EXPENDITURE

Salaries:	N Kellaway	rehearsal	1750		
		2 wks tour x \$1200	2400	4150	
	P Cordeiro	rehearsal	1750		
		2 wks tour x \$1200	2400	4150	
	S Wise	preparation			1400
		2 wks tour x \$1200	2400	3800	
	N Kellaway	Director/TOP administrator		2500	14600
	Oncosts	(11% of \$14600)			1606
Fees:	A Tesoriero	rehearsal	1400		
		2 wks tour x \$1200	2400	3800	
		Oncosts (8% of \$3625)		290	4090
	K Gallasch	(Dramaturg)			200
				210	
				1021.69	
					286.28
			1091		
				300	
				329	

3237.97

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

23733.97

INCOME

Venue Fees (2 x \$12000)

24000

Cartage reimbursement

160

TOTAL INCOME

24160.00

PROFIT

426.03

The opera Project Inc.

the audience and other psychopaths

Within the confines of a dilapidated film set, the soprano seeks revenge against the world
whilst the film auteur directs a deadly melodrama
and a drag queen dangerously confuses neurosis with psychopathy.

The audience is forced to cross "the boundaries" as three very different performers each
approach the "thriller" genre from a very different bent.

Truffaut, Cassavetes, Wertmuller and Hitchcock
are all blurred in an operatic fantasy of daring persuasions!

the audience and other psychopaths is a game of complex cross-narratives.

Onstage are Katia Molino and Nigel Kellaway with video artist Peter Oldham.

Molino plays the director and star of an Italian language movie in which the audience play a major role.

She shoots the scenes out of narrative order.

Kellaway is cast in a brief secretarial role in the movie, though he has other more deadly concerns which he plays out between “scene shoots”.

The role of a terrorist planning to bomb the theatre is pre-recorded by soprano Karen Cummings. Her presence in the space is implied through a complex quadraphonic sound replay and the mysterious opening and closing door to her dressing room.

In the large open space the audience are able to mill around as “extras” on the “sound stage”, constantly manipulated by Molino.

At each end of the space is a large white projection screen - one translucent, for the projection of the live images from Peter Oldham’s camera, and another for the projection of pre-recorded footage.

Performers: Nigel Kellaway Katia Molino Karen Cummings

Director: Nigel Kellaway

Co-Writers: Amanda Stewart Nigel Kellaway Katia Molino
Stephen Adams

Composer: Stephen Adams

Video Artist: Peter Oldham

Lighting Designer: Simon Wise

Dramaturgs: Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch (Open City)

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The Audience and other Psychopaths

DRAFT TEXT

October 2001

Writers: Amanda Stewart, Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino
with original dramaturgy by Melita Rowston

Composer: Stephen Adams

Video: Peter Oldham

The following text resulted from the work-in-progress presentation at Performance Space, Sydney, on the 19th and 20th October 2001 (with support from the NSW Ministry for the Arts Theatre Program). **PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT A SCRIPT. IT IS A RECORD OF MATERIAL TO BE MANIPULATED IN CREATING THE PROPOSED NEW WORK.**

Performing onstage are Katia Molino Nigel Kellaway with video artist Peter Oldham. The role of Karen is pre-recorded by Karen Cummings. Her presence in the space is implied by the complex use of quadrasonic sound replay, and the mysteriously opening and closing door to her dressing room.

Much of Katia's text is delivered in Italian (the language of the movie she is making). It is more than adequately explained by her physical language.

There are very few seats in the open space for audience - they are left to mill around as "extras" on the "film set".

The Space is empty, but for 4 cafe tables with chairs.

At each end of the space is a large white projection screen. The translucent screen at the entrance end is used entirely for the projection of the live images (silent) from Peter Oldham's camera. The screen at the other end, positioned between Karen and Katia's dressing room doors is for the projection of the pre-recorded (also silent) footage.

The Audience and other Psychopaths

Katia discretely chooses a man in the audience to play the leading male role (Guy/Luigi), explains the simple parameters of his role, and gives him a cigarette lighter engraved with "A to G".

Scene 1 KATIA IN FOYER

Katia: Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen.
My name is Katia Molino - the director and star of this evening's film shoot.
Thankyou all for making yourselves available, and for being on time, as we have a lot of scenes to get through this evening.
You will all be required in the first scene, so could I ask you all to make you way onto the sound stage.

Scene 2 Audience enters theatre, Katia organizes them around the space:

All women blonde, or pretending to be - beside the director's chairs.
All men 175 cm tall, or over - on the right hand.
Any other women in dresses or skirts on the left hand wall - and also all men under 30 years of age (please be realistic, gentlemen).
And the rest please move against the screen at the far end.

Places Rosa and Petro and Mario at cafe tables

Guy/Luigi to lie dead on floor centrestage.

Katia: Peter, Are you ready?
Peter (cameraman): Yes
Katia: Roll camera. Sound. And ACTION!

Live FILM SHOOT - projected on large screen
MUSIC: Rossini - overture to *L'italiana in Algeri*
Pre-recorded VIDEO 1 on small screen

Katia at the funeral of Flavio, who she slowly discovers is in fact Luigi - mourning hysterically over the body - screaming her revenge - sees Mario off camera - she is shot - falling over Luigi's body (a Lina Wertmuller moment).

Katia: Ciao, Ciao, condoglianze, poverello Flavio.
Pietro! Rosa! Povero Flavio, mi fa così dispiacere, che sciocchezza, incredibile, chi poteva fare questo nemmeno aveva trente anni, era buono come il pane, è così triste, che tragedia.
Ma perché mi guardate così? Cosa vuole dire questo sguardo? Ma non è Flavio?
Se non è Flavio allora chi è?

No!!! Misericordia no! No Luigi no! Non il mio Luigi! Ammazzatemi, annazzatemi, per l'amore di Dio.
Non ne posso più.
Ma perché, ma chi chi.

(She sees Mario, and approaches in a rage)

Mario? Mario, Mario perché è morto?
Bastardo, ladro, assassino!
Quando to prendo tra le mani....

(There is a suddenly gun shot on the sound recording - Katia falls to ground, and vainly attempts to crawl toward Luigi's corpse, reaching to his hand)

Suddenly Nigel appears at the theatre doors

Scene 3

Nigel: I'm sorry, I'm late

Katia: CUT!!! (Videos off) *(moving Guy to chair in front of large screen)*

Nigel: How the fuck do I get in? This way?

Yes, I know I'm late - I try not to make a habit of it.
It's just that I've been involved in a bit of an incident.

But I'm OK I'm actually feeling very strong right now.

Katia: You're here for the secretary scene?

Nigel: Yes, that's right
I know it's going to be incredibly liberating!

Katia: We won't be needing you for another hour.

Nigel: That's fine - I'll just wait over there (*moves to proscenium lip, leaving brief case on upstage table*)
Or should I go to makeup straight away? (*To audience*) It always takes an eternity! I've made a start though - I went to David Jones this afternoon and bought one of their new foundations. You don't think its a bit pale, do you? I think I'm going to need a lot more blush. The eyelashes are good though, don't you think.....

(*Katia bashes Nigel with a foam baseball bat, and exits to prompt dressing room*)

Nigel: (*staggering down the space to Guy*)
Jesus!!! Did you see that?
I need you as a witness, Buddy! - that's work place harassment!
Fuck her! She bashed me, the cunt!
O God, hold me! No, not like that! I need help!

My makeup's a mess and, honestly, I want to feel so close to my period, I could scream but I won't.

(*takes cigarette*).

Got a light?
Oh, I think you do - I think there's one in you right hand pocket.
See? - I was right. Some people say I'm psychic - ofcourse I couldn't possibly comment.
Thanks (*steals lighter*)
Oh, don't worry - I'm not pregnant. No innocent will be harmed.

Katia: (*entering from dressing room with 2 suitcases*)
Blonde's by the director's chairs!

Nigel: (*lights fill the space - Nigel recognizes Guy*)
Hey! I know you!

Katia: (*To Nigel*) You! Get out!

(*Nigel sets himself at distant cafe table in front of small screen, with an ashtray.*)

Scene 4 FILM SETUP

Katia: Don't look at the camera - you're just tourists.
Do we have children?

Simon I asked for children! Is that too much to ask for? A simple request - just a few blonde children!!

(Katia exits in fury to dressing room)

Scene 5

Nigel: Aren't you Guy Haines?
Oh sure you are, I saw you blast Hugo Weaving into total actorly oblivion on the Playhouse stage last season. Got one those nominations, didn't you?

Prerecorded VIDEO 2 *on small screen - Nigel flipping through his empty diary, weeping, and eventually taking a gun and pointing it wildly at the camera.*

Nigel: Oh, I certainly admire people who do things.

Oh, sorry - I'm so rude! - my name's Nigel. Nigel Kellaway.

See? *(show ring with insignia)*

I suppose you think it's corny- "Nigel" - but my mother gave it to me, so I have to wear it, just to please her. One should always make an effort for a "loved-one", don't you agree?

Oh look, I really don't talk that much - you go ahead and watch. *(Indicating video of Nigel on small screen)*

They tell me he's absolutely riveting.

Scene 6

(Katia enters in gold frock, asks Guy to zip her up, sets up cafe table and 2nd chair beside Guy)

Nigel: It must be very exciting, being so important.
Oh, people who really do things are important.
I mean - look at me - I don't seem to do anything - just a spot of typing - the odd email ...

(Katia exits)

(Nigel offers a cigarette to Guy)

Ciggie? ... No? ... I smoke TOO much!

(Lights cigarette - stops to contemplate the lighter)

From 'A to G'? 'A' to Guy. I bet I can guess who 'A' is - Anne Morton.

You see, I sometimes turn the arts page and see the society section, and the pictures.

Anne Morton - she's very beautiful! She's Sam Morton, the famous film director's daughter, isn't she?

Oh yes, I'm quite a reader. Ask me anything, I've got the answers. Even news about people I don't know. Like who wants to marry whom, once his wife gets her divorce.

(Katia throws 2 more bags down dressing room steps)

Nigel: Oh, sorry, there I go again - too friendly! It always happens - just when I meet someone I really like and admire - and then I open my big mouth.... just pretend I'm not here.

Scene 7

LIVE FILM SHOOT: **SAN MARCO PIAZZA SCENE -**

Katia is waiting at the station with the blondes - she is late and the vapparetto is not arriving. She rushes by foot to the Piazza where she meets Luigi/Guy at table in front of large screen and gives him one of 2 plane tickets)

Katia: Scusate, ma quando viene questo treno, sono qua ad aspettare per più di un'ora.

Luigi!

Che manicomio stamattina, io non ne posso più.

Prima non trovavo le borse, e poi il tassi era in ritardo, e il treno, dov'è il treno. Chi lo sa.

Vi cerco, non vi ho visto. Ai portato il Passaporto? Le carte? Oh menomale. Non poteva dormire ieri sera, pensavo solo a te. Guarda, ancora si vede la vostra bocca sul mio corpo. L'attra notte ho sognato che le mie gambe erano fatte de cioccolato, e tu le mangiavi. E tu cosa sogni? Tu non dici niente, tu non parli mai. Prima che mi scordo, I biglietti. Allora, ci vediamo, vado, a domani.

Ciao bello.

(Katia slowly exits to dressing room)

Nigel: *(approaching Guy)* So, when's the wedding?
You and Anne Morton. It was in the paper.
Oh don't tell me! Bigamy?! Well yes, I guess so, in your present predicament.

But right now, I suppose divorce is a fairly simple operation... No?...

Well, anyway, it sure is wonderful having you as company here tonight.

Say, why don't we

Lane Cove? You're going to Lane Cove? Who'd want to

Oh, I get it - that's right - Lane Cove, the old conjugal patch - a little chat with your wife about the divorce?

Well, Guy, I DO wish you luck.

Say, listen, if that's the case, why don't we have catering send us some drinks up to my dressing room now - just the two of us - something bubbly - the only kind of bubbles in my life, at the moment.

(Leading Guy toward dressing room) And we'll drink to the next Mrs Haines.

(Katia enters from dressing room in red and white checked suit with baseball bat)

Katia: *(to Nigel)* Hey you! Piss off!

(Katia takes Guy back to his seat and exits behind big screen)

Prerecorded VIDEO 3 on small screen

Nigel is in his dressing room, smoking furiously, drinking bourbon. He tears off his wig and coat, turning in a rage to the camera.

Nigel Sure, I went to acting school. I got kicked out of three of them - drinking, not quite committed enough.

(sitting opposite Guy)

Not like you, eh Guy?

Sure - I'm just a bum.

Nigel says I'm a bum - he hates me.

He thinks I ought to catch the 8.40 bus every morning, punch a time-clock somewhere, and work my way up from the bottom selling camping equipment or something. I don't think so.

I can tell you, I get so sore with him sometimes, I want to kill him.

Oh yes, I've got a theory that one should do everything before one dies.

Like, have you ever driven a car blindfolded at 150 K an hour? I did.

And I flew a jet plane. Almost blew all that sawdust right out of my head! And I'm going to make a reservation on the first commercial rocket to the moon. I've got very big plans!

(Video stops)

Honestly, I do!

Well, OK, I know I'm not like you, Guy.

You're lucky. You're smart.

Marrying the famous film director's daughter. That enhances the sure career!

Hey, hey, hey, take it easy, Guy. I like you, remember? I'm your friend.

I'd do anything for you.

Fade LX to Black *(Nigel moves to Mario's table)*

Scene 8

Prerecorded VIDEO 4 - MASSACRE (on small screen)

edited footage of the massacre scene from Visconti's movie

THE DAMNED.

SNAP video off as front doors suddenly open and then slam shut

TOTAL BLACKOUT

Scene 9

KAREN'S ENTRANCE

Karen: Look I know I'm late ...Yes, I'm sorryI've just ...well I was involved in a small incident ...I still feel a bit ...anyway I won't bore you with ...It was nobody's fault you know..... It's reassuring to have someone to blame but often.... anyway It was inevitable.. . and what else could I ...sorry... I really feel quite disorientated.....

We hear her footsteps cross the room. She shouts.

I'm a soprano for Christ's sake! I can't see a fucking thing!

(Karen slams her dressing room door - then it slowly open slightly)

(spoken to Guy - spotlight on Guy on his chair)

Well, did you bring it? Well did you?
Yes - you on the chair? Who else would I be...?
Did you bring it? You did bring it.
Did you have any trouble?
What did you expect?
Don't you trust me?
Are you sure no one noticed?
Are you feeling at ease?
At 9 o'clock remember you promised me.

(Katia enters in white bra and panties with baseball bat)

I know you have expectations.

Did you see her?

Did she kiss you?

Katia: What the fuck is going on?!
(Approaches Karen's door)

Stop mucking about, you reject Adonis!
You've fucked up, haven't you?
You narcoleptic perv!
(Karen slams the door again in Katia's face)

Katia: CUNT!!! *(Stomps to her dressing room and slams door)*

Prerecorded VIDEO 5 *Camera follows Katia into her dressing room. She slugs down a glass of bourbon, and puffs on a cigar. As Karen's aria becomes more agitated Katia starts listening through the wall. She starts banging on the wall, screaming at Karen to shutup. Katia dials on her mobile phone and starts screaming at whoever.*

(Karen ARIA section A - slow cabaret)

I really feel quite disorientated...

elated

I've been involved in a little incident.. it

accident/precedent

it was a... well anyway let's not ... let's just say... let's just say that I that I... chose to...

to ah... externalise my pain...

exorcise

(section B - Baroque scream)

... a scream... yes a scream... a scream ...

(*speaks:*)

Anyway it was like being in some damn soap opera really. You can't believe it. It's quite mad In retrospect.

Scene 10

Live video - MURDER PLOT

Katia's dressing room door suddenly flies open and out dances Katia in a silver disco frock and wig, followed by Peter and camera. She carries a ghetto blaster playing Italian 1980's pop music. She dances towards Guy/Luigi's table as Karen continues to sing

(Karen Aria - da capo section A - slow cabaret)

I really feel quite disorientated...

elated

I've been involved in a little incident.. it

accident/precedent

KATIA PASSES GUY THE GUN IN SLOW MOTION, INDICATING MARIO -

Nigel: (*to Mario*)

I think she's looking at you.

(*Katia exits behind large screen as her ghetto blaster fades to silence*)

You don't think my outfit's a bit severe, do you?

Well, Hell, I like it! And I'm dressing to please only myself, these days. Now that Nigel's let me down. But please, don't think I'm bitter. I'm not!

Hey, has anyone told you how much you look like Guy Haines, the actor?

I think it's the bone structure - such soft eyes

But then again, it might be just the lights.

Please, take my card.

Scene 11

KAREN - INTENTIONS CLEAR

(*Nigel moves slowly to dressing room as LX fades to Black*)

Karen: (*singing*) *Aria - exaggerated slow sprechstimme*

how vulnerable

trapped in a special place

inhaling each other's breath

shedding each other's skins
trapped in her delusions
who is the most attractive?
who will be eliminated?

pause

(on phone)

oh hi it's me yep
of course I did
I HAVE MADE A BOMB BEFORE, YOU FUCKWIT!
THIS TIME IS DIFFERENT
late last night
it was a very old fuse box
I had to jimmy it
yeah they've had it fixed but it's still pretty dodgy
yes they're all set
you'd never know
I didn't need the extra charges
the place is falling to bits
the alarms are off
the fire will take care of the rest

You're not listening to me, are you?
they're half way through now
there's less than one hundred
set it near the door
to the right remember
 I'll have fifteen minutes I probably only need ten
all right - calm down
just keep driving round the block
I'll be out just after 9
if I'm not there just go
No No!
Just go!

(Karen slams downs phone)

(Live Video close up on Nigel on large screen, as he appears in his dressing room door)

Nigel: What did you say your wife's name was?
 Miriam? That's right - Miriam Joyce Haines
 I suppose she's played around quite a lot.
 Don't get upset Guy - it's all too frequent these days.
 And, hey, what do you care - what with Anne Mor..... well, whatever....

Karen: *(recitative - slow intent whisper)*

so tenuous so soft her voice on the mobile one fuse box 14 lines dust and
frayed plastic the wires naked so fragile suspended at the point before the
pleasure so perfect so fragile the stations the terminals splitting dissembling
the ports and connections so tenuous soft her voice on the mobile
disconnected red disconnecting blue the frayed steel the gaps in between
so fragile so perfect

Nigel: *(at upstage table)*
Hey listen, want to hear one of my ideas for the perfect murder?
The busted light in the bathroom, or the carbon-monoxide in the garage?
Hey, what's a life between two guys? Some people are better off dead.
Like Nigel or your wife, for instance.

Karen: *(aria - operatic musing)*
She was wearing gold.
I remember being entranced by her once
it was her silence.

Nigel: *(centrestage)*
Oh, that reminds me of a wonderful idea I had once. I used to put myself off
to sleep at night just figuring it out:
Like, let's say, you wanted to get rid of your wife.
Like, let's just suppose you had a very good reason .
But obviously you'd be afraid to kill her.
Why? - because you'd get caught.
Why? Because you've got a MOTIVE.

(Nigel moves to Guy's table)

Karen: *(recitative - edgy alternating chant/whisper)*
1 fuse box
28 drops on average
it's no accident
a cry
a series of numbers
it's all interconnected
it's all in a mess!
there are no accidents!
only ideas!
What a mess!

Nigel: *(Sitting opposite Guy)*
So, here's my idea - it's so simple:
Two guys meet accidentally, like you and me -
No connection between them at all - never even met each other before.
But each guy has somebody he'd like to get rid of.
So - guess! - mmm! - THEY SWAP MURDERS!
Each guy does the other guy's murder for him, so there's nothing to connect
them.
Each guy murders a total stranger.
It's like: you do my murder, I do your's - your wife, my Nigel.
CRISS-CROSS.
Oh, we do talk the same language, don't we, Guy! You think my theory's
okay, don't you?
You like it! CRISS-CROSS!

Scene 12 Live Film: CHASE SCENE -

(Nigel exits behind large screen)

Katia runs from behind large screen in wedding dress - throwing her shoes at the camera, her bridal bouquet at Rosa, in fury. She exits to her dressing room

Katia: Brutto!! Vecchio!! Se non mi va non mi va e basta!!
Io non ne posso piu.
È mal'educato, stronzo, cretino!!
Finòcchio!!
Se lo vuoi è tuo!!

Scene 13

(Nigel behind main screen at front door)

Nigel: What day is it today? Saturday? Guess who I was last Sunday!
Oh, I'm just reflecting - on a body that can't really exist.
He was here - we all knew his name - spoke it every day.
Then suddenly he's gone.
What do YOU remember? The name or the body?

I'm very, very concerned about my hands -
I want them to look absolutely perfect.
Unfortunately, I still bite my nails.

But I'm alright - don't worry about me.
I took my vitamins yesterday, Mummy - a whole bottle full.
And besides, right now, I've got a North Shore ferry to catch.

*(Nigel leaves space, closing doors - **FADE TO BLACKOUT**)*

Scene 14 **KAREN'S INTERNAL WORLD**

Incorporating: KATIA'S "SHEET" SCENE - filmed onto large screen

Katia stretches washing lines across the space onto which she hangs and pegs large white bed sheets, that entrap many of the audience. She moves to Guy/Luigi and kisses him chastely on the forehead. Then slowly she moves back through the sheets, pursued by the Peter and camera, slowly stripping as she makes her slow exit to the dressing room.

Prerecorded VIDEO 6 on small screen -*Katia very slowly turning on the spot for 12 minutes, slowly stripping naked for the camera*

Karen: *(aria - soft reverie in liminal layers)*

so soft that warmth pastel late afternoon gold gold shredding the room into
tiny pieces souvenirs precious bits that start to look like junk gold bits of pink
fluff the curve of her arm her breath my face buried pushing deeper no I'm
never coming out staying here for ever closer please closer the first breath
her skin so warm pale her smell her gaze her breast rounded warm so soft

(Dial tone - Karen is on the phone - speaking)

Yep. Everything's fine... fine.
There's one small change.
We won't be meeting at 9.
I'm saying there's no need to even come.
Just take the car and go.
I'll explain later.
I haven't got time, I'm sorry
I haven't got time.
I'm sorry... goodbye...
I said goodbye! (*hangs up phone*) **KATIA ENTERS**

(aria - enclosing claustrophobic sound scape)

like this it's it's but i and sometimes these things just who would have ever it just totally came out
of the it could happen to any day every day patching up the unexpected a dog circles its tail an
unfamiliar smell a word perhaps some means of escape a word is always the way back the way
back to the next escape the next place a means of repeating reproducing a series of constantly
shifting reproducing bits and pieces each little girl/boy born into it into a little girl/ boy learning to
eat their words their mother tongue a father tongue which speaks them totally unprepared for
these things just happen they didn't mean to it it's just that totally unpleasured in such things 98%
unprepared in the beginning 48 drops on average that's just what happens wording the milk
patching up the unexpected cleaning up the bits and pieces precious bits pale her smell gold
shredding milking the word the first wound reproducing repeating souvenirs precious bits that start
to look like any day every day it's later that things get even more complicated that's just the
beginning it happened before i before it she bits and pieces sometimes things just don't the left
over bits and pieces of things that didn't cleaning up the bits left over at the edge before the
pleasure Don't touch me! This place is a dump! you'll never escape. eating your words eaten up
eat up eat your pumpkin! I may as well be invisible. you told me that you. you said you'd never.
you said I was your. you said that you'd. what I never said.

it's the it's it's it's spilling through the gaps

living my life around what I can't say I

closer... please closer..

This place is a mess! This place is falling to bits!

th th th it's it's

s t kt r

s tkr r the the

pp t p p t

uffering ombas

CHrrrrrrrr arcoleptic p!

s e altation

the the

sh sh sh t t t

m m m n n n
mmm ma
mmapatamapata
t t t tat tat tiamatt tat tat tiamatterutter tat that
re
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th th
a w per b b the w b
cl cl n n n

(Karen speaks)

We'd been apart for some time.
She wanted to meet.
I said that she didn't realise how dangerous that was.
She wouldn't listen of course. That's what I like about her.

During final part of aria Katia rents in an office suit. The sheets fall to the ground and are cleared away. She brings a table and chair centrestage and moves Guy/Luigi to sit at it with some paper work and pen.

Katia: The secretary scene.
(To Peter) Where is she?
Don't worry, we'll start

Scene 15 THE SECRETARY SCENE

Prerecorded VIDEO 7 on small screen
Clouds moving a saturated blue sky - hyper-real

Live Video: *Peter constantly circles the action, filming Guy/Luigi, Nigel and Katia.*

Katia: Buon giorno.
Luigi Nobile.
Katia Molino *(gives Guy/Luigi her business card)*
Finalmente, mi hanno parlato di te tante volte.
Ah stai facendo le somme adesso.
Hmm, bene.
Io di queste cose ci capisco proprio un bel niente.
Il vostro ufficio è molto elegante!
Ah, mamma mia, che bella vista!
Se vede Il Colosseo da qua, e Piazza Navona, Il Foro Romano, La Citta del Vaticano, La Fontana di Trevi...

Nigel: Guy! over here, Guy!
(Light slowly up on Nigel at side of space - LIGHTS CIGARETTE)
Hello Guy. You don't seem very pleased to see me.
And I've brought you a little present.

Katia: Hai mai pensato di visitare l'Australia? Ho delle bellissime fotografie dell'Australia a casa, le vedete vedere.
(Takes a room key from her cleavage and drops it tantalizingly into his lap Suddenly turns in surprise as Nigel enters with 2 coffee cups)

Nigel: I've brought you your coffees, sir
(Takes off his glasses and places them on the table in front of Guy)
Recognise them? Oh no, they're not mine - they're Miriam's.
It was very quick, Guy.
She felt no pain - all over in no time.

Katia: *(in fast forward - chaotic and possessed)*
Buon giorno.
Luigi Nobile.
Katia Molino *(gives Guy/Luigi her business card)*
Finalmente, mi hanno parlato di te tante volte.
Ah stai facendo le somme adesso.
Hmm, bene.
Io di queste cose ci capisco proprio un bel niente.
Il vostro ufficio è molto elegante!
Ah, mamma mia, che bella vista!
Se vede Il Colosseo da qua, e Piazza Navona, Il Foro Romano, La Citta del Vaticano, La Fontana di Trevi...
Hai mai pensato di visitare l'Australia? Ho delle bellissime fotografie dell'Australia a casa, le volete vedere.
(Takes a room key from her cleavage and drops it tantalizingly into his lap Suddenly turns in surprise as Nigel reenters with 2 coffee cups)

Nigel: Yes, I knew you'd be surprised,
but there's nothing for us to be worried about - noone saw me.
(Only Miriam)
I've brought you your coffees, sir
And I was very careful, Guy - even when I dropped your cigarette lighter,
I went back to pick it up. *(Placing the cigarette on the table)*

(Katia tells Nigel to close the imaginary window curtains. She continues with a slow motion silent replaying of her scene)

Nigel: Oh, come on Guy, ofcourse I can get away with it!
Why should I go to Lane Cove to kill a total stranger?
Unless it was part of a plan, and you were in it.
Remember, you're the one who benefits - you're the free man now -
I didn't even know the girl.

(Katia is groping Nigel at the table)

Katia: How's about a little smile sweetheart?

Nigel: How dare you! I'm after respect, goddamn it!
Not a snog over the photocopy machine!

Guy, if you go to the police, you'll be turning yourself in as an accessory -
You had the MOTIVE!
You wanted it - we planned it together in the last scene, remember? -
CRISS CROSS.

I've brought you your coffees, sir!

(Nigel, Katia and Peter suddenly confront Guy/Luigi at the table)

Nigel: Guy, we need to talk about Nigel.
I've tried to make it really simple for you.
I've got a plan of the theatre and his dressing room already made up -
see?

(Katia is growling madly at Nigel and Luigi, slowly exiting)

Nigel: I've brought you your coffees, sir
And the cutest little pistol I picked up in a pawn-shop.

I'm beginning to feel like I don't really exist.
I'm just someone I met once?
But I can't remember how to fill in the gaps -
I can't even remember what the gaps are.
DON'T CALL ME CRAZY!!!!

You know, you're not yourself, Guy.
You must be tired - I know I am - I've had a very strenuous evening!
But I know that when you've had a chance to think things over, you'll
see I'm right. *(Placing the pistol on the table in front of Guy)*

Nigel should be in his dressing room any minute now.

Scene 16 **KAREN'S DEMISE**

(Camera follows Nigel as he exits to his dressing room door)

Karen: No! I'm not coming out! I'm never coming out!
Piss off! I said out now! I've had it with you! This time I have had it! Out!
Piss of! I love you. I said out now! You smell! I've had it with you! Forgive
me.

This time I have had it! Out!
you're all complicit in it!
you're all a bunch of sexist X gen baby bombing bastards!
a pack of putrescent pervs
**IT'S MY BOMB, YOU FUCKERS -
AND WE'RE ALL GOING TOGETHER!!!**

Nigel: *(at dressing room door)* Guy!!!???

(Katia suddenly grabs a microphone as Karen next section begins and rushes down the space herding the audience out of the theatre)

Katia: GET OUT!
ALL OF YOU!
IT'S ALL OVER FOR TONIGHT!
GUY, LUIGI (WHATEVER YOUR FUCKING NAME IS) STAY WHERE YOU
ARE! WE HAVEN'T FINISHED WITH YOU YET!

THE REST OF YOU OUT!
AND KEEP THE NOISE DOWN OUT THERE - WE'RE STILL FILMING IN
HERE!

Karen: *(recitative - wild fast cutting multi layered attack)*

It's i i i i i i i i it's It's the drugs. It's the guns. It's abuse. It's the violence.
It's the Greeks! it's the Germans. It's Ally McBeal. It's Mel. It's the banks.
It's Elle. It's the media. It's the whites. It's the men. It's Pauline. It's the
English. It's the Christians. It's capitalism. It's human nature. It's fascism.
It's Kerry. It's Rupert. It's science. It's the bomb. It's the second world war.
it's the CIA. It's Hollywood. It's Monsanto. It's the stockmart. it's
greenhouse. It's in the stars. It's Rolf Harris
It's It's i i i i i i i i it's

(KATIA CLOSSES THEATRE DOORS - Karen's voice continues in the darkened foyer)

Three in One and One in Three
Logos Son of the only begotten Word made flesh
anointed software wording the milk fluorescent icons
madonna and knife man and mobile
morphing bodies pasteway sunsets
quantities of dirty sex
fully hygienic corporate slaughter
the pact
the pleasure of the pact
Adonis on the net
a sensitive new age IBM psycho
to inflict pain without feeling
feeling without pain
closer please closer
satan's sadam sodom condom
capital punishment is hygienic I hear
SDI MAI HIV BSE CJD
bits that start to look like junk
98% water 98 % chimp
everything's falling apart
he always
she never
a carnivorous insect, an alien gives birth, an it of an object,
a rib off a primate, a devil of a saviour
savoir faire
girt by semen, silenced like a god (shut up the dingo's dead!)
sky across a sunburnt g string (I'm not sorry)
I'm never coming out!
never feel except the pleasure of pain
never pain except the pleasure
so perfect
desire coming in numbers,
coked accountants, cufflinks and flares (~~sorry?~~)
a rationalist climax, a bootstraps disaster.
a touch of Thatcher beating around the bush,
(I'm not sorry) we all fall down as mary goes north
little Johnny went wee wee wee all the way

that that the the the that that

it's just that G7 the G8. it's GATT. it's the MAI. the World Bank. it's America! it's the second world war. it's NASA. it's NATO. it's the treaties. it's the pacts.

gold spilling through the gaps
across a polished plane
the blood and shit and death and sex
cleansing the left over bits from the hard drive
a red belly of a corporate whizzkid
the elation
the sheer exhilaration of the pact
a post mercantile premilitpausal virtual reality
deregulated restructured rationalised privitised
genetically recombined shareholders
in a globalised post modernised post nation corporate renaissance
traded incorporated sedated
the dissolution of pain
as a primary commodity
a series of numbers reassuring
so softcloser please... closer..

(FINALE - orgiastic)

I love it we love you not sorry I love
the fake reassurances, intrigue, the mystery,
the purity of forgetting the... the
GUY!!!!

*(as she delivers her last lines her voice is cut off by the sound of gun shots inside the space.
After a period of silence Guy/Luigi emerges alone from the theatre and closes the doors behind him.)*

the audience and other psychopaths

by The opera Project Inc.

**Assessment of Performance
on Saturday 20 October, 2001**

commissioned anonymously by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council

The audience and other psychopaths is a piece with a lot of freshness and experience and potential. This is a strong sense of mature artists doing important work that has taken many years for them to build to. It is unusual to see work with this level of integrity and maturity in Australia or anywhere - and this viewer would strongly recommend that support be provided by the Australia Council to continue its development. This is the kind of piece that people could look back to as a classic, but only if it has the opportunity to be fully realised. What follows are some suggestions about areas in which this development could fruitfully take place.

The foyer of Performance Space was full. Katia Molino appeared in the first of many personas and costumes, announcing that we were all extras in a movie that she was making. She led us into the performance space. In a manner reminiscent of some Sydney Front work, the audience was divided into groups and placed around the outer edges of the space. The grouping was arbitrary, chaotic - female blondes, brunettes, men over 35 etc. It was not uncomfortable but it was edgy. Chairs were available for some audience members, not for others, some of these were only children's chairs. Katia was commanding. She chose various audience members to play featured roles in her film, they took seats at different points in the centre of the room.

For the next hour or so the audience found itself inside and outside and gliding through the visual and aural membranes of a masterfully 'performed movie'. Or perhaps the memory of a movie. Or the nightmare of a fevered 'movid' imagination. There was a fractured narrative - interweaving plotlines, voice-overs and re-enactments from classic films often themselves heavily layered, self aware and arch (as it says in the program "suspense in Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* and *Rear Window*, melodrama in Wertmuller's *Blood Feud* and Truffaut's *Day for Night*, psychodrama in Cassavete's *Opening Night*.) This could probably use some dramaturgical work in terms of structure so that we 'know what's happening' a little sooner and so that themes and ideas can be explored in a little more depth. The work sags a bit at times and could also gain from some tightening and focussing - perhaps with the assistance of an outside eye. In this process there might also be the opportunity for some new threads to be added as what is there achieves a little more narrative clarity.

There is a fine balance between wanting to know where you are and enjoying the waves of disjointed information washing around you in the form of physical, aural and projected presences. This could benefit from some fine tuning in *the audience and other psychopaths*. But it is also clear that in this work in progress Nigel Kellaway and his collaborators are working towards this goal and in fact that this interplay is at the heart of the work's themes. It is expressed in many ways including in a visual language of cross-dressing in a gorgeous array of costumes. It is referred to in the dialogue in the central twist of the narrative - the idea of 'cross stitching'. Two strangers meet and make a deal to kill each other's partners, the perfect motiveless crime, each killing someone they don't know - cross stitch. This is made all the more pleausrably layered in the performance by the fact that the performers have picked an audience member they don't know. But it is also an example of an idea worthy of being taken further. Who is Nigel in drag killing - himself? What does this mean beyond its initial 'shock' value - what issues are really at stake here for him and for us?

A similar question could be asked of the characters Katia Molino plays. She is excellent, sweeping across a rainbow of characters in a rainbow of costumes. But, if the metaphor may be excused, where is the pot of gold? What is the overall trajectory of the series of characters she plays, who is she, is there a reason or is there no reason she keeps changing?

In short, there are ideas in this creative development showing interesting enough to warrant further development: what does it mean that Katia is always changing and Nigel wants to off himself. What is the relationship between the two? And why are they using their relationship with the audience to fulfil their needs?

Of course these questions and any answers to them will be tempered by the fact that this is very clearly a postmodern and ironic play with character, costume, makeup, suspense, drama and narrative. These devises are being used and abused and exploited for thee pleasures they give us. There is no pretending, no fourth wall. We know and they know that we know they are just putting it on. But just what this means rather than being clever with it is a deeper question that this work could address. To be getting anywhere near such core questions about the nature of postmodern performance is quite an achievement. To realise a work that deals with such matters at the highest artistic levels is a truly ambitious undertaking , and the fact is that for a work in progress this development was, despite some of the questions being raised here, already at an extremely sophisticated level in the performance viewed.

the audience and other psychopaths owes a debt to other works - most obviously the films mentioned above. This debt could be brought out more. Having seen some earlier versions of this project it is clear to this viewer that the cross stitching situation was directly referential to a film, but this could be clarified a little sooner in this longer version as the central spine of Nigel's character's story ballasts the colourful chaos of Katia's characters.

The work also owes a debt to other works of stage works - less in line with some recent opera Project works to grand opera and more to theatre and contemporary performance. In particular as noted earlier to Sydney Front pieces such as *First and Last Warning* in which Nigel played a significant role, as well as more recent pieces such as Sidetrack's *Nobody's Daughter*, especially at the moment Nigel says something like ' I feel like I am nobody'. Again this is not cited as a problem per se - it is part of the very fabric of the idea of fractured identity and decentredness at the 'centre' of the piece's themes. This is both an exploration that could go further and possibly in the process an opportunity for some more original writing to be layered into

that which is referential. The text as it is doesn't stand out in a particularly striking or literary way though there are a number of clever moments and turns of phrase.

Appropriately for a work about images, surfaces, imagination and imaging, there is some very nice and innovative use of the mixture of live and prerecorded cinematography and screens - will inventive timings, layerings and sizings. With more time this could be developed even further. The lighting felt very appropriate and collaborative. The music and sound were good - but mainly in a support role - switching the usual opera Project relationship. It could be worth considering how to make the sound design more active in driving the action into other senses at some key moments.

A sign of respect for *the audience and other psychopaths* was the quality of the audience that turned out, which included many of the leading figures in contemporary performance, and the fact that animated and positive discussion about the work continued afterwards in the foyer for at least as long as the production itself.

With regards to innovation, Australia doesn't have many original forms of theatre, but this may be one of them. If the Theatre Board of the Australia Council doesn't fund works of this nature and calibre with artists of this quality and experience it should, in the opinion of this peer assessor, seriously question why it exists at all.

Response to the Peer Assessment of the 2001 development showing of the audience and other psychopaths

I thank the Theatre Board for the opportunity to respond to the commissioned peer assessment of the public showing of *THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS* in October 2001.

Most of the concerns and suggestions of the assessor have been already addressed in the body of our application, but I will rearticulate and expand briefly on our planned strategies to develop the work:

- Katia's movie is an elaborate pretence - almost like an ephemeral set, costumes and props - creating a context for other emerging narratives. The audience recognises, remembers and responds to the filmic references. At the end of the work all that exists is an empty space and memories of an experience. Enormous attention needs to be paid to the atmosphere of the event. It actively casts the audience as part of the moment. Their roles as protagonists are, to date, only glimpsed at. We intend to flesh them out and complicate them further, creating a far more elaborate and enjoyable game.
- As regards the suggestion that we involve an outside eye in the further development, we are engaging Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter as dramaturgs in the next stage. Keith has considerable experience of the company and is highly effective in sorting problems of structure and action as a dramaturg "on the floor". Virginia's particular strengths lie in the nuances of text, and will be invaluable in helping us to juggle the necessary relationship between the three separately conceived and authored texts.
- At present the intentions of Katia's character are fairly clear - to a point. She is making a movie. But she needs another darker motive as well. We believe that this can be invented, not through a developed relationship with Nigel, but with the disembodied character of Karen Cummings, the terrorist soprano. To successfully realise Karen's role as an important disembodied protagonist is an enormous challenge which we are committed to meet. Her text needs to be at times far more explicit. She needs to be more than a mere musical support for

Katia and Nigel. One solution to the development of both her's and Katia's roles would be a complicity between them - possibly an implied history and a played out tension between them in an evolving narrative. Katia must need Karen's presence. The audience needs to be interested in Karen, if they are to imagine her present in the space.

- “An ambitious undertaking.” Part of the thrill for the audience is in a certain mystery that is never quite explained. We need to constantly keep them guessing. We want to maintain the possible varied interpretations of the events as they unfold. But, with thorough development and specific articulation, these multiple readings will become stronger and more satisfying.
- The texts: Nigel's text is intrinsically functional. He has a clever and complicated narrative to pursue, and not many words can be wasted. The textural challenge lies in developing the juxtaposition of his text with the poetic nature of Karen's (by Amanda Stewart) and the potential of Katia's role (in English as well as the extant Italian). This balance of aesthetics and content is the primary concern of the artists in their further development of the work.
- The 2001 development touched on several theatrical challenges. It was a process of briefly playing with and discovering what elements might be worth pursuing further. They are clear now, as are the strategies to achieve them.
- The opera Project platforms the work of established and mature artists. This is neither an obsession or a fetish - merely a circumstance. The peer assessor pinpoints not only our ability to bring established skills to a project, but also our knowledge and experience of performance history. We are “qualified” to extend our practice into the future.

We thank the Theatre Board for commissioning the assessment. It concurs with much of the feedback we received from our audience that evening, and supports the planned strategies of the associated artists this year.

We hope that the Theatre Board will consider the demonstrated enthusiasm of so many people for the future of *THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS* in assessing our application.

Nigel Kellaway
Artistic Director

THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

ARTISTIC AND FINANCIAL ACQUITTAL

NSW MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS - 2001 THEATRE PROGRAM

Our application to the NSW Ministry for the Arts was for funding to develop and realise a public season of a new work, with additional assistance from the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council. Unfortunately the past two applications to the Theatre Fund have been unsuccessful. In order to acquit the Ministry funding satisfactorily in 2001, permission was granted to develop the work and present a public showing of our work to date.

Performers:	Katia Molino Nigel Kellaway Karen Cummings
Director:	Nigel Kellaway
Writers:	Amanda Stewart Nigel Kellaway Katia Molino Stephen Adams
Dramaturg/Assistant to the Artistic Director:	Melita Rowston (funded by the Australia Council Music and Theatre Mentorship Initiative 2001)
Composer:	Stephen Adams
Lighting Designer / Production Manager:	Simon Wise
Video Artist:	Peter Oldham
Public Showing:	19th and 20th October 2001 Performance Space, Sydney

The Audience and other Psychopaths is a dark comedy, presenting three parallel and intersecting scenarios, performed simultaneously in the theatre - each with their own logic and structure, and working through their own intersection of theatrical means and media. They explore the climate of paranoia and conspiracy theorising that proliferates around the public's (and subject's) need to interpret public acts as significant and meaningful:

1. Nigel Kellaway performs, in the guise of a drag queen, a one-sided (contrived) dialogue with a member of the audience - a reflection on a story by Patricia Highsmith. Two strangers meet. They both have someone in their lives they wish to be rid of. One of them proposes a pact - that they each commit a murder on behalf of the other. With no apparent motive they would both avoid arrest. This scenario is the starting point for our narrative conceit. The relationship that develops between these two strangers, as opposed to the actual crime, is the focus. Interest is held as it slowly dawns on the audience that they are in the presence of a dangerous psychopath. Nigel interrogates and cajoles his victim, who may well wonder what lies beyond the drag queen's mask..... and then suspect that a murder may be committed, in which he (the audience) may be implicated.

A drag queen all too often expresses the neurotic - iconically dressed, grasping at his assumed identity with all his socially bestowed masculine articulacy, and yet despairing of his inaction. But,

in this work, he acts - the neurotic is transcended in psychopathy. This is an alternative transgendered voice - one not propelled by carnal impulses.

2. Katia Molino performs the role of a “film auteur” in the process of shooting a movie. Certain theatrical processes are reflected in the deconstructive nature of film making, in which scenes are shot out of sequence (thrown into stark contrast with the powerful thrust of Nigel’s linear narrative). She casts the audience as both extras and some leading actors in her movie. By chance, she casts Nigel’s audience victim as her romantic co-star. Yes, she is also the star in her movie (in the tradition of Truffaut, the great theatrical actor-managers, et al). Her film role seems to celebrate the classic moments of public acclaim, suffering (ironic self-realisation), betrayal and death of the *idol* as both heroine and sacrificial victim. The film is performed in Italian language (foreign/inarticulate to most in the audience). Does the “voiceless” (culturally inarticulate) performer present a cipher to which the audience attaches its own meanings, or can she exert her own control on the myriad readings? Or is this overwhelmed by the extreme articulacy of her “expressive” body?

The performance of Katia Molino is filmed by video artist Peter Oldham both prior to performance and live onstage, her image multiplied on the two large projection screens at either end of the open space. The response to our development presentation lauded our intersection of performance, video and sound. This is, however, not at all “hitech” - we are actually using no “new media”.

We also discovered in the development presentation, as the camera scans the audience and their closeup images are projected large on the screen, that they suddenly become important protagonists, despite their doing very little other than observe. We are however aware that their physical role in the space needs to be further expanded.

3. Over the past five years The opera Project has urged its theatre audience to listen to music - not just an environment, but as a narrative driving force. Where at first there was some dismay, there is now a literacy and appreciation. ***The Audience and other Psychopaths*** has no live musician. Two actors, a cameraman and the audience take the stage. The recorded sound is (almost) entirely the voice of another protagonist - the voice of the soprano enters the theatre to instigate a physical act of terrorism (ie. To dynamite the building and its audience)

Karen Cummings (soprano) performs a recorded spoken and sung monologue written by performance poet Amanda Stewart in collaboration with composer Stephen Adams. The declamatory, yet disembodied, interior voice of the *idol/diva* operates as an extended and uncensored stream of consciousness. However it is physically controlled through the recorded medium, using a 4-speaker surround system to create a dynamic theatrical and choreographic presence in sound.

The resulting musical work pushes the disembodied voice to its limits, ransacking the cultural resources of spoken and sung female roles from the blues to the operatic to the techno. The music must eventually act as a presence competing with the authority of the physical bodies onstage, influencing or even possessing the bodies/actions on the stage.

We need now to find intersections between Katia’s and Karen’s narratives. Their intentions need to be “fleshed out” and more clearly articulated. The collaborators have recognised the holes and have discussed numerous possible remedies.

The parallel unfolding of these three works presents opportunities for the interrogation of their discrete theatrical means and assumptions, in the light of the others. There are disjunctions and convergences in this game of interpretations, pointing back to both the audience and the act of making theatre - of performing and of consuming these public projections of our facade selves.

The different theatrical media and means of communication in the three works (music/physical performance/soliloquy) and their interaction drive toward an examination of a culturally defined 'articulacy'/'inarticulacy'. We are contemplating issues of power as the audience asks which of the three works presented are dominant? Who is controlling whom? Who perhaps has killed, or will be killed by whom? The audience is implicated in this fiction of theatre.

THE PROCESS

Over the 3 month development period in 2001 the process was:

1. Each of these three works were explored quite individually. After an intensive 4 day workshop considering a draft structure, the collaborators went their separate ways and wrote in virtual isolation. Its several parts presented a riot of dramaturgical possibilities.
 2. The collaborators regrouped for a 3 week period to collide their material. As structured material emerged the collaboration of video artist Peter Oldham and lighting designer Simon Wise entered into the process. The results were presented to an invited audience.
-

THE FUTURE

The development process resulted in "a million loose ends". Yet we and the largest proportion of our audience were excited by the potential of the material. We have applied again to the Theatre Board of the Australia Council for funding to complete the work for a public season. Recent discussions with Tom Cullen, Cultural Festival Program Manager for the 2002 Gay Games IV, have begun negotiation on the programming of the work in the Festival, dependent on the success of our application to the Theatre Fund. This will lend the project invaluable publicity resources. It is time to introduce the dramaturgical resources of Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch. Their intimacy with the history and processes of The opera Project promises a successful resolution of the textual, musical and theatrical complexities.

The \$589.38 surplus on the budget will allow us to promotional packages and videos for the 2002 Performing Arts Market.

DOCUMENTATION FOR THE PROJECT

As the project was a development process leading to an informal showing before an invited audience of peers and friends, with no press invited, there was no printed response to the project.

The draft text attached to this acquittal is not a "script", but rather an accumulation of material for further exploration.

Photographs of the showing by Heidrun Lohr are held by The opera Project.

Documentation of the video material by Peter Oldham is held by The opera Project.

The musical material is held by composer Stephen Adams.

Attached is a copy of the program for the presentation.

Nigel Kellaway

Artistic Director and Chief Executive Officer

THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

EXPENDITURE

FEES/SALARIES:	N. Kellaway (Performer)	3000	
	S. Adams (Composer)	3000	
	K. Molino (Performer)	2100	
	S. Wise (LX designer)	1500	
	P. Oldham (Video artist)	1200	
	A. Stewart (Writer)	3000	
	N. Kellaway (Director/Admin)	2000	
	K. Cummings (Performer)	1500	
	Sound Labour	330	17630
PRODUCTION:	Venue	2500	
	Electricity	137.09	
	Rehearsal Venue	150	
	Sets / properties	97.50	
	Costumes	94.46	
	Video production & hire	100	
	Sound production	1784.95	
	Sound hire	470	5334
ADMINISTRATION:	Postage/Tel/Stationary	280.59	

	Oncosts (11% of salaries)	946	1226.59
PUBLICITY:	Printing/Postage	175.13	
	Photo documentation	400	
	Opening night entertainment	160	
	Video editing for future sale	350	1085.13

TOTAL EXPENDITURE: **25275.72**

INCOME

NSW Ministry for the Arts 2001 Theatre Program	25000	
Interest (\$22500 x 5.5%pa x 4 months)		402
Donations		463.10

TOTAL INCOME: **25865.10**

Profit / (Loss) 589.38

SCRAPBOOK LIVE - NIGEL KELLAWAY - 30/09/01

I was asked to assess/reminiss/represent my career
at Performance Space in 20 minutes

The Scrapbook Live series occurred on the last Sunday of the month for 3 months -
3 nights x 3 dance artists with long associations with Performance Space.

I insisted that I be the last - how arrogant was that?!
It didn't really matter that only 30-40 people showed up.

Despite my bravura on the evening,
I was humbled, deeply honoured to be invited.

I felt, for perhaps the only time, that this small community was acknowledging
my part in the history of their practice.

I am just someone who floats in and out - I don't leave much of a footprint.
I'm sure no-one knew how important that 20 minutes was for me.
Half the audience probably didn't know who I was -

by the end of the evening they did,
even if they didn't know what I was talking about (ancient history).

MY LIFE AS A TAX DEDUCTION

My Name is Nigel John Kellaway.

I was born on the 30th September 195..... I am an actor.

I have stuffed 20 or 30 dolls with the sawdust that was my blood. Have dreamt a dream of a theatre in this country.

And have reflected in public on things that were of no interest to me.

That is all over now.

Well, no it isn't - or so it seems not.

They were the opening lines of a production I co-performed in 1994.
It wasn't on this particular rectangle of floor.

It was in that other space, just down the corridor - 12.67 x 22.75 metres, lighting rig at 5 metres

The walls shifted from a very light grey, and darker and darker, to black over 20 years - It is that space that I wish to celebrate this evening.

In the 20 minutes allotted this evening, I would dearly love NOT to talk about MYSELF, but what has made the Performance Space such an extraordinary centre for the development of movement language over the past 20 years.

But that is not the brief - so I will glance at just ONE history that refers to a performer's experience of this space.

20 years - the regular phone calls from Mike Mullins in 1983 at 6.00 of a Sunday evening - begging me to volunteer to make pre-show coffee - no kitchen or alcohol - just a kettle, some instant coffee and the gully trap in the courtyard to wash out the cups. (Mike was taking a rare evening off)

Numerous short appearances, and 33 / 35? full length works. (Lost track - the list in the other room has forgotten some also)

What do I talk about? How do I edit?

Well how about a cliché? - Nigel and his frocks ("Give me the frock, and I'll give you the show!")

Well, actually there are only 9 (that I'VE worn) - and here are the remnants. Hardly representative of the entire opus - but they do comprise a kind of scrapbook - a glimpse - a ragbag.

The first one is hardly a frock - though it's imbued with similar deviant persuasions -

It's a kind of skin, a nudity (and that's another cliché attributed to Nigel's work - hey, you just put it on - it's a bit foreign - you hide behind it - and it saves on the design and dry-cleaning budget.)

COSTUME 1 - TIGHTS

At 8.00pm on the 14th October 1981 some closely focussed lights came up slowly on 4 dancers (2 barechested men in flesh coloured footless tights, 2 women in matching leotards). Lynne Santos, Kai Tai Chan and two dancers making their Sydney debuts - Julie Shanahan and Nigel Kellaway.

The music was Bach.

The work was originally titled THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING COMPLETELY STILL.

Ironic, hey? Sounds a bit like a William Forsyth title, but we hadn't even heard of him in those days.

Jill Sykes wrote in the SMH:

"Kai Tai Chan is continuing to sharpen his ability to choreograph straight dance pieces, though this work doesn't reveal much of an advance. The most accomplished dancer is Julie Shanahan, but everyone made a distinctive contribution"

With a first Sydney review like that I knew I had a golden future ahead of me!

(Sorry Jill, although I don't want to abuse your professional distance, I'm probably going to have to mention you on a few occasions this evening -

you must surely have one of the longest histories of involvement and support of the Performance Space - you have been here since that first night of my association with the Space, and probably before then - and there is just no getting away from you!)

And too often, all we have left of a show (as years pass) is a handful of reviews.

What else was happening in this city? What were our histories?

Graeme Murphy had recently transformed the Dance Company of NSW into his very own Sydney Dance Company.

Heiner Muller was ripping European theatre apart (though we really hadn't heard much about it in those days).

We were trying to remember Heidegger's Phenomenology, Jean Paul Satre's Existentialism.

Growtowski had already crippled a number of young Australian bodies, but teased them with one brand of enlightenment.

Some of us had heard of Pina Bausch, but it really wasn't for another 6 months until that full hurricane of her influence was going to hit our shores.

Some of us were still wondering whether Baryshnikov was the greatest dancer ever born (the impossible is so alluring, isn't it?).

Russell Dumas was playing to 30 or 40 people a year in his occasional Sydney appearances at the Cell Block.

There was an influx of artists and loose collectives congregating in Sydney at that time - some from interstate, some returning from Europe. And some notable locals finding a new voice.

And in Adelaide, at the 1994 Festival, Tenkei Gekijo performed the interminable MIZO NO EKI (Water Station). Within a month Nick Tsoutas had Grotowski Monkey Choir and several associates climbing ever, ever, so slowly over chairs to peer at a snowy TV screen in this space - call it appropriation if you wish, but we were being oddly activated by the foreign!

COSTUME 2 - GIVE ME A ROSE

I survived an extraordinary 4 years with Kai Tai, launched myself as a director and then ran away immediately to Japan - not for the art - for love.

Not a word of Japanese and \$40 in my pocket - but love does that to you, at a certain age.

But I was a diligent contemporary dancer and did my compulsory 6 months with Tanaka Min.

Until the fearsome Alison Broinowski (1st secretary at the Australian Embassy at the time) took me on a personal project - off to Suzuki Tadashi (I had never heard of him - neither had anyone else in Australia, except for Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter)

- and some of Australian physical theatre changed a bit
- The Suzuki rash, I call it affectionately.

Go all the way to Japan to rediscover the ancient Greeks!

I'm being frivolous, but this frock is the proof:

Clytemnestra in GIVE ME A ROSE TO SHOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE - January 1986.

It was all a bit of a surprise for Sydney audiences. I think they were hoping for something a tad more "Japanese".

Taka, my partner, arrived from Japan on the morning I opened. He stuck with the show through the season - He didn't have much English, but still managed the box-office and washed the stage floor every night. Cute, eh? Doubt he'd do it now.

But as you can see - I practiced the art of serious applique.

Don't laugh - it was an apprenticeship for a long career of tight budgets.

COSTUME 3 - WALTZ

In January 1994 The Sydney Front trashed its storeroom - almost everything off to the tip - a cathartic experience - just the odd wedding frock and crinoline survives.

The Sydney Front first applied through dance to the Australia Council - unsuccessfully. We applied a lot - always unsuccessfully.

Especially when we devised a project (63 actually) we later called The 63 Blessings.

We became, briefly, terrorists, but of a cuddlier variety than our recent friends.

This is a pattern for the costumes we all wore for our first work in 1987 - WALTZ.

\$140 worth of black polycotton clothed all 8 of us.

The cast cut them out and Mickey Furuya and I spent 2 days sweating over an overlocker.

Combined with our next work this became THE PORNOGRAPHY OF PERFORMANCE, and with that, The Sydney Front was well and truly launched.

We began with a handful of ancient Greek monologues, and via Peter Weiss, Peter Brook and Heiner Muller we arrived at POST MODERNISM - it took us ALMOST by surprise!

The Sydney Front went to Brisbane - Expo 88 - 7 fucking months all together in the same house - 2 street parades, on stilts, 7 days a week.

COSTUME 4 - NUREMBERG

It was time to refind an individual voice!

THE NUREMBERG RECITAL - 1989 - a solo work.

Jill Sykes described it as “an economical 50 minutes”.

Don Mamouney pronounced me Australia’s greatest clown - in retrospect, that was quite nice - perhaps even accurate!

But, at least I mastered the art of burying a zip - hand stitched - not a bad job at all - for a first try!

Simon Wise designed the lights, Chris Ryan stagemanaged, and Sarah de Jong (the composer) arrived with the opening 10 minutes of music at 7.45 on opening night

- but she DID drive me to the airport at 9.00am after the closing night bumpout for The Sydney Front’s first European tour.

I LOVE COMPOSERS!

The Berlin Wall fell - and The Sydney Front took a year off.

COSTUME 5 - DON JUAN

Ah, DON JUAN, 1991 !! My personal favourite of all The Sydney Front shows.

The first frocks for The Sydney Front that I didn’t have to sew myself - Thank God - nothing I sew would survive 120 performances

- the show hung around for 3 years. John Baylis and I drank a lot over those years.

We were both apprehended, after one performance, by a security guard close to our hotel in Soho, London, as we emptied our bladders on an apartment wall late one night. Threatened to call the police.

We were ofcourse outraged by the prudery. “Fucking Poms” we spluttered.

We may have been derelicts, but we had some seriously good reviews in our pockets.

COSTUME 6 - FIRST AND LAST WARNING

FIRST AND LAST WARNING - 1992

Hey, there are 200 of these stored between my and Clare Grant’s roof cavities in Newtown.

We even invented a size 28 (had them especially designed for Eugene Ragghianti, Leo Schofield, et al).

Mine was a size 12, and I can still squeeze into it (perhaps not the prettiest sight - though it probably never was).

I was feeling a bit shitty at that time (had no idea in those days what “anxiety disorder” meant) and demanded that I was not going to perform - well at least not until the last 10 minutes when I could have the stage totally to myself (what a prick!)

I sang a song and then reminisced about all the famous people I’d met (I was practicing the “embarrassing moment”). Nureyev, Pope John Paul 1st, Frank Thring. They’re all dead now.

Which leads me to reflect on where my peers from 1981 are now. Most of us are still alive but not many of us are still regularly practicing. Australia is not that comfortable about performing artists over the age of 40 tackling anything too adventurous. Try to name 5 contemporary performance artists actively creating fulltime, in Sydney, over the age of 50.

But sorry, I've digressed.

COSTUME 7 - THIS MOST WICKED BODY

The work that I quoted at the beginning of my presentation was from THIS MOST WICKED BODY. 1994.

I incarcerated myself in the space for 10 days / nearly 240 hours, and danced, shouted, flirted, ate, fucked and slept a little.

I toiled over the presentation of a person I was not. The work was, rather, about what a space, THIS SPACE, could (might) create and nurture - a troubled man, a man in crisis, a man possessed.

It was a celebration of a very special theatrical space - a space in which the wonder and beauty of the body can be shown in all its grubbiness - boldly, no apologies - a body that can say "I hate myself", "I hate you"

- and then says sincerely and humbly "Thankyou".

Indeed, this space is the Mecca of both License and Indulgence.

Jill Sykes wrote: "Kellaway delivers all this in a deadpan voice, varied only by the number of decibels. His body is the more eloquent of his communication skills, emerging here in its most specific form of ballet, with its symmetry and strict turnout, and the inward-turning irregularity of *butoh*."

(Sorry, Jill. I'm only quoting the irritating bits from your reviews -

You've also written inquiringly and positively about my work over the years - and for this particular work you drew out many of the essential dilemmas posited.)

What did The Performance Space represent? Sarah Miller and I were both serving on committees of the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council at the time. I reflected on, and argued for what HYBRID practice meant - it all seemed second nature to US - how come noone-else seemed to be quite cottoning on? We wanted recognition for not only OUR process, but one that was emerging all over this continent and it was tucked away under the banner of *New Media*. What a cop-out! I was nurtured by an environment in this space that allowed me to explore beyond one particular sphere.

This was not just a dance space, it wasn't just a gallery, or a theatre space. It was a place of dialogue. And that impact on individual artists doesn't happen overnight - it takes years - many of them quite unconsciously - you learn new processes - slowly.

COSTUME 8 - TOSCA

Ah, TOSCA!!!

My first opera Project frock - Annemaree Dalziel designed - and I only got to wear it for 10 minutes.

What does The opera Project want? - an ensemble of artists - our peers - those we share knowledge with.

It has to be flexible - that suits both the artists and the funding bodies.

Perhaps what The opera Project has succeeded in doing, if nothing else, is to draw mature artists back to the Performance Space on a regular basis - back home.

Our “opera” is about the body and the space we find ourselves in.

In this building it is always the same 4 walls.

The feet are placed - the arms reach out - they lead the eyes.

A pyramid, grounded on this floor, and yet in relationship to the extremities of the blackened space and the imagined beyond.

Think about the Pyramids of Giza.

They were built by humans - with vision and skill. But they weren't created in a moment - it took hundreds of years of transferred knowledge.

It's always an issue when one makes work about culture, rather than about society of the distilled “NOW”.

Performance Space has, over the years, balanced both these issues.

I am in an environment where I am drawn to talk to people. People even talk to me!

I'm an artist enchanted by 19th century opera, the movies of Luchino Visconti and his ilk, point shoes, good Italian tailoring

... and at the same time I'm committed to contemporary hybrid performance.

Weird - but I feel comfortable.

COSTUME 9 - EL INOCENTE

EL INOCENTE, 2001.

What a tragic rag

- I made it - I don't do pretty these days - I do drab - it's so much less stressful.

Poor Katia Molino and Regina Heilmann - they had to wear identical costumes - but then, ofcourse, those two women would look beautiful in anything.

Due to certain vagaries in the levels of government funding, an extraordinary patience was demanded over 3 seasons (2 of them developments) and 18 months by the Performance Space and its audience.

After the eventual bonafide opening night this year, Tess de Quincey asked me when the trilogy might be performed again.

I immediately assumed that she was referring to our Romantic Trilogy (The Berlioz/Tosca/Tristan). But no, she was talking about the 3 showings of El Inocente - all a bit different, and all staged in a single evening, demonstrating a process.

I thought the idea ridiculous (as well as impossible), but I have to acknowledge that for so many people associated with this space, the “process” is incredibly important - and there is belief that “process” can be celebrated and performed in a satisfying and theatrical manner.

We won't ever do it - but Tess had articulated a concern.

Colin Rose in The Sun Herald would beg have to differ: “the dullest, most humourless and most pretentious hour I've spent in the theatre for many an evening - Kellaway makes a ridiculous spectacle of himself ... and a question for Kellaway: does the word “tosh” mean anything to you?” Frankly, Colin, **no**. But top that for inspirational comment - perhaps only James Waites in RealTime

but, hey!, I won't go on.

It's not just the press!

The dance world, too, is a hideously vicious world, where-ever you might be. It promotes a culture of the body, and that is an intensely personal vision. Young children are drawn into this culture, and gaze endlessly at their image in the studio mirror - a scary inward vision. This is a culture of "me, me, ME!". I have listened to dancers scream for 30 years about the lack of support and camaraderie in their profession, and then watched them stab a colleague in the back. I've done it myself.

The Performance Space introduced me to a sometimes different world - a dangerous world, but a potentially supportive one.

Any dance artist that has been associated with this space is a privileged one.

My anecdotes are personal - My work is public - That is all that matters. My work acknowledges various extra-theatrical issues - but it comes back to one simple concern - my work is about a body (sometimes several bodies).

That space (out there!) has allowed me to move that body and my imagination. I have been a musician, an actor, a dancer - a body. Only that room would have permitted me such freedom.

I have worked many other spaces that have insisted that I stand still - that I define my practice in a brief sentence.

It's too easy, as you tour your work or processes to other contexts, to appear radical and fresh in that foreign climate with its different histories and experiences.

But the demands are actually greater when you strive to entertain/provoke a similar/familiar audience over 20 years.

It's not just preaching to the converted - it's attempting to invigorate an often jaded palate.

I'm a notoriously lazy person, but this space has demanded that I keep moving.

And so to you and a thousand artists (some of whom I've never met),

those who have contributed to this extraordinary space:

I very occasionally hate you, but more often I love you.

THANKYOU.

FA'AFINE (PROGRAM NOTE)

fa'afa : like

fine : a woman (Samoan)

Over the past month I have been gradually seduced by a text written by Brian Fuata. He has imagined a possible 23 year old gay man - intelligent, articulate, New Zealand born, Samoan parents, and now living in Sydney. His writing poses questions regarding gender assignment in relation to sexual proclivity - questions relevant to every young (and not so young) person. My job has been to realize these arguments in a performance.

“..... *I am a white fucker*”

Desire and cultural determinates can make awkward bedfellows - who is fucking whom (over)? - the rub of flesh on flesh can be unsettling.

Much has been written about a Samoan “peculiarity” known as the *fa'afine*. We are not adding another thesis to the anthropological canon. We are situating an audience in a theatre with an Australian/New Zealand/Samoan man to consider what he experiences when he is told he is “like a woman”, and yet does not feel “like a woman” at all.

Nigel Kellaway
Director

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FA'AFINE

Text by Brian Fuata with the Direction of Nigel Kellaway
Dramaturgy by Damien Millar

1. COMMANDMENTS (voiceover)

My mother was very superstitious.

Most of her superstitions, oddly enough, had a specific time:
midnight and any time after midnight but before sunrise ...

1. Never look into a mirror.

2. Never whistle.

3. Never be awake with a window opened.

4. At all times, day and night, avoid contact with an Aiku — an evil male demon that sits in trees, waiting for girls, waiting to jump into them and possess them, because they are jealous of the girls' long hair.

5. Clear stockings are to be worn at all times on Sundays.
6. A lady never talks with a member of the opposite sex without her guardian.
7. Never kiss on the lips in public toilets.
8. Your name is "Gary Cooper", and you have never been with a guy before.
9. Never seduce your mother.
10. Always love someone who can never love in return.
11. Never answer a slow tapping or scratching at the door.
12. Never approach — and avoid at all times — roaming dogs or cats.
13. Never fall in love with your children.

2. BIRTH

There's something happening that no one else is quite sure of, but you and I have known exists somewhere out near the borders of foreign countries, where passers by acknowledge each other with side glances and weird white science.

Goodbye to mothers.

I gave birth to mine on the 26th of July 1978 in Wellington hospital, Wellington, N.Z.

The nine months leading to her departure were fair sailing ...

and I hadn't much difficulty understanding the miracle happening inside me.

I had eaten well, exercised regularly, went to my breathing classes, took up yoga, gave up cigarettes and alcohol and acquired three substantial relationships with three smart, handsome, intelligent and very well endowed men. Who supported me greatly during the ten minutes of my labour.

It took less than five pushes and not much breathing when my mother slid out and severed a farewell. It has devastated me ever since.

I'll have lost her several times over, and it will devastate me even more to the point where I'll have given birth to many more mothers in retribution to the many I have lost to hysteria, to utopia, to gossip, to free drugs and public toilets, to anonymity — and his many fears towards intimacy.

(Hula)

3. AND THEN THERE IS ME AND MY MUM

Tonight I will criss cross this city's spine and bark wanting something more. There will be no apology, tonight..

There's this cute boy on the train who looks like Gary Cooper travelling backwards reading maps and desiring vacant lots of casual sex. Last night I fucked him.

Sorry. I'll say something pretty.

My mother is feeling maybe she should start writing letters to Gary Cooper since he's never home to answer the telephone —

(drunk) "Mr Cooper, please call immediately..... Hey Mister Cooper, I have lost the word and can't remember a single gesture."

No Mum, here will be no applauding from the crown tonight. You have lost your rule.

But Brian is doing very well. He's moved down to Sydney and is living with two females.

Mum, I like dresses. I like mohawks. And I like being a boy. Mum is happy.

When I was 8 I told her that I found Jesus attractive. She hit me, sent me to my bedroom, and closed the door. Not long after she came running in to pull the bedsheets off me, and accused me of being naughty. A few months later she repapered the livingroom with a huge image of Jesus. I liked it.

(High heel shoes on)

When I was 18 I moved to Sydney. She called twice a day without fail for a week, saying nothing but crying, sometimes really hysterically, other times just sobs and sniffles. I just listened through the five minutes and then I'd hang-up.

I wanted her to ask me to forgive her. I wanted to remind her that I was NOT a fa'afafine.

4. CHAT SHOW

Hostess:

Good evening!!! Tonight we're asking who does what, to whom, who likes what, who likes doing what, and what and to whom.

Brian, do you recognise this voice?

MUM (VOICE OVER - drunk): Where there is a boy there is method.
 And if you want to wear a frock, Brian, you can wash the
 fucking dishes.

Where there is method there is a mother.
There are other reasons to wear a frock!

1. Does a Fa'afafine need to wear a dress?

No!!!!!!

Have you any idea what FA'AFAFINE means .. literally?!
It means "LIKE A WOMAN"

Does that mean that every drag queen in Samoa is a Fa'afafine?
Confused?
I think I'd better take your boyfriend!

2. *(Take boyfriend to seats)*

Don't worry, not every Fa'afafine is gay

3. *(Moving back to tables)*

Can anyone tell me the Fa'afafine's favourite colour?
I'll tell you later.

4. Are Samoan mother's comfortable with gay men?
Usually not

Are there any gay men here this evening?
You'd better all come with me!

5. *(All gay men to the seats)*

Are the men who fuck Fa'afafine gay?
Not necessarily
Or so they claim ... do they do it in the dark?!

6. Can a Fa'afafine marry a nice girl and have children?
Yes!

Who creates a Fa'afafine - men or women?
Women - there mothers

Come on boys, we're not safe here - all of you up here

(ALL MEN TO SEATS)

"I have cleaned the house several times but all with different intentions, some not all that clean. Mopping the floor, washing and drying the dishes, wrung many clothes on the line surrounded by a taro garden that takes up the entire backyard."

Samoan families can be very big - you pray for daughters - but if not

(scrim lowers)

I am a White Fucker.

Fucking white men has never been an "option", but a cultural imperative. It is for the benefit of anthropology. I have been known to have a relationship with coloured boys, all of whom have been as interesting and developed as some East African countries. The one coloured boy in particular (who was the most developed) was my cousin who everyone called "Macguyver", for no reason. (Samoans don't have reason, we ate it).

I remember him sucking me off and nothing happening.
He would cordon off the back of his throat, collect so much saliva, which poured into my mouth as if he was watering me.

I began to learn about the human boy. My education with Macguyver instructed a sweet perversity in retrospect, but I have never forgotten that naked boys in beds know absolutely nothing, but sensations and darkness.

But with colour, as in a darker pigmentation of the skin, Macguyver taught me nothing about the colour of mine. Until I watched TV and got sexual crushes (which meant rubbing the corner of pillows between my legs) on all these white men parading in American soaps.

So, white fucking it is.

Over the years I have learnt to love being a White Fucker. I hate them.

Without you I would feel a great loss of identity.

5. TABLE

My mother and all her friends meet up at each others house to play poker without sleep, laughing and singing till Kingdom come. Literally spending 24 hours smoking cartons of cigarettes, drinking bourbons and coke, gambling half their weeks earnings to pay respect to their idol and their idiot, the Virgin Mother Mary. Thinking how stupid that some nigger could have such a high demanding job and still not have anything to show for it. Because as far as they are concerned Mary is no different from Tina Mulipu who works at the shoe store her palangi husband owns. At least Tina gets discount shoes.

Meanwhile us children wait in the peripheries anticipating the odd note or coin to fall off the table and into our pockets, I being the little girl that I am have the advantage of being allowed to sit underneath the table, and under there I sit. Sexy platform shoes. In the wrong hands one too easily falls over into a coma of marriage to the local pharmacist, who calls all you islander women “Blossom”, and later shortens it to “Loss”.

(Pharmacist VOICE OVER) Come here my beautiful Loss, I haven't seen you for a while. Come marry me, my one and only Loss, we've nothing to lose.

Surrounded by a sea of legs, brown legs, women's legs, mothers legs saturated in cheap perfume, baby oil and the cynicism that Jesus was like any other sailor they had met in the early 70s.

Back then, you women was Sex in platform shoes — both functional and naive. Sexy platform shoes and a sea of legs.

And above this water's line a collective of strangers sound their laughter like puberty, and in this little girl that I'm not, a drunk-yard of happy women, where down and down I sink.

The foreskin has medicinal properties. You softly rub mine on your sick eye while I stupidly argue with the girls in the family over how I can't see the television — “Because you're in my way!” And after a few minutes your eye becomes soothed and James, my older brother, is thankful that he doesn't have to do it this time.

Tonight, underneath, I am sitting on a woman's big toe and my arsehole is safe and secure ... With your tears wept on the tip of my groin, I fumble my underwear back on and continue watching the television, now made clear and in full view.

And sucking on a hard boiled sweet I realise I am facing right in between my mother's legs where I continue sucking. Her thighs are two whales, thick and blubber, sweating concern for her children's ability to walk well into the future and I all of a sudden run dry in the mouth. I am

strangely intrigued, waiting for something to come gushing out from between her legs, but nothing does, so I will wait a little longer.

6. FIRST GOSPEL, ACCORDING TO THE MOTHER

Her hand on my mother's thigh smelt like God where salt burnt my skin and Sodom and Gomorrah! I couldn't breathe. My mother's legs opened further apart where above this water's line I could hear their laughter sing like memory where down, down I sank drowning in this sea of legs, brown legs, women's legs, mothers' legs, and my dick pissed my pants and I realised I was a ... and Sodom and Gomorrah! I couldn't, I couldn't breathe ...

Her hand went further up my mother's legs, the liquid that ran down mine became thick like paste and stuck my legs together and I couldn't, fucken, breathe ... saturated in cheap perfume, baby oil and the cynicism that Jesus was just like any other sailor they had met, I tried ... nothing came out but kissing sounds and the fuck of my cold body flip flapping on the suburban ocean floor. My toes disappeared, my ankles became one, the salt that I perspired became crusted, flaking away to reveal silver specks of scales. My mother was happiness ... "Brian's doing well, he's moved down to Sydney and living with two females!"...

And after swimming around these strangers legs, I swam out from underneath the table and into the midnight streets, realising, for the first time, I can never have what these women had.

And she would genuflect her stupid knee, sit her arse on the floor, cross her legs like Buddha — "What more can you do to please me?" — and I would position my groin like lamb on marble and she would receive ... into her eye ... Jesus.

And then, in 1987, my mother was possessed

By her dead sister.

7 - 8. THE EXORCIST - PART 1

Okay, so there's this Samoan family in the lounge room reciting the usual evening prayer.

Not long after we finish, my mother starts rolling her head in circles and her arms and hands rotate like a chopper.

She yells at the children, "You're ugly and disrespectful and where the fuck are my kids!" Pointing at me, "Who are you? I know you, you're trouble and your mother's going to pay for it"

The others run to their rooms. I follow.

(RUN BACK TO GET RADIO MICROPHONE)

So my mother was possessed,
maybe by Auntie Maria,
and she is vomiting shit and silly regrets of leaving her children in rotting families,
"You're dad's responsible."
My mother is not my mother
and my dad's scared.
He's shaking his head thinking "not again".

He hated Auntie Maria.

Screams and screaming and panties drenched in piss, and her face is pleasantly sour, and there are contortions and yellow eyes and bibles flipping like a multitude of fish gasping for a multitude of loaves, and my living aunties show up.

My dad doesn't like them either.

They've got this white priest man,
that all the parishioners have crushes on 'cause he was sex.
"Fr Frank, you fucken slut! Are you going to Fuck me too?!!

'Cause he was just sex.

PRIEST: *In the beginning was the word, and the word was God.*

And cultural catamites that refuse to mention names, professions and familial beliefs for fear their girlfriends or possible girlfriends would turn into stone and die in shit, loiter in church pews reciting creeds to affirm family ties and strengthen the voices of the parish choir. Cautious that no note is overlooked and the cocks of the men in mass remain moist.

BRIAN: And we children are scared, and we're called upon to witness a sacred Samoan custom, where the living aunties are standing on my mother who is not my mother and beating her body to get to Maria.

And Dad's rolling his eyes.

There's something happening that no one else has caught on to and you are relishing the glory of others not knowing. Your children are reading and speaking in fluent English. They are far more articulate than the average "child" and seem to be a lot lighter in shade. Almost translucent. Radiant. Closer to god.

And she's bleeding and she's bruised, and they're beating and bruising, and the husband is very proud, as he stanches up and down the isle like Paul Keating and dismisses his people with slight glances like middle class. It is a proud moment for you when your children are the talk of the congregation.

alley Where one of your daughters is a slut with the "Western morals of a black cat!" and she is pretty like ludicrous, like a brochure of your island home, so pretty its sacrilege.

Your eldest son is visiting home from the army,
studying micro-electronics part-time at University.

Another daughter, the eldest...although ugly as black-sinned skin, is reading the gospel this morning and reading so well you can see right through her, her bitch black bucked teeth frothing language that your people say "yes" to, "thankyou", "what would you like?", "if you like", "when you like", nod subserviently, smile unknowingly and end dancing lovely.

Your youngest daughter is doing contemporary liturgical movements that oohs and aahs the parish priest which then oohs and aahhs the parish present left

pondering as to where to enrol their brown daughters to follow footsteps of such praise.

9. BEAT SEX

And then, there is me. And tonight I met a Sex. And it was dead. Tonight I met him over the phone. And he was dying.

He was effeminately cold and anonymous with the name “Bob”, and he was weathered and withering with disease and we didn’t say much — small talk about discount prices, local charges, how monthly payments worked out a lot more cheaper in the long run. And I didn’t. And I wasn’t. Attracted to him. Most precious of all was my embarrassment.

I was embarrassed by the sight of her. After school when she picked me up in front of other students, or on weekends when making that all important trip, with all my cool friends, trying to avoid her by sitting in another train carriage. Pretending not to hear her when she spoke to me. But she talks for ever and she looks ugly.

His lips were independent to the rest of his face, the rest just hung like meat in a sauna. Body was sickly thin and haggard. Skin decorated with lesions. Sweet.

But I wasn’t going to cry now, now that she had come all this way in her obviously newly purchased car (she got rid of the old one, it won her no friends). And we went back home and met her maternity. I obliged our stupid contract but suddenly I fell in love.

It was the best Sex I had ever met. But still, I fell in love. I had known of him, and of it and knew them now. I knew his lesions like my childhood. And he knew my childhood better than me. He knew I didn’t know anything, that to me, “Samoa” and “Samoan” were nouns and adjectives — nothing more.

While my fingers were circling his arse I was the prodigal son realising upon a white male pattern. I had heard of it and knew it now. Patterned into a history of sad beautiful neutral cock-moments — for the first time I felt honestly Samoan. A proper one, with a wife, several hundred babies, a job as a factory hand, catholic with mormon tendencies, a house, and two cars. Two holy, genuine, newly purchased, family carrying, law abiding, beautiful, natural, moving cars ... Goodbye to mothers.

This is a sign that what we have physically shared has been but a moment, last night, when christ was washing your feet (you can barely walk these days). This is a moment in time, frozen for you, extended. It is taken for granted that what we have just done could be considered by many a personal cultural trait.

I love you and like all lonely animals in the kingdom I am eternally sorry for your outgoing calls to the bank, to the nursing home where you work inside and in your insides (dealings with old people are hard for you, I know that, we all know that). For the many nights of Bingo with money lost to Tina, Paulita who had just moved from Auckland, Ese’ese who you owe twenty dollars, Bessy and her thirty year old manic depressive daughter Rusty, Sau and Eterine. Remember that time when you likened my tummy to licking? We were both very upset.

The absence we have shared has not brought an answer any closer to us. There is a principal, common to the people, that to feel something, it has to be lost. So, goodbye. There was always no belonging, no connected bits or bitings, so goodbye to the tooth that has fallen out, the eye that loves sweet things, and goodbye to you.

10. THE EXORCIST - PART 2

Hi, my name's Brian,

and it's early morning, cold, and we're all trying to sleep in the lounge room. Mum's bleeding and bruised.

"Stop it" she screams. "Please stop it." Dad's rolling his eyes. I with all the luck in the world have been chosen to sleep closest to her —

"I'm gonna eat your fucken toes you lil' cunts!" — and the blankets rise to our knees revealing our feet while we writhe like sleeping misfits, because our mother has evil in her, and Auntie Maria. And boogies have always existed, in the cupboard, and under our beds, fucking rosary beads then spitting them out like pips.

And we're exhausted from the night's exorcism and don't go to sleep, but pretend to.

There's a scratching at the door and I know it's the possessed cat we were all told about in Sunday school, or maybe it's mum, and it's wanting to possess us, and my living aunty is warning us to ignore it, but the cat is howling like the devil dog, and my toes are still poking out.

And then it's morning and we haven't slept.

I've cleaned the lounge room of the holy dirt and holy water from the night before and it's calm. My mum is sleeping ... and then it begins again.

So picture my mum in boiling lettuce juice, and it scars her belly. Picture her screaming with popping veins and mad eyes. The white priest-man is back and he's trembling because this is not the Eucharist. His belief is in Roman architecture and he left that behind years ago.

11. CONFUSED?

Hostess:

Confused?

It happens, girlfriends, in the playground when none of you are watching.

The girls spun me round in rounds and the ground wouldn't stop, and the laughing girls and the laughter of girls threw me off the edge and falling I fell into the pit of your belly, heartbroken.

That reminds me of something I read on the Web last week, on the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute site:

An active volcano rising more than 4,300 meters from the ocean floor in the Samoa Islands has been discovered by a team of U.S. scientists earlier this year ... similar in size to Mt. Whitney in California, the largest mountain in the U.S.

The volcano has been called *Fa'afafine*, a Samoan word that they translate as "wolf in sheep's clothing."

It seemed an appropriate name since the size of the volcano was a surprise, and wasn't at all what it appeared to be.

I imagined, in this ambiguity, a world that could've existed in us, Mum ... you and me.

I saw you dancing like a man on fire, and me, like your Gary Cooper (who made a film in Samoa once and left behind hundreds of adoring Samoan girls because he could) Garry Cooper, spinning girls and vomiting over my grandmother's insolence.

I am not a Fa'afafine, But you, so toothless and full of gum you continue chewing your poker game in the vain hope that tonight's winnings will get you and your family out of social obscurity and into the world of television that you blindly bitch-watch so much of.

HOSTESS VOICE OVER: Well, thankyou Brian. Very tropical.

12. LIPSTICK LOVE YOU ALL DAHLING!!

"I'm wearing lipstick again. I suck my tongue in remembrance of you — Gary Cooper." The first and last time I wore lipstick, it was my mother's. I wore it out one night and was approached by several motherless men, weary and worn out from the weight of their fantastic cocks. I got fag-bashed and my lipstick, smudged. "How can you offer me love like that, my heart's burnt. How can you offer me love like that, I'm exhausted leave me alone." You ask too much. I'm too tired. You completely forgive the stairwell that leads to our room. You walk the stairs like a movie star. Upon entering, I find a ready poured glass of cold cow's milk (my favourite of all secretions). I am overwhelmed by your powers of suggestion. You turn me on and I don't like it.

Please leave me, children are watching.

review

A nice, nasty night out

Will Rollins

RealTime February / March 2002

(Reproduced with permission)

Mr Fuata has a *very* nice speaking voice. A nice leg. Very fetching in Cottontails. A very nice head. Shaven smooth as a baby's bum. Big eyes. Big lips. Everything *very* nicely rounded. Embraceable. Charismatic too. He doesn't have to do much. Just recite his prose poems about his mummy in *That* voice. That'd be quite enough, thankyou. But tonight he is here, there and everywhere, very nicely done, yes very stylish, new man, new persona. Prancer. Teaser. Cajoler. Manipulator. Natter natter. He's cocky. He's confident. He's a mover. He fairly dances. Corrals all the gay men, and then the others, up on stage with him. All on view. Ladies night out ... but not exactly the Chippendales. If only he'd keep still, lie down!, we could listen properly and play psychoanalyst. So Mummy subconsciously want you to be a Fa'afafine, is that it? And so did TV, all those fuckable white men: "Fucking white men has never been an option, but a cultural imperative. It is for the benefit of anthropology." Tres witty! And superstition: "The foreskin has medicinal properties. You (Mother) softly rub mine on your sick eye while I stupidly argue with the girls in thee family over how I can't see the television." And what you were not: "And after swimming around these strangers' legs, I swam out from underneath the table and into the midnight streets, realising for the first time, I can never have what these women had." And, Jesus, did this happen? "... she would genuflect her stupid knees, sit on her arse on the floor, cross her legs like Buddha - 'what more can you do to please me?' - and I would position my groin like lamb on marble and she would receive ... into her eye ... Jesus." And then she, your mother, is ritually beaten because she is possessed by a dead aunt. And your brothers and sisters are culturally all over the shop. And you fall in love with a dying man, "skin decorated with lesions ... While my fingers were circling his arse I was the prodigal son realised on a white male pattern ... for the first time I felt properly Samoan." Say again? This is heavy. I can't keep up. We're out of time. Make an appointment for ... But, *my*, but you've slipped into something astonishing, so climactic, so peacocky, so proud while so loquaciously abject. "I find a ready poured glass of cow's milk (my favourite of all secretions). I am overwhelmed by your powers of suggestion. You turn me on and I don't like it." Who exactly turns you on? Mother? See your own Mother's Commandments no 9, "Never seduce your mother". Well, not exactly a nice night out, but so charming a host, so ably playing himself. On more persona in the unfolding life of Brian Fuata, this one high camp, elegant (well styled Mr Kellaway!), mouth as usual delightfully and so informatively in the gutter. So much to think about. I think you'll enjoy *Fa'afafine*. I know I did.

response from Urban Theatre Projects

Dear RealTime,

For seven years I have worked for Urban Theatre Projects, the company which produced *Fa'afafine*, reviewed in your last issue. As you know, I have never complained or taken issue with any review of any UTP show appearing in RealTime (nor any other publication). There have been negative or mixed reviews of our work in the past. Most of these I have agreed with. The rest I saw as valid assessments which I happened not to share. I would never dispute your right to publish them.

But what am I to make of the "Will Rollins" review of *Fa'afafine*?

Yes, I know you'll respond that its not a review but a *response* to the work.

Well, yes.

A response that is sneering, patronising and utterly unprofessional. No wonder its author didn't have the guts to run it under their real name.

The clear implication is that Brian doesn't need an audience, he needs a therapist. This is dressed up in a kind of why-should-I-listen-to-a-tired-self-indulgent-recitation of "his prose poems about his mummy" because-aren't-we-all-over-personal-narrative world weariness. I could argue that the piece is about much more than this personal relationship, (the little matter of colonisation, for example) and that "Will Rollins" has

missed the point. But I'm writing this letter to talk about how we discuss our work, not to defend this particular show.

I've seen pieces in RealTime that were wonderfully provocative essays in response to ideas raised by works, as much as reviews. There is thoughtful critique elsewhere in this very issue. But what the "Will Rollins" piece adds up to is "fuck you, who the fuck gives a fuck anyway". It is nothing more than misanthropy. "Will Rollins" completely rejects the possibility of engagement with the performer's personas, the show, and the artists who created it. This is his or her right - as an audience member. To publish this opinion in an anarchist zine or an undergraduate paper would probably be mildly amusing. (I suppose the piece is actually trying to be clever and funny.) But publication of an opinion in our artform's (and our industry's) most significant journal - which on every page but this one takes itself and its subject seriously - is quite a different matter. It carries responsibilities; to the work, to the artists, to our artform, and to the readers.

The editors of RealTime have abandoned these responsibilities. No other worthwhile journal would allow such a piece to be published pseudonymously. This is the first rule of critical writing. If I, as the producer of this show, had written in praise of it under a fake name, you would regard this as seriously unethical, and rightly so. I welcome critical dialogue around our work and always have - I'd just like to know who I'm talking with. Brian Fuata, aged 23, had the guts to state his position(s). "Will Robbins", who are you? From what position were you reading this work?

We can argue about the role of the reviewer. I don't expect pollyanna boosterism, or a bland consumer guide. I expect a fair critical response. I expect some kind of engagement with the possibilities of our artform. And I don't think too many people would disagree that in some way or another, the reviewer (or analyst or critic or responder or whatever) in a national industry journal is there as the eyes and ears of the reader.

If these were my eyes, I'd pluck them out.

I await your response.

Harley Stumm
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From: "keithg" <keithg@orangemail.com.au>
Date: Tue, 12 Feb 2002 14:45:42 +1000
To: Harley Stumm <harley@urbantheatre.com.au>
Subject: Re: outrageous piece by "will rollins"

Dear Harley

Thanks for your letter. We assume that it's meant for publication in the next print edition of RealTime. Is that so? We hope it is.

As for the issues you raise:

1. We think you have misinterpreted what is fundamentally a supportive if idiosyncratic review, hardly the "why-should-I-listen" response you portray. We see the writer as attentive, in fact wanting to focus more closely on Fuata's words. Rollins does not at all 'completely reject the possibility of engagement.'

In our reading of Rollins review, we saw it as taking pleasure in Fuata's performance, especially his new persona, praising the director for shaping that persona, astonished at the extremes of what the performer describes, and critical only of the disjunction between Fuata's delivery and the staging of it. As for the colonisation issue, perhaps for Rollins, as for us, that pretty much went missing in the performance and the density of the text.

2. RealTime allows the use of pseudonyms where the writer might be placed in a difficult position in respect of their employment and/or the community they belong to. It is not treated lightly.

3. We do not censor commissioned writers. Commissions are rarely rejected.

Should you be happy to have the letter published, we will reply and also offer Will Rollins the opportunity to respond.

Regards,

Keith & Virginia
Managing Editors
RealTime

Report to Ministers on Small to Medium Performing Arts Sector

Company: **The opera Project Incorporated**

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Tel/Fax: +61 (0)2 9516 3762

Email: oproj@orangemail.com.au

1. Your organisation's vision or mission statement

The opera Project Inc.'s mission is to create an ongoing process of examination of contemporary theatrical structures (embracing its very long history), and in particular those structures which hold up our notion of 'opera'. It aims to do this within a forum of collaboration between committed artists who share a history in contemporary performance. Over the past four years a flexible ensemble of established and highly experienced artists, committed to the vision of The opera Project, has emerged.

2. Your organisation's contribution

Art form: The opera Project approaches the "operatic" form from a quite different position to other companies in Australia. Firstly we don't define it from a primarily musical position, although music may be an important component of any given project, and music may be the primary skill of some of the collaborating artists. The works produced do not develop from the initial writing of a librettist and composer, and therefore text and music are not bestowed any greater authority than any other components in a project. The results are works that (though acknowledging theatrical / operatic / performance / musical / structural techniques and histories) challenge our notions of "opera" and established processes of devising musical and theatrical works.

Audience access: Over the past four years The opera Project has developed a Sydney audience base that is changing its attitudes to contemporary music theatre practice. They come to our work with a range of prior concerns - contemporary performance, classical and contemporary music, physical theatre. Many of them (particularly those who have followed many of the

collaborators' work in contemporary performance over the past 15 years) were at first confused by the departures in theatrical structure that the company was making. The opera Project reminded them that even the most radical theatrical practice can become habitual (conservative?) over time. The opera Project's mission is to encourage its audience to look and listen in ever different ways - no two projects approach these challenges in the same way.

In 2001 the company has had the opportunity to tour an early work (*The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*) to Hobart and Brisbane. This is crucial to the both the company and its audience. When a company works in the same city, year after year, it will inevitably play to an audience that is experiencing the same theatre environment and the work will reflect similar experiences. It is essential that work is shown to audience that can bring to it a quite different literacy and viewing history.

Professional development: The opera Project is a loose ensemble of mature artists, many of whom have worked together in various combinations over 10-15 years. They are all freelance artists that move from project to project. The opera Project not only provides a platform and focus for their work, but also ensures a continuity of process. Working relationships are not fully developed in the process of a 6 week project. - it takes years. The opera Project provides a flexible environment in which these artists can explore certain shared concerns over years, with the freedom, also, to move beyond the group to develop other projects and collaborations.

3. **Your organisation's critical issues**

Project funding: The opera Project is funded at both the State and Federal levels on a project-by-project basis. The work created enters the company's repertoire, and immediately on completion of the work, the company begins the process of ensuring a future touring life in which the work can continue to develop. This requires that the company is assured a future existence - this existence dependent on one State funding round and two Federal funding rounds a year. Projects must be planned at least 12 months in advance, tours require at least 18 months. One unsuccessful application can throw the entire organisation into chaos. The opera Project has found itself in a position for two years in which the State and Federal funding for each project has been 12 months "out-of-sync". With acquittal requirements (before lodging the next application) the company has found itself in a cycle of endless development processes with eventual productions being mounted 12 months later on half the envisaged budgets and whilst the artists are already in development on the next project.

This situation can be further aggravated when an unsuccessful application leads to an extended close down of the company (as happened for 9 months in 2000) in the middle of the development of a work funded by another government level.

Administrative resources: Project funding provides administrative support for a 6-8 week period. Even if the company produces three works in a year (as is the case in 2001) the office is supported for only six months. The reality is that the administration of such an output, forward planning, and financial and legal requirements required of an incorporated GST registered organisation is ongoing, twelve months of the year. The large bulk of this work is done between projects by one person (the General Manager, who is also Artistic Director and planner, co-writer, director and performer on each project) on a voluntary basis. The accumulated workload can be stressful.

Artist burnout: The collaborating artists of The opera Project are independent artists partly by choice. The opera Project's output is distinguished by the maturity and experience of its artists, many of whom have worked as independent artists over 15-20 or more years. The ensemble nature of The opera Project is a rare occasional "safe haven" for these professionally insecure artists. Most of them would be described as "mid career". It is of concern to us that so few contemporary performance artists in Australia get to see a productive life beyond

“mid career”. Too many will have ceased their practice before the age of 40. Almost all are “burnt out” before 50. In an International context this is a disgraceful predicament. Young artists need to “emerge” into a vibrant culture - an environment in which their work be seen in a literate context. Most of Australia’s performance history is locked away in fading video archives - the output of prematurely retired artists.

Flexible organisations which platform the work of independent artists must be constantly nurtured, or the environment collapses and individual vision and innovation in the performing arts is permanently decontextualised, deprived of a living history and consequently marginalised. When one side of government envisages (and the other side responds to) a *Knowledge Nation*, we hope they consider that “knowledge” is accumulative - about utilising acquired wisdom, and not about relegating “the known” and “experience” to the dusty corners of a library.

Venues: It is well known that Sydney has a critical shortage of venues affordable and flexible enough to present contemporary performance. The ongoing tribulations of the Performance Space, that has been platformed the major initiatives over the past 20 years, are well acknowledged and are (thankfully) beginning to be addressed.

Nationally, even where there are the suitable venues, there are comparable problems. Dedicated venues need the funds to support the presentation of new work. The present situation, in which triennially funded venues (organisations with the necessary core administration and sector impact to realise new initiatives) are limited to one additional Australia Council application per year for the support of a single project, seriously limits the potential for new work to emerge. (It is often the case, also, that these venues have responsibility for representing other artforms as well, so the options are spread fairly thin). The state funding bodies’ reticence to support the presentation of interstate work (or the interstate touring of home-grown work) limits the scope of exchange between cities. The festivals and Playing Australia are about the only options available at present.

4. Your organisation’s observations about relationships in the sector

Major or specialist festivals: The opera Project has presented *This Most Wicked Body* at the 1998 Telstra Adelaide Festival and our work has been represented at the 1998 and 2000 Performing Arts Markets. In 1998 and 2001 we were invited to pitch our work at “Development Site” initiatives of the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals. These are variably valuable forums. The opera Project is struggling to juggle marketing and administrative resources with the demands of immediate productions.

The major performing arts sector: The Australia Council has successfully “compartmentalised” performing arts practice over the past 6 years. We have isolated artists in fairly water-tight structures. The major organisations have no need to acknowledge the practices that are reliant on other funding mechanisms.

Other arts organisations: Although there is a huge opportunity gulf (unbridged!) between organisations funded triennially by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council and project based artists, The opera Project has benefited from close relationships with other “small to medium” organisations.

Funding bodies: (please refer to **3. Project Funding**)

IN CONCLUSION: The opera Project has outlined concerns that have been articulated in various ways, ad infinitum, for twenty and more years - this is no new crisis. Solutions to these problems require considerable understanding, focus, planning and co-ordination.

But there is also an obvious “bottom line” - a substantial injection of additional funds, dedicated to the sector, is essential. Without it there will be little growth. Endlessly re-slicing the same cake is a pointless exercise.

**There is a see-saw action in my personal assessment of my work.
There are short positive periods (well documented herein),
and then there are long periods in which I feel total disrespect for what I am doing.
It's a bit "Sysiphus and his rock":
push it uphill, watch it roll down again.
It's interesting to look back at the acquittals over the past 9 years -
Making promises,
then knowing I have broken them (because they're arrogant),
and then making them again a few years later.
I'm not sure where this gets me.
I think my work has become more mature,
and certainly "better made",
but I don't understand where I've moved as an artist.**

Mentorship Program Acquittal 2001

Grant recipient:	The opera Project Incorporated
Amount of grant:	\$15,000.00

Board:	Theatre and Music
Grant Category:	Music Theatre Mentorship Initiative
Purpose of grant:	mentorship for emerging artist Melita Rowston as Assistant to the Artistic Director

1. DETAILS ABOUT THE PROJECTS OR ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

The program supported **Melita Rowston** as assistant to the Artistic Director, Nigel Kellaway, on a substantial and varied program of work over a six month period. Melita Rowston was introduced to an array of artistic approaches to the 'music theatre' form. Although Nigel Kellaway has his own clearly articulated approach and method of creating the company's repertoire, the many collaborators on each project bring to each process many rigorous, stimulating and challenging alternatives.

Melita was exposed to a vibrant dialogue on the visions, issues and techniques pertaining to contemporary Australian music theatre practice.

The program offered tough 'hands-on' experience in the day-to-day realities of running and nurturing a small arts organisation committed to and focussed on the development of contemporary performance and music theatre. The opera Project, as an organisation, is only as large as is needed to service the artistic practice - the artistic priorities are clearly defined.

The Program:

April 2 - May 13	<i>El Inocente</i> Rehearsal and Performance Season Performance Space, Sydney (6 weeks)
May 14 - June 17	<i>The Berlioz, our vampires ourselves</i> Rehearsal (equivalent 3 weeks)
June 18 - 24	<i>The Berlioz</i> Hobart Season - Salamanca Arts Centre (Long Gallery) (1 week)
June 25 - 1 July	Hobart - assisting Nigel Kellaway and Simon Wise in teaching artist workshops (1 week)
July 2 - 8	<i>The Berlioz</i> Brisbane Season - Brisbane Powerhouse (1 week)
July 9 - 15	<i>The Audience and other Psychopaths</i> Writing Workshop (1 week)
Aug 27 - Oct 21	<i>The Audience and other Psychopaths</i> Writing, Rehearsal and Public Presentation Performance Space, Sydney (8 weeks)

Principle Collaborating Artists on the Program

EL INOCENTE

Performers: Regina Heilmann, Katia Molino
Nigel Kellaway, Lynne Murray

Director: Nigel Kellaway (assisted by Melita Rowston)
Composer: Richard Vella (and G.F.Handel)
Lighting/Video: Simon Wise
Costumes: Nigel Kellaway, Annemaree Dalziel

THE BERLIOZ - our vampires ourselves

Performers: Nigel Kellaway, Annette Tesoriero, Paul Cordeiro
Director: Nigel Kellaway (assisted by Melita Rowston)
Scenarist/Dramaturg: Keith Gallasch
Composer: Peter Wells (and Hector Berlioz)
Lighting: Simon Wise
Costumes: Nigel Kellaway

THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

Performers: Katia Molino, Nigel Kellaway, Karen Cummings
Director: Nigel Kellaway (assisted by Melita Rowston)
Writers: Amanda Stewart, Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino, Stephen Adams
Composer: Stephen Adams
Dramaturg: Melita Rowston
Lighting: Simon Wise
Video Artist: Peter Oldham

2. STATEMENT BY NIGEL KELLAWAY (MENTOR)

Melita Rowston was involved in the daily development, rehearsal and production of three major theatre music works. This entailed experiencing three very different, though complementary, artistic processes:

- the consolidation of already developed components resulting in production - ***El Inocente***
- the re-rehearsal and touring of an extant work - ***The Berlioz-our vampires ourselves***
- the initial development and presentation of a newly conceived work - ***The Audience and other Psychopaths***

Over the six months of the mentorship program Melita's role in the company developed. *EL INOCENTE* was a work that had already benefited from 2 development processes over 18 months. Entering the process in the final rehearsal period and performance season gave her the opportunity to see the company in full flight, and allowed her to acquaint herself with the dynamics of the group. As well as assisting the company in the rehearsal room, Melita took major responsibility in liaising with the publicist and organising the mailing lists.

Melita played a major role as rehearsal director on the remounting of *THE BERLIOZ our vampires ourselves*, which primarily involved introducing a new performer to an extant role (Paul Cordeiro was replacing Dean Walsh). This is a work with no spoken text, and the sung text in French has no literal relevance to the scenario. It is a work that explores the abstract expression of the sung voice and the body. For an artist that has most familiarity with text-based theatre, this was a considerable learning experience. Melita also gained experience in the logistics of touring a work with a small company, the relationships that must be developed with the producing venues, and inter-company politics that are always tested under the pressure of a gruelling timetable.

By the time we were embarking on the development process on *THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS*, Melita had a very strong grasp on the company's approach to creating new work. Her role was very much that of Dramaturg, working closely with all the key creative artists, and keeping a meticulous eye on the rehearsal process as the performers grappled with the emerging text and sound score. Once we came to the public presentation Melita also took on responsibility as stage-manager.

Melita brought to the company a strong rudimentary knowledge of company administration and bookkeeping. The program provided the opportunity for her to witness a particular case study - a project based company that secures an ongoing financial base through thorough and long-sighted planning and a quick response to future opportunities. Financial profit is not the aim - artistic output and reasonable recompense are the priorities.

Melita was involved in the writing of applications to both the Australia Council and the NSW Ministry for the Arts for projects for 2002.

Although spoken text can play a very large role in the work of The opera Project, the work is more importantly driven by music and physical forces. The program offered Melita the opportunity to develop her interest in examining the various roles music can play in theatre and contemporary performance - and hence further understand the possibilities of the 'music theatre' form. The opera Project is certainly not a company of young artists. The program offered Melita the opportunity to have professional contact with mature and established singers, composers, writers, actors, dancers and contemporary performance artists.

Melita was also able to develop her 'hands-on' technical skills in the theatre, under the guidance of Simon Wise and Nigel Kellaway, in the areas of lighting, sound and staging - two artists that approach the visual content of their work in a very different light to much of mainstream theatre.

Melita had the opportunity to develop a strong collaborative and learning relationship with her principle mentor - an experienced artistic director, administrator and music theatre creator and actor with proven skills in running a small organisation, as well as many years experience as a freelance director working for much larger arts companies.

Value of the program to the host organisation:

The opera Project (the organisation and its productions) is both directed and administered by myself. Such a busy six month program meant considerable pressure for me (considering also my role as a performer in all three projects). The assistance of a young artist (who already possesses a huge range of skills, ripe for development) was invaluable in all areas of the operation.

Melita brought considerable artistic skills to the company and developed valuable rehearsal-director skills on both the assembling of the disparately developed elements of *El Inocente* and the remounting of *The Berlioz*. She also provided the invaluable “outside eye”.

The continuous nature of the program meant that this development of the artist’s skills were accumulative from production to production, which relieved the pressure of attempting to familiarise her with every aspect on a single project. Also, in completing the program with the development of a new work from scratch, the artist had valuable ‘corporate’ knowledge and artistic insight with which to contribute to the process as an informed collaborator with all the contributing artists. Melita became adept in second-guessing my demands and at shortcutting many negotiations. It is always good to have someone to censor some of my extremes, instigate the occasional reality-check, and at times to push us all further in our explorations.

In Conclusion:

The program offered the emerging artist an enormous range of insights into the practical running of a small performing arts organisation and the artistic realisation of a demanding program of productions. The economical nature of The opera Project’s structure ensured that the emerging artist was never sidelined as a mere observer.

I would hope that the benefits for Melita are long-reaching. I know from experience that in the whirlwind of an intensive program the major concerns are survival and immediate proficiency. As Melita creates more work alone over subsequent years, she may remember and understand certain lessons - some good, some instructively inadequate. Such is the mentorship “beast” for the more promising emerging artist.

The opera Project appreciates the initiative of the Music and Theatre Boards to provide a forum for instruction and dialogue for both the company and the artist.

3. STATEMENT BY MELITA ROWSTON (EMERGING ARTIST)

In December 2000, I graduated from The Directors’ Course at NIDA. As an emerging director, I was overwhelmed at the dis-interest shown towards us graduates as we embarked on our professional careers. I wrote countless letters to directors and theatre/opera companies seeking assistant positions, secondments or even just the opportunity to watch rehearsals! All except for two directors who did reply ignored my letters. (Rosalba Clemente at STCSA and Ros Horin at The Griffin Theatre Company.) I was appalled by the lack of support and encouragement - a general apathy that pervaded all levels of the industry. It was therefore a delight and relief when The Australia Council approved my mentorship application and I experienced the privilege of stepping into a full time position with Nigel Kellaway and The opera Project.

Reflecting upon the ensuing six months, I have on many occasions, counted my blessings at having had this opportunity. Upon starting I was immediately thrown into rehearsals for the staging of a previous developmental piece - *El Inocente*. I met performers Regina Heilmann, Katia Molino, singer Lynne Murray, composer Richard Vella and designers Simon Wise and Annemaree Dalziel. I was immediately welcomed and supported by all. This warmth also

extended to my liaisons with the staff at the Performance Space, especially Fiona Winning and Michaela Coventry who were open and inclusive. I chose to take a back seat during the initial stages of the rehearsal process, so that I was able to view how the ensemble interacted as a team, to understand their working methods and to gain insight into the ideas and concepts behind the production and The opera Project's continuing artistic concerns. By the time the production was bumping in at the Performance Space, I felt I was duly equipped to comment creatively about the work and to take on the responsibility as the outside eye of the production. I was involved in many late night discussions about the shape of the piece and how the music, text, video and physically were or weren't working together as a whole. I often offered creative solutions to the shaping of this new, complex work. These are invaluable tools for an emerging director, as it is only during the practical "hands on" process of shaping a new work that one can sharpen these skills. The season proved fruitful not only in terms of gaining knowledge about the creative and cognitive side to mounting the work, but through executing mail-outs, creating mailing list databases, liaising with the publicists, front of house, the Performance Space staff and finally in making those much sought after industry contacts on opening night!

One week after the show closed, we jumped into rehearsals for ***The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves***. This inaugural production for The opera Project was being remounted, for a tour to Hobart and Brisbane. Again I was introduced another group of professional artists: mezzo - soprano Annette Tesoriero and dancer Paul Cordeiro. These relationships have proved long lasting as professionals and friends. We were all an extremely close-knit group as we traversed different states to stage this work. I will be working with both artists on separate projects in 2002 due to my direct contact with them through The opera Project. In the rehearsal room, I was encouraged to take a much more in-depth role in the process. Paul and I were both new to the project's concepts and themes as the original dancer, Dean Walsh, was unavailable for the tour. So we both suggested new ideas and alternate ways to stage the piece - Nigel and Annette took all suggestions on board. My opinion and outside eye was relied upon constantly, and I became an integral player in the production and its subsequent tour. The tour opened up further contacts for me and introduced me to the structures and organizations set in place to support touring productions. This experience was invaluable, as I intend to tour my own work in the future and the knowledge I gained liaising with Rosemary Miller and staff at The Salamanca Arts Centre and Zane Trow and staff at The Brisbane Powerhouse is not something that can be learnt from the net, a guidebook or advice by other practitioners. I was instrumental in co-ordinating the tour and liaising with publicists in both states. I was asked to speak on "post show panels" and to help Nigel and Simon run performance making and lighting workshops in Hobart. Again the number of practitioners I met in each state and the contacts I made were invaluable and can only occur when one is in the thick of working with a company.

After returning from the tour, I became involved with day to day running of the company. I became familiar with the financial side of the company, from the balancing of books, to applying for grants and dealing with the joys of the GST, incorporation, work cover insurance and so on. I designed and co-ordinated the printing of corporate folders and business cards and completed various other administration tasks. I was fortunate to be involved in discussions with Wendy Blacklock at Performing Lines about future touring initiatives for The opera Project. This was also another benefit of the mentorship, as I gained further inside information about how the performing arts touring network operates in Australia, how Wendy runs Performing Lines and how this fits into the infrastructure of Australian and International touring agencies and festivals.

We then jumped into the development process for ***The Audience and other Psychopaths***. On this occasion I was a participating artistic voice as opposed to an assistant. Nigel and I spent a heavy week brainstorming and debating ideas with writer Amanda Stewart and composer Stephen Adams. As the process unfolded we met regularly and shaped the work. I took on a dramaturgical role working closely with Amanda. When the writing was ready it was handed over

to Stephen who began composing. Being involved in this process was integral to my development as a director working in music theatre. I was about to start the same process on an outside project with a composer and two musicians, so I eagerly kept my ear to the ground. I learnt about the relationship between composer, writer and director, gleaning skills to add to my own work practise. I saw how Stephen approached a piece of text and turned it into a layered composition for voice. The possibilities and scope of the work astounded me and has further instilled within me the desire to work with composers on new compositions for theatre in the future. As soprano Karen Cummings, performer Katia Molino and video artist Peter Oldham were introduced to the process, the layers of the work became richer. I was involved in every aspect of this development and saw first hand how each element tied into the other. Again when we reached the rehearsal room, I was included as a main player and my ideas and responses were listened to. The development was staged at the Performance Space and I was involved with all levels of the process from tying cables to performing briefly on stage with Katia to taking notes during the dress rehearsals.

It was a heady six months! In retrospect, the large number of professional artists I worked closely with is quite amazing. I entered the process wanting to learn more about the role of music in physical, devised theatre. I emerged six months later with a firmer knowledge of music and theatre and how the two forms intertwine, with my skill base certainly broadened and with future work opportunities opened up before me because of my association with The opera Project. I have also amassed a large knowledge of contemporary performance practice in Sydney - current and past.

I have had the great fortune of working full time in the arts during my first year out of NIDA. This has been the greatest advantage to me, as I have found that working constantly within the industry, not stepping in and out of it, opens one up to further work opportunities ñ it seems to have a snowball effect.

This mentorship has been integral to my development as a director, dramaturge and writer. On the "post show panel" at The Brisbane Powerhouse I was asked what I felt about the mentorship and I will repeat what I said to that audience:

These mentorships are integral to the future development of young and emerging directors and arts practitioners in Australia. The landscape at present is bleak out there for anyone graduating from a course like NIDA or VCA or simply seeking to gain skills in this area. There seems to be a great lack of interest from our leading theatre practitioners to invest in the next generation of directors. These mentorships and the companies and individuals involved in executing them, are one of the only avenues for young directors to take. My knowledge of the industry and of my own abilities would be much poorer without this experience.

Nigel Kellaway has been a warm, open and consistently driven mentor. Throughout the process on every level he has been there to answer questions, to share stories and to work with hand in hand. He has always been available, always approachable and always committed to the work. He has been a friend, a colleague, a drinking buddy as well as The Artistic Director and boss. I have always felt that I can ask him anything about the processes we have undertaken, advice on other aspects of the industry and favours in terms of his knowledge of music and theatre.

It is difficult to set up the relationship of mentor and mentee and usually this is something that organically grows out of a friendship or professional working relationship as opposed to something that is artificially enforced upon two strangers. But I felt from the instance that I first met Nigel as he showed me round the Performance Space, explaining the history behind every mark and scrape on his beloved building ñ that here was a person who had a lot to share and was willing to share it. That is a true mentor and in Sydney, in this industry there are few and far in-between.

My first year out of NIDA has been a big one, it has proven to me that I have the abilities required to tackle head on the joys and sorrows of pursuing a career in the theatre industry. I have a long path ahead of me, the struggle has been made a little easier because of the skills, contacts and experience I have gained working with the professional ensemble of artists that make up The opera Project. That is practical life experience that can't be gained from a textbook, lecture notes or in staging a co-operative production at The Old Fitzroy.

Melita Rowston
 Artistic Director
 glass theatre
 02 9698 0713 / 0402 657 952

Mentorship - Budget

EXPENDITURE

Salaries:

Melita Rowston	10,000.00	
Nigel Kellaway	1,000.00	
		11,000.00

Tour expenses:

Airfares (Syd/Hobart/Sydney/Brisbane/Sydney)	601.48	
Accommodation (Hobart and Brisbane)	893.00	
Travel Allowance	637.00	
		2,131.48

Administration costs:

Oncosts on Salaries (11%)	1,210.00	
Administration (Melita Rowston & The opera Project)	726.40	
		1,936.40

TOTAL EXPENDITURE		15,067.88
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INCOME

Australia Council Funding under Music Theatre Mentorship Initiative	15,000.00
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TOTAL INCOME	15,000.00
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<u>Profit (Loss)</u>	(67.88)
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Chapter 9: 2002

(The year of *Entertaining Paradise*)

KISS MY FIST

Consulting director for production featuring emerging writer/performers Karl Velasco, Shelley O'Donnell, Brian Fuata and Hannah Furmage. A Performance Space/ Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras production.

ENTERTAINING PARADISE

Co-created, directed and performed with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Regina Heilmann, Nigel Kellaway, Andrew Morrish, Peretta Anggerek (countertenor), Michael Bell (piano). Lighting designer: Simon Wise. A co-production with Performance Space, Sydney.

WOMAN IN TRANSIT

Consulting director for a work-in-process showing of a new work by Rakini Devi. Performance Space, Sydney

VACANT ROOM Mentorship program

Mentor for a short process/work by Michelle Outram, for PACT Theatre, Sydney

I LOVE YOU xxx

Director of solo show for Alicia Talbot. Performance Space, Sydney

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Medea:Material - Australia Council Application - 2003 Project

Application to Performance Space for position of Associate Director

Annette Tesoriero/Nigel Kellaway Christmas recital program

The opera Project: decadence and survival

RealTime

April / May 2002

Keith Gallasch

(Reproduced with permission)

Nigel Kellaway is a survivor—one of the few mature artists still working in contemporary performance in Sydney, such is the unnatural attrition of the field. But for how much longer? After directing, administering, performing in and consulting on a string of demanding shows over the last year (Little George, The Song Company; Interview with The Virtual Goddess, Rakini Devi (Perth); El Inocente, The opera Project; The Berlioz—Our Vampires Ourselves tour, The opera Project (Hobart & Brisbane); The Audience And Other Psychopaths, The opera Project, Sydney; Fa'afafine, Urban Theatre Projects, Sydney; Kiss My Fist, Performance Space, Sydney) his latest work, entertaining paradise, could be the last for quite a while. He really needs a break but the astonishing failure of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council to support Kellaway's work for the third time running means that he has no major support for his key venture, The opera Project, over the next year. Welcome funds from the NSW Ministry for the Arts have always been anticipated to supplement those from the Australia Council, but recently they have become the company's only source of support—and there's no more of that for the balance of 2002. So make sure you catch entertaining paradise before Kellaway becomes yet another premature archival Australian arts object (read his Scrapbook presentation at www.realttimearts.net). While this country's investment in the young, the emerging, the multicultural and the regional has revealed a broadening arts sensibility and begun to meet some important needs, our attention to the ongoing development and survival of the mature artist has been shamefully negligent. The current shortage of Australia Council artform funds means that there is never enough to go around. Too often we hear of artists being told that they were judged on their most recent work. This is ridiculous when dealing with artists with a substantial lifetime of work. Of course not every work can be a success or of the same high calibre, but artists like Kellaway prove themselves over and over with surges of invention and brilliance. Such is the nature of creation.

Kellaway's enthusiasm for entertaining paradise is undimmed by his straitened circumstances. Inspired by the material and especially the structure of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Pre-Paradise Sorry Now, he is collaborating with sometime opera Project cohort, performer Regina Heilmann and, for the first time, the improviser Andrew Morrish. The Fassbinder, described by Kellaway as "a classic piece of German anti-theatre" was taken up around the world in the 70s and realised in wildly differing versions. "There is a kind of narrative made up of mobile, fluid scenes including part of the story of Moors murderers Myra Hindley and Ian Brady—from how they met as young people and up to the first 2 murders. There are 9 pas de deux dialogues between them. There are 20 contra scenes each with 3 people. They're all about 2 people ganging up on a third, for example 2 prostitutes versus a transsexual prostitute; 2 fag bashers versus a homosexual...The scenes can be performed in any order. There's a sense of scenes being replayed or re-assessed as information recurs in different ways."

Ever one for a challenge, Kellaway is fascinated with “how to make a show working from limited information and with how a small kernel of an idea can develop.” Having Morrish in the team is another kind of challenge. Although Kellaway always sees the process of making work as improvisation, the prospect of having a professional improviser on stage, in performance, is another matter. Kellaway has a meticulous sense of structure which firms as the work emerges. Fortunately he’s found in Morrish a like-minded collaborator—an improviser preoccupied with structure. “I’ve never met anyone who can jettison material as fast as he can...if it’s not working he jumps to the next moment...an extraordinary facility for self-censorship. He’s very intuitive. I’m more calculating—I think before I do. Regina does, thinks and then does again differently.” Kellaway and Heilmann have been working as Hindley and Brady “with Andrew intervening quite left field...then we respond and rewrite our material and eventually jettison the Fassbinder text.”

While the Fassbinder has provided a formal springboard for entertaining paradise, Kellaway feels that the German writer’s preoccupation with the roots of fascism in racism, homophobia and cultural paranoia still warrant exploration, and we’ve had plenty of evidence recently in this country why this should be the case. The Moors murderers “were the products of Glasgow and Manchester slums—their limitations were forced on them. Brady did reform schools, jails. But he did well—he was a bookkeeper in a soap factory and wore a tie. He and Hindley met there, products of the class system. But the work is not about the Moors murderers. It’s about a neo-Nazi mentality—they talk endlessly about superior forms of life and those with no right to be here. It’s about the massive insecurity that makes people go for the weakest, that’s fascism.”

This is an opera Project venture, so what role does music play in the scenario? “High art is very scary for Ian and Myra and therefore is everything they fear. Especially when the singer is a counter tenor and Indonesian. This is paranoia about the elite artist.” Eleven songs make up 35 minutes of the show. There are Purcell art songs, an aria from Handel’s Rodelinda—“a burst of extreme energy”—and the 1910 Alban Berg Early Songs—“lush, decadent, cabaret quality and pre-serial.” Of Purcell’s “Sweeter than Roses”, Kellaway enthuses: “it’s like a Restoration soundtrack for a hard core porn movie, the foreplay, the sudden cum shot (“and shot like fire all over”) and then, marvellously post-orgasmic. It’s onomatopoeic, it’s in-ye-face, it’s the rattling-in-the-dark world of Hindley and Brady—not that they’d recognise it!” They cling to an Elvis songbook.

Kellaway, Heilmann and Morrish are joined by the remarkable young counter tenor Peretta Anggerek and the accomplished pianist Michael Bell in what promises to be a grimly thrilling experience, where the pleasures and horrors of decadence tangle, exploring, as Kellaway puts it, “the obscene limits to which intimate relationships can degenerate.”

Description from grant application

entertaining paradise_

(pianist)	Performers:	Regina Heilmann, Nigel Kellaway, Andrew Morrish, Peretta Anggerek (counter tenor), Michael Bell
	Director:	Nigel Kellaway
	Lighting Designer:	Simon Wise

The project gives equal weight to the collaborative process between specific artists and the performed work. However, this is NOT an open-ended “research laboratory” - The opera Project is, as always, committed to a finished and focussed “product”. A more adventurous project than in past productions, The opera Project is inviting new and exciting challenges, as befits a proven organisation of five years.

We have chosen, as a starting point, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's "play" *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*. Fassbinder, as an essential protagonist in the *antitheatre* movement of European theatre in the 1960's, proposed theatrical concepts highly influential on the development of our own contemporary performance practice. The process may eventually jettison the specific Fassbinder text, but it has not been carelessly chosen. Our concerns are in examining not only its formalistic structures but also its themes of Neo-Fascism - a disturbingly real force in our own contemporary culture, with its focus on xenophobia, homophobia and entrenched class-structures/opportunities. We do not seek to prescribe any moral judgements. We want to consider Fascism's genesis and contemporary ramifications.

Fassbinder (puts) his personal pain on show again and again. In his naked, no-exit narratives, the closeness of adult unhappiness to childhood trauma, of monstrosity to helplessness, is clear and emphatic. Endless cycles of (child) longing and (adult) betrayal are enacted, most of these ending in suicide, murder, fatal accident, or the deadliest compromise, suicide of the spirit. ... Escape can be more intolerable than death.
A Very Sad Song Sung with Lots of Feeling, Georgia Brown

Fassbinder offers some very persuasive explanations for the allure of Neo-Fascism, and details the horror of its execution.

Fassbinder prefaces *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* with the following explanation:

Four basic sets of material make up the play:

- *15 contes: short scenes about the fascistoid underpinnings of everyday life, in which two unnamed performers gang up on an individual - the gender combinations are for ever shifting.*
- *6 short narrations, spoken in the 3rd person by Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, the English "Moors Murderers".*
- *9 "pas des deux": fictitious dialogues between the two murderers.*
- *9 liturgical sections: texts reminiscent of the cannibalism embedded in religious liturgies and cults.*

These 39 sections can be arranged however one sees fit, so long as the Ian/Myra dialogues hold the dramaturgical centre. (Fassbinder) envisaged that the work could be performed by anything from five to thirty actors.

This Fassbinder provides not only the textual and thematic source material for the project, but also a malleable form for a work that depends on improvised structures in performance.

The collaborators

Andrew Morrish is respected as one of Australia's most accomplished and experienced improvisational performers. He also comes to the company with a solid understanding of The Opera Project's work over the past years. The Fassbinder text will suggest material to build

upon. Andrew will offer many alternative strategies to his collaborating artist's, both in the devising of the work and its execution.

Andrew articulates his interests as follows:

For me performance is intensely and intrinsically improvisational. I try to treat words as physical commodities that can be placed in space, projected, or unleashed in disconnected streams. A focus on controlling meaning diminishes under these conditions and the result is a combination of conscious and unconscious language and narrative flow. Movements are treated as individual units of meaning which develop into sequences (phrases and sentences). In the end I do not care if the material is presented in movement or language or both. I wish to find whatever form is theatrically satisfying in the moment of its presentation. I share the concerns of writers and choreographers: I want to clarify and deepen my vocabularies.

Andrew will offer a radical departure in the process of developing and performing work for the other collaborators. Certain imposed structures and pre-devised material (musical, textual and choreographic) will also lead Andrew to challenge to his own processes and strategies. Although known in Sydney primarily as a solo improvisatory performer, *The Fassbinder* will extend Andrew's considerable experience of collaborative performance, "bouncing off" his co-performers and any prescribed structures.

Since 1990 **Regina Heilmann** and **Nigel Kellaway** have developed a remarkable creative and performing partnership. Although they have different training histories they also share several, and the years have resulted in a partnership that can charge the space with an acknowledged "electricity".

In this new work they are setting themselves a huge physical and textual challenge. Their intention is to create a duet (in response to Fassbinder's "pas de deux") in which they maintain physical contact with each other throughout the entire work. They will perform within a ballroom dancing structure without any of its specific vocabulary. They are Myra Hindley and Ian Brady theatricalized - drawn together by circumstance, even though their individual desires may be at odds.

Fassbinder's films will often open with some version of a longing/rejection scenario. Usually tantalizing beauty and blossoming of desire are followed by acts of cruelty. The motif of circling is often employed in these scenarios to represent bliss. This, and the metaphors surrounding spiral staircases (the circling required to go either up or down) will be the starting points for these "pas de deux".

In order to play with an improvised scenic structure in each performance, an enormous repertoire of movement material will be explored and honed in the rehearsal process.

Likewise, the performative "availability" of the two musicians and their chosen repertoire will need to be highly developed:

Peretta Anggerek (counter-tenor) is one of Sydney's emerging vocal stars.

The Fassbinder will capitalise on the erotically charged nature of the counter-tenor voice, with its power to unsettle all prejudices pertaining to male virility. It is a degenerately "libertine" voice ("suspect" emotions are licensed). It possesses a virtuosic control over the "un-natural".

In Fassbinder's 1969 film *Why Does Herr R, Run Amok*, a man searches through a record shop for a recording, but he cannot remember its name. He describes it to the sales assistant as a "very sad song sung with lots of feeling". The feeling and grace with which the song is

sung can make the pain seem bearable, transform despair into voluptuous melancholy. This scenario forms the inspiration for the role of the operatic counter-tenor voice in this work, and also the work's emotional impetus.

Given the theatrical demands of the work, it is essential that Nigel Kellaway is freed from the piano.

Michael Bell first performed in The opera Project's *Tristan* in 1999. One of the most "in demand" accompanists to have recently emerged from the NSW Conservatorium of Music, he has demonstrated a keen interest in the role of music in a wide range of theatre. He brings a solid theatrical presence and finesse to the stage, and is an accomplished improviser in a wide variety of styles, which will prove invaluable in negotiating the flexible structure of *The Fassbinder*.

The sound will be entirely acoustic - spoken and sung voice and piano. The music envisaged for the work will include selected art songs of Henry Purcell and the *Jurgenlieder* (1901-04) of Alban Berg. These are all songs prominent in Peretta's repertoire. Other possible inclusions are various Indonesian pop songs from the 1940's and 50's, given the full early 20th century German cabaret "treatment". We have chosen not to collaborate with a composer. The songs will be treated in the same manner as Fassbinder intended for his written scenes - as material for manipulation. Our last work *EL INOCENTE* was "through-composed" by Richard Vella. *The Fassbinder* will be quite different - the extant songs and text will "hang" in an otherwise silent environment.

Simon Wise is a "permanent" collaborator with The opera Project. Simon and Nigel's professional relationship traces 21 major works over the past 15 years and several national and international tours.

As was the case in the creation of *El Inocente*, Simon will play a part in the daily development of the work. The flexible nature of the material in performance will mean that he will play a major role in the spontaneous ordering of scenes each night.

The setting will be a simple ballroom - a totally bare set with a piano centre stage. At most, the odd piece of functional furniture might be introduced. The work will concentrate on simultaneity of action (a hallmark of Nigel Kellaway's work), exploring focus by the material's physical positioning in the space (the all-important consideration in Simon Wise and Nigel Kellaway's collaborations over the years).

media release

The opera Project Inc. and Performance Space present

entertaining paradise

where all things are permitted

It's the 1960's on the Moors.
Myra and Ian are slaughtering British youngsters in a frenzy of calculated desire....
Or is it 2002 in the suburbs of Sydney?
Neo-Fascism merrily festers in any location.

At the wheel of a rented car is Myra Hindley. Beside her is Ian Brady.
On the seat between them is a copy of Mein Kampf and some pornographic literature.
In the fog a boy is leaning on a garbage can.
The car stops.
John Killbridge gets in ...

entertaining paradise is a dramatic meeting between four of Australia's most established contemporary performance practitioners and two of Sydney's rising musical stars. Inspired by Rainer Werner Fassbinder's play on the subject of the Moor's Murders, this work explores the obscene limits to which intimate relationships can degenerate ... particularly given optimum conditions involving Manchester slums, a soap factory, a camera and German wine. This dark tale with comic undertones is given the vicious and witty treatment that The opera Project is notorious for.

Andrew Morrish, one of Australia's most experienced and entertaining choreographic improvisers, joins the legendary partnership of **Nigel Kellaway** and **Regina Heilmann** who continue to challenge each other in their unique and dangerous collaboration. The team is joined

by Kellaway's long-term collaborator, lighting designer **Simon Wise**, for this chance assemblage of 40 discrete and mobile scenes promising a truly surprising event each night.

Peretta Anggerek (countertenor) is one of Sydney's emerging vocal stars (recently a soloist with The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and the Australian Ballet). This male soprano, who unsettles all prejudices pertaining to male virility, is joined on stage by the accomplished pianist, **Michael Bell**. The musical repertoire combines the naive and troubled world of early twentieth-century composer **Alban Berg** with the lush and provocative sound of **Henry Purcell** (with just a hint of **Elvis Presley** thrown in for good measure).

"One attends a Kellaway event with a very real sense of anticipation. He has been one of the leaders of our avant-garde for at least fifteen years and in that time has participated in the creation of some astounding events."

James Waites, RealTime

"Sydney's doyen of the dim, dark and disturbing avant-garde, Nigel Kellaway ... Moody and evocative of all things gothic and bloodthirsty ... this company cannot be accused of being too cautious in its presentation."

Stewart Hawkins, The Daily Telegraph

PERFORMERS: Regina Heilmann Nigel Kellaway (Director) Andrew Morrish
Peretta Anggerek (countertenor) Michael Bell (piano)
LIGHTING: Simon Wise

April 19 - 27 PERFORMANCE SPACE 199 Cleveland St Redfern

Wed - Sat 8pm, Sun 5pm

\$16/\$10 (Wed 24 all tickets \$10)

BOOKINGS 9698 7235/ boxoffice@performancespace.com.au

Media enquiries: Michaela Coventry 9310 7935 michaela@performancespace.com.au

EMAIL INTERVIEW WITH 3D MAGAZINE

Dear Bek van Vliet,

Thankyou for so much time to respond to your questions. However, I have addressed them in a quick hour, knowing that if I indulge for too long my responses will be too studied (deadly journalism!)

You've asked me 10 really big questions! Some very loaded, but astute. If this was a radio interview I could probably rattle through my responses in 7-10 minutes. But for the printed press it looks like a mountain of copy.

I trust you will edit carefully - please do not misquote me, or mal-contextualize.

Yours,

Nigel Kellaway

The opera Project Inc.
72 Margaret Street
NEWTOWN NSW 2042 AUSTRALIA

Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 9 - 2002

1. Give us a brief outline of the story of *Entertaining Paradise*.

In 1965 Ian Brady and Myra Hindley were arrested after a two year spree of rape, torture and murder. They are known as the *Moors Murderers*, in reference to the final destination of their young victims. Brady and Hindley, now well into their sixties, are still in jail, “never to be released”. They have not communicated with each other since 1970.

That was in Manchester. Here we are 37 years later in Sydney. This is not a “play”, so we are not being too precious with Myra’s and Ian’s story. We reference a few details about how they got together, how they festered their Neo-Nazi ideals and a couple of their early murders. But their story is merely a hook on which to hang a theatrical invention.

2. What can we expect in terms of the musical element – how much of the performance is music-based? Did you compose the whole score yourself?

I wrote none of the music. It’s all by dead-white-males (Purcell, Berg, Handel). Does that make it sound like a dreary run-of-the-mill opera? Well, it’s not! In fact most of it is not even operatic music - just fabulous songs. The opera Project doesn’t make big “O” opera - a lot of people don’t think it’s “opera” at all.

The music in *Entertaining Paradise* is about the singer on the stage - and he’s a real and vigorous protagonist. Peretta Anggerek is a most astonishing counter tenor - a male falsetto voice. But this is not “yodelling-in-the-bathroom” singing. His voice is incredibly voluptuous, agile and loaded with colour. It’s huge, and can be very scary when he wants it to be - a quite lethal weapon. And with him is Michael Bell, a phenomenal pianist. Yeah, there’s a lot of music.

And just to muddy any possible purity, there’s some Elvis Presley in there as well.

3. You’ve been described as a ‘doyen of the dim, dark & disturbing’– how well does *Entertaining Paradise* fit in with this description of you?

I hope whoever wrote that was speaking affectionately. “Doyen” suggests that I do it well, which in theatrical terms means I make it entertaining. *Entertaining Paradise* is certainly “dim, dark and disturbing” in its themes of Neo-fascism, racism, homophobia and cultural paranoia. But it is also grimly funny. I like to laugh when I’m in an audience, and then be shocked by the fact that I have been seduced by the “beautiful” packaging of something sinister, even repellent. It makes me reflect on how I think.

4. What is it that intrigues you about the darker, more cynical themes?

“Cynical”? No, cynicism doesn’t appeal to me at all. But I am certainly drawn to the “darker themes”. It’s all about surprising contrasts. I choose for my friends and colleagues people who are generous, worldly, intelligent, tolerant, imaginative. But those qualities would make fairly dull theatre - wrapped in a confection of beautiful music and staging it would all be as vapid as a chocolate box. (And I don’t really like sweet things). Who wants to see “nice” people on stage? The savage and disturbing are theatrically potent. I’m stimulated by the tension between that and exquisite music, elegant performance and staging. Making the abominable beautiful is really unsettling - and I like that!

5. Which do you prefer – virtuoso performances or group performances (both in terms of acting in and directing)?

“Virtuoso performances and group performances” are not mutually exclusive. I demand every performer in my theatre be a soloist. And virtuosity is compulsory. And that probably means they are going to be quite mature artists.

It’s the rub of different fields of expertise against each other that defines The opera Project - that’s why we like opera. And in *Entertaining Paradise* the virtuosity is right out there.

6. Do you go to see many plays and performances yourself? What was the last thing you went to see?

I certainly do! In the past week or so I have seen 4 very different works: Urban Theatre Projects’ *THE LONGEST NIGHT* (an oddly “operatic” and powerful work made in collaboration with housing commission kids in the outer suburbs of Adelaide), Deborah Pollard’s *GIRT BY SEA* (a wonderful marathon performance installation on Manly Cove beach, resulting from a collaboration between Australian and Indonesian artists), Julieanne Long’s fabulous solo dance/theatre work *MISS XL* at the Seymour Centre and Russell Dumas’ ambitious summary of his company’s history and presence at Performance Space. An eclectic and rewarding week! I tend to see very few “plays”.

7. As someone who’s accomplished at directing, acting, dancing, composing and playing piano, how hard is it to find a creative team – like that involved in *Entertaining Paradise* – that is both supremely talented and can work well together?

THE BIG ISSUE!!

I don’t do “plays”. I don’t go around casting for a “23 year old, medium build, with a baritone speaking voice, some musical and dance skills, and does a good Manchester accent”. I encounter artists that excite me and that I think I might like to work with. I give them a ring and ask them if they’d like to work with me on a project - any project. And then, when I feel I have an interesting combination of people (and the necessary financial resources) I search for a vehicle to platform and challenge them.

My choice of vehicles just happens to be a bit left-of-field. In my middle age I still get this post-pubescent glee in having audiences dismayed when their particular favourite performer is doing something so apparently “inappropriate”.

“Can work well together”? Well, they have to get on well with me, and so it’s a good chance they’ll get along with each other. I haven’t made too many mistakes over the years. I tend to gravitate towards very generous and adventurous artists.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY - **Familiarity!** I am a passionate advocate for the long term ensemble of artists. With artists like Regina Heilmann and Simon Wise (lighting designer) there is a huge wealth of collaborative history stretching over well more than a decade. That creates a “chemistry” which translates into very dynamic onstage relationships. Michael Bell (pianist) worked with us in 1999. Add to that mix Andrew Morrish and Peretta Anggerek and there is a new explosion - something quite different for our audiences. The opera Project is committed to building on its strengths and then challenging them with the unexpected.

8. Do you have a favourite part of the performance?

There are quite a few, but one particularly fabulous moment is when Andrew Morrish is hurtling himself across the stage in a manic “dance of death”. Peretta Anggerek is in full anarchic flight with a virtuoso Handel aria. Michael Bell is ripping through millions of notes on the piano at the

speed of light. And I leap into the middle of it all with what is probably the most balletic display I've indulged in, in many a long year. It's all a bit blokey, but aggressively camp and thrilling at the same time.

9. What lasting impression do you hope *Entertaining Paradise* leaves on audiences?

Vertigo.

How can something so beautiful be so tinged with the depressing?

If we think Australia doesn't have a sick "class system", we're kidding ourselves.

Entertaining Paradise leaves lots of room for the audience to consider the material.

10. How would you sum up *Entertaining Paradise* in one sentence?

A sumptuous *entertainment* devised by 2 young people for the Gods living in the perverted *Paradise* of their imaginations.

(Does that sound too bleak? Or too arch?)

reviews

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

April 22nd, 2002

by **PETER McCALLUM**

Confusion of evils

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Response to Peter McCallum re his *Entertaining Paradise* review

Dear Peter,

Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 9 - 2002

Thankyou for such a thoughtful review of *entertaining paradise*, and I fully respect your “*resistance to the work*”. And thankyou for not visiting the naff arguments of what rightfully constitutes “opera” or “music theatre”. You have carefully addressed a theatrical work. You posit a couple of questions which I am able to answer. Firstly, you bring my attention to the possible relationship between the “*grassy fields*’ of the Sufi saying and the English moors. No grim pun was intended. The whirling dervishes seemed a useful metaphor to address our Western (Christian) fascination with certainty, cadence and moral/theatrical/musical closure. As you have experienced in the past I do not write program notes to explain a work. Rather, I endeavour to provoke questions, possible readings, experiences. And, as you rightly point out, the issue of imposed closure is central to all my best works.

The collaborating artists on *entertaining paradise* encountered serious social and moral dilemmas in the development of the work. As an ensemble of highly educated, comfortably middle-class, artists who daily contemplate seriously “elite” artforms, our greatest peril was in ironic condescension toward the subject matter.

And this dilemma is representative of serious questions that the comfortable space of our contemporary theatre is not well equipped to deal with. Serious art should never exclude people, but indeed many do feel excluded - that is a problem for “us” as much as “them” (to recklessly quote Ian and Myra). Even in my audience there are people intimidated (or resiliently unengaged) by the music I present.

In response to your final question:

NO, I am not apologising or equivocating for the evils of Brady and Hindley. “*Those we sometimes dismiss as victims or less-than-losers*” refers to neither Brady and Hindley nor their victims, but rather to the other victims of a brutalising and inescapable class structure who somehow achieve a value (indeed nobility) in their lives against oppressive odds. Myra and Ian failed. Andrew’s little deaf and blind boy might well succeed. Peretta and Michael are sufficiently privileged to be assured some kind of dubious success.

Yours most sincerely,
Nigel Kellaway

cc.

Regina Heilmann

Andrew Morrish

Peretta Anggerek

Michael Bell

Simon Wise

Fiona Winning - Director Performance Space, co-producer of *entertaining paradise*

Michaela Coventry - Co-ordinator Performance Space, publicist of *entertaining paradise*

Tim Cochrane - Arts Editor, Sydney Morning Herald

Gerard Willems - esteemed former collaborator of The opera Project

Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter - editors of RealTime and commentators on press response on The opera Project

Kim Spinks - Theatre Manager, NSW Ministry for the Arts.

Annette Tesoriero - co-founder of The opera Project

John Baylis - Manager, Theatre Board, Australia Council.

RealTime

June-July, 2002

by LAURA GINTERS

(Reproduced with permission)

That business with the cat

"it was at that time the business with the cat occurred." Fassbinder's killer opening line is also seized on by Nigel Kellaway. But this is immediately countered by Andrew Morrish - the always charming, disarming Morrish - who spins off into an hilarious, expansive impro along the lines of "Let's just leave the cat alone."

We have been warned. This is not a production of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's play *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, although it does draw on that work for at least part of its organising structure.

(The cat) was one of the early victims of Ian Brady who late, with Myra Hindley, terrorised, raped and killed 5 children in England in the 1960s and buried them on the moors. Leaving the cat alone, resisting violence and victimisation, is also an underlying entreaty of this piece which has been created "respecting those we sometimes dismiss as victims or less-than-losers" (program note).

entertaining paradise echoes the Fassbinder play in that it contains section of narration about the exploits of Ian and Myra (or "Mein Fuhrer" and "Hessie" - after Rudolf Hess - as they called one another); dialogue between the 2, and a series of scenes "about the fascistoid underpinnings of everyday life" as Fassbinder saw it.

The 'everyday life' which Kellaway chooses to portray is that of the schoolyard - the performers are all costumed (by Annemaree Dalziel) in blue box pleated school tunics, and the piece opens with a giggling schoolyard courtship ritual. Their playground, populated by the loathsome bullies we all remember, is the triangular performance space (piano at its apex, complete with one of the school nerds playing; Michael Bell at the piano) and is thoughtfully used to mirror the victimisation triangle of 2 ganging up on one. A triangle where allegiances shift suddenly and mercurially among the partners/victims in crime.

Here, the one-time Brady/Hindley victims are the aggressors - not to provide the simplistic excuse of arrested development or childhood trauma for adult atrocities, but perhaps also to allow for some timely self-reflection. Adults, of course, should know better than to persecute the innocent, the weak and the different. But are Ian, the bookkeeper and Myra, the secretary so different from the millions of other bookkeepers and secretaries who, closer to home, listen to Alan Jones, vote for John Howard, and hate their neighbours? It is the evil side to their banality that we need to worry about.

At one intriguing moment in the performance, peering deep into their music scores, Ian and Myra perceive the images of their victims. And so too, during this performance, are we uncomfortably reminded of the ugly hearts of glorious cultures that produce Berg *and* Hitler, Purcell *and* Brady.

Closer to home, what 'we' love and hate is, literally, embodied in Indonesian-born Peretta Anggerek: the heights of Western musical culture emanating from the body of a despised and feared Other.

(And this is further reiterated in performance: it is no innocent gesture for Anggerek in his school uniform to quietly read his Tintin book on stage. It points to an insidious and ongoing colonial project, which many seem so reluctant to relinquish. Not for us the putting away of childish things.)

Music is central to The opera Project's work, and here Michael Bell provides the excellent live accompaniment (everything from Elvis to Berg); and Anggerek's lovely counter-tenor is a pleasure in and of itself, whether he is singing a traditional Indonesian tune or songs from the Western repertoire.

While an intense engagement with music is familiar territory for Kellaway's productions, improvisation as a major element is a new departure and an inspired addition. What improvisation can so successfully do, in the face of the other very structured and often technically demanding performance elements (piano playing, opera singing, text-based theatre), is to *undo* them. It can rewrite and overwrite - it adds the dash of danger, the unexpected swerve, to performances which otherwise have their set paths to follow from beginning to end. And then there is also, simply, the pleasure of watching the performers create as they go, the thrill of the instant response to the immediacy of their situation.

Kellaway and Heilmann are - as always - riveting performers and seeing their work with the Fassbinder text (as especially as Ian and Myra) was enough to make me idly wish - heresy! - for the opportunity to see them do 'straight' theatre.

Clever, unexpected, provocative and captivantly performed by all - I wish I had had the opportunity to return again (and again) as others did to see the re-creation of *entertaining paradise* each night during its season.

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entertaining paradise

SECTION 1

Audience entrance

Regi and Michael at piano - **Elvis Presley** songs
Nigel and Andrew skip through space - then with Peretta.

pas de deux 1.

I: I like your hair.

M: Sorry?

I: I like your hair colour.

M: I thought I'd know your taste.

I: You seem quite clever.

M: Oh, yeah?

I: Yeah. Just looking at you, I can tell.

M: Thankyou. But I'm not fishing for compliments.

pas de deux 2.

PERETTA ENTER TO MUSIC STAND

I: I'm coming to your party tomorrow tonight. I'll bring wine. German wine.

M: I'll tell mother and father about you. I haven't mentioned you yet.

I: That's alright. I'll be there at eight - on the dot.

M: There'll be something to eat too.

I: I eat very little. I do sports. I hike in the woods. For me, physical conditioning is second only to mental concentration.

M: I'd like to join you, sometime.

I: It will tone your muscles.

M: "I will remember that."

I: "The era of the strong will arrive. Those who listen to me will be at the forefront of that era."

SONG *MUSIC*Purcell (2'45")

Nigel: It was at that time the business of the cat occurred.....

PERETTA EXIT

ANDREW "CATS / PETS / DESIRE"

Narration 1.

NK: It was at that time the business with the cat occurred.

Ian had begun collecting Nazi memorabilia and regularly broke into a crumbling house near a bombed-out cemetery in the city centre. There, one day, he ran across a cat. Up 'til then he had never had anything against cats.. He wasn't particularly fond of them either. But now he had something against them. He caught the animal, stuffed it into a shopping bag, waited until dark, and then shut the yowling animal into an empty grave.

The next day on the cricket field he said to his school mate Angus Morristown: "I bet you don't know how long a buried cat can stay alive for." Then he told the story. Angus didn't believe him,

so Ian took him to the cemetery, opened the grave, and the cat jumped out. Ian had proved to his friends that he was “tough”.

Narration 2.

PERETTA ENTER TO BEHIND MICHAEL

RH: Ian had proved to his friends that he was “tough”.
He proved it again with the de-panting episode. A few of the boys had grabbed bashful Billie and de-panted him to have a good laugh at his skinny little manhood. They all yelled, “Ladyfinger”. Ian just stood there, smoking, until they wanted to de-pant him too.

All Ian said, real quiet like, was “OK, OK”, as he pressed the cigarette between his lips to free his hands.

And then, as if he were fetching something very valuable out of a bag, he took it out. And for a growing boy it was certainly a strapping thing, and it wasn’t even hard yet. Well they had to give him credit for that.

pas de deux 3.

I: The photographs. What effect did they have on you?

M: They were hot. They turned me on. They were powerful, my Fuhrer.

I: Can you imagine a time, Hessie, when what we’ve got going now won’t be enough?

M: Perhaps .. yes .. if you wish it.

I: This front we put up when we’re not here. This “just friends” business. It’s oppressive. Being polite to everyone.... But then again, it’s not that hard.

M: I feel the same.

I: “You stand above the multitude, Hessie. You are my true deputy. Your eyes gleam with the dignity of pride.”

M: “I am glad to satisfy your expectations.”

I: “To be German. That is your goal.”

M: “You make me worthy, my Fuhrer.”

SONG *SWEETER THAN ROSES* Purcell (3’00”)

I: Fetch some wine, Hessie. Liebfraumilch.

M: I don’t have any more money. Can you help out?

I: Stupid cunt!

PERETTA TO WALL BEHIND PIANO

pas de deux 4.

I: What do mean? You’ve spent it all?!..... Your imprudence will have to be punished.

M: I thank you, My Fuhrer. Your indulgence is great.

I: No ... this time you'll have mercy.

M: I thank you, My Fuhrer.

(Bashing)

pas de deux 5.

I: You know why I had to hit you.

M: You always know what you are doing.

I: You will never make the same mistake twice, Hessie.

M: I am here to learn.

SONG *BENGAWANG SOLO (1'30")*

PERETTA MOVING TO CONCERT POSITION

SECTION 2

Narration 3.

NK: Then Ian left school, worked as a delivery boy, and then for a butcher. He read mysteries and occasionally on long winter evenings he'd break into houses. He was almost seventeen when the police caught up with him. He got probation, but on the condition that he live with his natural mother. And so it was that Ian moved out of the Glasgow slums and into the much worse ones in Manchester.

All he took with him were some newspaper clippings about Hitler, and a well-worn paperback copy of *The Third Man*.

First he worked as a bag boy and shop assistant. Then he was unemployed, went on welfare, started to steal again, two years in reform school, one more in a half-way house. But when he got out things improved. He took up bookkeeping, and got a job at Millwatts Limited, a medium size producer of soaps and oils.

He stayed there almost seven years and was eventually put in charge of the orders department. He was reserved, kept to himself. No one got close to him, or even noticed him - until one day a new stenographer was hired: Myra Hindley. She had an invalid father and a mother who worked as a machinist.

pas de deux 6.

I: Hessie! I bought a book. Reading it has taken me one step further. It calms me. Hessie, I would like you to read me a passage from it. I've marked the page.....
out loud, Hessie.

M: Justine had the fat baldhead priest up her anus. He caused her tremendous pain, but if she cried out it would mean the death penalty. The priest stuck it in her with incredible force and she let out on involuntary whimper. Father Jacques then called out, "Come my brothers, chastise this wayward creature. Fetch the cat o'nine tails". The other priests came and brought all manner of torture instruments with them. Justine had all she could do to remain conscious. Father Jacques withdrew his gigantic member from her anus, and her body began to relax just as the first blow landed - precisely between her legs. Father Jacques said, "I need a woman as cold and as inhuman as I am. One who can carry out without question my every command."

I: Good, Hessie!

Narration 4.

RH: At school Myra's 109 IQ had been a little above average. The other girls in the neighbourhood already had boyfriends, but Myra still hung around with little Michael Higgins from the next block. She treated him like a doll, spoiled him and protected him from the bigger boys. Then one summer afternoon the doll got smashed. Michael Higgins drowned while swimming, and Myra Hindley drowned in grief.

She grew totally apathetic and for months wore only black. Duke, her grandmother's dog, became her new favourite, until he got run over by a car. Grandma said that was too bad and bought herself a new dog. Myra dressed in black again. At first she wanted to enter a convent and take the veil, but instead she took to the hairdryer.

Sometimes blond, sometimes with a little red in her hair, full of stilted expressions from women's magazines, and untouchable to the boys in the neighbourhood, she waited for the one she knew would come. From the very first moment she knew Ian Brady was it.

pas de deux 7.

I: There must be an elite, even if it is small. A vanguard.
You, Myra, are part of that vanguard.

M: Nothing could make me happier, My Fuhrer.

SONG *VIVI TIRANNO* Handel (5'45")

with **ANDREW** "MURDER"

A Section: *Peretta in concert position*

B Section: *Peretta centrestage*

Da Capo: *Peretta at music stand*

pas de deux 8. (In playout of Da Capo section)

M: "What I need is an intelligent, good looking woman who has already gone the way of pain herself; in a single word, an efficient young woman devoid of pity who knows exactly what she wants".

SECTION 3

pas de deux 9.

I: Now, Fuck off! Yeah, you in the frock.

M: You heard him, fuck off!

(NK chases MB offstage)

I: Submission is the correct path for the masses.
(Re-entering) To submit, fully conscious - that is their happiness!

(RH gestures toward PA)

pas de deux 10.

I: G'day.....What do they call you?

P: Peretta.

I: Sorry?

P: Peretta.

I: ... Great. *(Moving to piano)*

Hey Myra look, I've got a photograph here ... of the boy ... taken shortly before his death.

M: It gives the impression of an animal. As an adult he'd have been a waste of space.

I: *(turning page)* And in this one, he's dead. *(Begins introduction)*
Come and join us, Peretta.

SONG *LOVE ME TENDER* Elvis Presley

(PA moves slowly to piano during second half of first verse. RH encourages him to join in. He declines and moves around the piano to concert position - to leaf through his score)

M: The boy should have been kept alive longer. When we continue our experiments the food deprivation phase must be extended. The important issue is energy-withdrawal among inferior life forms. The windows and doors must be sealed, sound-proofed.

pas de deux 11.

I: O Hessie, I don't think Peretta approves.
Tell you what Peretta, how about another experiment?
Buy some barbed wire Hessie. *(Moving to centre stage)* The next experiment will be with a female subject - bound with barbed wire.

Try to get some that is old and rusty.

A LONG PAUSE - Lights tracking

CD of Kirsten Flagstad from the foyer

Nigel to music stand. Reg circles Peretta and moves down space to back wall. Michael to piano.

Narration 5.

NK: But Ian Brady paid no attention to the busty, long-legged girl. To be more precise: for months he subjected her to an ordeal of alternating hope and despair. An encouraging look would be followed by weeks of indifference; a few words tossed her way, by weeks of silence. He ignored her at lunch and quietly read *Mein Kampf* or pornographic literature or mysteries. Once when he had a cold, Myra wrote in her diary, "I'd love to take care of him."

RH: The cold-shoulder treatment lasted until the beginning of 1962, when he arrived for a New Year's Eve party: a man of the world, button-hole perfect and goose-stepping, with a bottle of German wine under his arm. Myra's parents were charmed by him. Myra was plastered by the time they snuck into her room and Ian got straight to the point. He deflowered her at once, mercilessly, and left as if nothing had happened.

SONG DIE SORGLICHEN Berg (1'33")

(Nigel tries to provoke Peretta with his dick - unsuccessful, he slowly circles his way back to the wall)

SECTION 4

Narration 6.

RH: At home, always within easy reach on his bedside table, lay Ian's photograph of Irm Grese, the real power behind the commandant of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Myra must become Ian's perfect Teutonic woman. He gives her the name Hessie, after Rudolf Hess, deputy to the Fuhrer.

NK: Every night they drink German wine and listen to the Fuhrer on American records. Myra goes to buy bottles of wine, more each time - two, three, then four - but during the day at the office no one notices they're a couple.

And then Ian Brady begins to take photographs. First a few pictures of Hessie on the moors, then Hessie in bed. Bookkeeper Brady carries sexy lingerie home in his briefcase. At first Myra doesn't want to wear it. Then she does, urged on by Ian and his little leather whip. The whip and Myra's striped backside can be seen in one of the thirty photographs confiscated by the police.

RH: There are also photographs of Ian, alone and with Myra during intercourse, then both again with Klu Klux Klan images above their heads, or with blase looks on their faces. Life speeds us - movies, then wine, then sex, and the same in reverse order.

SONG *FERNE LEIDER* Berg (2'45")

ANDREW "PHOTOS / EMAILS / RECORDINGS"

pas de deux 12.

Ian: OK, OK
Myra: Make an end of her now
Ian: OK, OK. Just a moment.
Myra: Now!

I: Hessie, your eyes. They are more and more like steel. Bluer than blue.

M: You have helped me to become myself. It is taking effect, isn't it?

I: Yes, Hessie. It is. Especially your body. The muscle tone. You are achieving nobility.
I am pleased.

SONG *WO DER GOLREGEN STEHT* Berg (2'10")

pas de deux 13.

I: The time has come to spread the doctrine. Yes?

M: Certainly. This great thing must be carried forward. Those who are sacrificed will be as a tidal wave. And they will be grateful.

I: Our compatriots - I suggest we keep to blood relatives. You know my cousin. He will be our Bormann. But it will take real effort to initiate him to the perfection of our thoughts.

M: Your ideas are of such magnitude! They will be grasped quickly.

I: Yes, but it will be difficult for everyone to appreciate the ultimate consequences..

M: I have the greatest trust in your blood relations. The ideas will flow through the blood.
Isn't it so?

I: Nothing that is similar to me can be inferior.

SONG *ER KLACHT* Berg (1'00")

ANDREW "GOD"

pas de deux 14.

I: Strange. The girl was tougher than the boy - really strange.

M: Marginally superior, perhaps.
The barbed wire caused her great pain, yet she never once begged for mercy.

I: Still, there was fear in her eyes.

M: But hunger got her first. When I held the piece of bread in front of her eyes, they crossed.
Did you see it, my Fuhrer?

I: Yes, Hessie. But I was watching for signs of shame.

M: She was beyond that.

I: Naked - and yet made no effort to cover the place between its legs.
And some say it has the same right to life we do.
In my anger I nearly forgot our plan to make the experiment last longer.

M: But you didn't.

NK and RH dance upstage

pas de deux 15.

M: "Therefore, all inferior life is to be eliminated."

I: Oh Hessie, that's not something people just say. There are conclusions to be drawn.
Direct conclusions.

M: Although the unworthy take space, breathing room, they do not have a right to it.

I: So? Your conclusion?

M: You want to lie down in your bed. But someone is in it. What do you do?

I: I kick him out.

M: There are many too creatures on this planet who are breathing your air, walking on
your streets. So what do you do?

I: "Kick them out!!"

M: Precisely!

SONG *LEUKON* Berg (1'30")

Reg pushes Andrew forward

Narration 7.

RH: Life acquires direction once again when by pure chance Ian buys a book which both fascinates and has a calming effect on him. It is *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* by the Marquis de Sade. They both read the book. He points out the key sentence to her: "What I need is an intelligent, good looking woman who has already gone the way of pain herself; in a single word, an efficient young woman devoid of pity who knows exactly what she wants".

Nigel enters from back wall, making his way to piano - his intention is to get a cigarette.

NK: Myra knows what she wants when after a booze-up on the moor she drives Ian in a rented car past the market in Ashton-under-Lynne. It is 5.45pm. In the fog a boy is leaning on a garbage can. The car stops. John Killbridge gets in.

SONG *EVENING HYMN* Purcell (3'15")

Nigel lights his cigarette. Gestures to Peretta to join them down the other end. He doesn't respond. Reg cajoles him with provocative rolling tongue and thrusting pelvis. Still no response from Peretta.

*RH/NK/AM interrupted "pas d'assemble" step, repeated...
"Alleluyah" - NK moves to PA, taking him by the hand and leads him leading him with RH to the downstage wall. (past AM who begins to dance) -
Peretta's final vocal phrases diminuendo, as NK gently pins him to the wall.*

Pas de deux 16.

N: You know why I had to hit you.

P: No.

N: You'll never make the same mistake twice, Peretta.

P: No.

N: Good.

R: You've got good muscle tone, Peretta.

P: Thanks.

N: For us, physical conditioning is second only to mental concentration.

N: *(referring to AM)* What's he want?

R: I dunno.

N Hey you! You in the frock! Dainty dancer. This ain't no place for faggots.

R: Perverts fuck up the landscape, honey.

N: So piss off!

(Michael exits)

N: Submission is the correct path for the masses. Isn't that so, Peretta?

R: To submit, fully conscious - that is their happiness. Isn't that so, Peretta?

N: But some say they have the same right to life that we have.
I don't think so - do you, Peretta?

R: Oh, don't worry Peretta, we like you.

N: *(to AM)* Hey honey, ever got it on with a woman?

R: Come off it, does he look like a lesbian?

N: Or how about a little kiddie? Cock sucker!

R: Fucking fag!

N: "Touchies under the tunic?" Get the fuck out of here!
(NK exits)

(RH pins PA to the wall)

R: Your eyes, Peretta, they are more and more like steel.
You are achieving nobility. We are pleased.

(Peretta exits)

(to AM)

Go home, honey.

You've got nothing to teach me.

(RH exits)

Andrew solo fades to black

CURTAIN CALL

(Elvis Presley in the foyer)

Acquittal

entertaining paradise

Our application to the NSW Ministry for the Arts was for funding to develop and realise a public season of a new work, with additional assistance from the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council. Unfortunately our past three applications to the Theatre Fund have been unsuccessful. In order to acquit the Ministry funding satisfactorily in 2002, permission was granted to develop and (with Performance Space) co-produce the work on a reduced budget.

Performers:	Regina Heilmann Nigel Kellaway Andrew Morrish Peretta Anggerek (countertenor) Michael Bell (pianist)
Director:	Nigel Kellaway
Lighting Designer / Production Manager:	Simon Wise

Costumes:

Annemaree Dalziel

Performance Season:

19th - 27th April 2002
Performance Space, Sydney

The Challenge

The genesis of each new work by The opera Project generally comes from the makeup of the changing ensemble. Believing that the strongest impact made on our audience derives from the particular combination of artists onstage, the company assembles for each new work a group of collaborators that promises new challenges. Once the artists are confirmed we look for a suitable vehicle to showcase them.

The regular opera project artists in *entertaining paradise* were Regina Heilmann, Simon Wise and Nigel Kellaway. Through many projects together, over more than a decade, these artists have evolved quite particular processes and performance strategies. We are also well experienced in working with "mainstream" classical musicians, who bring to the work certain recital aesthetics and methods of preparing their work, that complement the very studied performance aesthetic of The opera Project. So, to this well-honed process, we decided to introduce a serious "wild card" - the improvisation artist, Andrew Morrish. Andrew is an artist with absolutely no experience of a written script, pre-devised choreography, attention to musical form, predetermined lighting or sound cues, or any of those other devices we take for granted in making our way from the beginning to the end of a work. Our processes of meticulous rehearsal were a complete mystery to him, at the outset. A collaboration between artists whose processes appeared so diametrically

opposed was bound to be scary for all of us. But what became evident through the process were not so much our differences, but our shared concerns in theatrical structures. Our methods in arriving at those structures might be a little different, but our intentions and visions for the work turned out to be exactly the same. And so the journey we all experienced meant that we could constantly examine elements of our personal processes - elements we often take for granted - and to clearly articulate them in the rehearsal room. Through a process of observing each others "tricks" and approaches to shared problems, a fresh performance vocabulary emerged that enabled us to share the same space and material, without sacrificing our individual strengths.

Process

1. Script choice and initial preparation.

The Fassbinder theatrical text *Pre Paradise - sorry now* presented us with a flexible structure of narrative prose, short sections of dialogue and obliquely related scenes, all intended by Fassbinder to be performed in an arbitrary order. This seemed an ideal vehicle for us, allowing us to randomly insert our musical material, develop the kind of character relationship that Regina and Nigel often drive their work with, create the large "architectural" structures in space and sound that define the work of The opera Project, and still allowing the flexibility that leaves room for improvisation. We were interested in exploring a minimum of narrative material that could be revisited, re-ordered and reassessed over and over again. The emerging structure of the work was as much musical as theatrical.

Initially, Nigel examined the Fassbinder text with a brutal "pair of scissors", jettisoning about 90%, structuring what little remained around the unrelated songs he had chosen from Peretta Anggerek's repertoire and quite randomly apportioning the material between himself, Regina and Andrew.

2. January 2002

This very raw material was the subject of a number of initial meetings with Nigel, Regina and Andrew, mainly to brainstorm the issues that the material addressed and to consider what our political and social attitude to these issues might be.

Rather than hitting the rehearsal room under the direction of Nigel, we decided to invite Andrew to take the lead for the first few sessions, with him guiding us through quite general improvisation exercises exploring the dynamics of two people in conflict with a third individual. These sessions enabled us to discover how our bodies and temperaments worked together, how fast our minds worked in relationship with each other and to discuss at length what interested us about performance and how we variously set about achieving our goals.

3. February 2002

Andrew, Regina and Nigel were all committed to other projects, so we took a break, during which Nigel had initial meetings with Simon Wise and Annemaree Dalziel re design, Suzanne Boccalatte and Heidrun Lohr re poster and flyer design, and Michaela Coventry and Fiona Winning re marketing planning.

4. March 2 - April 14

Our six week development process began with Nigel and Regina taking part in a 2 day intensive improvisation workshop that Andrew was teaching at the Omeo Studio with 8 other experienced performers.

From there Nigel assumed his directorial role in the rehearsal room, 2-3 days per week, with a 3 hour call with the musicians each week.

5. Bump-in April 15 - 18

We performed on a totally bare stage, the audience seated diagonally in traverse and with a grand piano at one end of the performance area. All the music was performed live, so there was no sound setup. The number of lamps was kept to a minimum. As we needed to keep the structure of the work very flexible, Simon Wise designed about 8 contrasting states (with no specials) that could be operated manually and appropriately depending on where the performers chose to move on the stage at any given time. Our one "trick" was a large section of the lighting rig mounted on curtain rails, enabling it to move along the entire centre length of the performance area. With so little to set up, we were able to spend most of the 4 bump-in days experimenting with the many available options.

The musicians were in each night for a run of the work. If anything, we had too much time for bumpin - by the Tuesday night we were all wanting an audience. However the discipline of running the show for several nights before we opened, meant that by opening night we felt we were half way into the season, and quite confident with the work.

6. Season: April 19 - 27 (8 performances)

The performers' attitudes to the material changed each night, and the work developed greatly through the season run - it became darker, more erotically charged, the relationships between the performers more complex and mercurial, more violent. This had much to do with the improvisatory licence that Andrew brought to the process. We all felt a freedom to play, alter our more structured material, take much bolder risks than we might normally in front of an audience. Conversely, Andrew explored techniques that enabled him to repeat material, trusting when something worked and learning how to make it fresh each night without having to constantly invent something totally new. He had been extraordinarily generous in the long rehearsal period, and estimated that he had "wasted" at least 100 good improvisations on no audience (he had good reason to feel grumpy about that!). There was the constant risk of "burnout" throughout the process. But by the time we opened, he had worked his way through a myriad of concepts and discovered the most pertinent to the subject matter. This meant that rather than panicking about an idea for each night, he concentrated on the presentation and structure of predetermined concepts. He found this very liberating, and found he could trust a process that he had previously found daunting.

The performances of Michael Bell (pianist) and Peretta Anggerek (countertenor) blossomed through the season - musically and theatrically. They became powerful theatrical protagonists in the work, very much caught up in the games of Myra Hindley and Ian Brady. Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann explored quite new territory in their onstage relationship that has developed over a decade. Their performances were a testament to the values of maturity and an ongoing "ensemble" practice. When there is such trust and knowledge of a collaborator, huge risks can be contemplated, and much can be said on stage by the of smallest means. The opera Project is very proud of what it has achieved in *entertaining paradise*. The work is extremely spare in its staging, its performance vocabulary (there are no "theatrical fireworks", for a change!), its themes and textural and musical material. For a work that was planned well before Tampa, September 11th, November election and Michael Kirby affairs, it was surprisingly topical and gained due momentum from the contemporary social climate.

Support and Sponsorship

entertaining paradise was a co-production by The opera Project and Performance Space. This meant that Performance Space provided one of the two weeks in the theatre and rehearsal space at no cost to The opera Project and provided the services of their publicist, Michaela Coventry, in return for a 50% cut of the box office takings.

We were also able to attract support from the Goethe Institute (\$2000) and from Allans Music (a fine grand piano for the 2 weeks, paying for only cartage and tuning). St Luke's Anglican Church, Stanmore, once again provided their fine hall at reduced rates for rehearsals with the musicians (for which we need a piano).

Promotion and documentation, at the level we manage, would not be possible without the ongoing generosity of Heidrun Lohr (photography), Peter Oldham (video documentation) and Suzanne Bocalatte (graphic design).

entertaining paradise attracted considerable interest from tertiary institutions. The Dance and Performance Departments of University of Western Sydney made attendance compulsory for all of its 80 first year students. About 20 students came from Wollongong University. Koon Fei Wong, an honours student from the Department of Film, Theatre and Dance at University of New South Wales, used the process and work as the topic of her dramaturgy unit, and attended many of our

rehearsal, assisted in our bump in, saw several performances, and interviewed all the performers at length after the season.

Audience and Press Response

entertaining paradise attained an 82% capacity audience over the season - our most successful work in Sydney, to date. Although our publicity budget was modest, we benefited from a healthy word-of-mouth. We think that the unexpected lineup of performers attracted a lot of people (what exactly was Andrew Morrish going to do with Heilmann and Kellaway in an "opera", and what was The opera Project going to do with its first male singer on stage?). The improvisatory nature of the work also encouraged many people to return 2 or 3 times through the season.

The general audience reaction was extremely positive. Some were clearly disturbed by the subject matter, but applauded the way we had handled it. The demographic of our audience is wide - classical music and opera supporters, contemporary performance regulars, the gay audience (encouraged by The opera Project's reputation as a somewhat "queer" company, and the involvement of Kellaway and in this case Anggerek). We can target all these audiences with the nature of our work. The company's long term association with Performance Space also means that we have a base in the broader spectrum of contemporary arts. Performance Space conducted an audience survey, that attracted good response. The data is at present being analysed.

Written press response (Sydney Morning Herald and RealTime) is included in the supporting documentation.

Financial

The co-production with Performance Space, the modesty of the production costs (and diligence of Simon Wise and Michaela Coventry) and the healthy box-office enabled a small surplus of \$910. This will enable the further marketing of the work (both Brisbane's Powerhouse and Hobart's Salamanca Arts Centre are interested in the work for 2003), and the ongoing operation of The opera Project's office in this year's light operation, and in preparation for what promises to be a very full 2003.

entertaining paradise - BUDGET

EXPENDITURE

Salaries:	N Kellaway	3000		
	M Bell	2000		
	S Wise	3000		
Director/Admin:	N Kellaway	4000	12000	
Oncosts:	11% of 12000(Salaries)		1320	
Fees:	R Heilmann	3000		
	A Morrish	3000		
	P Anggerek	2000		
	M Coventry	2000		
	Bump-in/out labour	560	10560	23880.00
Production:				
Venue Hire		5000		
Rehearsal venue		250		
Theatre Electricity		180.64		
Sets and Properties		256.45		
Costumes		460		
Piano Hire and tuning		700		6847.09
Administration:				
General		574.08		
ToP 2002 Public Liability		912.50		1486.58
Publicity:				
Advertising/Poster design/Print/Distr/Postage				
Prepaid		2930.35		
SMH listing		568.26		
SSO ad		212.50		
3D World ad		150.00		
Photography - advertising	300			

documentation	400	700	
Video Documentation - filming	500		
editing and dubbing	350	850	
Opening Night entertainment		232.95	5644.06
Box office 50% share to Performance Space:			1870.98

TOTAL EXPENDITURE **39728.71**

INCOME

Box Office:		3741.95	
Donations		396.85	
NSW Ministry for the Arts Theatre Program		30000	
Sponsorship - Goethe Institute	2000		
- Performance Space rent (1 week)		2500	
- Performance Space Publicist fee		2000	
TOTAL INCOME			40638.80

PROFIT **910.09**

application

THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

Artists: Performers: Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino, Karen Cummings
 co-Writers: Amanda Stewart, Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino, Stephen Adams
 Composer: Stephen Adams
 Video Artist: Peter Oldham
 Director: Nigel Kellaway
 Dramaturgs: Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch (Open City)
 Lighting Designer: Simon Wise

Venue : Performance Space, Sydney

Rehearsal dates: May 5 - 18, 2003 (or the equivalent of 2 fulltime weeks)

Bump-in & Performance dates: May 19 - June 1, 2003 (8 performances)

THE oPERA PROJECT INC.

opera / 'opra / opara (lt. from L.: service, work, **a work**)

Since 1997 The opera Project has committed itself to the development of a flexible ensemble of mature, experienced and respected theatre artists. The company's concerns are in pursuing a contemporary theatre practice that deliberately examines the breadth of cultural heritage in theatre, music, dance and associated technologies.

The opera Project's first major production venture, *The Romantic Trilogy*, was completed in 1999. It was a radical reassessment of our theatrical heritage, rampaging through a musical, theatrical and literary repertoire of remarkable scope. *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* (1997) explored the woman's voice and body as a conscious and active protagonist in male homoerotic pornography. *The Terror of Tosca* (1998) considered the problems in reconciling carnal desire with religious piety, proposing the historically inscribed female "victim" as an eager and effective participant in sexual and mortal violence. *Tristan* (1999) portrayed the male body and psyche as a feminised hero (and victim?) and explored the woman's body in a repudiation of its casting as a male inscribed victor. *El Inocente* (developed in 2000 and produced in May 2001) explored the heritage of Baroque humanist thought in collision with contemporary South American story-telling. These themes pertain to the historic emergence of the articulate female voice - which will resonate again in The opera Project's proposed work, ***The Audience and other Psychopaths***.

The work has already acquitted development funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts: subsequent to early discussion between the principle artists in January 2001 we commenced the development process in July. This eventuated in an informal presentation at Performance Space in October 2001. The feedback from invited peers and our own self-assessment have been invaluable to the ongoing process.

THE PROJECT

The Audience and other Psychopaths will be a dark comedy, presenting three parallel and intersecting scenarios, performed simultaneously in the theatre - each with their own logic and structure, and working through their own intersection of theatrical means and media. They will explore the climate of paranoia and conspiracy theorising that proliferates around the public's (and subject's) need to interpret public acts as significant and meaningful:

1. Nigel Kellaway performs, in the guise of a drag queen, a one-sided (contrived) dialogue with a member of the audience - a reflection on a story by Patricia Highsmith. Two strangers meet. They both have someone in their lives they wish to be rid of. One of them proposes a pact - that they each commit a murder on behalf of the other. With no apparent motive they would both avoid arrest. This scenario is the starting point for our narrative conceit. The relationship that develops between these two strangers, as opposed to the actual crime, is the focus. Interest is held as it slowly dawns on the audience that they are in the presence of a dangerous psychopath. Nigel interrogates and cajoles his victim, who may well wonder what lies beyond the drag queen's mask..... and then suspect that a murder may be committed, in which he (the audience) may be implicated.

A drag queen all too often expresses the neurotic - iconically dressed, grasping at his assumed identity with all his socially bestowed masculine articulacy, and yet despairing of his inaction. But, in this work, he acts - the neurotic is transcended in psychopathy. This is an alternative transgendered voice - one not propelled by carnal impulses.

2. Katia Molino performs the role of a “film auteur” in the process of shooting a movie. Certain theatrical processes are reflected in the deconstructive nature of film making, in which scenes are shot out of sequence (thrown into stark contrast with the powerful thrust of Nigel’s linear narrative). She casts the audience as both extras and some leading actors in her movie. By chance, she casts Nigel’s audience victim as her romantic co-star. Yes, she is also the star in her movie (in the tradition of Truffaut, the great theatrical actor-managers, et al). Her film role seems to celebrate the classic moments of public acclaim, suffering (ironic self-realisation), betrayal and death of the *idol* as both heroine and sacrificial victim. The film is performed in Italian language (foreign/inarticulate to most in the audience). Does the “voiceless” (culturally inarticulate) performer present a cipher to which the audience attaches its own meanings, or can she exert her own control on the myriad readings? Or is this overwhelmed by the extreme articulacy of her “expressive” body?

The performance of Katia Molino will be filmed by video artist Peter Oldham both prior to performance and live onstage, her image multiplied on the two large projection screens at either end of the open space. The response to our development presentation lauded our intersection of performance, video and sound. This is, however, not at all “hitech” - we are actually using no “new media”.

We discovered in the development presentation, as the camera scans the audience and their closeup images are projected large on the screen, that they suddenly become important protagonists, despite their doing very little other than observe. We are now aware that their physical role in the space needs to be further expanded.

3. Over the past five years The opera Project has urged its theatre audience to listen to music - not just an environment, but as a narrative driving force. Where at first there was some dismay, there is now a literacy and appreciation. ***The Audience and other Psychopaths*** has no live musician. Two actors, a cameraman and the audience take the stage. The recorded sound is entirely the voice of another protagonist - the voice of the unseen soprano who enters the theatre to instigate a physical act of terrorism (ie. To dynamite the building and its audience).

Karen Cummings (soprano) will perform a recorded spoken and sung monologue written by performance poet Amanda Stewart in collaboration with composer Stephen Adams. The declamatory, yet disembodied, interior voice of the *idol/diva* will operate as an extended and uncensored stream of consciousness. However it will be physically controlled through the recorded medium, using a 4-speaker surround system to create a dynamic theatrical and choreographic presence in sound.

The resulting musical work will push the disembodied voice to its limits, ransacking the cultural resources of spoken and sung female roles from the blues to the operatic to the techno. The music must eventually act as a presence competing with the authority of the physical bodies onstage, influencing or even possessing the bodies/actions on the stage.

We need now to find intersections between Katia’s and Karen’s narratives. Their intentions need to be “fleshed out” and more clearly articulated. The collaborators have recognised the holes and have discussed numerous possible remedies.

The parallel unfolding of these three works presents opportunities for the interrogation of their discrete theatrical means and assumptions, in the light of the others. There are disjunctions and

convergences in this game of interpretations, pointing back to both the audience and the act of making theatre - of performing and of consuming these public projections of our facade selves.

The different theatrical media and means of communication in the three works (music/physical performance/soliloquy) and their interaction drive toward an examination of a culturally defined 'articulacy'/'inarticulacy'. We are contemplating issues of power as the audience asks which of the three works presented are dominant? Who is controlling whom? Who perhaps has killed, or will be killed by whom? The audience is implicated in this fiction of theatre.

THE PROCESS

Over the 3 month development period in 2001 the process was:

1. Each of these three works were explored quite individually. After an intensive 4 day workshop considering a draft structure, the collaborators went their separate ways and wrote in virtual isolation. Its several parts presented a riot of dramaturgical possibilities.
2. The collaborators regrouped for a 3 week period to collide their material. As structured material emerged the collaboration of video artist Peter Oldham and lighting designer Simon Wise entered into the process. The results were presented to an invited audience.

Funding in this application is sought for:

The development process resulted in "a million loose ends". Yet we (and the largest proportion of our audience) were excited by the potential of the material. It is time to introduce the dramaturgical resources of Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch. Their intimacy with the history and processes of The opera Project promises a successful resolution of the textual, musical and theatrical complexities. The draft text attached to this application is not a "script", but rather an accumulation of material for further exploration. Funding is sought to support the equivalent of 2 fulltime weeks in the studio for this process, a 5 day period in the theatre during which the lighting and video components can be further developed and realised, and then 8 public performances.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Over the past 5 years a relationship has developed between The opera Project and Performance Space that enables us to benefit from the full resources of a highly visible organisation. The opera Project is considered by Performance Space as a valued presenter and an appropriate example of the breadth of work the space represents. ***The Audience and other Psychopaths*** is proving to be of strong interest to audiences concerned in hybrid practice across a range of theatre, contemporary music and film genres and these audiences will be strongly targeted. The opera Project maintains a relationship with the New Music Network. The company's email database is constantly expanding, and we have found this an invaluable tool for marketing and networking. *Entertaining Paradise* was co-produced with Performance Space, utilising their publicist and publicity machine. The season achieved an 82% capacity audience, proving that both organisations are successfully extending their audience bases.

A valuable initiative came from the tertiary education sector, with the theatre and dance faculties at the universities of Western Sydney and Wollongong including the company's work on their compulsory syllabus. This is a relationship that will be rigorously pursued with lectures and further productions.

Also it was encouraging to see a high rate of audience returns for 2 or 3 viewings of the work over the season. An audience survey conducted during the *Entertaining Paradise* season is presently being analysed to help us in the further marketing priorities of our work.

THE RATIONALE

This is an ensemble of mature artists who have created seminal work, together and individually, over the past 25 years. It is important that these experienced artists produce many alternative works. These artists play an active role in contemporary theatrical practice. They are informed, virtuosic and generous (with both their audiences and their peers).

Uninterrupted yearly project support from the NSW Ministry for the Arts over the past 5 years has provided a momentum for The opera Project to maintain and develop its practice and collaborations. Over the years our vision has become a lot more sophisticated and wider reaching. Although the funding from the Ministry has been dedicated to only one project per year, it has also helped ensure an ongoing public visibility in Sydney, and the a resulting company energy that can further promote the touring life of the extant works and plan its future projects. Without this support The opera Project's sustainability would be quite impossible.

2001 saw the eventual realisation of *El Inocente* (in May), a tour of *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* to Brisbane and Hobart (in June/July, supported by Playing Australia) and the development of *The Audience and other Psychopaths*. 2002 has seen the development and production of a new work exploring the writings of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Entertaining Paradise*. The company is in negotiation with Zane Trow at the Brisbane Powerhouse to tour in 2003 with a production of either *El Inocente* or *Entertaining Paradise* (both completed works and so eligible for Playing Australia support). Our 2001 tour of *The Berlioz* was the Powerhouse's most successful interstate production that year, and so they are most keen to have us return.

The opera Project is generally concerned with the theatrical 'artefact', but only in the process of challenging its reason to exist. Its work does not sit comfortably in any popularised genre. It rubs against the boundaries. It respects, but never authorises, its many histories. In an environment that nervously sets benchmarks of cultural and social relevance, The opera Project is determined in its ongoing interrogation of the real complexities of theatre, the legacy of its history and how it has reflected social discourse - celebrating the potency of the theatrical experience. ***The Audience and other Psychopaths*** is a surprising departure in concerns and style. It is a complex project that addresses contemporary theatrical challenges, and is blessed with a line-up of collaborating artists with the experience and proven ability to resolve and invigorate these complexities.

The success of *El Inocente* was due partly to the long development of the work leading to full production. The early development process on ***The Audience and other Psychopaths*** has created not only a loose structure, but also copious theatrical and musical material for honing and realisation. This will, once again, be a work with more than 18 months invested in its fruition by extremely committed artists - a considerable prior investment. The opera Project asks that this application be assessed in consideration that it strives to support the work of a number of mature and notable artists at a time in their careers when they are proving a capacity to produce their best and most complex work.

application

MEDEA:MATERIAL (later renamed *another night : medea*)

Performers: Regina Heilmann
Nigel Kellaway (director)
Peretta Anggerek (countertenor)
Michael Bell (piano)
(TBA: Flute, Violin, 'Cello, Harpsichord)

Lighting design: Simon Wise

Costume design: Annemaree Dalziel

Rehearsal: 3rd - 26th March 2003

Performances: 27th March - 6th April 2003 (9 performances)
Performance Space Sydney

The opera Project Inc.

opera / 'opra / opara (lt. from L.: service, work, a work)

Since 1997 The opera Project has committed itself to the development of a flexible ensemble of mature, experienced and respected theatre artists. The company's concerns are in pursuing a contemporary theatre practice that deliberately examines the breadth of cultural heritage in theatre, music, dance and associated technologies.

The opera Project's first major production venture, *The Romantic Trilogy* completed in 1999, was a radical reassessment of our theatrical heritage, rampaging through a musical, theatrical

and literary repertoire of remarkable scope. *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* (1997) explored the woman's voice and body as a conscious and active protagonist in male homoerotic pornography. *The Terror of Tosca* (1998) considered the problems in reconciling carnal desire with religious piety, proposing the historically inscribed female "victim" as an eager and effective participant in sexual and mortal violence. *Tristan* (1999) portrayed the male body and psyche as a feminised hero (and victim?) and explored the woman's body in a repudiation of its casting as a male inscribed victor. *El Inocente* (developed in 2000 and produced in May 2001) considered the heritage of Baroque humanist thought in collision with contemporary South American story-telling. These themes pertain to the historic emergence of the articulate female voice - which resonates again in The opera Project's first work proposed for 2003, *The Audience and other Psychopaths* (developed in 2001).

Having satisfied its somewhat rarefied interests in Romantic and Baroque opera, The opera Project is now finding a more direct voice in contemporary concerns. Still it celebrates its inheritance in centuries of theatrical and operatic practice, but *Entertaining Paradise* (April 2002) was a turning point in solidifying its theatrical raison d'être and understanding its placement of music in the theatrical "score". It is a difficult mission to create socially relevant contemporary theatre and at the same time overtly acknowledge 400 years (or more) of music theatre practice. This is not a task for ingenues.

THE PROJECT

Returning to Corinth from his quest for the Golden Fleece, Jason brings his mistress Medea, princess of his colonised Colchis, by whom he fathers 2 sons.

When he marries Creon's daughter, Medea seeks revenge by murdering both Jason's new bride and her own 2 children.

Medea:Material will be an originally devised theatrical work, influenced by two substantial works in the theatrical and musical canon: Heiner Muller's 1983 theatre texts *Despoiled Shore, Medea:Material* and *Landscape with Argonauts* and Clérambault's early 18th century French solo cantata *Medée*.

It will be a baroque cantata (theatrically realised) that slowly emerges from a contemporary theatre work. On a aural level the baroque instrumental ensemble (flute, violin, 'cello, harpsichord) and soprano voice will emerge from a contemporary jazz piano and spoken score. On a performative level a heightened operatic acting will emerge from a more contemporary naturalism. Similarly, the structure of the work will explore the movement between formalistic genres.

Post September 11th 2001 we have been frantically looking for "terrorists-under-the-bed". Innocent victims of oppressive regimes, driven on boats to our shores, have become feared demons. Respected (homosexual) judges and lawyers have been carelessly marked as abusers of privilege and pedophiles. The list of insecurities goes on and on. Those who borrow the land fear the next invader, the next "other". Revenge is an instant response, if often inappropriate. In every revenge scenario there are some innocent victims.

Heiner Muller describes the story of Jason (of Medea and the Golden Fleece) as the earliest representation of colonisation in Greek legend.

"The end signifies the threshold where myth turns into history: Jason is eventually slain by his boat ... European history began with colonisation ... That the vehicle of

colligation strikes the coloniser dead anticipates the end of it. That's the threat of the end we are facing, the 'end of growth'."

In his *Despoiled Shore*, *Medeamaterial* and *Landscape with Argonauts* (1983) Heiner Muller presumes a society of transgression in which a condemned person can turn their death on stage into a collective experience. His writing presumes the catastrophes toward which mankind is working.

"The theatre's contribution to their prevention can only be in their representation... The landscape might be a dead star where a task force from another age or another space hears a voice and discovers a corpse. As in every landscape, the "I" of the text is collective"

H. Muller, preface to the texts, 1983

In Australia 2003, Medea might be just another imported exotic sex slave. (Although certainly privileged as a mistress and mother of his children, Jason will not marry her.) Ovid describes her as a sorceress. Euripides points very definitely to her "foreignness". Seneca combines these attributes to create an iconic evil - only a foreign sorceress could murder her own children and so abuse her Hellenic lover.

Medea has indeed be a well "used" in the Western canon. Medea is not a real historical figure (unlike Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, the 1960's Moors Murderers in The opera Project's most recent work, *Entertaining Paradise*, which discussed related contemporary Australian issues). Medea is mythological - a literary invention to discuss aspects of the human condition and their intersection with society. Multiple reading are permitted, and certain respect for the character can be reconsidered.

It is such a way The opera Project will use Medea - not for a realisation or interpretation of extant theatrical/operatic works, but as a way of discussing with our audience pertinent contemporary issues, regarding colonisation, demonization and price of sudden revenge. The mythological Medea has been around a long time, but she is still a useful theatrical metaphor, if sensibly and sensitively interpreted.

THE ARTISTS

Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann have enjoyed a rewarding theatrical relationship over 13 years. An intensely physical stage partnership has developed over many productions. With that comes a deal of trust, and the consequent ability to take substantial creative and performative risks. Their experience in working with Andrew Morrish on *Entertaining Paradise* expanded their abilities to build performances through improvisation, both in the studio and onstage. In exploring the relationship between a possible Medea and Jason, a huge range of expressive tension is on offer - desire, frustration, betrayal, revenge, despair, denouement.

Medea:Material will mark The opera Project's third work utilising pianist Michael Bell, an artist fast becoming one of Sydney's most sought-after accompanists. As the season of *Entertaining Paradise* progressed he demonstrated great improvisatory skills in his collaboration with Andrew Morrish. It is this that we intend to further develop in the rehearsal studio: Kellaway, Heilmann and Bell creating an elaborate "jazz score" of text, physicality and music. This practice of using the spoken voice as a musical implement extends the experience of The opera Project artists in works ranging from *This Most Wicked Body* (1994-

98) through much of *The Romantic Trilogy* (1997-99) to *El Inocente* (2000 - 01), in which a spoken (acted) naturalism infiltrates a heightened musical formalism.

Medea:Material will be very “non-tech”. The sound will be entirely acoustic and there will be no “new media”, slides or video projections. Lighting designer Simon Wise will be doing what he does best - working with a handful of lamps in a staging collaboration with Nigel Kellaway, which benefits from 15 years of work made together.

In Peretta Anggerek, The opera Project has found a rare singer, capable of matching the actors with a physical and vocal presence, and not seeming “a-bit-overwhelmed-by-it-all”. The audience response to his performance in *Entertaining Paradise* has been extraordinarily positive - a sensational voice and huge presence. *Medea:Material* will provide the opportunity to layer his particular charisma with a fictional persona (Medea). Peretta is highly qualified in the exploration of 18th century vocal practice, bringing a

quantifiable historical reference to the Medea material. He is also, by sheer virtue of his countertenor (soprano) voice and his Indonesian birth, “exotic” in the context of the other artists and the themes of this work. The voice and body of Peretta and his musical repertoire will bring alive a very different “reading” of the material. The feminine sentiments of the cantata (ofcourse written and composed by men) will create a dangerous frisson with the male (falsetto) sensuality of the singer.

THE PROCESS

The development of *Medea:Material* has the possibility of benefiting from an integration with another related work. Stopera (ACT) has made application to the Theatre Board for support to bring Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann to Canberra to develop a production of two French Baroque “operas”, Clérambault’s *Medée* and Rameau’s *Pygmalion*, slated for production in late 2003. Although the artists that we will be working with in Canberra will bring very different skills and concerns to that process, Kellaway and Heilmann will certainly return to Sydney’s opera Project work with a wealth of impressions, concepts and understandings about the “Media material”. The Stopera development process will also conclude with a public showing that will place Kellaway and Heilmann for the first time onstage exploring Medea and Jason.

THIS APPLICATION IS **NOT** RELIANT ON THE SUCCESS OF THE STOPERA APPLICATION. But it will certainly benefit from it. In real terms the Stopera application would support an early development time that will otherwise be contributed by the artists. Furthering this collaboration, if Stopera is successful in attracting support from ArtsACT for the eventual full production of their work in Canberra, the experience of The opera Project’s distantly related work will certainly feed into that.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Over the past 5 years a relationship has developed between The opera Project and Performance Space that enables us to benefit from the full resources of a highly visible organisation. The opera Project is considered by Performance Space as a valued presenter and an appropriate example of the breadth of work the space represents.

Entertaining Paradise was co-produced with Performance Space, utilising their publicist and publicity machine. The season achieved an 84% capacity audience, proving that both organisations are successfully extending their audience bases.

A valuable initiative came from the tertiary education sector, with the theatre and dance faculties at the universities of Western Sydney and Wollongong including the company's work on their compulsory syllabus. This is a relationship that will be rigorously pursued with lectures and further productions.

Also it was encouraging to see a high rate of audience returns for 2 or 3 viewings of the work over the season. An audience survey conducted during the *Entertaining Paradise* season is presently being analysed to help us in the further marketing priorities of our work.

THE RATIONALE

This is an ensemble of mature artists who have created seminal work, together and individually, over the past 25 years. It is important that these experienced artists produce many alternative works. These artists play an active role in contemporary theatrical practice. They are informed, virtuosic and generous (with both their audiences and their peers). They are artists that, in association with The opera Project, are creating a music theatre style quite unique in Australia, which has the potential to present a very different view of Australian theatre overseas.

The opera Project is generally concerned with the theatrical 'artefact', but only in the process of challenging its reason to exist. Its work does not sit comfortably in any popularised genre. It rubs against the boundaries. It respects, but never authorises, its many histories. In an environment that nervously sets benchmarks of cultural and social relevance, The opera Project is determined in its ongoing interrogation of the real complexities of theatre, the legacy of its history and how it has reflected social discourse - celebrating the potency of the theatrical experience.

2001 saw the eventual realisation of *El Inocente* (in May) and a tour of *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* to Brisbane and Hobart (in June/July, supported by Playing Australia). 2002 has seen a new work exploring the writings of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Entertaining Paradise*. *The Audience and Other Psychopaths* or *El Inocente* is slated for touring in 2003.

The opera Project asks that this application be assessed in consideration that it strives to support the work of a number of mature and notable artists at a time in their careers when they are proving a capacity to produce their best and most complex work.

**As I walked offstage on the last night of ENTERTAINING PARADISE
(and what a great line to exit on: "Get the fuck out of here!!")
something told me it was a final curtain.
But I'm not good at admitting hard truths.
New grant application deadlines were looming,
and so I wasted another month on more pipe-dreams.
Unemployed again and living off the couple of thousand dollars
I'd managed to save over the past exhausting 18 months.
Needed a holiday out of Sydney (not had one since 1991)
but personal matters conspired against that.**

**When the Performance Space new Associate Director position
was advertised, the job description and criteria seemed to fit well.
But I didn't get the job.**

18th June 2002

Tim Wilson
The Chair
Performance Space
PO Box 419
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Dear Tim Wilson,

I am writing to apply for the position of Associate Director of Performance Space.

There is no Sydney institution to challenge Performance Space's pre-eminence in its consistent nourishing of a vibrant contemporary performance culture over so many years. In its strongest periods Performance Space has flourished via the keen curatorial vision of particular Directors. Those visions have often stemmed from the Directors' own strong artistic practice. But the best curatorial eyes have been both flexible and inquisitive - responding to the various passions of the

field, and assessing how best to create a fertile environment for the development of those sometimes conflicting passions.

I am a beneficiary (product) of the Performance Space culture over the past 20 years. Performance Space has contextualised my evolving practice and allowed me to develop as a theatre, dance and music practitioner, whilst never allowing me to narrow my discipline to one single, predetermined genre. I have been compelled to articulate my position/vision in conflict with the cultural norm of specialist practice, and so have an alternative (sometimes provocative) reading of the discrete genres - principles pertinent to the mercurial contemporary arts scene. The role of the Associate Director will be in nurturing those principles in response to the demands of the Director and will require, from a practicing artist, an openness and flexibility of personal vision and an ability to quickly respond to alternative demands.

I have a very "hands-on" approach to management and a literacy in most of the skills that contribute to performance production. I appreciate the way the Performance Space office functions. There is a flexibility in the responsibilities all the staff take on, and I am experienced and very comfortable with that kind of operation.

I reflect on my 6 months as Co-ordinator of Performance Space in 2000 as a kind of menteeship under the direction of Fiona Winning. She is both a generous collaborator and a demanding boss. I was enriched by that experience and would welcome the opportunity to work closely with her again. I have supported Fiona as a former board member, employee, venue client and peer, and continue to staunchly support her vision and astute strategies for both the space and the contemporary arts sector in general.

Addressing the Criteria:

A contemporary arts or performance practice.

For the past 25 years I have concentrated on the sustaining and development of my performance practice, and all that entails in the areas of creation, planning, administration and active support of the contemporary performance sector. I have enjoyed lengthy professional relationships with a number of companies in Sydney including the One Extra Company (1981-84), The Sydney Front (1987-93) and The opera Project (1997-2002). These 3 organisations focussed their Sydney operations on the presentation of work at Performance Space. Over the past 17 years my freelance directing career has also produced a large body of work at Performance Space.

I am applying for the position of Associate Director, not only for the challenges the job promises, but also because of the essential criteria that the applicant has a "contemporary arts or performance practice". I know very well that "24 hours per week" very rarely means only "24 hours per week", but it is a unique position that encourages (and acknowledges the reciprocal advantages of) an active arts practice. Reconciling the demands of the Associate Director position and my own practice, without prejudice, will require careful and constant forward planning, so that rather than conflict, the 2 roles might complement each other. Performance Space and I have experience in such planning. Also, I might hope that my public reputation as an artist brought some bonuses to the position of Associate Director of Performance Space.

Knowledge of new media arts practice.

The area of "new media" needs constant and careful redefinition, and particularly in response to the current funding body policy. Over the past few years I sense that Performance Space has rigorously defined it as "hybrid" arts practice that focuses on performance and embraces all possible and relevant areas of "new technologies" as critical media.

My own training and practice has focussed strongly on hybridity (and I acknowledge that in recent years I have chosen to narrow my personally initiated investigations to quite specific, esoteric even, areas of hybrid performance). As a freelance director of projects initiated by other organisations and individuals I have enthusiastically and rewardingly explored a large range of media and technologies.

My knowledge of, and experience in, the visual arts is limited. In the early '90s, I was a supporter of Performance Space's curatorial policy for "time-based" arts that positioned it uniquely amongst the plethora of Sydney's galleries. More recently I have been a strong advocate for presenting work in the galleries that, when possible (given opportunity and budget), responds to what is occurring in the main theatre space. I appreciate the vital role of an expert curator for each new exhibition/installation, and would rigorously initiate and support curatorial committees or individuals in any area I personally felt ill-equipped to realise.

Concept development and project management.

In the roles of artistic director/collective member/company manager I have learnt, over a number of years and companies, that the ongoing health of an organisation essentially depends on concept development and change that challenges and responds to both the artists and their audiences. Most of my work has been with relatively small organisations where vision must be met by management acumen. The relationships you develop with producers are very different to those with funding/sponsorship bodies. And the rapport with, and encouragement of, other artists is yet another type of relationship - one that I have successfully and rewardingly negotiated over many years in many circumstances (cf. biography).

The present management of Performance Space experienced my management of a number of projects in 2000 when I was Co-ordinator at Performance Space. My role was not so clearly defined at that time, and was largely to respond to and realise the concepts and planning of some quite varied projects already put in place by Fiona Winning. I am excited by the opportunity to conceive new projects and to collaborate with Fiona in their development, should they be deemed appropriate and viable. As a manager that has largely created work on a project base, I am meticulous about the financial "bottom line", and have almost no experience of deficit (but plenty of constructive compromise).

High level of oral and written communication skills.

My career as a performer/director/performance maker has demanded a high level of oral and written skills - articulating to and seducing producers, funding bodies, press, artistic collaborators, in-house technicians, sponsors and audiences.

My first major experience of staff liaison/management was as Musical Director of St Peters College, Adelaide (1979-80) with responsibility for approximately 40 casual music teaching staff in the context of a large multi-curricula (and extremely conservative!) teaching organisation. In 1988 I was appointed Director of Parades at World Expo in Brisbane, leading an organisation with over 50 fulltime performers, technicians and auxiliary creative team, and managing up to 100 different

international guest "paraders" every day, 7 days a week. One develops most varied "people skills"!

My practice has largely been supported by government funding. My written communication skills have enabled that ongoing career.

Ability to introduce new bodies of work and new communities of artists/audiences to the program and to the space.

Venue programming and management will bring new responsibilities and challenges, but my experience, as follows, will be of value:

Funding:

Since 1983 I have successfully sought funding for many projects and organisations.

I was a sitting member of the Australia Council's Performing Arts Board (Dance Committee) from 1993-95. During that time I was an energetic advocate for the work of emerging and individual artists, and for the creation of the (then named) Hybrid Arts Committee.

I have proved a willing, effective and diplomatic agitator for policy and guideline change by the funding bodies (particularly federal) over many years.

Artist Support:

Each time I create a new company work with The opera Project I bring at least one new artist onboard, embracing and being stimulated by that artist's input. As a rule that artist will want to continue as a collaborating member of the loose ensemble on future projects. This is partly due to my endeavours to acknowledge and encourage their input and their sense of shared ownership of the work.

The Associate Director position will require an openness to project proposal, which is how I have worked as a freelance director, embracing and being enthused by many varied artists' personal visions and driving them toward realisation.

Over many years I have provided active consultancy on grant application procedures, feedback and hands-on support for both emerging and established artists.

Audiences:

My company and freelance directing work is extremely varied, and so targets quite different audiences. I am very aware of marketing demands, and work closely with my publicist to brainstorm each new strategy.

I am keen to have the opportunity to conceive new projects appropriate to Performance Space, that have the potential to pull new audiences to the space.

Sponsorship:

Despite the difficulties that the small-to-medium arts sector experiences in attracting corporate support, I have had some modest successes over the years, particularly when incorporating the team effort of management and publicist.

Macintosh literate with keyboard skills.

The opera Project has recently updated its computer to an IMac G3, with all its new tricks and available hard and soft ware. Although for basic word processing I prefer to work in Word 5 or 6, I am frequently and quickly having to re acquaint myself with recent Windows applications. I am familiar with the Microsoft Excel program, but rarely use it - some brushing up might be necessary.

I use Outlook Express for email and Filemaker Pro for our database, as does Performance Space.

Demonstrated office administration experience.

I have been company administrator/office manager of The Sydney Front (1987-93) and The opera Project (1997-2002), both Incorporated Associations, with responsibility for budgeting, workers' compensation and public liability insurance, superannuation, financial reporting to the Department of Fair Trading, PAYE and PAYG management, database management, GST reporting and payment (BAS), artist contracts, general public relations, project management, grant application and acquittal, strategic planning, tour management, accounts and investment management, payroll, and all the general tasks required to maintain an efficient office operation.

As an individual artist I have managed myself, without an agent, for 25 years. I have developed the necessary skills to sustain that career, and the organisations that have contracted me over those years have respected my management acumen, speed and attention to detail. I have a reputation for thorough planning, and a horror of relying on "damage control".

Programming experience. (covered above)

I would welcome the opportunity to work in an organisation to which I have had a very long and passionate commitment. I believe I have a sound appreciation of the contemporary arts sector in Sydney and Australia (the expectations, the relationships with government bodies, the demands of artists and the variety of visions presented by the field), a long experience of the history and obligations of Performance Space and the skills to fulfil the demands of the position.

I hope I might have the opportunity to further discuss my application with you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any immediate queries.

yours sincerely,

Nigel Kellaway

Referees:

Rosemary Miller, director of Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart. Tel 03 6234 8414

Rosemary is a long-time colleague, familiar with my work from my early Musical Directorship of St Peters College and my acting directorship of the Australian Dance Theatre in Adelaide. As Director of the Adelaide Fringe she presented The Sydney Front's *The Pornography of Performance* in 1988 and in 2001 toured The opera Project's *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* to Hobart.

Keith Gallasch, co-editor of RealTime. Tel 9283 2723 / 9332 4549 (hm)

Keith has collaborated as a writer and dramaturg on several major works directed by me since 1995, is familiar with my company administration style, and is well qualified to address my position in Australian contemporary performance culture.

Sarah Miller, director of Perth Institute for Contemporary Arts. Tel 08 9227 6144

Sarah has presented work by The Sydney Front (as Director of Performance Space 1989-93), The opera Project and also invited me on numerous occasions to produce work and teach at PICA since 1994.

.... on the fifteenth year of Christmases ...

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway

Women's College, University of Sydney, 18th December 2002

Songs of the Italian Baroque

1. **Deh, piu a me v'ascondete** Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747)
 2. **Intorno all'idol mio** Marc' Antonio Cesti (1623-69)
 3. **Selve amiche** Antonio Caldara (1671-1763)
 4. **Pur dicesti, o bocca bella** Antonio Lotti
 5. **Ogni pena piu spietata** Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736)
 6. **Cangia, cangia tue voglie** Giovanni Battista Fasolo (circa 1600-1665)
 7. **Sento nel core** Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)
 8. **Gia il sole dal gange** Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)
-

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway - A brief history ...

Let's blame composer Richard Vella for introducing us, in the dead of a Canberra winter in 1987, as participants in the music theatre component of the Australian National Playwrights' Conference. Annette was several months merrily pregnant and Nigel was nursing a crippling neck and shoulder injury. Something odd blossomed despite these diverse physical circumstances.

Richard brought us together again with John Baylis two years later for Calculated Risks Opera Productions' *Tales of Love*, which kick-started our voice and piano collaboration with *Frauenliebe und -Leben*, a challenging stage relationship and a lasting personal friendship.

Then came two or three years of *Don Juan*, internationally with The Sydney Front and our enticingly problematic cabaret work *Choux Choux Baguette Remembers* - Perth, Wagga Wagga, Hong Kong, Wollongong, Canberra and endlessly in Sydney - yes, it still occasionally plays for deservedly (ridiculously?) inflated fees!

In 1997 we co-founded The opera Project Inc., collaborating on *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* (1997 Sydney, 2001 Hobart and Perth), *The Terror of Tosca* (1998) and *Tristan* (1999).

And throughout all those years, innumerable recitals and perverse appearances together. Many of you have collaborated with us or generally supported us, and we acknowledge and thank you all.

At a rough guess we've clocked up around 250 performances together over the past fifteen years, and might now plot something unexpected to entertain us all sometime in the next fifteen.

Chapter 10: 2003

(The year of *Medea*)

ANOTHER NIGHT : MEDEA

Co-created, directed and performed with THE OPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Regina Heilmann, Nigel Kellaway, Peretta Anggerek (countertenor), Michael Bell (piano), Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichord), Margaret Howard (baroque violin), Catherine Tabrett (viola da gamba). Lighting designer: Simon Wise. Costume designer: Annemaree Dalziel. Performance Space, Sydney.

CANTATA

Created, directed and performed with STOPERA . Featuring two French Baroque works (*Medee* by Louis-Nicolas Clerambault and *Pigmalion* by Jean-Philippe Rameau). Principal performers: Dina Panozzo, Nigel Kellaway, Rebecca Collins, Judith Dodsworth, Louise Page. Harpsichordist and Conductor, Nigel Ubrihien. Street Theatre, Canberra ACT.

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The opera Project Inc. and Performance Space present

another night : medea

Medea is a myth of love, betrayal and revenge. Medea and Jason present a classic example of the long-term dysfunctional relationship. Time exacts its toll on the games of love. Amidst the wrestling over unsettled scores and niggling threats of revenge there are victims - some innocent.

The opera Project is back at Performance Space with **another night : medea**, a new performance piece which weaves together three contrasting works based on the legend of Medea - Heiner Muller's 1983 theatre texts *Despoiled Shore*, *Medea:Material* and *Landscape with Argonauts*, Edward Albee's 1962 play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Louis Nicholas Clérambault's early 18th century French solo cantata *Medée*.

"One attends a Kellaway event with a very real sense of anticipation. He has been one of the leaders of our avant-garde for at least fifteen years and in that time has participated in the creation of some astounding events."

James Waites, RealTime # 43

another night : medea is another celebration of theatrical invention, visual brilliance, musical expertise and wicked humour for which The opera Project is famed. It brings together the artists that created last year's sell-out theatrical provocation **entertaining paradise**. Performers **Nigel Kellaway** and **Regina Heilmann** with the countertenor singer **Peretta Anggerek** and pianist **Michael Bell**, are joined by **Nigel Ubrihien** (harpsichord), **Margaret Howard** (baroque violin) and **Catherine Tabrett** (bass viol), three noted Sydney exponents of Baroque musical practice.

Ovid invented a ten year relationship for Medea and Jason. Albee decided on 23 years for sad old George and Martha (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*). The opera Project gives them another night together ... another night full of fearless and vicious bravura.

April 30 - May 10 Tues - Sat 8pm
preview: Tues April 29 8pm (all tickets \$8)

Performance Space 199 Cleveland Street, Redfern

\$18 / \$14 / \$10 (Tues 6 & Wed 7: \$12 / \$10)

BOOKINGS 9698 7235/ boxoffice@performancespace.com.au

NIGEL KELLAWAY (performer and director)

Nigel Kellaway has worked as a performer, choreographer, director, musician and teacher with many of the major contemporary theatre and performance companies in Australia over the past 30 years, creating over 50 full evening works in that time. He was a co-founder of the performance ensemble **The Sydney Front** (1987-93), touring nationally and internationally. Solo performance works for both himself and other performers have been an important focus of his output. In 1997 he co-founded with Annette Tesoriero **The opera Project Inc.**, which has to date created seven new works, and toured extensively.

REGINA HEILMANN (performer)

Regina Heilmann was a performer with **Sidetrack Performance Group** from 1990 to 1997. More recently she has collaborated with other artists and organisations in the making of many new works. **another night : medea** is the fifth work she has collaborated on with **The opera Project**. With broad experience in youth, community and children's theatre, in 2002 she was appointed the new Co-Artistic Director of **PACT Theatre**, Sydney.

PERETTA ANGGEREK (performer - countertenor)

Peretta Anggerek has been twice selected as a finalist in the McDonald's Operatic Aria competition (1999/2001) and for the Covent Garden National Opera Studio Scholarship (2001). In 2000, Peretta performed at the Royal Conservatorium in the Hague, the Netherlands, made his debut recital broadcast recording with Paul Rickard Ford for **ABC FM's Young Australia Program** and appeared with the **Australian Ballet** in the Sydney Olympic Arts Festival. Peretta has been a regular performer for the **Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival** and the **Australian Brandenburg Orchestra**. **ENTERTAINING PARADISE** in 2002 was the first work that Peretta has co-created with **The opera Project**.

MICHAEL BELL (performer - pianist)

Michael Bell studied piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with Gerard Willems, David Miller and Stephanie McCallum, developing an interest and gaining experience in the fields of accompaniment and contemporary music performance. In 1997 he received membership into the Golden Key National Honours Society and was awarded the *Sonja Hanke Memorial Scholarship* in 2001. Currently, he tutors in chamber music at the Conservatorium High School, teaches piano privately, and at the Conservatorium Access Centre as a piano and chamber music tutor and accompanist. Michael has previously co-created with **The opera Project** *TRISTAN* (1999) and *ENTERTAINING PARADISE* (2002).

NIGEL UBRIHIEN (performer - harpsichordist)

Nigel Ubrihien graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium in 1995 before continuing his harpsichord studies under Zuzana Ruzickova at the Academy of Music, Prague in 1998. Nigel is also a teacher, writer, musical director and arranger for cabaret and music-theatre, performing regularly around Australia, New Zealand and the USA. He won a Green Room award in 2000 for his show *FRIENDS OF BABRA- THE WAY WE WEREN'T* (also in New York 2000/01). *A STAR IS BORED* premiered in New York in 2002. He was the musical director for the Australian premieres of *THE WORLD GOES ROUND* (Sydney) and *LUCKY STIFF* (Melbourne) and tutors for ATYP.

SIMON WISE (lighting design/production manager)

Simon Wise is a freelance lighting designer and production manager. He has worked with many of Sydney's major performance ensembles and artists over the past fifteen years. His association with **The opera Project** has entailed the lighting design and production management for all their works and tours. His collaborations with Nigel Kellaway has extended to many other independent projects and his seven years with **The Sydney Front**.

ANNEMAREE DALZIEL (costumes)

Annemaree Dalziel has been designing for contemporary theatre since 1984. She has created costumes in a number of collaborations with Nigel Kellaway: *IDOL* and *FRIGHT!!!* (**Sidetrack Performance Group**), *THE SINKING OF THE RAINBOW WARRIOR* (**The Song Company/Sydney Festival**) and *CHOUX CHOUX BAGUETTE REMEMBERS*, *THE TERROR OF TOSCA*, *EL INOCENTE* and *ENTERTAINING PARADISE* (**The opera Project**). Her work with Regina Heilmann also includes dramaturgy for *A ROOM WITH NO AIR*.

Are you gonna kill the kids tonight, honey?

David Williams

Realtime April/May 2003

(Reproduced with permission)

Nigel Kellaway, artistic director of The opera Project, begins listing some long-term relationships. Medea and Jason clocked up 10 years before ending with a bang. George and Martha dragged themselves onward kicking and screaming for 23 years in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Kellaway and Regina Heilmann have made performance together for 13 years, and in **another night: medea** opening at Performance Space in April, they playfully contemplate the often vicious games that only the intimate can play. They do this by staging themselves as fictions, and restaging these classic fictions as themselves, raising the stakes as only long-term collaborators can.

These are games for consenting adults. Perhaps they'll play *Are you gonna kill the kids tonight, honey?* On paper this new work looks incredibly complicated, a clash of styles and performance demands. *another night: medea* interweaves 3 contrasting works based on the legend of Medea—Heiner Müller's 1983 theatre texts *Despoiled Shore*, *Medea: Material and Landscape with Argonauts*, Edward Albee's 1962 play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Louis Nicolas Clérambault's early 18th century French solo cantata *Medée*. And yet Kellaway insists that the work is simple: "My work is very straightforward. It's not complicated...It's not difficult work at all. It's celebratory work. It's celebrating our culture, our history, and everything that we recognise, things that we know."

In the beginning, at the centre of the work, there is Medea. Jason's there too, but he definitely plays second fiddle to the ultimate bad mother. In this work, true to the slipperiness of gender in The opera Project's work, Medea will be played, in one of her incarnations at least, by a bodybuilding tattooed Indonesian countertenor. The striking Peretta Anggerek is back, singing Clérambault's *Medée* cantata, accompanied by a baroque trio on period instruments. This will be performed in French, with surtitles. The beautiful strangeness of Anggerek's performance presence, for Kellaway, "...personifies what Medea was. Medea has been variously described as, well certainly as a foreigner, but also as a sorceress and there is something of the sorcerer in the countertenor voice, particularly in contemporary culture. It has magical powers."

Unfortunately Anggerek won't get to kill the kids. Clérambault's cantata reads the story as a revenge tragedy, but finishes before Medea murders her children. Presumably, killing her partner's new wife was enough revenge.

In the middle there's George and Martha. No one has written about the middle years of Medea and Jason, years in which they raised a family. Most storytellers just want to skip to the bloody end. Few writers have plumbed the depths of middle-aged dysfunction as sensationally as Edward Albee in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and Kellaway draws upon Albee's masterpiece to sketch this absent middle ground, to articulate the intimate violence of the long term

relationship, and to view these mythic figures, Medea and Jason, as a savagely dysfunctional couple. On a performance level, the meeting of this naturalistic classic with multiple readings of the Medea story forces a re-engagement not only with baroque music theatre and Greek tragedy, but also with naturalism. Kellaway aims to open audiences to new ways of listening both to music and to theatrical texts, staging meetings of clashing material in which strangeness is not erased but sublimated:

“Regina and I are not going to be just there trying to shout down the music. It has to be like chamber music, where the spoken voice and the material that we are doing has some marriage point with the music. And so you start looking at quite naturalistic text—dialogue as sets of recitatives and arias...It’s a fresh way of looking at naturalism, at naturalistic acting. The clash forces us to use different techniques, discover different reasons to say this text...The slippage between these modes of performance is a considerable negotiation for a performer. How do they actually talk to one another rather than just being jump cuts?”

The company’s most recent performance work was *Entertaining Paradise*, a darkly seductive take on the Moors Murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley. But Kellaway innocently insists, “I’m not a dark person.” The perception of him as The Prince of Darkness is simply “because I’ve always steered against doing feel-good, pretty work. I just don’t think that’s terribly potent. Sex and violence are the mainstay of theatre.” And he wants to keep his work on that potent edge, to keep it interesting. But he also wants to have fun: “Ten, 15 years ago, you wouldn’t dare play with these kinds of things—it would be a crime against art. I’m just getting older; I don’t care that much anymore. I want to have fun, and I want audiences to have fun. I guess I’m not nearly as snobbish as I used to be. There are less rules, I think, as you get older, a lot less rules.”

After the dark territory of *Entertaining Paradise* Kellaway says this new work is much more playful: “It’s much funnier. Ian and Myra were not bright. They didn’t have much sense of irony at all. But ‘Nigel and Regina’ in this piece are much brighter, much quicker, much wittier, and in a way, nastier...They’ve had a number of years experience knowing how to rip strips off each other...but also how to maintain the relationship. And I think that’s the important thing—not every long-term relationship has to finish. Medea chooses to finish her relationship with Jason. That doesn’t always happen...[for us] there will always be another night.”

The restless ghosts of Medea and Jason, George and Martha will be moaning and rattling their chains as Kellaway, Heilmann and an all-star early music cast present a dark night of fun and games. Witness the thrilling spectacle of virtuosic performers taking on huge challenges. Be prepared for something rich and strange.

another night: medea, **The opera Project**, performers Nigel Kellaway, Regina Heilmann, countertenor Peretta Anggerek, pianist Michael Bell, harpsichord Nigel Ubrihien, baroque violin Margaret Howard, bass violin Catherine Tabrett, Performance Space, April 30-May 10.

INTERVIEW WITH NIGEL KELLAWAY - 18/04/03 - The Glebe

What is the story of Medea and why does it interest writers and audiences today?

Medea is the exotic mythic princess/sorceress of ancient Greek legend who becomes Jason's trophy after he sacks and pillages her home of Colchis in his quest for the Golden Fleece. When he later takes a new bride, Medea takes her revenge on Jason by killing the new bride and slaughtering her's and Jason's own two sons. Every culture has its legends of revenge, though this is perhaps one of the most spectacular. Myths and legends are valuable cultural tools - something recognizable that we can endlessly reinvent to reflect our contemporary world and troubles. For example, Medea's story could be seen as one about empire and colonization and the threat of "terrorizing" revenge .

A little about the history, productions and ethos of The opera Project?

The opera Project was founded in 1997 by soprano Annette Tesoriero and myself - a very different kind of "opera" company to the others "on-the-block". (Consider that in this production 2 of the 3 main players are actors, non-singers!). Although we both had strong musical backgrounds, we also had long experience in experimental theatre. And our interest was in applying a history of radical theatrical practice to the conservative world of opera, in order to drag it out of the 19th century museum it too often languishes in. We've made six new works to date, including *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves*, *The Terror of Tosca*, and *Entertaining Paradise*, and 2003 will also see *The Audience and Other Psychopaths*.

Why have you chosen Baroque musicians? What is it about Baroque music that evokes the myth of Medea?

The starting point of this new work was my discovery of a rarely performed 25 minute cantata, *Medée*, for soprano and string ensemble by the 18th century French composer Clérambault. We are performing it on the traditional instruments of the period with the astonishing male soprano Peretta Anggerek. I then went looking for other more contemporary readings of the Medea myth and that led me to thinking about the trials and tribulations of maintaining a long-term relationship such as Medea's and Jason's.

A little about the process of creating the work? Was it collaborative?

The opera Project is a loose ensemble of performers and associated artists from strong backgrounds spanning music, theatre, dance and experimental performance. Regina Heilmann (playing Medea) and myself (playing Jason) have collaborated on many works over the past decade and a half. As director I might initially choose the material, write the "first draft" and choose the collaborating artists for a project. But when we all start working in the rehearsal studio, the experience and trust we've shared over the years means that the work is developed very collaboratively, often through improvisation on the material I've provided - the discoveries and final decisions are made together.

What is the significance of these three writers' works in developing the myth of Medea?

The three main texts we started with, in developing this new work, were Clérambault's 1710 cantata *Medée*, Heiner Muller's two 1983 theatre texts *Medea:Material* and *Landscape with Argonauts* and Edward Albee's 1962 classic play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. The Clérambault is an amazing portrayal, at times hauntingly beautiful and then fiercely dramatic, of the transition from love, through betrayal, to revenge. The 2 Muller texts re-read the story as a powerful study of contemporary colonization and nationalistic power. The Albee is perhaps one of the most spectacular stories of a middle-aged dysfunctional relationship written in the past sixty years. It is also very funny, in parts. It's rude, vulgar, hilariously vicious and works as a fantastic foil to the ethereal seriousness of the Baroque cantata.

How is the work of the three writers incorporated?

We perform the cantata *Medée* complete, but the Muller and Albee were just starting points for the development of the work. They've been cut up, rewritten and juxtaposed with each other, so they are really only illusions to their original selves.

What should audiences expect?

another night : medea is a piece of many layers. It's about the games people might play with each other. It's also about how we see ourselves in relationship with our cultural history. We don't need our audience to recognize all the references we're alluding to, but they will easily follow the story of a night played out by a rather clever couple who know exactly what games will incite fury in their partner. It's an adventure in music, in performance and virtuosity, in theatre, in visual invention ... a fantastic clash of cultural references and artistic styles ... fast, furious and even funny.

A virago took my baby!

Laura Ginters

RealTime June/July 2003

(Reproduced with permission)

This title suggests the common view we have of Medea, who slaughters her children supposedly out of jealousy when her husband leaves her. It's a powerful and enduring myth—she's the ultimate Bad Mother. (And our own continuing horror/fascination with Lindy Chamberlain testifies to this phenomenon.)

In *another night: medea* Nigel Kellaway pairs this classic with one from the modern repertoire, Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Albee's play answers Medea, with George killing off the (imaginary) child the couple has raised, after a night of cold fury, slugging it out in the living room in front of transfixed guests (a role designated for the audience).

This work is less concerned with the children's deaths, though, than their parents' lives: it is the Jason/George/Nigel and Medea/Martha/Reggie show. (Indeed, later on "Nigel" has little patience with "Reggie's" [Regina Heilmann] pillow-baby smothering.)

Welcome to the *Games that Lovers Play*—or at least the rather less innocent and more manipulative ones long-term couples play. You have to know someone very well indeed to unerringly home in on and bring out their worst every time—or, in the case of long-time collaborators Kellaway and Heilmann, their best, as in this production.

another night isn't just about middle-aged dysfunction, nor does it merely display the rubble of plundered texts. It also has more profound comments to make on the material itself and there is a clear logic at work which rebuilds these stories into a commentary on those same old, same old stories we fall back on, and the dead-end, self/mutually destructive grooves we lapse into. It's an invitation to think anew.

This we particularly see through an especially gorgeous feature of this production, the 18th century Clérambault *Medée* cantata, sung by counter tenor Peretta Anggerek. The cantata itself stops short of the dastardly deed of infanticide and thus cuts short the natural conclusion of the Medea story. The pierced, tattooed, half-naked body-builder is not our usual image of an opera singer, and Anggerek embodying Medea the foreigner, Medea the enchantress is thus a double reminder that things aren't always what they seem and assumptions can be dangerous. This Medea might well tell a different tale from the one that has repeatedly been told of her.

The set also echoes this invitation to shake out our preconceptions. Beginning mostly in darkness, all we can see are the grand piano downstage right and, prominently centre stage, a golden sofa (with Heilmann resplendent upon it).

Uh-oh. In the last month both a playwright and a designer have commented separately to me on how much they hate "sofa" theatre, the writer claiming that it was almost worth checking in advance to see if there was a sofa on the set before buying a ticket: it's become shorthand for unadventurous, naturalistic TV theatre-family drama at its most banal. Of course that doesn't turn out to be the case here (though no one takes the credit for the set design), and a black gauze screen swings up to reveal 3 more musicians, behind them a cascade of scarlet drapes descend from ceiling height creating performance spaces on several levels.

What I also find particularly fascinating in this work is its lively conversation with opera in its high art form, rather than in its original (and opera Project) understanding of a “work” in its broadest sense.

Kellaway sways towards opera with live music (4 very talented musicians, including a truly delightful trio of harpsichord, baroque violin and viola da gamba), surtitles and the outstanding talents of Anggerek. At the same time, the sumptuous artificiality that is opera is neatly paraphrased/parodied by the ballerina-in-the-jewellery-box that is Anggerek in his opening scene; framed by red curtains, dressed in golden silk, revolving jerkily to the sounds of appealing music. An ironic answer to the all too familiar “park and bark” school of opera performance?

While static display is not part of Kellaway’s aesthetic, display certainly is, and Annemaree Dalziel again contributes costumes. Most gorgeous are Kellaway and Heilmann’s robes with full swishy skirts—great for flouncing about the stage—a sumptuous pink and gold for Heilmann, regal purple with frills for Kellaway. And Anggerek’s 18th century inspired half gown (all the better to see your pierced nipples and tats with) is truly fab.

This show is also, I feel, The opera Project at its most accessible yet. Surtitles! A play (well, movie) we all know! Of course, there’s Heiner Müller mixed in there too with his *Medea Material*, but even he is digestible, given enough context, as we are here—and he certainly provides the text for some of the most theatrical and striking moments of the piece, especially in ‘solos’ by Kellaway and Heilmann.

Heilmann in her toxic frock sequence is wonderful: as she plans doom for Jason’s bride-to-be, she brings it (literally) on herself—and, unwittingly, thousands of years of condemnation with it. Twitching and grimacing on the floor, this lethal charmer is mesmerising.

That Kellaway revels in the language and music and their interplay in this production is clear. The sung and spoken texts are better integrated here than ever before, and they work powerfully off one another. An extract of Müller’s *Landscape with Argonauts* transforms into a visually and aurally arresting duet between Anggerek singing the cantata on the top level of the stage with Kellaway standing immediately below him, spitting out the text in the music’s pauses.

At the end, the screen descends once more, again cutting off the musicians from the performers, returning us to the beginning, and “Nigel” sends the “children” (the musicians) off to bed, before wandering off himself.

Everyone has gone except Medea who remains sprawled on her couch, her fiery, golden chariot; there before it begins, there after it ends. After 2500 years, she’s not going to stand for being pushed around/pushed off stage anymore—she concludes the evening with a defiant “Fuck you, Nigel!” But was anyone listening? Well, yes, the “guests” were still there and paying close attention.

The opera Project Inc, ***another night: medea***, director Nigel Kellaway, performers Nigel Kellaway, Regina Heilmann, countertenor/narrator Peretta Anggerek, piano Michael Bell, baroque violin Margaret Howard, viola da gamba Catherine Tabrett, harpsichord Nigel Ubrihien, lighting/production Simon Wise, costumes Annemaree Dalziel, music Clérambault, Poulenc, Schubert, Melissa Seeto,
Performance Space.

Nothing to build on once the nasty fun ends

Harriet Cunningham
Sydney Morning Herald 2nd May 2003

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Pastiche comes unstuck

John McCallum

The Australian, 5th May 2003

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PROGRAM NOTE

another night : medea

The opera Project has a very different starting point for each new work it makes. It might be a socio-political concern. It might be a particular text and/or attendant philosophy. Common to all works is how the performance of music impacts on theatrical articulacy, and how well all aspects of the material serve as a vehicle for the collaborating artists.

Sometimes a particular musical text (generally non-operatic) triggers a new work. In this case the work is a rarely performed cantata by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1710). The subject matter? The murderous and infanticidal Medea, and Clérambault has a very interesting "take" on that subject. Ovid's story of Medea is a revenge myth. It's true relevance lies in the myriad ways in which Western culture has chosen to interpret the story and applied it to contemporary events and consciousness.

There is no "one" Medea. Ovid's mythical Jason, on a questionable quest, slaughters the citizens and rulers of Colchis and takes as his trophy their princess, the beautiful Medea. Oddly enough, they fall in love, settle and have kids on another foreign shore and confront all the usual immigration red tape. Jason's solution to their troubles is rather clumsy - he marries the King's daughter. His mistake - not first conferring with Medea.

The late 20th century East German playwright, Heiner Muller, describes the story of Jason as the earliest representation of colonisation in Greek legend:

The end signifies the threshold where myth turns into history: Jason is eventually slain by his boat ... European history began with colonisation ... That the vehicle of colonisation strikes the coloniser dead anticipates the end of it. That's the threat of the end we are facing.

Louis-Nicolas Clérambault's early 18th century cantata reads the story as a psychologically complex "revenge tragedy". Interestingly, and perhaps cogniscent of contemporary moral squeamishness, he finishes his work short of Medea's savage infanticide.

In researching many interpretations of the myth we noted that Medea and Jason's relationship supposedly lasted ten or more years. The beginning and ending of their lives together have been quite spectacularly chronicled, but nothing has been invented regarding their middle years. Should we be concerned about this gap? Or is the purpose of myths merely to create iconic certainties? Further research reminded us that "mud-slinging" has always been a reliable mainstay of the theatre, and few writers of the 20th century canon have plumbed the depths of middle-aged dysfunction as sensationally as Edward Albee, in his lateral treatment of Medea's and Jason's wrestling match.

What are we to present? Ovid? Euripides? Muller? Clérambault? Albee? They are all profound readings of this myth.

And so... **another night : medea** - endeavouring to discuss the "relatively" recent positioning of theatre as a psycho-analytical forum, and considering how myths have been quite differently interpreted in the artistic canon of earlier centuries - all pertaining to where we locate art in our collective self-awareness.

Nigel Kellaway, 2003

Australia Council Acquittal

another night : medea

Medea: Regina Heilmann
Jason: Nigel Kellaway
Narrator: Peretta Anggerek (countertenor)
piano: Michael Bell
harpsichord: Nigel Ubrihien (musical director of the Clérambault cantata)
baroque violin: Margaret Howard
viola da gamba: Catherine Tabrett

writer/director: Nigel Kellaway (assistant to the director: Michelle Outram)
music: Louis-Nicolas Clérambault, Francis Poulenc, Franz Schubert
piano sketches by Melissa Seeto

referred texts: Heiner Muller: *Medea:Material and Landscape with Argonauts*
Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

lighting design & production: Simon Wise
assistant to the production manager: Kallum Wilkinson (NIDA Technical Production Secondment)
costume design: Annemaree Dalziel
publicist: Michaela Coventry
photography: Heidrun Löhr
publicity graphic design: Suzanne Boccalatte

Season: **Preview:** **29th April 2003**
Performances: **30th April - 10th May, 2003**
Performance Space, Sydney

Project description and Process

another night : medea was a new full evening theatre work referencing two major extant theatrical texts, Heiner Muller's *Medea:Material and Landscape with Argonauts* (c1953) and Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962). Central to the work was a complete performance of Louis-Nicolas Clérambault's solo cantata for soprano, violin and bass continuo *Médée* (1710).

Due to the failure of Canberra based **Stopera Inc.** to attract funding from the Theatre Board for the development process planned for early 2003, Nigel Kellaway embarked on a solitary writing process in December 2002. The starting point for the work was Clérambault's cantata. It should be noted that a cantata is NOT an opera - it is merely a assemblage of four recitatives and arias, providing a "third person" narrative of part of the Medea myth. There is no action depicted in the words. It was quickly realised that this work was never going to provide the "meat" for a theatrical production. In researching the Medea myth the two extant works by Muller and Albee suggested two dramatically (in both style and intent) contrasting studies of dysfunctional relationships and revenge.

The opera Project has a very different starting point for each new work it makes. It might be a socio-political concern. It might be a particular text and/or attendant philosophy. Common to all works is how the performance of music impacts on theatrical articulacy, and how well all aspects of the material serve as a vehicle for the collaborating artists. Sometimes a particular musical text (generally non-operatic) triggers a new work. In this case the work is a rarely performed cantata by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1710). The subject matter? The murderous and infanticidal Medea, and Clérambault has a very interesting "take" on that subject.

Ovid's story of Medea is a revenge myth. Its true relevance lies in the myriad ways in which Western culture has chosen to interpret the story and applied it to contemporary events and consciousness.

There is no "one" Medea. Ovid's mythical Jason, on a questionable quest, slaughters the citizens and rulers of Colchis and takes as his trophy their princess, the beautiful Medea. Oddly enough, they fall in love, settle and have kids on another foreign shore and confront all the usual immigration red tape. Jason's solution to their troubles is rather clumsy - he marries the King's daughter. His mistake - not first conferring with Medea.

The late 20th century East German playwright, Heiner Muller, describes the story of Jason as the earliest representation of colonisation in Greek legend:

The end signifies the threshold where myth turns into history: Jason is eventually slain by his boat ... European history began with colonisation ... That the vehicle of colonisation strikes the coloniser dead anticipates the end of it. That's the threat of the end we are facing.

Louis-Nicolas Clérambault's early 18th century cantata reads the story as a psychologically complex "revenge tragedy". Interestingly, and perhaps cogniscent of contemporary moral squeamishness, he finishes his work short of Medea's savage infanticide.

In researching many interpretations of the myth we noted that Medea and Jason's relationship supposedly lasted ten or more years. The beginning and ending of their lives together have been quite spectacularly chronicled, but nothing has been invented regarding their middle years. Should we be concerned about this gap? Or is the purpose of myths merely to create iconic certainties?

Further research reminded us that "mud-slinging" has always been a reliable mainstay of the theatre, and few writers of the 20th century canon have plumbed the depths of middle-aged dysfunction as sensationally as Edward Albee, in his lateral treatment of Medea's and Jason's wrestling match.

What are we to present? Ovid? Euripides? Muller? Clérambault? Albee? They are all profound readings of this myth.

And so...***another night : medea*** - endeavouring to discuss the "relatively" recent positioning of theatre as a psycho-analytical forum, and considering how myths have been quite differently interpreted in the artistic canon of earlier centuries - all pertaining to where we locate art in our collective self-awareness.

(Nigel Kellaway's notes from the production program)

Once Kellaway had prepared a draft structure of the work, he met with Regina Heilmann (actor) and Simon Wise (lighting designer) for discussion and evaluation of the new text. Re-writing and occasional discussion continued through January and February 2003.

Peretta Anggerek (male soprano) was already committed to the production. He recommended Nigel Ubrihien as harpsichordist / musical director, who in turn approached baroque violinist Margaret Howard and viola da gambist Catherine Tabrett to perform in the work. The only score of the music available anywhere in the world is the original 18th century autograph score by the composer. Much of it had to be transcribed to be readable by the musicians. The music is extremely virtuosic, and The opera Project was fortunate to be able to work with musicians of such exceptional calibre.

In Kellaway's original concept of the work there were to be two contrasting "sound worlds" - one of the baroque instruments and voice and another much more contemporary. Pianist Michael Bell once again joined the ensemble, bringing some extant 20th century French piano music (by Francis Poulenc), and introducing us to composer Melissa Seeto who volunteered to compose additional piano music as required.

Meticulous planning was essential to the development of the work, as the available budget was only to cover 3 weeks of development and rehearsal (with only 3 rehearsals with the full ensemble together), which is very short for a newly devised work.

Michelle Outram approached the company in early 2003, requesting permission to observe the process of creating the new work from scratch. She diligently attended every rehearsal. Her strong musical background and strong concerns in music theatre and contemporary performance meant that she soon became an invaluable collaborator on the work, operating sound in rehearsals, "sitting on the book" as Heilmann and Kellaway learnt the substantial text, and offering valuable input as the work developed. The company was eventually able to employ her to operate the surtitles each night in performance and share with the performers essential stage-management duties.

We were able to negotiate with NIDA for a final year technical secondment (Kallum Wilkinson) to assist Simon Wise in the two weeks leading up to opening night - rigging and focussing lights and assisting Kellaway and Wise in the construction of the minimal set.

Successes and challenges of the project.

Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann have enjoyed a collaboration over 13 years, sometimes in a director/performer relationship, and in 6 productions they have played opposite each other in principal roles. Each production has demanded different skills and very different relationships. ***another night : medea*** pushed many of the devices they have developed over the years. It challenged them with the most substantial spoken text that either of them have had to grapple with for many years (perhaps even since they were both young "emerging things" 25 years ago!) Their audiences have, over the years, expected a developing and increasingly challenging on-stage relationship to be played out between them. Their years, experience and technique equipped them well to acquit that task in this work. Both of them were deeply rewarded by the process.

The opera Project's mission is (partly) to sophisticate a marriage of text, physicality and music (vocal, instrumental, even recorded) to create an articulate and aesthetically rewarding theatrical work. It was commented, by many of our most literate audience, that this work succeeded far beyond our work over the past 7 years. This is partly due to the experience of the core artistic team, but also because of the careful choice of the collaborators (some of whom have worked with the company before). This work was the most complicated piece we have attempted, in terms of layering of sonic textures, textural references, historical traditions, performative styles and thematic arguments.

The work was partly a product of the Performance Space - and we are talking about the building here, rather than the organisation. ***another night : medea*** was partly about a particular French sound. The music (and this is most particularly evident in the piano music and the spoken voices) is more concerned with the resonance of the sound, rather than the immediate percussive enunciation of the note/word. The Performance Space theatre's acoustical properties were major players in the conception of this work. We were very particular about the kinds of instruments we wanted to collide in the space, and the kind of sung, spoken and played phrases that would

produce that oddly "French" resonance - with peculiarly "Australian" characteristics! To help realise this our budget benefited from the generosity of Allan's Music (who provided us with an appropriate piano at 30% cost) and the donation of a fine harpsichord for the season.

Design is always an essential component in the work of The opera Project - indeed it is central to the very first conceptual thoughts about a work. Nigel Kellaway will always think primarily about the positioning of bodies in a space, and how they are viewed by their audience. His collaboration with Simon Wise (over 17 years) is integral to this vision. The finessing of a lighting design is as much about the movement of bodies on stage as it is about the focussing of lamps. Also, a lighting rig is a dramaturgical dilemma as much as it is about budget and practical requirements. Kellaway and Wise created for *anther night : medea* one of their most successful and economical designs. The opera Project has a horror of "sets" - Kellaway and Wise imagine an empty space and then introduce into it the bare necessities (a couch, a table and chair, and a few curtains off which to bounce light). Once again, Annemaree Dalziel was included in the collaboration - a costume designer that has tremendous understanding of the dramaturgical sensibilities of the creative team.

anther night : medea succeeded because of what was offered by the collaborators - a wildly varied group of artists, with different skills and experiences - but all committed to a process of exploring the material on offer in this work. Some of that material was set well before the rehearsal process began. Much of it had to be developed afresh over a very short period. The opera Project is fortunate to work with highly specialised and virtuosic artists who have the ability to grapple with quite complex material and repertoire, and are keen to adapt and refine that material and their crafts toward the benefit of the unique artefact we are creating.

Impact of the project

The press reviews - mixed:

John McCallum, at the **Australian**, evidently didn't like it. But as admitted, he really only likes the sensationalised details and climaxes in *Medea* (as perhaps are detailed in Euripides' most famous rendition of the myth) and so our more contemporary reading was never going to please him. And, as he often does, he confuses meta-theatrical and genre with "camp", which he always despises.

Harriet Cunningham, at the **Sydney Morning Herald**, a music reviewer, approached the work more cautiously (realised it was a theatre work, was a bit scared about mentioning the music, and so didn't have a lot to say about the work).

Laura Ginthers, in **RealTime**, had far more intelligent things to say (granted, her editors gave her more column inches).

Audience response:

Contemporary music theatre in Australia is still a fairly modest field (though reasonably healthy when one considers the scale of any arts practice in relationship with our population). A commendable attention is paid to the supporting the work of contemporary composers in this field (though sometimes their work is constricted by very conservative theatre making practices). The opera Project does NOT primarily see its role as a platform for contemporary Australian music composition (although it has collaborated with several composers over the past seven years). It is a contemporary performance "ensemble" that is very concerned with music in the process of "writing" and "performing" a theatrical event. Every time we present a work we have to deal with these pre-conceptions as to our role within the local cultural landscape.

The opera Project is developing a very interesting and varied audience base, spanning a wide demographic of 'genre' concerns, age, sexual proclivity and where they might position a cultural event in their lifestyles/politics. The opera Project is providing Sydney with work quite unlike any other company, and attracting a very healthy audience. It was encouraging to so many of our audience return for a second viewing of this work, and wanting to remain in the foyer to quiz (even argue with) the artists after each show. This is not a rule in Sydney!

There seems a general willingness (desire?) for people to redefine their notions of "opera". And there are many that have no experience of mainstage opera - only ill-informed prejudices. They seem quite comfortable in receiving difficult music as just part of the whole mix - accepting that it has its own vocabulary that functions in a different time frame to the articulated word or the moving body.

The opera Project's database has consequently grown with this production - many newcomers want to return!

Performance Space and The opera Project have shared a close relationship over the past 7 years. The opera Project once again enjoyed a collaboration with Performance Space as co-producers. As Performance Space reignites its image with a breadth of audiences The opera Project shares in this (a 50% share in the box office in return for Michaela Coventry as publicist). A 70% audience and above projected box office return was achieved, to both organisations' benefit.

Academic outreach: Over the past few years The opera Project has been seriously developing its relationship with the universities. ***another night : medea*** was on the compulsory curriculum for performance studies students at the universities of Sydney, New South Wales, Western Sydney and as recommended study at University of Wollongong. The company offered discount tickets to student groups. On Tuesday 6 May Nigel Kellaway led a forum discussion of the work, prior to that evening's performance, and he also presented lectures at the universities of Sydney and New South Wales in the weeks following the season for the students who were studying the work.

Linda Calgaro, an honours student at UNSW, attended rehearsals and performances as part of her dramaturgical unit.

The future: The further development of ***another night : medea*** progresses with Stopera (ACT) as we collaborate in September on their production ***cantata*** - devised and directed by Nigel Kellaway. ***another night : medea*** will be reconstructed, with Jean Phillippe Rameau's opera ***Pygmalion*** (1748) embedded within it. Regina Heilmann is unable to perform and will be replaced by Dina Panozzo. Nigel Ubrihien will travel with the work as Musical Director and harpsichordist, as will the designs by Simon Wise and Annemaree Dalziel. The cast will be enormously expanded to 34 professional artists from NSW, ACT, VIC and Europe.

This Canberra production (supported by ArtsACT and the Music Board of the Australia Council) will be realised only because of the "development" work, on ***another night : medea***, that has been supported by the Theatre Board.

It is hoped that this final realisation of Medea (Stopera's ***cantata***) might some day see an audience beyond the ACT.

SECTION 1

(RH lying on couch alone as audience enters - MB at piano)

RH: Edward Albee...1962..."What a dump!" *(Thinks about it - sits upright)*
Hey, what's that from, Michael? *(impersonates Bette Davis)* 'WHAT A DUMP!'

(MB shrugs)

RH: Aw, come on! What's it from? You know.....Jason! Nigel!

NK: Yep? *(entering with coffee)*

RH: WHAT'S IT FROM, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE?

NK: What?

RH: I just told you, I just did it. 'What a dump!' Hunh? What's it from?

NK: *(Nigel shrugs and gets on with business of putting on makeup)*

RH: It's from some fucking Bette Davis picture...some fucking Warner Brothers' epic...
Bette Davis gets peritonitis in the end...she's got this big black fright wig she wears all
through the picture and she gets peritonitis, and she's married to Joseph Cotton or
something...
and she wants to go to Chicago all the time, 'cause she's in love with that actor with the
scar...But she gets sick, and she sits down in front of her dressing-table...and she's got this
peritonitis...and she tries to put her lipstick on, but she can't...and she gets it all over her
face.....and she comes home from a hard day, with the groceries, and she walks into the
modest living-room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotton has set her up in... and
she looks around, and says, 'WHAT A DUMP!'

(no reaction from NK)

She's discontent.

(no reaction from NK)

WELL, WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE PICTURE?

NK: ...are we just improvising ...or is this actually leading somewhere?

RH: Well, sweetheart, dearest, only soulmate, since we're both being paid, this evening, I
thought we should start with something...like....

NK: ...My Fair Lady?...The King and I?... A Lake near Straussberg...Despoiled Shore?

RH: What's that supposed to mean?

NK: Just a quote...Heiner Muller...1953.....coffee?

RH: Thanks.

NK: *(to Michael)* Over to you, honey.

(MB plays repertoire softly - French "salon", circa 1910?. Piano takes prominence - the following text "accompanies" it.)

NK: Milk?

RH: No thankyou.

NK: Sugar?

RH: You know I don't.

NK: Sorry...forgot.... (moving to couch with their coffee)
A telegram came this afternoon.

RH: Another fan?

NK: And then I went to the gym . Third time in a week...

RH: I got an email today...

NK: ...Only one?

RH: ...about her waiting...her longing...her desire...her plans...the DRESS!!!

RH: I think we should get dressed.

NK: You are a monster!

DRESSING (big piano)

RH: OK, I'm loud, and I'm vulgar, and I wear the pants around here because somebody's got to, but I am *not* a monster!

NK: You're a spoiled, self-indulgent, wilful, dirty-minded...

RH: ...LOOK, I'm not going to try to get through to you any more...

NK: Once a month, Regi! I've gotten used to it...but once a month and we get misunderstood Regi, the good-hearted girl under the barnacles. And I've believed it (more times than I want to remember) because I don't want to think I'm that much of a sucker. But there is no moment, any more, when we could...ever come together!

RH: Well, maybe you're right, baby. I sit here, watching you...and watching these other younger men around you, the men who are "going places"...and *you* aren't *there!* And so I'm going to howl it out, and I'm going to make the biggest fucking explosion you ever heard.

NK: You try it, and I'll beat you at your own game...

RH: Is that a threat, Nigel?

NK: Yeah, that's a threat, Regi....I'll rip you to fucking pieces.

RH: You aren't man enough...you haven't got the guts.

NK: Total war?

RH: TOTAL!!!

(She gestures to proscenium)

(Sudden Silence - light up on Peretta, behind scrim - lengthy stillness)

NK: So that's the way you want to play it, is it? OK then...
Yes, there on the ground...

(sparse, eerie, improvised)

NK: ...Medea still cradling her dead brother,
whom I killed years ago, whom I hacked to pieces!
And so I WON her!.....
Medea, expert in poisons.

RH: Where is Jason, my husband?

NK: *(quietly)* With Creon's daughter.

RH: Yes, why not with Creon's daughter? She who has power over her father?
Creon, King of Corinth, who alone can grant Jason and I the right to live here, or drive us
out to other foreign shores.

I am not welcome here.
It's three times five nights that you Jason haven't asked me.
With your voice you have not.
Nor with hands, nor with a glance.
Jason?

NK: What do you want?

RH: Does this body mean nothing to you, anymore?

NK: When will this end?

RH: When did it begin?

NK: What were you before I came?

RH: Medea! I WAS ... AM ... MEDEA!!
And you owe me a brother, Jason

NK: For your one brother's death, I gave you two sons.

RH: Do you love them, Jason, your sons?

(Piano)

RH: Do you want them back?
They're yours!
What can be mine, being your slave?
All of me is your tool, and all things from me.
For you I killed,
For you I did give birth
I've been your bitch, your whore,
A rung on your ladder of fame,
Anointed with your foes' blood,
As if a memory of your victory over my country and my people.

You want to make a wreath from their entrails to adorn your temples?
They're yours, Jason!
I no longer own the images of those who have been slain,
The screams of all my tortured people.
I left my home to follow you,
Your bloody tracks, the blood of my own kind, into my new and only home,
now treason!

RH: Blind to the images,
Deaf to the screams was I
Until you tore the tightened net knitted of our lust that was our home!!

Clerambault (1) Recitative

*Jason's lover, on the shore of Colchis,
Had summoned Hell to her defence;
Love and gratitude should have held the hero in her thrall;*

RH: The ashes of your kisses on my lips
Between my teeth the sand of our years

*But soon she learns that a new marriage
Is the sweetest desire of her fickle bridegroom.
"Ye gods!", she cries, "to what grief have you condemned me if I lose Jason forever!"*

RH: On my skin only my sweat
Your breath, a stench of alien bed
NK: Coffee?

*Led astray by the solicitude of his false love
I dared to betray my father and the gods too:
It was through me that, overcoming the raging bulls*

*He returned triumphant to the heart of Greece;
And on this fatal day the traitor
Sacrifices duty, fame and love.*

Clerambault (2) Prelude

*No, no, let us hearken only to a righteous anger.
Despairing love requires a victim.
I loved, I was betrayed, and my heart is jealous.
Come, hate and fury, Love delivers me up to you.*

RH: If you are my man, Jason, then I am still your woman!

Clerambault (3) Air

*Let us hasten to vengeance;
Deadly resentment, kindle my wrath.
Let the ingrate who has injured me
Perish, perish beneath your blows.
Make the menacing thunderbolts of my just fury
Fall on his guilty head.
Hatred becomes implacable
When Love kindles it in a heart.*

SECTION 2

NK: When I was but a lad, barely sixteen, still at boarding school, during the Punic wars, a bunch of us used to go into the city on the first day of vacations, before we fanned out to our family homes. We used to go to this bar owned by the father of one of us and drink with the grown-ups and listen to the jazz. And one year there was this boy who came with us, about fifteen, and he had killed his mother with a shotgun some years before - completely accidentally, without an even unconscious motivation, I have no doubt at all. Anyway, we ordered our drinks, and when it came to his turn he said, 'I'll have bergin...give me some bergin, please...bergin and water.' Well, we all laughed...he was blond and had the face of a cherub, and his cheeks went red and the colour rose in his neck, and the barman who had taken his order told people at the next table what the boy had said, and then they laughed, and then more people were told and the laughter grew, and no-one was laughing more than us., and none of us more than the boy who had accidentally shot his mother. We drank free that night, and we were bought champagne by the management. And, so of course, we all suffered the next day, each of us alone on his train, each of us with grown-up's hangover...but, may I say, it was the grandest night of my...youth.

The following summer, on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket and his father beside him on the front seat, the boy who had accidentally shot his mother swerved the car, to avoid a possum, and drove straight into a large tree. In the hospital, when he was conscious and out of danger, they told him that his father *was* dead, and he began to laugh, I have been told. And his laughter grew and he would not stop - not until after they jammed a needle in his arm, and his consciousness slipped away. And then when he was sufficiently recovered from his injuries he was put in an asylum. That was thirty years ago. And I'm told that for these thirty years he has not uttered one sound.

Do you know the saddest thing about men?...Well, no, not the saddest, but one of the saddest things about men ... it's the way they age. And do you know what it is with *insane* people?...the quiet ones? They don't change...they don't grow old. Well, eventually, probably yes, they do, but not...in the usual sense. They maintain a...a firm-skinned serenity...the under-use of everything leaves them...quite whole.

I'm not recommending it...of course. But some things are sad. But you jest gotta buck up an' face 'em, 'at's all. Jest buck up!

RH: (*approaching back of couch*) Another story says you die, Jason. Tough, hey? But, Medea? No! I tell the guests about our little buggers' fate, and then drive off in a golden fiery chariot. Perhaps no-one is going to love me, Nigel, but at least I don't die.

NK: Nice one, Reg. How appropriate. How characteristically sensitive.

So... what shall we play now, hunh? Oh come on. We've played "Hassle the Host"... "Niggle at Nigel"... so what shall we do now?

I mean, come on! We must know other games, thespian-type types like us...that can't be the limit of our vocabulary, can it?

Let me see now...How about..."Hump the Hostess"? HUNH?? You wanna play that one? Mount her like a goddamn dog?...or is that for later?... OK, let's save that one. But, what'll we play *now*?

RH: (*sitting on couch*) Portrait of a man drowning?

NK: I'm not drowning.

I've got it! Let's play a round of "Get the Guests".

RH: Jesus, Nigel.

NK: Oh, no...no...We have to play another game. So now we're going to play "Get the Guests". (*taking book from beneath couch*) How about you start, Regi...and I'll go and sit down over here and read a book.

RH: You're going to do *what*?

NK: I'm going to read a book. Read. R-e-a-d. Read? You've heard of it?

RH: What's the matter with you?

NK: There's nothing the matter with me, Regi... I'm just going to read a book. That's all.

RH: We've got guests.

NK: I know, my dear...but I feel like reading. So, you...go about your business...and I'll sit here very quietly...and read.

RH: *(to audience)* Well...we can amuse ourselves, can't we?
(to Nigel) We're going to amuse ourselves, Nigel.

NK: Unh-hunh. That's nice.

RH: You might not like it.

NK: No, that's fine...you go right ahead...you entertain the guests.

RH: I'm going to entertain myself, too.

NK: Good...very good, Regi.

RH: Oh, Ha-Ha-Ha! You're a riot, Nigel.

NK: Unh-Hunh.

RH: *(sits in audience next to a man, or on his lap)* Well I'm a riot, too, Nigel.

NK: Yes you are, Regi.

RH: You know what I'm doing, Nigel?

NK: No, Regi...what are you doing?

RH: I'm entertaining. I'm entertaining one of the guests. I'm necking with one of the guests.

NK: Oh, that's nice...which one?

RH: I said I was necking with one of the guests!

NK: Good...good for you, Regi. You go right ahead.

RH: Oh, I see what you're up to...

NK: ...I'm up to page one hundred and...

RH: You miserable little shit!...I'll show *you*.

NK: No!!...show him, Regi...he hasn't seen it.
(to audience member) You haven't seen it yet, have you?
Yes, you're quite right...I couldn't care less. So, you just take this bag of laundry here, throw it over your shoulder, and...
What?!...you think I'm disgusting? Because *you're* going to hump Regina, *I'm* disgusting?

RH: Now you listen to me...

NK: I'd rather read, Regi, if you don't mind...

RH: Well, I do mind. Now, you pay attention to me! You come off this kick you're on, or I swear to God I'll do it. I swear to God I'll take that guy up to the dressing room, and...

NK: ...AND WHAT, REGI?

Lord, if you want the boy that much...have him...but do it honestly, will you? Don't cover it over with all this...footwork.

RH: I'll make you sorry you made me want to marry you. *(exit to Peretta)*

NK: *(reading)* "And the west, encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommodate itself to the swing of events, must...eventually...fall."

Clerambault (4) Recitative

*What am I saying? My heart rebels against me,
Begins to take alarm at its deadly peril:
I was ready to punish Jason, but his cruel betrayal
Cannot rouse me against him.*

*I see in the faithless one
Only what made me love him.*

RH: Nigel, who is out somewhere there in the dark...Nigel who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me at night so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy... and yet I do.
Nigel and Regi: sad, sad, sad. *(move to back of couch, arms around NK's neck)*

Clerambault (5) Air Tendre

*Love puts me back in his fetters:
Despite all my resentment he triumphs in his turn.*

... whom I will not forgive for having seen me and saying: "yes, this will do"; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it.
...who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension.
Nigel and Regi: sad, sad, sad.

*In vain does a tender heart give himself up to hatred;
It always returns to love.*

some night...some stupid night...I will go too far...and I'll either break the man's back...or push him off for good...which is what I deserve. (move away)

SECTION 3

(NK and RH sitting together on couch. MB moves to couch)

Clerambault (6) Recitative

*But what was my great mistake?
To save an ingrate I betrayed myself,
While perhaps at this moment the villain
Is being united to his love at the feet of the immortals*

MB: (to Nigel) When is your son coming home?

*It is too much to suffer such cruel affronts:
My unhappy passion must be avenged.
Let us deliver the ungrateful Jason to eternal woes,
While destroying my fortunate rival.*

NK: Regi, when is our son coming home?

RH: Never mind.

NK: No, no...I want to know...you've obviously brought it out into the open, and so apparently Michael wants to know too. So, when's he coming home?

RH: I said never mind. I'm sorry I brought it up.

NK: *Him* up...not *it*. You brought *him* up. Well, more or less. So when's the little bugger going to appear, hunh? I mean, isn't tomorrow supposed to be his birthday, or something?

RH: I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!

NK: I'll bet you don't.

Regi does not want to talk about it...*him*. Regi is sorry she brought...*him* up. But since you have had the bad taste to bring the matter up, Regi...when *is* the little bugger coming home?

RH: Nigel talks disparagingly about the little bugger because...well, because he has problems.

NK: The little bugger has problems, does he?

RH: Not *HIM*... You! *You've* got problems.

Nigel's biggest problem our son, is that deep down in the private-most pit of his gut, he's not completely sure it's his own kid.

NK: *(moving to upper stage)* My God, you're a wicked woman...

RH: And I've told you a million times, baby...I wouldn't conceive with anyone but you...you know that, baby.

NK: ...a deeply wicked woman.

Now, Regi is lying, ofcourse. There are very few things in this world of which I *am* sure...national boundaries, the level of the oceans, political allegiances, practical morality...on none of these would I stake my stick any more...but the one thing in this whole stinking world that I am sure of is my partnership, my chromosomological partnership in the...creation of our...blond-eyed, blue haired...son.

RH: That was a very pretty speech, Jason.

NK: Medea knows...SHE knows best.

Clerambault (7) Invocation

(SECTION A)

(INTRO)

MB: Coffee? *(MB exits with coffee plunger)*

NK: So, shall I speak of ME?

I ... Who ... Of whom they are speaking, when they do speak of me,

I, JASON, I, scum of man, I, scum of a woman

Platitude piled on platitude

I, called by my accidental name

I, fear of my accidental name.....Jason, Nigel.

*Hideous jealousy, you fatal demon,
Cruel daughter of Hell,
Come forth to avenge
My deceived love; your abysses are open.*

My sea voyage
My annexation
My walk through the outskirts
The anchor is the last umbilical cord with the horizon
The memory of the coast slips away.

(Payout) The corpses' sisters ... My fingers play in their vaginas
At the nightly window between city and landscape we watch the flies dying slowly as
Nero stands exultant above Rome

(SECTION B)

*Come, come punish my rival
For the fearful anguish I have suffered:
Make her pain equal my fury,
And let her torment amaze the universe.*

The car drives up, sand in the gearbox
A wolf stands in the street as the car falls apart
And so, a bus ride in the next early dawn
WHAT A DUMP!
DO YOU REMEMBER? DO YOU? NO, actually Martha, I DON'T.

My war. My victory.
The dried blood is smoking in the sun

(payout) The theatre of my death opens as I stand between the mountains, in the
circle of my dead comrades on the shore
And the expected airplane appears above me

(in Silence) Without thinking I know this engine was what my grandmothers used to call
God. It's airblast sweeps the corpses off the plateau and shots crackle at my reeling flight.
I feel MY blood come out of MY veins and turn MY body into the landscape
Of MY death.

(PA sings first phrase of Da Capo)

(da capo A section of previous aria - Peretta singing from dressing room - piano improvise over it all)

RH:

O poor Jason. Are you discontented with the souvenirs of your war?

So, whom do you love now? Dog or bitch?
Take what you gave to me, Jason,
And stuff it into your new whores eager womb, my bridal present for your next wedding!
She might bleed, Jason - another victory

(to audience)

My children, go with your father who kicks away your mother:
Don't you want to sit at royal tables?
Why do you cling to the barbarian who is your mother?
Oh...actors you are:
The children of base treason
So now sink your teeth into my heart and go with your father who has done the same before you.

(To Nigel)

(Takes off gown and throws it onto the couch)

Here, Jason, take my bridal gown as a gift
For your new bride, who will embrace your body,
Who will cry on your shoulder, who will sometimes moan in heat
This gown of love.
It shall adorn your new love just as if it were my own skin
So then I'll be close to you:
Close to your love.
Go now to your new wedding, Jason, go!

(Peretta moves downstage to piano)

SECTION 4

Peretta - Song (Poulenc: C'est ainsi que tu es)

(RH moves to piano, to listen to PA singing) (NK move to table)

(RH gently closes the piano lid on MB's hands - stopping PA's singing)

RH: The man that I came to meet is sitting over there. *(indicating Nigel)*
 And before we go any further, I should tell you both that I can't imagine
 sleeping with anyone but him.
 (Moving to table)
 So you can buy me a drink after the show, or play me a song - but that's all.

(Peretta moves to couch - Regi to table)

NK: *(at table)* New game, Reg?

RH: No more games, Nigel

NK: Aw, come on, one more game, and then beddie-byes. We'll climb them well-worn stairs.

RH: Please, Nigel, no.

NK: No climbing stairs with Nigie-Wigie?

RH: It's games I don't want.

NK: Aw, sure you do, Reg...original good-time-girl and all, 'course you do! You'll have a ball!

RH: *(stroking Georges cheek)* Please, Nigel, no more games...I...

NK: *(slapping her away)* You keep your paws for the guests!

Now, you listen to me, Regi; you've already had quite an evening...but we are going on, and I'm going to have some fun now, and it's going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant. So I want you to get yourself a little alert . I want a little life in you, baby! *(slapping her gently)*

RH: Stop it!

NK: *(dragging her to her feet)* I want you on your feet and slugging, sweetheart, because I'm going to knock you around, and I want you up for it.

RH: What do you want?

NK: An equal battle, baby; that's all.

RH: You'll get it!

NK: *(pinching her cheeks)* I want you mad, Regi!

RH: I'M MAD!!

NK: Good for you, girl; now, we're going to play this one to the death.

RH: Yours, Jason! You're the one who dies!

NK: You'd be surprised. Now...ready?

RH: I'm ready!!

(RH move to Peretta on couch)

RH: *(leaping on Peretta)* Hey, you played football, hunh?

PA: No...boxing...actually.

RH: BOXING! You hear that Nigel?

NK: Unh-hunh.

RH: You must have been very good at it...I mean, you don't look like you've been hit in the face at all.
You've still got a pretty good body, too...

NK: Regi...decency forbids...

RH: SHUT UP, YOU! *(to PA)* Well, haven't you? You have kept your body!

PA: I work out.

RH: Do you?!!
Well, I think that's very nice.
Nigel doesn't cotton much to body talk...do you, sweetheart? Paunchy over there isn't too happy when we get to muscle. You know...flat bellies, pectorals...How much do you weigh?

PA: 70...72...

RH: Still in the old middle-weight limit, eh? Cute!

NK: Excuse me, may I interrupt for a moment? Hey, I think you've skipped a scene, Regi...By my reckoning this should still be Act 2 Scene 2 ... this is my scene now. Do you mind?

(sitting between RH and PA on couch, addressing audience)

Now, in this game...sorry, life episode...Peretta, here, is playing a hapless, though fabulously built, young biologist, who will try to hump Regi later in the show...somewhat unsuccessfully...And Regi is well and truly out of it...And I'm playing a frustrated old historian, who hasn't had a good root in years.....so....GO!

RH: *(leaping on Peretta)* I want to know all about chromosomes, sweetie, I love 'em!

NK: Regi eats them...for breakfast...she sprinkles them on her cereal.
It's very simple, Regi, some young men these days are working on a system whereby chromosomes can be altered...the genetic makeup of a sperm cell can be re-ordered...to order, actually...for hair and eye colour, stature, potency (I imagine) ... hairiness, health...and *mind*. Most importantly...Mind.

RH: Wow!

NK: *But!* Everyone will tend to look rather the same...perhaps even like this young man *here*.

RH: *That's* not a bad idea!

NK: Yes, on the surface of it, it will be all rather pretty...quite jolly. But ofcourse there will be a dank side to it, too. A certain amount of regulation will be necessary. A certain number of sperm tubes will have to cut.

RH: Ouch!...

NK: ...Millions upon millions of them...millions of tiny little slicing operations that will leave just the smallest scar, on the underside of the scrotum, to assure the sterility of the imperfect. But!! ... in time, we will have a race of glorious men, perfectly in the middleweight limit!

RH: Yeah!

NK: Ofcourse there will be a certain loss of liberty ...and diversity will no longer be a goal. Cultures and races will eventually vanish...And I, naturally, am rather opposed to all this. History, which is my field...will lose its glorious variety and unpredictability. There will be order and constancy...and I am unalterably opposed to it. I will fight you, young man...one hand on my scrotum...but with my free hand I will battle you to the fucking death! (*grabbing PA firmly and intimately*)

RH: You make me sick!
Nigel eventually makes everybody sick...When our son was just a little boy, he used to throw up all the time, because of Nigel...
It got so bad that whenever Nigel came into the room he'd start retching, and...

NK: ...the real reason *our son* used to throw up all the time, wife, colleague and lover, was nothing more complicated than that he couldn't stand you fiddling with him all the time, breaking into his bedroom with your kimono flying, and fiddling with him , with your liquor breath and your hands all over his...

RH: YEAH? And I suppose that's why he ran away from home twice in one month ...Six times in one year!

NK: Our son ran away from home all the time because you used to corner him.

RH: I NEVER CORNERED THE SON OF A BITCH IN MY LIFE!

NK: He used to run up to me when I'd get home, and he'd say, 'Mummy's always coming at me.'... VERY embarrassing.

RH: If you think it's was so embarrassing, why do you want to talk about him all the time?

NK: I don't want to talk about him....I never want to talk about him.

RH: Yes you do.

NK: Medea!...we've got guests. (*referring to Peretta and Michael*)

RH: We sure have! (*referring to audience*)

(*RH on couch with NK and PA - very still and soft - very sparse piano
RH to audience*)

RH: I'll turn the bride into a wedding torch, my children
Watch your Mother stage a play for you
You want to see your father's new bride all aflame?
She is young
Her hide is smoothly stretched, not wasted yet by age nor any breeding
It's on her body that I write my play
I want to hear your laughter when she screams

Before midnight she will be all aflame
I want to see your laughter
And share my joy with you, my children!

SECTION 5

RH: What's the matter , Nigel? You given up?

NK: No...no. I just trying to figure out some new way to fight you, Regi.

RH: Well you figure it out, and you let me know when you do.

NK: All right, sweetheart.

(NK moves slowly to book - leafs through it - considers)

NK: *(reading from book)* "Our son." I think this should be you scene ... over to you, Regi.

(NK moves back stage for solo dance)

RH: All right. *(reading)* "Our son was born on a night in May, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty...one...years ago. It was an easy birth...

NK: Oh, Regi, no.... how you laboured!

RH: It was an easy birth...once it had been...accepted, relaxed into.

NK: Ah...yes. OK.

RH: ...an easy birth, and I was young, and he was a healthy child, a red bawling child, with slippery firm limbs...

NK: ...Regi thinks she saw him at delivery...

RH: ...and a full head of black, fine, fine hair which, oh, later, later, became blond as the sun. And, oh, I had wanted a child...And I had my child!

NK: *Our* child.

RH: *Our* child. And we raised him...yes, we did; we raised him... And his eyes were green...green with...if you peered so deep into them...bronze parentheses around the irises...but such green eyes!

Peretta - Song (Poulenc: Priez Pour Paix)

RH: ...and he loved the sun!...He was tanned before and after everyone...and in the sun his hair...became...fleece.

NK: ...GOLDEN fleece...*(Nigel 'puppet dance')*

RH: ...and school...and summer camp...and swimming...///// and how he broke his arm...how funny it was...oh, no, it hurt him!...but, oh, it was funny...in a field, his very first cow, the first he'd ever seen...and he went into the field, where the cow was grazing, head down, busy...and he mooed at it!...and the beast, surprised, swung its head up and mooed at him, all three years of him, and he ran, startled, and he stumbled...fell...and broke his poor arm. Poor lamb./////

Nigel cried! Helpless...Nigel...cried. I carried the poor lamb. Nigel snuffling beside me, I carried the child, having fashioned a sling... across the great fields.////

And as he grew...he walked evenly between us...a hand out to each of us for what we could offer by way of support, affection, teaching, even love...and these hands, still, to hold us off a bit, for mutual protection, to protect us all from Nigel's...weakness...and my...necessary strength...to protect himself...and *us*.

NK: All truth being relative.

RH: It was true! He was beautiful, wise and perfect.

NK: There's a real mother talking.

RH: But ofcourse, this state, this perfection...couldn't last. Not with Nigel around.

NK: There; you see? I knew she'd turn.

RH: A drowning man takes down those nearest. Nigel tried, but, Oh God, how I fought him.

RH: Lesser states can't stand those above them. Weakness, imperfection cries out against strength, goodness and innocence. And Nigel tried.

NK: How did I try, Regi?

RH: *(puzzling)* No! No...our son grew...up...He is fine, everything is fine.

(closes book)That's all.

NK: *(at back of couch)* Just a minute! You can't cut a story off like that! You started to say something...now you say it!

RH: No!

NK: Well, I will! You see, Regi, here, stops just when the going gets good...just when things start getting a little rough. You see, Regi, here, is a misunderstood little girl. Not only does she have a husband who is a bog, she also has a son who fought her every inch of the way, who didn't want to be turned into a weapon against his father, who didn't want to be used as a goddamn club whenever Regi didn't get things her own fucking way!

RH: Lies!

NK: A son who would *not* disown his father, who came to him for advice, for love that wasn't mixed with sickness - and you know what I mean, Regina! - who could not tolerate the slashing, braying residue that called itself his MOTHER. MOTHER? HAH!

RH: A son who was so ashamed of his father he asked me once if it possibly wasn't true (as he had heard, from some cruel boys) maybe, that he was not our child...

NK: Lies!

RH: Who could not tolerate the shabby failure his father had become...

NK: Lies!

RH: Who would not bring his girlfriends home to the house...

NK: ...in shame of his mother...

RH: ...of his father! A son who spends his summers away from his family...ON ANY PRETEXT...because he can't stand the shadow of a man flickering around the edges of a house...

NK: ...who spends his summers away...because there isn't room for him in a house full of empty bottles, lies, strange men, and a harridan who...

RH: Liar!

NK: Liar?

RH: ... A son who I have raised as best as I can against ...vicious odds, against the corruption of weakness and petty revenges...

NK: ...A son who, deep in his gut, is SORRY TO HAVE BEEN BORN!!

Game?

RH: *(resigned)* Set.

NK: Good. Getting there, aren't I?*(to Michael)* Say, why don't we play some music? Regi's feeling a bit tired now, but she loves dancing! Regi had her photograph in the paper once...oh, decades ago...Seems she took second prize in one o' them seven-day dancing contest things...biceps all bulging, holding up her partner.

RH: Will you just play something and shut up?

NK: Certainly, my dear. How are we going to work this? Mixed doubles?

RH: Well, you certainly don't think I'm going to dance with *you*, do you?

NK: No...not with him around...that's for sure. *(chooses music and sits at piano)* Here...Regi should like this...she likes a good "chune"...you play the top part and I'll do the pedals.

MB: It's German.

NK: Austrian, actually ... just shut up and play.

PIANO DUET WITH MICHAEL (Schubert's F Minor Fantaisie?)

RH: *(dancing for Peretta)* The groom, he enters now the bridal chamber
And now he places at his young bride's feet Medea's bridal gown,
The bridal present soaked in my sweat of submission.

(puts on gown - a sort of sexy reverse striptease)

Now see the whore -
She struts before the mirror.
And suddenly the gold of Colchis seals her pores, planting a field of knives into her flesh
The barbarian's bridal gown celebrates its wedding.
Jason, of your virgin bride, the first night will be mine
And it will be the last one.

She screams!
Have you ears to hear the scream?
She burns!
(to audience) Hey, laugh!
I want to see you laugh
My play, it is a farce
So, why don't you laugh?
What? Tears? Tears for the bride?
My little ones, my traitors,
No, I want to cut you right out of my heart,
my heartflesh, my remembrance, my beloved.
Give back to me the blood out of your veins
Back into my womb, you who are my entrails

RH: *(move to piano)* All right, you two...cut it out!

(music stops)

NK: I thought it was fitting, Regi?

RH: Oh you did, hunh?

NK: Well why don't you choose something? Regi's going to run things...the little ladies going to lead the band. Regi's going to choose some rhythm she understands...*Sacre du Printemps*, maybe?.....

NK plays first chords of Stravinsky Sacre du Printemps- Young girls' dance

Band retunes instruments

RH: *(at piano - to NK)*

Today is payday, Jason.
Your Medea will collect her debts today!

Death is but a present,
And from my hands you shall receive the gift.
I broke off forever all the bridges to what I once called home.
Now I will do the same for this my foreign shore.
Alas, would I'd remained the animal I was before you made me your woman, Jason
I am Medea:

The barbarian, now despised.
With these my hands I will break mankind apart,
in two! And live within the empty middle!

Clerambault (8) Recitative

(NK and RH confront each other)

*The spell is cast, the cruel Furies
Leave their gloomy abode:
The radiant god who gave me life
Trembles at their ferocity.*

RH: *(grabbing NK)* No woman

NK: *(throwing RH downstage, and moving upstage to podium)* and no man!

Clerambault (9) Orchestral Prelude

(RH runs to PA on couch. PA quickly moves back to harpsichord)

RH: *(to PA)* What, do you scream?
Worse than death is to grow old.
You'd kiss the hand that gives you death if you knew what a life was here.

(scrim drops to 1/2 position)

(NK and PA, both upstage quickly turn to confront RH on final bar of Prelude)

Clerambault (10) Air

(slow change of lights to baroque stage. NK on top podium)

(RH moves to audience - gently chatting with them)

*Fly, demons, fly and serve my deadly anger;
Burn and lay waste this palace;*

*Let the flames of Hell
Destroy this place forever.
Plant in all hearts this turmoil and terror,
Redouble the horror of your fires;
And in this hideous chaos offer
To Jason the sight of my rival dying!"*

Clerambault (9) Orchestral Prelude - da capo

(RH to table removing makeup- NK on couch - PA sitting on stairs

(piano)

RH: *(at table)*
Who are you?
Who has dressed you in the body of my little child?
What animal is hiding in your eyes?
Do you play dead?
You won't deceive the mother
You're an actor, nothing but a liar and a traitor inhabited by dogs, rats, snakes.
It barks, it squeaks, it hisses - I can hear it

O, I am wise
I am Medea!!!

Now all is quiet
The screams of my home are silenced too
And nothing is left

NK: Regi.....?

RH: Do you know this man?

SECTION 6

NK: Regi, I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you...for us, actually.

RH: What?

NK: This afternoon...before you came in, we got a telegram...

RH: So? Another fan?

NK: No, Regi...about our boy...I'm afraid he's not coming home for his birthday, tomorrow.

RH: Of course he is

NK: No, Regi.
He...can't.

RH: He is! I say so!

NK: Regi.....our son is...dead.
He was...killed...late this afternoon....on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket, he swerved, to avoid a possum, and drove straight into...

RH: YOU...CAN'T...

NK: ...a large tree.

RH: YOU CANNOT DO THAT!

NK: I thought you should know.

RH: NO! NO! YOU CANNOT DO THAT. YOU CANNOT DECIDE THAT FOR YOURSELF I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THAT!

NK: We'll have to leave early tomorrow morning, I suppose..... there are matters of identification, naturally, and arrangements to be made...

RH: I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THIS!!!

NK: I haven't done anything.....

RH: YOU CANNOT DECIDE THESE THINGS! YOU CAN'T KILL HIM YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM DIE!

NK: That's right, Regi; I'm not God. I don't have power over life and death. But, there was a telegram.

RH: Show it to me! Show me the telegram!

NK: I ate it.

(RH spits in his face - then turns and sits on couch)

NK: Good for you, Regi.

RH: You're not getting away with this, Nigel.

NK: I can kill him, if I want to.

RH: HE IS OUR CHILD.

NK: Oh yes, and you bore him, and it was a good delivery...and I now I have killed him. Because, I can kill him anytime I want to.

RH: But Why?

NK: Because you broke our rule. You mentioned him...to them.

RH: I FORGET! ...when it's late...and I read the script...I forget, and I want to mention him.....oh, Nigel, you've *pushed* it...there was no need for *this*. I *mentioned* it...OK!!...but you didn't have to push it over the edge. You didn't have to...kill him! That wasn't needed.

Just because we couldn't...

NK: That's right, Regi...we...couldn't.....we're just actors...real children aren't...they aren't.....whatever.....

(to audience)

Okay, I think the party's over for tonight.

(To other performers)

Home to bed, children; it's way past your bedtimes
Night-night Peretta

Hey, Michael, that means you too.
...give us a kiss.....

(Michael gives RH and NK a goodnight kiss)

You're a good boy...now, off you go....sleep well....we'll see you tomorrow.

(all leave RH and NK alone on the couch)

NK: *(breaking away from RH,
and moving toward table to start removing makeup)*

..Coffee?

RH: No...nothing...it's probably cold, anyway.

NK: Yes...it is.....tired?

RH: Yes.

NK: Me too

RH: Yes.....I guess you are.....

NK: (Thursday/Friday/Saturday/etc.) tomorrow; all day.

RH: Did you have to?

NK: Yes.....either that, or ... some other problem we'd invented.....

It'll be better, now.

RH: uh-unhh

NK: It will be...I promise.....

... Sorry, Reg, I've got to get all this shit off...(referring to his costume)

(NK kissing RH on the forehead) ... I'll see you tomorrow

(NK exit)

RH: (to herself) That makes it all very neat, doesn't it.

But where's my chariot?.....

Medea's golden, fiery chariot?

Fuck it. (closes her eyes).....and fuck you, Nigel.

Final image of RH, foetal position, on the couch

another night : medea**real Final BUDGET****EXPENDITURE**

Salaries:	Nigel Kellaway (performer) 5wks x \$700	3500	
	Nigel Kellaway (director/administrator) 4wks x \$700	2800	
	Simon Wise (production/lighting)	3000	9300
Fees:	Regina Heilmann (performer) 5wks x \$700	3500	
	Peretta Anggerek 23 (3hr) calls x \$120	2800	
	Michael Bell (pianist)	2500	
	Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichordist)	2500	
	2 x instrumentalists x 16 (3hr) calls x \$100	3200	
	Annemaree Dalziel (costume designer)	1000	
	Michelle Outram (operator)	600	16100
Production:			
	Theatre Rent 3wks x \$2500	7500	
	Theatre Electricity and Bulb replacement	233.08	
	Bumpout labour	162.50	
	Sound maintenance	250	
	Rehearsal Venue	225	
	Sets / Properties / Lighting hire	1255.48	
	Costume manufacture	1103.15	
	Makeup etc.	141.52	
	Piano and Harpsichord Hire / Cartage / Tuning	1050	11920.73
Administration:			
	Oncosts on Salaries (\$9300 x 12%)	1116	
	Telecommunications / postage / general	853.80	
	Public Liability	987.50	
	Credit card charges	11.01	2968.31
Publicity:			
	Poster/advertisement/ Design / Print	2150	
	Poster distribution	347.72	
	Advertising		
	Sydney Star Observer	400	

RealTime	280.50		
2SER radio	181.82		
SMH Listing (2wks)	646.80	1509.12	
Publicist disbursements		19.63	
Photography (publicity and documentation)		700	
Video documentation		805	
Opening night entertainment		280.20	5811.67
1/2 SHARE OF BOX OFFICE TO PSPACE			2806

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

48906.71

INCOME

Box Office: 10 performances x 100 seats x 69.1%	5612
Program Sales / donations	421.60
Australia Council Theatre Board	45000
Interest (42000 x 4.7% x 100 days)	540

TOTAL INCOME

51573.60

PROFIT

2666.89

french ...

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway

Women's College, University of Sydney, 16th July 2003

1. Printemps qui commence

from *Samson et Dalila* by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

2. Amour, viens aider

from *Samson et Dalila* by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

3. Connais-tu le pays

from *Mignon* by Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896)

4. Me voici dans son boudoir

from *Mignon* by Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896)

5. Que fais-tu, blanche tourterelle

from *Romeo et Juliéte* by Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

6. Divinités du Styx

from *Alceste* by Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714-87)

7. Les Nuits d'été (Summer Nights) Opus 7 (1834)
by **Hector Berlioz** (1803-1869), poems by Theophile Gautier

Media Release

August 2003

Stopera presents

cantata

September 4-13, The Street Theatre, Canberra

An extraordinary fusion of French baroque opera, contemporary dance and raw theatre from Canberra's award-winning chamber opera company.

Imagine, in a miracle of time travel, that two of the greatest early 18th century French composers were commissioned in 2003 to collaborate on an operatic realisation of the 1962 classic play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Richard Burton might stir, intrigued, from his grave. Liz Taylor would probably panic!) How would these two composers negotiate such a riotous clash of histories, cultures and styles? What kind of entertainment might they devise for us?

cantata, meaning 'a work to be sung', is the collision of Louis Nicolas Clérambault's exquisite solo cantata *Médée* with Jean-Philippe Rameau's astonishing opera-ballet *Pigmalion* celebrating all the glorious music and sumptuous staging of French baroque opera, wrenched into our contemporary world in a provocative intrigue of relationships, desires and jealousies. Two actors,

three singers, five dancers and eleven musicians are directed in this premiere production by legendary contemporary theatre artist **Nigel Kellaway**, who also performs in the work, with musical direction from the harpsichord by baroque expert **Nigel Urbhien**.

medea

Médée (1710)

by **Louis Nicolas Clément**

Solo cantata for soprano,
violin and continuo

pygmalion

Pigmalion (1748),

by **Jean-Philippe Rameau**

Acte de ballet for three singers,
dancers and chamber ensemble

Médée is a myth of love, betrayal and revenge. Medea and Jason present a classic example of the long-term dysfunctional relationship. Time exacts its toll on the games of love. Amidst the wrestling over unsettled scores and niggling threats of revenge there are victims - some innocent.

Pigmalion examines how an artist's 'labour of love' is unnervingly brought to life and transformed into his object of desire. The story of an obsessive personality and the ultimate 'makeover': *Pretty Woman* goes baroque!

Director/writer/actor **Nigel Kellaway** and Musical Director/harpsichordist **Nigel Urbhien** created a sensation in Sydney earlier this year with their theatrical production of Clément's *Médée* for **The opera Project**.

cantata, the further developed and expanded edition, is two acts of astounding theatre incorporating two masterpieces of French baroque music, with a script by Kellaway that layers myth with mayhem, referencing Heiner Müller, Edward Albee and other great takes on two classic narratives of revenge and desire. This is the second original Kellaway production for Stopera, having first commissioned a work by him for the company in 1998. The result of that collaboration was the sold-out *distressing the Diva*, a delightfully twisted concoction of Handel, Mozart and Rossini.

cantata now adds French baroque opera to the company's extensive repertoire of rarely performed chamber operas, which includes works by Monteverdi, Handel, Galuppi, Weill, Stravinsky and Hindemith.

Featuring **Stopera's** exciting ensemble of opera singers, dancers, musicians and actors,

cantata promises to be one of the most remarkable and rewarding events on the 2003 musical and theatrical calendar - **exclusive to Canberra and NOT to be missed!**

One attends a Kellaway event with a very real sense of anticipation.

He has been one of the leaders of our avant-garde for at least fifteen years

and in that time has participated in the creation of some astounding events.....

James Waites, RealTime # 43 (2001)

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

THE CANBERRA TIMES, August 30th, 2003

Do not expect the obvious or conventional in this production. Be prepared for remarkable theatre, writes Janet Wilson

AN AUTEUR IN SEARCH OF THE REMARKABLE

MUSE MAGAZINE September 2003
(Reproduced with permission)

Bill Stephens picked up Nigel Kellaway, one of Australia's leaders in avant-garde contemporary opera, for a chat before he embarks on directing Stopera's latest production, *Cantata*.

"Longish curly hair, probably tied back flat, medium height with a mischievous pixie face. Usually wearing thin sandals. He will have all his gear with him for a long stay (three large suitcases). He will probably need to light up a cigarette as soon as he gets off the train ." Indeed he did.

Vivienne Winther, Stopera's artistic director, had provided this description to help me recognise Nigel Kellaway, who was arriving in Canberra by train (he's scared of flying) to commence rehearsals for Stopera's latest production, *Cantata*, which he will direct. Her description was spot on.

For at least 15 years, Kellaway has been one of the leaders in avant-garde contemporary opera in Australia. Remembering the controversy that accompanied his previous Stopera production, *distressing the Diva*, I was keen to talk to him about his plans for *Cantata*, and despite the train journey, his enthusiasm was palpable. "I like theatre as entertainment. I want to entertain people," he offered. "That doesn't mean that I dumb down anything. My work is quite complex. It get audiences engaged and that's what I am interested in."

Kellaway explained that *Cantata* is really the amalgamation of two works, *Medea* by Louis Nicolas Clerambault, which is basically a song for solo soprano, Rebecca Collins, and *Pigmalion* by Jean-Philippe Rameau, an acte de ballet requiring dancers, singers and actors together with a large baroque opera.

"I'm not the kind of director who is interested in bunging two work together on either side of an interval," he explains "so what I've done is link them dramaturgically. Both are based on Greek myths, and the whole purpose of myths is that they are stories that we know and can re-interpret to speak to our contemporary world."

In considering *Medea*, Kellaway reasoned that the relationship between Jason and Medea was deeply dysfunctional. He then examined the artistic and theatrical canon for other great stories of dysfunctional relationships, and decided he couldn't go past George and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and this gave him a clue on what direction to take with *Cantata*.

"*Pygmalion* is, of course, probably better known through George Bernard Shaw's play and most particularly through *My Fair Lady*. The *Pygmalion* stories are all about men who try to construct women how they wish them to be, with the essential assumption that women in their own right are really of no intrinsic value what-so-ever. They look, dress, talk exactly how men want, and the men in *Pygmalion* stories always fall in love with them once they look, dress and talk exactly as the men wish them to be. The women are actually empowered by the man's love and brought to life. So they are deeply problematic stories," says Kellaway. He points to films like *Pretty Woman*, *Overboard* and *Educating Rita* as modern examples of *Pygmalion* stories.

Having decided that both works could be dramaturgically married to each other, Kellaway then proceeded to develop a concept for *Cantata* that, he feels, will reveal the relevance of the two works to contemporary audiences.

When I inquired as to whether it was going to be a period piece, Kellaway was adamant. "It's now. But it's highly theatricalised. Some of the costumes will be quite contemporary, while at other times we will have quite lavish baroque costumes. Some of the costumes are almost in 1960s Hollywood epic style. Imagine if Warner Bros. had made *Medea* with Elizabeth Taylor, the type of costume they might have put her in.

Pygmalion will be staged using a large baroque ensemble with three singers; Louise Page, Judith Dodsworth and Rebecca Collins; two actors, Kellaway himself and Sydney based actor Dina Panozzo; and five dancers for whom Kellaway, an ex-director of Australian Dance Theatre, will choreograph. Kellaway has also been deeply involved with the stage and costume design.

I wondered why Kellaway chose to appear in most of his works. "I'm more an auteur than a director. There is a long history of auteurship, particularly in movies with directors like Truffaut and Orson Welles. I actually write the work, rather than just directing a play or opera that already exists. The work is a vehicle and as I'm an actor as well as a director, I like to create on myself."

Kellaway is also adamant that, whatever liberties he may take with the staging, the music will not be altered in any way. "I want to be led by the music. It is exquisitely beautiful music, particularly the Rameau, one of my favourite theatre composers. *Cantata* will not look like a two-act opera because it is not, it's two separate pieces which I'm exploring. It's the kind of thing no other company would take a risk on. But this is the thing that I love about Stopera, and about Vivienne Winther. She's a go-getter and she gets things done. She gets remarkable things done."

Given his reputation for creating innovative, often confronting productions interrogating the contemporary operatic form, there is little doubt that whatever you might think of Stopera's forthcoming *Cantata*, Nigel Kellaway will be applying all his undoubted skills and knowledge toward making it remarkable.

Bill Stephens is Muse's Contributing Editor (Music).

CANTATA - DIRECTOR'S PROGRAM NOTE

A number of years ago **Stopera** asked me to consider the staging of two French baroque vocal works, both settings of stories mentioned in the writings of Ovid (43B.C - A.D.17). Common to many works that I make for the theatre is how the performance of music impacts on theatrical articulacy, and how well all aspects of the material serve as a vehicle for the collaborating artists. Often a particular musical text will trigger a new work. In this case it is a rarely performed cantata by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1710) and an "acte de ballet" by Jean-Philippe Rameau (1748). The subject matter? The vengeful and infanticidal Medea of Clérambault and the obsessive and egocentric Pygmalion of Rameau. These are myths of fantasy and revenge, and their relevance

lie in the myriad ways in which Western culture has chosen to interpret and apply them to contemporary events and consciousness.

There is no "one" Medea. Ovid's mythical Jason slaughters the citizens and rulers of Colchis and takes as his trophy their princess, the beautiful Medea. Despite all odds, they fall in love, settle and have kids on another foreign shore and confront all the expected immigration red tape. Jason's solution to their troubles is rather clumsy - he marries the King's daughter. His mistake - not first conferring with Medea.

The late 20th century East German playwright, Heiner Müller, describes the story of Jason as the earliest representation of colonisation in Greek legend:

The end signifies the threshold where myth turns into history: Jason is eventually slain by his boat ... European history began with colonisation ... That the vehicle of colonisation strikes the coloniser dead anticipates the end of it. That's the threat of the end we are facing.

Clérambault reads the story as a psychologically complex "revenge tragedy". Interestingly, and perhaps cogniscent of contemporary moral squeamishness, he finishes his work short of Medea's savage infanticide.

In researching many interpretations of the myth we noted that Medea and Jason's relationship supposedly lasted ten or more years. The beginning and ending of their lives together have been quite spectacularly chronicled, but nothing has been invented regarding their middle years. Should we be concerned about this gap? Or is the purpose of myths merely to create iconic certainties? Further research reminded us that "mud-slinging" has been a reliable mainstay of the theatre, and few writers of the 20th century canon plumbed the depths of middle-aged dysfunction as sensationally as Edward Albee, in his lateral treatment of Medea's and Jason's wrestling match.

In this production we have the selfish Jason utilising (conjuring up?) the story of Pygmalion as a weapon against his wife. Rameau reflects in *Pygmalion* on his own obsessive personality and his fixation on the "artefact". He transfers his musical interests across genres to the visual arts and creates a sculptor who dismisses the wife he loves in preference for his artistic preoccupation, and imagines that his art is "honest". The Pygmalion myth is about a man who creates a woman exactly as he would like her to be. It is a story (told by men) that resurfaces with depressing regularity, particularly since the emergence of women's suffrage at the turn of the 20th century - from G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1916) through Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady* (1956) to more recent Hollywood fluff like *Pretty Woman* and *Educating Rita*. All these versions involve the physical and psychological makeover of a woman, and eventuate in the man falling in love with her now that she looks, dresses and acts the way he wants. However hard the man might attempt to assume an enlightened position, these stories ultimately suggest that women are not worthy individuals in their own right until they are moulded by a man. His love then brings them to life.

Our production of Rameau's vision of Pygmalion celebrates all this self-deluded male vanity, brought to life in perhaps inappropriately exquisite music. The sometimes profound and revelatory nature of its text and setting, the generosity of Rameau's music, all present a terse dialogue with our own commentary. Throughout we have allowed the music to speak on its own terms, rather than merely illustrate our chosen dramaturgy. We are creating multiple layers of material, histories and readings.

What are we to present? Ovid? Euripides? Müller? Shaw? Clérambault? Albee? Rameau? Lerner and Loewe? They are all variously profound readings of these myths.

And so...*cantata* - endeavouring to discuss the "relatively" recent positioning of theatre as a psycho-analytical forum, and considering how myths have been quite differently interpreted in the

artistic canon of earlier centuries - all pertaining to where we locate art and history in our collective self-awareness.

Nigel Kellaway, August 2003

cantata

Bill Stephens MUSE #233 October 2003

(Reproduced with permission)

Produced by **Stopera**

written, directed, choreographed by Nigel Kellaway, musical direction by Nigel Ubrihien
The Street Theatre September 4 – 13

A man walks onstage, pours a coffee, takes off his clothes and dons a rather fetching dressing gown and high heels. He then engages in a spiteful argument with a woman recumbent on the gold divan, centre stage. During the argument they vacillate between addressing each other as Jason/ Medea and Nigel /Dina. Is this a script or are they for real?

A soprano (Rebecca Collins) appears upstage, clad in an outlandish golden baroque costume against a brilliant red backdrop. She sings the Clérambault cantata *Médée*. She is interrupted from time to time, as Nigel/Jason and Dina/Medea continue to argue, and do so throughout the performance.

Following the interval a roller door at the back of the stage opens dramatically to reveal a Fellinesque group of people silhouetted in dazzling white light. This group takes the stage in a spectacular procession. They proceed to perform Rameau's *Pigmalion*, here staged as a sort of Jerry Springer lesbian ménage a trois, complete with dancers, chorus and a large baroque orchestra, the latter skilfully led by Nigel Ubrihien.

cantata is the latest offering from **Stopera**, well known for its innovative, often challenging, productions of chamber opera. In this case the director, Nigel Kellaway, has applied his considerable talents to combining two disparate eighteenth century French baroque vocal works, a cantata by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault and an acte de ballet by Jean-Philippe Rameau. His point of connection being that both works deal loosely with myths concerning the battle of the sexes juxtapositioned against a modern relationship inspired by Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

The production is a tour-de-force for Kellaway. Not only did he write the script, direct, choreograph movement, and help design the set; he also played one of the central roles. In some ways he has been spectacularly successful, for much of the evening was hugely entertaining, containing moments of great visual and aural beauty, three outstanding sopranos, some excellent dancers and a fine baroque orchestra. The audience was challenged to keep up with the relationship of the two actors, (Nigel and Dina), who have a propensity for role-play (Jason and Medea) as well as cope with the constant switches between modern spoken word, sung French, and surtitle translations to make some sense of what was being performed. But despite, or maybe because of, all these resources, in the end the production somehow failed to satisfy or achieve its promise as a compelling theatre production.

Part of problem was the script, which did not provide the two central characters with enough lines of sufficient wit or interest to prevent the continuous arguments from becoming tedious by the end of the night. Dina Panozzo, despite an attractive, committed performance, was unable to match the sustained malevolence of Nigel Kellaway's character, thereby depriving him of a worthy adversary.

The singing of the three sopranos, Rebecca Collins, Judith Dodsworth and Louise Page, was outstanding throughout. It was a pity, therefore, that the effectiveness of Rebecca Collin's Medea was marred by a directorial decision to have her sing the entire cantata from the back of the stage

with a violinist placed directly in front of her through most of the work. Collins did not fare much better in *Pigmalion* where, clad in a costume which made her look more like a department store mannequin than a statue, she was required to perch uncomfortably on the settee throughout most of the piece.

In fact the direction throughout was idiosyncratic, leading to many potentially effective moments being spoiled by intrusions, such as the bright light emanating from the stage manager's desk constantly drawing the eye away from the stage action, surtitles that were crooked, and awkward placement of actors, particularly on and around the settee which dominated the centre stage area.

As *Pygmalion*, Judith Dodsworth sang with security and confidence playing her role with panache, while the beautiful voice of Louise Page, in the less showy roles of Cephise and L'amour, was a real asset.

As *Furies and Graces* respectively, the dancers were provided with some lovely, if aimless, choreography, the best of which, curiously, seemed to happen at the back of the stage behind the orchestra.

With *cantata*, Nigel Kellaway fashioned a production for **Stopera** that was as challenging and demanding of its participants, as it was intriguing, perplexing and confronting for its audience.

cantata

William Hoffmann **The Canberra Times** September 8th, 2003

Some fine musical moments, but a generally unrewarding night

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STAGE SETTING

ACT 1: A black scrim hangs centre stage.

Behind it (OP side) is concealed the harpsichord, gamba and violin, and numerous music stands scattered across the stage.

Approx 1.5m from back wall is a full expanse of red curtain, in front of which is placed a rostra (1m height) skirted in red, on which the soprano stands). Downstage of the scrim, centre is a large gold-upholstered sofa.

Downstage Prompt is a cafe table and 2 chairs.

ACT 2: The black scrim is tilted up to create a ceiling above the upstage area, revealing roller doors backstage leading to loading bay.

The red curtain and rostra are removed.

The music stands and chairs are repositioned appropriately around the harpsichord.

3 additional cafe tables with chairs - 2 upstage stage and 1 downstage OP.

CAST

NIGEL / JASON actor (designated NK) - Nigel Kellaway

DINA / MEDEA actor (designated DP) - Dina Panozzo

NARRATOR soprano (Medee, Act 1) - Rebecca Collins

PIGMALION soprano - Judith Dodsworth

STATUE soprano - Rebecca Collins

LOVE / CEPHISE soprano - Louise Page

5 x DANCERS (one male dancer - Douglas Amar - performs role of ASM)

CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

BRACKETED SECTIONS OF THE TEXT DENOTE MUSIC SECTIONS

ACT 1

scene 1

(DP lying on couch alone as audience enters - Douglas "attending" the cafe table)

DP: Edward Albee...1962..."What a dump!" *(Thinks about it - sits upright)*
Hey, what's that from, Douglas? *(impersonates Bette Davis)* 'WHAT A DUMP!'
Aw, come on! What's it from? He'll know.....Jason! Nigel!

NK: Yep? *(entering with coffee to main cafe table)*

DP: WHAT'S IT FROM, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE?

NK: What?

DP: I just did it. 'What a dump!' Hunh? What's it from?

NK: *(Nigel shrugs and gets on with business of putting on makeup)*

DP: It's from some fucking Bette Davis picture...some fucking Warner Brothers' epic...
Bette Davis gets peritonitis in the end...she's got this big black fright wig she wears all
through the picture and she gets peritonitis, and she's married to Joseph Cotton or
something...sorry?...*somebody*...
and she wants to go to Chicago all the time, 'cause she's in love with that actor with the
scar...But she gets sick, and she sits down in front of her dressing-table...and she's got this
peritonitis...and she tries to put her lipstick on, but she can't...and she gets it all over her
face.....and she comes home from a hard day, with the groceries, and she walks into the
modest living-room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotton has set her up in... and
she looks around, and says, 'WHAT A DUMP!'

(no reaction from NK)
She's discontent.

(no reaction from NK)
WELL, WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE PICTURE?

NK: ...are we just improvising ...or is this actually leading somewhere?

DP: Well, sweetheart, dearest, only soulmate, since we're both being paid, this evening, I
thought we should start with something...like....

NK: ...My Fair Lady?...The King and I?... A Lake near Straussberg...Despoiled Shore?

DP: What's that supposed to mean?

NK: Just a quote...Heiner Muller...1953.....coffee?

DP: Thanks. *(Light up on harpsichord, upstage of scrim)*

NK: *(to harpsichordist)* Over to you, honey.

(Harpsichord)

NK: Milk?

DP: No thankyou.

NK: Sugar?

DP: You know I don't. (*moving to cafe table to take her coffee*)

NK: Sorry...forgot.... (*both moving to couch*)
A telegram arrived this afternoon.

DP: Another fan?

NK: (*beginning to undress*) And then I went to the gym . Third time in a week...

DP: I got an email today...

NK: ...Only one?

DP: ...about her waiting...her longing...her desire...her plans...the DRESS!!!

scene 2

DP: I think we should get dressed.

NK: YOU ARE A MONSTER!!!!!!!

DRESSING (big harpsichord)

DP: OK, I'm loud, and I'm vulgar, and I wear the pants around here because somebody's got to, but I am *not* a monster!

NK: You're a spoiled, self-indulgent, wilful, dirty-minded...

DP: ...LOOK, I'm not going to try to get through to you any more...

NK: Once a month, Dina! I've gotten used to it...but once a month and we get poor little misunderstood Dina, the good-hearted girl under the barnacles. And you know what? I've believed it (more times than I want to remember) because I don't want to admit that I'm that much of a sucker. But there is no moment, any longer, when you and I could... ever come together!

DP: Well, maybe you're right, baby. I sit here, watching you...and watching these other younger men around you, the men who are "going places"...and *you* aren't *there!* And so I'm going to howl it out, and I'm going to make the biggest fucking explosion you ever heard.

NK: You try it, and I'll beat you at your own game...

DP: Is that a threat, Nigel?

NK: Yeah, that's a threat, Dina....I'll rip you to fucking pieces.

DP: You aren't man enough...you haven't got the guts.

NK: WAR?

DP: TOTAL!!!

(She gestures backstage)

(Sudden Silence - light up on Soprano, behind scrim - lengthy stillness)

NK: So that's the way you want to play it, is it, Dina? OK then...
Yes, there on the ground...Medea...

(sparse, eerie, improvised harpsichord)

NK: ...still cradling her dead brother,
whom I killed years ago, whom I hacked to pieces!
And so I WON her!.....
Medea, expert in poisons.

DP: Where is Jason, my husband?

NK: *(quietly)* With Creon's daughter.

DP: Yes, why not with Creon's daughter? She who has power over her father?
Creon, King of Corinth, who alone can grant Jason and I the right to live here, or drive us
out to other foreign shores.
I am not welcome here.
It's three times five nights that you Jason haven't asked me.
With your voice you have not.
Nor with hands, nor with a glance.
Jason?

NK: What do you want?

DP: Does this body mean nothing to you, anymore?

NK: When will this end?

DP: When did it begin?

NK: What were you before I came?

DP: Medea! I WAS ... AM ... MEDEA!!
And you owe me a brother, Jason

NK: For your one brother, I gave you two sons.

DP: Do you love them, Jason, your sons?

(harpsichord)

DP: Do you want them back?
 They're yours!
 What can be mine, being your slave?
 All of me is your tool, and all things from me.
 For you I killed,
 For you I did give birth
 I've been your bitch, your whore,
 A rung on your ladder of fame,
 Anointed with your foes' blood, *(kissing NK's hand)*
 As if a memory of your victory over my country and my people.

You want to make a wreath from their entrails to adorn your temples?
(grabbing NK's hair) They're yours, Jason!
 I no longer own the images of those who have been slain,
 The screams of all my tortured people.
 I left my home to follow you,
 Your bloody tracks, the blood of my own kind, into my new and only home,
now treason!

DP: *(backing away from couch)* Blind to the images,
 Deaf to the screams was I
 Until you tore the tightened net knitted of our lust that was our home!!

scene 3

Clerambault (1) Recitative

*Jason's lover, on the shore of Colchis,
 Had summoned Hell to her defence;
 Love and gratitude should have held the hero in her thrall;*

DP: The ashes of your kisses on my lips
 Between my teeth the sand of our years

*But soon she learns that a new marriage
 Is the sweetest desire of her fickle bridegroom.
 "Ye gods!", she cries, "to what grief have you condemned me if I lose Jason forever!"*

DP: On my skin only my sweat
 Your breath, a stench of alien bed
 NK: Coffee?

*Led astray by the solicitude of his false love
 I dared to betray my father and the gods too:
 It was through me that, overcoming the raging bulls
 He returned triumphant to the heart of Greece;
 And on this fatal day the traitor
 Sacrifices duty, fame and love.*

Clerambault (2) Prelude

*No, no, let us hearken only to a righteous anger.
Despairing love requires a victim.
I loved, I was betrayed, and my heart is jealous.
Come, hate and fury, Love delivers me up to you.*

DP: If you are my man, Jason, then I am still your woman!

Clerambault (3) Air

*Let us hasten to vengeance;
Deadly resentment, kindle my wrath.
Let the ingrate who has injured me
Perish, perish beneath your blows.
Make the menacing thunderbolts of my just fury
Fall on his guilty head.
Hatred becomes implacable
When Love kindles it in a heart.*

scene 4

NK: When I was but a lad, barely sixteen, still at boarding school, during the Punic wars, a bunch of us used to go into the city on the first day of vacations, before we fanned out to our family homes. We used to go to this bar owned by the father of one of us and drink with the grown-ups and listen to the jazz. And one year there was this boy who came with us, about fifteen, who had killed his mother with a shotgun some years before - completely accidentally, without an even unconscious motivation, I have no doubt at all. Anyway, we all ordered our drinks, and when it came to his turn he said, 'I'll have bergin...give me some bergin, please...bergin and water.' Well, we all laughed...he was blond and had the face of a cherub, and his cheeks went red and the colour rose in his neck, and the barman who had taken his order told people at the next table what the boy had said, and they all laughed, and then more people were told and the laughter grew, and no-one was laughing more than us., and none of us more than the boy who had accidentally shot his mother. We drank free that night, and we were bought champagne by the management. And, so of course, we all suffered the next day, each of us on his train home alone, each of us with our grown-up's hangover...but, may I say, it was perhaps the grandest night of my...youth.

The following summer, on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket and his father beside him on the front seat, the boy who had accidentally shot his mother swerved the car, to avoid a possum, and drove straight into a large tree. In the hospital, when he was conscious and out of danger, they told him that his father *was* dead, and he began to laugh, I have been told. And his laughter grew and he would not stop - not until after they jammed a needle in his arm, and his consciousness slipped away. And then when he was sufficiently recovered from his injuries he was put in an asylum. That was thirty years ago. And I'm told that for these thirty years he has not uttered one sound.

Do you know the saddest thing about men?...Well, perhaps not the saddest, but one of the saddest things ... it's the way we age. And do you know what it is with *insane* people?...the quiet ones? They don't change...they don't grow old. Well, eventually, probably yes, they do, but not...in the usual sense. They maintain a firm-skinned serenity...the under-use of everything leaves them quite whole.

I'm not recommending it of course. But some things are sad. But you jest gotta buck up an' face 'em, 'at's all. Jest buck up!

DP: (*approaching back of couch*) Another story says you die, Jason. Tough, hey? But, Medea? No! I tell the guests about our little buggers' fate, and then drive off in a golden fiery chariot.
(*teasing him*) Perhaps no-one is going to love me, Nigel, but at least I don't die.

NK: Nice one, Dina. How appropriate. How characteristically sensitive.

So... what shall we play now, hunh? Oh come on. We've played "Hassle the Host"..."Niggle at Nigel"... so what shall we do now?
I mean, come on! We must know other games, thespian-type types like us...that can't be the limit of our vocabulary, can it?
Let me see now...How about..."Hump the Hostess"? HUNH?? You wanna play that one? Mount her like a goddamn dog?...or is that for later?... OK, let's save that one.
But, what'll we play *now*?

DP: (*sitting on couch*) Portrait of a man drowning?

NK: I'm not drowning.

I've got it! Let's play a round of "Get the Guests".

DP: Jesus, Nigel.

NK: Oh, no...no...We have to play another game. So now we're going to play "Get the Guests". (*taking book and spectacles from beneath couch*)
How about you start, Dina...and I'll just sit over here and read a book.

DP: You're going to do *what*?

NK: I'm going to read a book. R-e-a-d. Read? You've heard of it?

DP: What's the matter with you?

NK: There's nothing the matter with me, Dina... I'm just going to read a book.

DP: We've got guests.

NK: I know, my dear...but I feel like reading. So, you...go about your business...and I'll sit here very quietly...and read.

DP: (*to audience*) Well...we can amuse ourselves, can't we?
(*to Nigel*) We're going to amuse ourselves, Nigel.

NK: Unh-hunh. That's nice.

DP: You might not like it.

NK: No, that's fine...you go right ahead...you entertain the guests.

DP: I'm going to entertain myself, too.

NK: Good...good for you, Dina.

DP: Oh, Ha-Ha-Ha! You're a riot, Nigel.

NK: Unh-Hunh.

DP: *(sits in audience, on a man's lap)* Well I'm a riot, too, Nigel.

NK: Indeed you are, Dina.

DP: You know what I'm doing, Nigel?

NK: No, Dina...what are you doing?

DP: I'm entertaining. I'm entertaining one of the guests. I'm necking with one of the guests.

NK: Oh, that's nice...which one?

DP: I said I was necking with one of the guests!

NK: Good...good for you, Dina. You go right ahead.

DP: Oh, I see what you're up to...

NK: ...I'm up to page one hundred and...

DP: You miserable little shit!...I'll show *you*.....

NK: No!!...show him, Dina...he hasn't seen it.
(to dancer) You haven't seen it yet, have you?
 Yes, you're quite right...I couldn't care less. So, you just take this bag of laundry here,
 throw it over your shoulder, and...
 What?!...you think I'm disgusting? Because *you're* going to hump Regina, *I'm*
 disgusting?

DP: Now you listen to me...

NK: I'd rather read, Dina, if you don't mind...

DP: Well, I do mind. Now, you pay attention to me! You come off this kick you're on, or I swear to God I'll do it. I swear to God I'll take that guy up to the dressing room, and...

NK: ...AND WHAT, DINA?

Lord, if you want the boy that much...have him...but do it honestly, will you? Don't cover it over with all this...footwork.

DP: I'll make you sorry you made me want to marry you. *(move upstage)*

NK: *(reading)* "And the west, encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommodate itself to the swing of events, must...eventually...fall."

scene 5

Clerambault (4) Recitative

*What am I saying? My heart rebels against me,
Begins to take alarm at its deadly peril:
I was ready to punish Jason, but his cruel betrayal
Cannot rouse me against him.*

*I see in the faithless one
Only what made me love him.*

DP: Nigel, who is out somewhere there in the dark...Nigel who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me at night so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy... and yet I do.
Nigel and Dina: sad, sad, sad. *(move to back of couch, arms around NK's neck)*

Clerambault (5) Air Tendre

*Love puts me back in his fetters:
Despite all my resentment he triumphs in his turn.*

... whom I will not forgive for having seen me and saying: "yes, this will do"; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. ...who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension.
Nigel and Dina: sad, sad, sad.

(Douglas moves to cafe table - pours himself coffee)

*In vain does a tender heart give himself up to hatred;
It always returns to love.*

some night...some stupid night...I will go too far...and I'll either break the man's back...or push him off for good...which is what I deserve. *(sits on couch)*

scene 6

(NK and DP sitting together on couch. Douglas moves to couch, beckoned by DP)

Clerambault (6) Recitative

*But what was my great mistake?
To save an ingrate I betrayed myself,
While perhaps at this moment the villain
Is being united to his love at the feet of the immortals*

Douglas: (to Nigel) When is your son coming home?

*It is too much to suffer such cruel affronts:
My unhappy passion must be avenged.
Let us deliver the ungrateful Jason to eternal woes,
While destroying my fortunate rival.*

NK: Dina, when is our son coming home?

DP: Never mind.

NK: No, no...I want to know...you've obviously brought it out into the open, and apparently even young (?) here wants to know now. So, when's he coming home?

DP: I said never mind. I'm sorry I brought it up.

NK: *Him* up...not *it*. You brought *him* up. Well, more or less. So when's the little bugger going to appear, hunh? Isn't tomorrow supposed to be his birthday, or something?

DP: I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!

NK: I'll bet you don't.
Dina does not want to talk about it...*him*. Dina is sorry she brought...*him* up.
But since you have had the bad taste to bring the matter up...when *is* the little bugger coming home?

DP: Nigel talks disparagingly about the little bugger because...well, because he has problems.

NK: The little bugger has problems, does he?

DP: Not *HIM*... You! *You've* got problems.

Nigel's biggest problem with our son, is that deep down in the private-most pit of his gut, he's not completely sure it's his own kid.

NK: (moving to upper stage) My God, you're a wicked woman...

DP: And I've told you a million times, baby...I wouldn't conceive with anyone but you...you know that, baby.

NK: ...a deeply wicked woman.

Now, Dina is lying, ofcourse. There are very few things in this world of which I *am* sure...national boundaries, the level of the oceans, political allegiances, practical morality...on none of these would I stake my stick any more...but the one thing in this whole stinking world that I am sure of is my partnership, my chromosomological partnership in the...creation of our...blond-eyed, blue haired...son.

DP: That was a very pretty speech, Jason.

NK: Medea knows...SHE knows best.

scene 7

Clerambault (7) Invocation

(SECTION A) (INTRO)

Douglas: Coffee? *(Douglas exits with coffee plunger)*

NK: So, may I speak of ME?

└ ... Who ... Of whom they are speaking, when they do speak of me,
I, JASON? I, scum of man, I, scum of a woman
Platitude piled on platitude
I, called by my accidental name
I, fear of my accidental name.....Jason? ... (no!) ... NIGEL!

*Hideous jealousy, you fatal demon,
Cruel daughter of Hell,
Come forth to avenge
My deceived love; your abysses are open.*

My sea voyage
My annexation
My walk through the outskirts
The anchor is the last umbilical cord with the horizon
The memory of the coast slips away.

(Payout) The corpses' sisters ... My fingers play in their vaginas
At the nightly window between city and landscape we watch the flies dying slowly as
Nero stands exultant above Rome

(SECTION B)

*Come, come punish my rival
For the fearful anguish I have suffered:
Make her pain equal my fury,
And let her torment amaze the universe.*

The car drives up, sand in the gearbox
A wolf stands in the street as the car falls apart
And so, a bus ride in the next early dawn
WHAT A DUMP!
DO YOU REMEMBER? DO YOU? NO, actually Martha, I DON'T.

My war. My victory.
The dried blood is smoking in the sun

(payout) The theatre of my death opens as I stand between the mountains, in the
circle of my dead comrades on the shore
And the expected airplane appears above me

(in Silence) Without thinking I know this engine was what my grandmothers used to call
God. It's airblast sweeps the corpses off the plateau and shots crackle at my reeling flight.
I feel MY blood come out of MY veins and turn MY body into the landscape
Of MY death.

(Soprano sings first phrase of Da Capo)

***(da capo A section of previous aria - instruments only
orchestra tunes offstage?)***

DP:

O poor Jason. Are you discontented with the souvenirs of your war?

So, whom do you love now? Dog or bitch?
Take what you gave to me, Jason,
And stuff it into your new whores eager womb, my bridal present for your next wedding!
She might bleed, Jason - another victory

(to audience)

My children, go with your father who kicks away your mother:
Don't you want to sit at royal tables?
Why do you cling to the barbarian who is your mother?
Oh...actors you are:
The children of base treason
So now sink your teeth into my heart and go with your father who has done the same before you.

(drinks coffee)

(Takes off gown and throws it onto the couch)

Here, Jason, take my bridal gown as a gift
For your new bride, who will embrace your body,
Who will cry on your shoulder, who will sometimes moan in heat

Clerambault (8) Recitative

The spell is cast, the cruel Furies

Leave their gloomy abode:

This gown of love.
It shall adorn your new love just as if it were my own skin
So then I'll be close to you:
Close to your love. Go now to your new wedding, Jason,

*The radiant god who gave me life
Trembles at their ferocity.*

Go!

Clerambault (9) Orchestral Prelude

(DP lies on couch - as at the beginning of the show)

Clerambault (10) Air

*(dancers appear on stage one by one - moving to and from the orchestra seats like furies)
(NK moves to cafe table and Douglas moves to couch in the Da Capo)*

*Fly, demons, fly and serve my deadly anger;
Burn and lay waste this palace;
Let the flames of Hell
Destroy this place forever.
Plant in all hearts this turmoil and terror,
Redouble the horror of your fires;
And in this hideous chaos offer
To Jason the sight of my rival dying!"*

Clerambault (9) Orchestral Prelude - da capo

*(DP slowly strips shirt off Douglas, on couch)
(orchestra moves in darkness into position behind back curtain)*

scene 8

DP: *(to Douglas)* The man that I came to meet is sitting over there. *(indicating Nigel)*
And before we go any further, I should tell you all that I can't imagine
sleeping with anyone but him. *(Moving to table)* So you can buy me a drink after the show,
or *(to band)* play me a song - but that's all.

NK: *(at table)* New game, Dina?

DP: No more games, Nigel

NK: Aw, come on, one more game, and then beddie-byes. We'll climb them well-worn stairs.

DP: Please, Nigel, no.

NK: No climbing stairs with Nigie-Wigie?

DP: It's games I don't want.

NK: Aw, sure you do, Dina...original good-time-girl and all, 'course you do! You'll have a ball!

DP: *(stroking NK's cheek)* Please, Nigel, no more games...I...

NK: *(slapping her away)* You keep your paws for the guests! Now, you listen to me, Dina; you've already had quite an evening...but we are going on, and I'm going to have some fun now, and it's going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant. So I want you to get yourself a little alert . I want a little life in you, baby! *(slapping her gently)*

DP: Stop it!

NK: *(dragging her to her feet)* I want you on your feet and slugging, sweetheart, because I'm going to knock you around, and I want you up for it.

DP: What do you want?

NK: An equal battle, baby; that's all.

DP: You'll get it!

NK: I want you mad, Dina!

DP: I'M MAD!!

NK: Good for you, girl; now, we're going to play this one to the death.

DP: Yours, Jason! You're the one who dies!

NK: You'd be surprised. Now...ready?

DP: I'm ready!! *(RH move to Douglas on couch)*

DP: *(leaping on Douglas)* Hey, you played football, hunh?

Douglas: No...boxing...actually.

DP: BOXING! You hear that Nigel?

NK: Unh-hunh.

DP: You must have been very good at it...I mean, you don't look like you've been hit in the face at all. You've still got a pretty good body, too...

NK: Dina...decency forbids...

DP: SHUT UP, YOU! *(to Douglas)* Well, haven't you? You have kept your body!

Douglas: I work out.

DP: Do you?!! Well, I think that's very nice. Nigel doesn't cotton much to body talk...do you, sweetheart? Paunchy over there isn't too happy when we get to muscle. You know...flat bellies, pectorals...How much do you weigh?

Douglas: 70...72...

RH: Still in the old middle-weight limit, eh? Cute!.

NK: Excuse me, may I interrupt for a moment? I think you've skipped a scene, Dina...By my reckoning this should still be Act 2 Scene 2 ... this is my scene. You mind?*(sitting between RH and Douglas on couch, addressing audience)*
Now, in this game...sorry, life episode...Douglas, here, is playing a hapless, though fabulously built, young biologist, who will try to hump Dina later in the show...somewhat unsuccessfully...And Dina, of course as usual, is well and truly out of it...And I'm playing a frustrated old historian, who hasn't had a good root in years.....so....GO!

DP: *(leaping on Douglas)* I want to know all about chromosomes, sweetie, I love 'em!

NK: Dina eats them...for breakfast...she sprinkles them on her cereal.
It's very simple, Dina, some young men these days are working on a system whereby chromosomes can be altered...the genetic makeup of a sperm cell can be re-ordered...to order, actually...for hair and eye colour, stature, potency (I imagine) ... hairiness, health...and *mind*. Most importantly...Mind.

DP: Wow!

NK: *But!* Everyone will tend to look rather the same...perhaps even like this young man *here*.

DP: *That's* not a bad idea!

NK: Yes, on the surface of it, it will be all rather pretty...quite jolly. But ofcourse there will be a dank side to it, too. A certain amount of regulation will be necessary. A certain number of sperm tubes will have to cut.

DP: Ouch!...

NK: ...Millions upon millions of them...millions of tiny little slicing operations that will leave just the smallest scar, on the underside of the scrotum, to assure the sterility of the imperfect. *But!!*
... in time, we will have a race of glorious men, perfectly in the middleweight limit!

DP: Yeah!

NK: Ofcourse there will be a certain loss of liberty ...and diversity will no longer be a goal. Cultures and races will eventually vanish...And I, naturally, am rather opposed to all this. History, which is my field...will lose its glorious variety and unpredictability. There will be order and constancy...and I am unalterably opposed to it. I will fight you, young man...one

hand on my scrotum...but with my free hand I will battle you to the fucking death! (*grabbing him firmly and intimately*)

DP: You make me sick!

NK: Sorry!

DP: Nigel eventually makes everybody sick...When our son was just a little boy, he used to throw up all the time, because of Nigel...
It got so bad that whenever Nigel came into the room he'd start retching, and...

NK: ...the real reason *our son* used to throw up all the time, wife, colleague and lover, was nothing more complicated than that he couldn't stand you fiddling with him all the time, breaking into his bedroom with your kimono flying, and fiddling with him, with your liquor breath and your hands all over his...

DP: YEAH? And I suppose that's why he ran away from home twice in one month ...Six times in one year!

NK: Our son ran away from home all the time because you used to corner him.

DP: I NEVER CORNERED THE SON OF A BITCH IN MY LIFE!

NK: He used to run up to me when I'd get home, and he'd say, 'Daddy! Mummy's always coming at me.'... It was VERY embarrassing!

DP: If you think it's was so embarrassing, why do you want to talk about him all the time?

NK: I don't want to talk about him....I never want to talk about him.

DP: Yes you do.

NK: Medea!...we've got guests. (*referring to audience*)

DP: We sure have!

(orchestra re-tuning behind red curtain- doubles bass onto stage -slow light builds on red curtain - dancers move toward curtain)

DP: (*to audience*) I'll turn the bride into a wedding torch, my children
Watch your Mother stage a play for you
You want to see your father's new bride all aflame?
She is young
Her hide is smoothly stretched, not wasted yet by age nor any breeding
It's on her body that I write my play
I want to hear your laughter when she screams
Before midnight she will be all aflame
I want to see your laughter
And share my joy with you, my children!

DP: What's the matter, Nigel? You given up?

NK: No...no. I just trying to figure out some new way to fight you, Dina.

DP: Well you figure it out, and you let me know when you do.

NK: I certainly will..... *(gestures to red curtain - dancers drop curtain
Douglas exits from couch quickly)* Perhaps I might see you after interval, Dina?

PYGMALION OVERTURE (no repeats)
*orchestra revealed in doorway, back lit.
NK and dancers slowly exit through roller door)*

DP: Douglas, I need coffee!! *(exits OP)*

ACT 2

*The black scrim and red curtain are out. Orchestra stands and chairs grouped suitably around harpsichord. Orchestra gather Upstage Prompt
Additional cafe tables and chairs upstage
The Statue lies on the couch (like DP in ACT 1) covered in a light shroud.*

*ROLLER DOORS RISE TO REVEAL NK, DP, LOVE/CEPHISE, DANCERS AND PYGMALION
(NK DP and 2 dancers carry coffee plungers).*

Overture

*Orchestra move across stage from prompt side to their seats.
Cast enter space during Allegro . Roller door closes.*

scene 1

NK: New game, Dina?

DP: Like what? ... Total War?

NK: Oh no ... just a little something to excite your more sensitive, fleshy bits.

DP: You're not man enough ... you haven't got the guts. *(moves to OP cafe table)*

NK: Maybe ... maybe not.GO! *(gestures to orchestra, who play)
(choosing from 2 singers) Eeny-meeny-miney...mo
(pointing to Pygmalion) YOU! Pygmalion!.....Don't argue -
(to DP) Why can't a woman be just like a man? just a paraphrase!
(NK to Prompt cafe table - prepares coffee for Pygmalion)*

PIGMALION: *(to NK)*

Fatal Love, cruel conqueror,
What darts you have chosen to transfix my heart!
(Pygmalion moves to Prompt cafe table)

I shuddered at having you as a master;
I feared to be moved, and I had to be punished;

(gesturing to statue)

But did I need to become enamoured
By an object that cannot be?
Fatal Love, cruel conqueror,
What darts you have chosen to transfix my heart!

NK: Coffee?

*(Pygmalion takes coffee. Moves to couch - sitting awkwardly at its end with his coffee
NK shows a large sign "the artist")*

Indifferent witness of the distress that overpowers me,
Can it be that you should be the work of my hand?
Is it then to groan and sigh in vain
That my art has produced your adorable image?
Fatal Love, cruel conqueror,
What darts you have chosen to transfix my heart!

scene 2

CEPHISE: *(moving to behind Pygmalion on couch)* Pygmalion, is it possible
That you should be indifferent
To the fires with which I burn for you?
This object ceaselessly beguiles you.
Can it rob me of your love
And make you forget...

PYGMALION: Cephise, pity me.
Accuse no one but the gods.
I feel their revenge:
I defied Love, now he causes my torment.

CEPHISE: You seek to make use of an idle subterfuge
To conceal a love that offends me.

PYGMALION: *(leaping from couch)* Yes! I feel all the violence of love,
And you behold the object of this enchantment.

CEPHISE: No, I do not believe you: some secret bond
Fetters you and stands in the way of my most tender desires.

PYGMALION: Such is the effect of heaven's wrath,
That it subjects me to the penalty
Of a frivolous and vain ardour
(attempting to embrace Cephise) And deprives me of the sweetness of sighing for you.

DP: *(to NK)* You arsehole! *(rescuing Cephise and taking her to OP table)*

NK: I'm getting there, aren't I?

CEPHISE: Cruel!!! So it is true that this object inflames you:
Then abandon your soul to these vain transports,
And may the just Gods, by this mad infatuation,
Punish the straying of your inhuman heart.

scene 3

PYGMALION: What charms! What allurements! Her bewitching grace
 Draws from me, in spite of myself, tears and sighs!
 Gods! What aberration, what vain love!

(NK approaching back of couch, and reveals a sign "a statue")

 O Venus, O mother of joys,
 Stifle bootless desires within my heart;
 Could you block up the fountain of my tears?
Love shaped the object by which my heart is bewitched.
 Acknowledge in my ardours the work of your son:
 He alone could assemble so many charms.

(NK, removes the shroud from the Statue)

 Whence came these chords?
 What are these harmonious sounds?
 A bright light floods into this space.

 What a wonder! What god? Through what inspiration
 Has a dream beguiled my senses?

 I do not deceive myself, o divine influence?

 Protectors of the dead, great gods, benevolent gods?

STATUE: What do I see? Where am I?
 And what do I think?
 Whence come these movements?

PYGMALION: O heaven!

STATUE: What must I believe?
 And by what power can I express my feelings?

PYGMALION: O Venus, o Venus! Your infinite power.

STATUE: Heaven! What is this object? My soul is enchanted by it.
 On seeing it I savour the sweetest pleasure.
 Ah! I feel that the gods who granted me life
 Granted it me only for you.

PIGMALION: **Let this avowal forever deliver me from my woes;
 AIR You alone, beloved object, could have helped me;
 I heaven had not caused you to live.
 I t would have doomed me to death.**

STATUE: **How happy is my lot! You share my love**

AIR

**It is not your voice
That most clearly tells me.
But I perceive in your eyes what I feel in my soul.**

PYGMALION:

AIR

**For a heart entirely mine can I burn too much?
How true your ardour for me must be.
Since your first motions were to love me.**

STATUE:

And my first desire was to please you.
I shall always follow your command.

PYGMALION:

For all the bounty that I receive
Can I ever be sufficiently....

STATUE:

Take custody of a destiny that I do not know,
All I know of myself
Is that I adore you.

(Pyg and Statue recline together on floor, downstage)

(NK gives the "I'amour" sign to Cephise)

NK: New role, honey.

DP: You miserable little shit!

NK: She's on the pay roll.

scene 4

(Pygmalion and Statue recline in an embrace on the floor in front of the couch)

(DP supports Love/Cephise, taking her to sit together on the couch)

LOVE:

This wonder is the result of Love's power
Love has long aspired with his talents
To shape the most lovely object.
But to unite them all, an object was required
Of which your art alone was capable.
It lives and it is yours; its tender passions
Were the just reward for your talents.
Only too well have you served my power,
Not to deserve to be happy forever.

(NK joins DP and Cephise/Love, enthusiastically on the couch. The dancers join Pygmalion and Statue on the ground in a tableau during the B section.

During the Aria, Love - encouraged by DP - begins slapping NK's face.

NK gets a little angry and moves off to the Prompt cafe table to check his script)

AIR

**Games and Mirth who follow on my traces,
Hasten by, come to adorn this place.
Come, lovely Graces,
It is for you to complete Love's work.**

Hurry, lovely Graces,
Hasten to complete Love's work

scene 5

DP: *(with Cephise on the couch)* What's the matter, Nigel? You given up?

NK: No...no. I'm just trying to figure out some new way to fight you, Dina.

RDP: Well you figure it out, and you let me know when you do.

NK: I certainly will.....

(NK moves to book - leafs through it - considers)

NK: *(reading from book)* "Our son." I think this should be you scene ... over to you, Dina.

(NK hands book to DP)

DP: All right. *(reading to Cephise)* "Our son was born on a night in September, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty...one...years ago. It was an easy birth...

NK: Oh, Dina, no.... how you laboured!

DP: It was an easy birth...once it had been...accepted, relaxed into.
...an easy birth, and I was young, and he was a healthy child, a red bawling child,
with slippery firm limbs...

NK: ...Dina thinks she saw him at delivery...

DP: ...and a full head of black, fine, fine hair which, oh, later, later, became blond as the sun.
And, oh, I had wanted a child...And I had my child!

NK: *Our* child.

DP: *Our* child. And we raised him...yes, we did; we raised him...
And his eyes were green...green with...if you peered so deep into them...bronze
parentheses around the irises...but such green eyes!.....

The Dancers and NK instruct the Statue in the various figures of the dance - also referring to DP's story, with the Statue playing the role of the "son").

1. Air. Very slow

DP: ...and he loved the sun!...He was tanned before and after
everyone...and in the sun his hair...became...fleece.

NK: ...GOLDEN fleece...*(Nigel joins dancers)*

DP: ...and school...and summer camp...and swimming....

2. Graceful Gavotte

3. Minuet

DP: (*in repeat*)and how he broke his arm...how funny it was...oh, it hurt him!...but, oh, it was funny...in a field, his very first cow, the first he'd ever seen...and he went into the field, where the cow was grazing, head down, busy...and he moored at it!...and the beast, surprised, swung its head up and moored at him, all three years of him, and he ran, startled, and he stumbled...fell...and broke his poor arm. Poor lamb.....

4. Gay Gavotte

5. Lively Chaconne

DP: Nigel cried! Helpless...Nigel...cried. I carried the poor lamb. Nigel snuffling beside me, I carried the child, having fashioned a sling... across the great fields.

6. Very slow Loure

7. Lively Passepied (The Graces)

8. Rigaudon. Fast

(*Cephise move to OP cafe table*)

(*Pygmalion Statue to couch - DP doesn't notice the change*)

DP: And as he grew...he walked evenly between us...a hand out to each of us for what we could offer by way of support, affection, teaching, even love...and these hands, still, to hold us off a bit, for mutual protection, to protect us all from Nigel's...weakness...and my...necessary strength...to protect himself...and *us*.

NK: All truth being relative.

DP: It was true! He was beautiful, wise and perfect.

NK: Now, there's a real mother talking.

DP: But ofcourse, this state, this perfection...couldn't last. Not with Nigel around.

NK: There, you see? I knew she'd turn.

DP: A drowning man takes down those nearest. Nigel tried, but, Oh God, how I fought him.

Lesser states can't stand those above them. Weakness, imperfection cries out against strength, goodness and innocence. And Nigel tried.

NK: How did I try, Dina?

DP: (*puzzling*) No! No...our son grew...up...He is fine, everything is fine.

(*closes book*)That's all.

NK: (*at back of couch*) Now hang on a minute! You can't cut a story off just like that! You started to say something...now you say it!

DP: No!

NK: Well, I will! You see, Dina, here, stops just when the going gets good...just when things start getting a little rough. You see, Dina, here, is a misunderstood little girl. Not only does she have a husband who is a bog, she also has a son who fought her every inch of the way, who didn't want to be turned into a weapon against his father, who didn't want to be used as a goddamn club whenever Dina didn't get things her own fucking way!

DP: Lies!

NK: A son who would *not* disown his father, who came to him for advice, for love that wasn't mixed with sickness - and you know what I mean, Dina! - who could not tolerate the slashing, braying residue that called itself his MOTHER. MOTHER? HAH!

DP: A son who was so ashamed of his father he asked me once if it possibly wasn't true (as he had heard from some cruel boys) maybe, that he was not our child...

NK: Lies!

DP: Who could not tolerate the shabby failure his father had become...

NK: Lies!

DP: Who would not bring his girlfriends home to the house...

NK: ...in shame of his mother...

DP: ...of his father! A son who spends his summers away from his family...ON ANY PRETEXT...because he can't stand the shadow of a man flickering around the edges of a house...

NK: ...who spends his summers away...because there isn't room for him in a house full of empty bottles, lies, strange men, and a harridan who...

DP: Liar!

NK: Liar?

DP: ... A son who I have raised as best as I can against ...vicious odds, against the corruption of weakness and petty revenges...

NK: ...A son who, deep in his gut, is SORRY TO HAVE BEEN BORN!!

Game?

DP: *(resigned)* Set.

NK: I'm getting there, aren't I? *(to band)* Say, why don't we play some more music?
Dina's feeling a bit tired now, but she loves dancing!
She had her photograph in the paper once...oh, decades ago...Seems she took second
prize in one o' them seven-day dancing competition things...biceps all bulging, holding up
her partner.

DP: Will you just play something and shut up?

NK: Certainly, my dear. Now how are we going to work this? Mixed doubles?

DP: Well, you certainly don't think I'm going to dance with *you*, do you?

NK: Not with all these young things around...that's for sure.

Oh look! A Sarabande - a tad mournful.... but I think it might suit Dina's present mood
perfectly.

Why don't you start, and I'll just follow along.

The dances continue - NK quasi-conducting the orchestra

9. Sarabande for The Statue

DP: *(dancing for Pygmalion and Statue on couch)* The groom, he enters
now the bridal chamber

And now he places at his young bride's feet Medea's bridal gown,
The bridal present soaked in my sweat of submission.

(puts on gown - a sort of sexy reverse striptease)

Now see the whore -
She struts before the mirror.
And suddenly the gold of Colchis seals her pores, planting a field of
knives into her flesh.

The barbarian's bridal gown celebrates its wedding.
Jason, of your virgin bride, the first night will be mine
And it will be the last one.
She screams!
Have you ears to hear the scream?
She burns!

10. Tambourin. Loud and fast.

DP *(to audience)* Hey, laugh!
I want to see you laugh

My play, it is a farce
So, why don't you laugh?
What? Tears? Tears for the bride?
My little ones, my traitors,
No, I want to cut you right out of my heart,
my heartflesh, my remembrance, my beloved.
Give back to me the blood out of your veins
Back into my womb, you who are my entrails!

DP: All right, you guys...cut it out!

NK: I thought it was rather fitting.

DP: Oh you did, hunh?

NK: Well why don't you choose something? Dina's going to run things...the little ladies going to lead the band. Dina's going to choose some rhythm she understands...*Sacre du Printemps*, maybe?.....

DP: Today is payday, Jason.
Your Medea will collect her debts today!
Death is but a present, and from my hands you shall receive the gift.
I broke off forever all the bridges to what I once called home.
Now I will do the same for this my foreign shore.
Alas, would I'd remained the animal I was before you made me your woman, Jason!
I am Medea:
The barbarian, now despised.
With these my hands I will break mankind apart,
in two! And live within the empty middle!

(Chorus bashing a back door - NK moves downstage)

scene 7

PYGMALION: *(running upstage to open door)* The people are coming hither.
Love, they know the extent of your power,
And what joys your goodness can shower upon us!

(CHORUS ENTER)

AIR GAY - Modere

DP: *(grabbing NK)* No woman!!

NK: *(throwing DP downstage, and moving upstage)* and no man!!

(DP runs to Pygmalion and Statue on couch. They quickly escape upstage)

DP: *(to Pygmalion)* What, do you scream?
Worse than death is to grow old.
You'd kiss the hand that gives you death if you knew what a life was here.
(all cast freeze as DP strangles the children/cushions on the couch)

scene 8

NK: *(grabbing cushion from DP)* JUST STOP IT!!

(DP moves, distractedly, through the audience)

PYGMALION:
AIR

**Love triumphs, announce his victory,
He uses all his power to gratify our desires.
We cannot praise his glory too much,
He finds it in our pleasures!**

CHORUS+Pygmalion:

**Love triumphs, announce his victory,
He uses all his power to gratify our desires.
We cannot praise his glory too much,
He finds it in our pleasures!**

(DP moves to Prompt cafe table., toward the end of the music. NK rearranges cushions and sits on couch)

Simple and rather slow Pantomime

(3 pauses in the music for DP to insert her lines - a sense of haltering interruption:)

DP: Who are you?
Who has dressed you in the body of my little child?

What animal is hiding in your eyes?

Do you play dead?
You won't deceive the mother
You're actors, nothing but liars and traitors inhabited by dogs, rats, snakes.
It barks, it squeaks, it hisses - I can hear it

DP: O, I am wise
I am Medea!!!

Second very lively Pantomime

(DP slowly removes her makeup, reiterating her name "Medea")

(All performers moving very slowly - enacting a "wedding scene" for Pygmalion and the Statue)

DP Now all is quiet
 The screams of my home are silenced too
 And nothing is left

NK: Dina.....?

DP: Do you know this man?

(Chorus, Dancers stand still throughout aria, with their backs to audience)

PYGMALION: *(To NK)*

AIR A

**Reign, Love, let your flames shine.
Shoot your darts into our breasts.
Empty your quiver
In the hearts subject to your laws.**

(Pygmalion, Statue and Cephise behind couch)

B

**Beguiling god, you grant us the happiest lot.
I owe to you the object that has ravished my soul.
And this beloved object breathes, owes its life
To the fires of your divine torch**

(The Statue and Cephise moving upstage)

A

**Reign, Love, let your flames shine.
Shoot your darts into our breasts.
Empty your quiver
In the hearts subject to your laws.**

(Pygmalion ends aria by sitting on couch next to NK)

scene 9

(All other performers frozen on stage - backs to audience)

NK: Dina, I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you...for us, actually.

DP: What?

NK: This afternoon...before you came in, we got a telegram...

DP: So? Another fan?

NK: No, Dina...about our boy...I'm afraid he's not coming home for his birthday, tomorrow.

DP: Of course he is

NK: No, Dina.
He...can't.

DP: He is! I say so!

NK: Dina.....our son is...dead.
He was...killed...late this afternoon....on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket, he swerved, to avoid a possum, and drove straight into...

DP: YOU...CAN'T...

NK: ...a large tree.

DP: YOU CANNOT DO THAT!

NK: I thought you should know.

DP: NO! NO! YOU CANNOT DO THAT. YOU CANNOT DECIDE THAT FOR YOURSELF!

NK: We'll have to leave early tomorrow morning, I suppose..... there are matters of identification, naturally, and arrangements to be made...

DP: I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THIS!!!

NK: I haven't done anything.....

DP: YOU CAN'T KILL HIM! (*standing*) YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM DIE!

NK: That's right, Dina; I'm not God. I don't have power over life and death. But, there was a telegram.

DP: Show it to me! Show me the telegram!

NK: I ate it.

(*DP spits in his face - then turns and sits on couch*)

NK: Good for you, Dina.

DP: You're not getting away with this, Nigel.

NK: I can kill him, if I want to.

DP: HE IS OUR CHILD.

NK: Oh yes, and you bore him, and it was a good delivery...and I now I have killed him. Because, I can kill him anytime I want to.

DP: But Why?

NK: Because you broke our rule. You mentioned him...to them.

DP: I FORGET! ...when it's late...and I read the script...I forget, and I want to mention him.....oh, Nigel, you've *pushed* it... I *mentioned* it...OK!!...but you didn't have to push it over the edge. You didn't have to...kill him!
Just because we couldn't...

NK: That's right, Dina...we...couldn't.....we're just actors...real childrenwhatever.

(*Long pause as NK takes a cigarette from his pocket and sits on couch - shooing Pygmalion away - cast turns to front*)

Air (for the Graces, Games and Merriment)

Rondeau Contredanse

(*Douglas, as ASM, plays games through which the dancers and singers move solemnly in a slow formal dance - they move slowly upstage as roller door rises. Pygmalion moves to cafe table and retouches his makeup.*)

NK: (*to audience*) Okay, I think the party's over for tonight.

(*To orchestra*)

Home to bed, children; it's way past your bedtimes

(Orchestra slowly exit through roller door, leaving harpsichordist playing alone)

Hey, Pygmalion, that does mean you, too.
...give us a kiss.....

(Pygmalion gives DP and NK a goodnight kiss and exits)

You're a good girl...now, off you go....sleep well....we'll see you tomorrow.

(DP and NK alone onstage. Roller door closes)

scene 10

NK: *(breaking away from DP
and moving toward table to start removing makeup)*

..Coffee?

DP: No...nothing...it's probably cold, anyway.

NK: Yes...it is.....tired?

DP: Yes.

NK: Me too

DP: Yes.....I guess you are.....

NK: (Thursday/Friday/Saturday/etc.) tomorrow; all day.

DP: Did you have to?

NK: Yes.....either that, or ... some other problem we'd invented.....

It'll be better, now.

DP: uh-unhh

NK: It will be...I promise.....

.... Sorry, Dina, I've got to get all this shit off...*(referring to his costume)*

(NK kissing DP on the forehead) ... I'll see you tomorrow

(NK exit)

DP: *(to herself)* That makes it all very neat, doesn't it.
But where's my chariot?.....
Medea's golden, fiery chariot?

Fuck it. *(closes her eyes)*.....and fuck you, Nigel

Final image of DP, foetal position, on the couch

Grant Application - Theatre and New Media Arts Boards Australia Council and NSW Ministry

The Slippage (renamed **CASTRATI**)

Director:	Nigel Kellaway	Associate Director:	Andrew Morrish
Sound Artist:	Liberty Kerr	Lighting/production:	Simon Wise
Costumes:	Annemaree Dalziel	Video Artist:	Peter Oldham
Performer/Writers:	Nigel Kellaway	Regina Heilmann	Andrew Morrish
	Peretta Anggerek (counter-tenor)	Michael Bell (piano)	
	Karen Cummings (mezzo-soprano)	Nigel Ubrihien (piano)	
	Katia Molino	Dean Walsh	Rakini Devi
Writer/Dramaturgs:	Amanda Stewart	Martin del Amo	

Development period: February - July 2004

Proposed venue: Performance Space (theatre and galleries), Sydney
(or alternative 'site-specific' venue)

Performance dates: 5-16 October 2004

opera / 'opra / 'opara (It, from L: service, work, a work)

The opera Project Inc. is a non profit incorporated association founded by Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero in 1997. Its mission is to create an ongoing process of examination of contemporary theatrical structures, their histories, and in particular those structures which hold up our notion of 'opera'. It aims to do this within a forum of collaboration between committed artists who share a history in contemporary performance. Over the past six years a flexible ensemble of established and highly experienced artists, committed to the vision of The opera Project, has emerged. All the company's completed works have contemplated themes of vocal (sung and spoken) and physical articulacy within a highly visual context, each from very different positions.

THE PROJECT - THE ISSUES

The Slippage contemplates all we want theatre to be (or even what we imagine it empirically is) - and referencing all the great audience experiences we dimly remember. We reminisce about the most extraordinary theatrical moments we have witnessed (*always* years ago) as we long for a moment, today, that might astonish us in the same way. Nostalgia is a deceptive vehicle that betrays the present moment. The opera Project brings together an exceptional company of mature artists who can all certainly reminisce about the past, but who prefer to create in the vulnerable reality of the present.

The Slippage is about how we might interpret history.

By the end of the 18th century, the phenomenon of the **castrato** (mature castrated male soprano) was relinquishing its absolute dominance of Italian opera. Contrary to popular belief, the castrati did not perform female roles - they were men playing male roles. Though their popularity and power was waning, the convention of the principal male role performed by a soprano voice maintained currency. Consequently women (mezzo-sopranos) began to perform and develop these roles - that became known as "pants roles". This phenomenon reached its height of popularity in the operas of Gioacchino Rossini and his contemporaries. The "**Rossini mezzo**" was capable of a similarly enormous vocal range and virtuosity for which the castrato had been famous. She was the star of the voice culture known as *bel canto*.

The Slippage will be a large scale theatre installation exploring not only this perverse accident of history but, more generally, ideas of "gender slippage" and all that infers in contemporary culture. It will contemplate the theatrical act in terms of facade, construct and artefact.

The politic of gender signifiers presents a history of the slow slippage of sexual power, back and forth, to and fro', over millennia: the warrior, the nurturer, the chauvinist, the coquette, the effeminate (though heterosexual) playboy, the butch dyke, the cartoonish drag queen, the bread-winner, the cuckold, the (de)sexualized slave, the gigolo, the SNAG, the working mum, the lipstick lesbian, the leather "top" or "bottom", the fop, the fag hag, the dominatrix, the matinee idol, the spinster maid, the male ballet dancer, the swooning acolyte of the castrato, the opera queen, the 1950's "ball breaking" movie siren.....all are descriptors chronicling our insecurities regarding gender attribution and the conundrum of dominance and passivity. And fetishism (like the notions of identity) is just another symptom of this politics of power.

The Slippage is concerned with issues of "wholesomeness" vs "degeneracy"; the "natural" vs the "fake". And few artistic phenomena encapsulate these cultural and moral struggles as vividly as the historical ascendancy of the *bel canto* voice.....

The *bel canto* (literally "beautiful singing") most accurately describes the era of the 18th century castrati, when melodic and expressive line subsumed the literal word. But, as a term in itself, it only acquired currency in the mid 19th century, once that era had truly ended. The culture of opera has always fantasized about a lost golden age of singing, a longing for lost days of glory (but no-one is so bold as to say "I want the castrato back!").

Neither of our two sopranos are castrati - Karen Cummings is a "natural" soprano and Peretta Anggerek is a falsettist. And so their pairing highlights the tensions inherent in this work. History has taught us to accept that the sound of the female operatic soprano, and even the male falsetto voice (when consistently used, like expert drag), can give the illusion of truth. Ofcourse, both voices are equally constructs. But, forgetting its dependence on the feigned, voice culture over-values the "natural". And so long as singing is considered natural, some techniques (*bel canto*, falsetto) will be considered degenerate by some.

Observe voice culture's affinity with psychoanalysis. Both systems believe in expressing hidden material, confessing secrets. And both discourses take castration seriously: voice culture wants to recapture the castrato's scandalous vocal plenitude, while psychoanalysis imagines castration as identity's foundation - star player in the psyche's interminable opera.

Wayne Koestenbaum *The Queen's Throat* 1993

The diva overturns the world's gendered ground by making femaleness seem at once omnipotent and artificial. Read the biography (hagiography) of any diva and you will be repeatedly reminded of her physical flaws. The beauty and magnitude of the diva's voice resides in her apparent "deformity". Her voice is beautiful because she herself is not. Her ugliness (read, less than absolute physical perfection) is thus interpreted as a sign of moral and social deviance - it usurps her divinity (or visa-versa).

The diva exposes her capacity for independent pleasure: her joy comes from the body, the throat, the cavities that no-one in the audience is permitted to see. She presents the unsettling (anti

patriarchal) spectacle of a woman taking her body seriously - channelling, nourishing and enjoying it on her own terms.

The falsettist (counter-tenor) holds an interesting mirror to the diva's antecedent. Castration was a means of freezing the boy-voice before puberty could wreck it. But in puberty the "real" erupts: acne, Adam's apples, sperm, breasts and blood - all those things generally protected under the disguise of discretion.

The history of opera (particularly the *bel canto*) attempts to hide some shocking secrets behind the veils of exquisite music and stupendous theatricality. And this history perfectly reflects similar conundrums faced in presenting the "essential truth" as paraded by the contemporary actor, the "truthful body" in contemporary dance, and the dilemma of the elaborately constructed "lies we call theatre", and how theatre art struggles to reconcile itself with everyday contemporary experience.

STRUCTURE

In a large central space, an installation of "operatic exhibits", vocal, physical, musical and visual, through which the audience will be free to roam. These short overlapping, sometimes simultaneous, performance works will celebrate and question many cliches associated with the early 19th century operatic tradition. They will capitalize on the aesthetic seductiveness of the most striking of these cliches - the heightened voice and body.

Simultaneously with this "museum", in a number of intimate alternative spaces, a more narratively logical performance will take place - a stark and vicious confrontation between Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann - a reckoning with Jean Genet's great theatrical text *The Maids*, in which two women/men/children/spinsters/humiliated servants play out games of identity, dominance, passivity and self-annihilation.

Initially the audience will have freedom to move from space to space, catching snippets of the material in random order, but authority will be given to what is being captured of Kellaway and Heilmann on a steady-cam (Peter Oldham) projected live onto large screens situated in each space. This single uncut "take" will become the "authoritative text", the cameraman replacing the director's authorial eye, creating structure out of an apparent superfluity of random events and material.

The sound will comprise a single soundtrack to accompany the video, mixing Kellaway and Heilmann's spoken dialogue with the live vocal and instrumental music (Rossini) emanating from the central space and a linking original sound score by Liberty Kerr.

Eventually the audience will be corralled in the central space where Kellaway and Heilmann will continue/complete their narrative as the other performers revisit their diverse material in a highly constructed operatic presentation, where all the parts of the installation come together in an articulated 45 minutes.

Andrew Morrish will perform the role of a narrator / master of ceremonies, drawing the audience on his own journey through the exhibition (not necessarily the same as the camera's). His task will be to create an inconclusive commentary on the material, discussing issues of identity and histories of dominance/passivity. His performance will be largely improvised around a predetermined structure. This is a device Andrew explored in The opera Project's *Entertaining Paradise* (2002), and one he is keen to develop further.

PROCESS

Working with accomplished, experienced and very busy artists can be logistically problematic. The work is usually made within unreasonable time constraints. The proposed process of creating *The Slippage* is a strategy to overcome some of these difficulties. The artists will be initially

grouped in small unconventional partnerships (eg. a singer with a writer, an actor with a pianist, a dancer with a dramaturg) to create short (10 minute) performance pieces around the prescribed themes and historical phenomena. They will have freedom to organise their own schedules over a period of 3-4 months, eventually presenting their work to Nigel Kellaway, who will then design an assemblage of the material created. This means that the full ensemble need meet only in the final stages of the process, with many of the components developed in isolation. There will also be a great diversity of material, driven by the individual artists - actors, dancers, performance practitioners, singers, musicians, designers.

The responsibility of director Nigel Kellaway and his associate Andrew Morrish will be in constructing a overarching form - an architecture - so that the final work is much more than a mere accumulation of random exhibits - a work with theatrical, visual, musical and dramaturgical structure.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Over the past two years The opera Project has successfully developed new audience development strategies. Its two most recent productions (*Entertaining Paradise*, 2002, and *Another Night : Medea*, 2003) have achieved an average 76% box office. The company has refined its use of carefully placed email notices, with a very substantial database, and has also forged valuable reciprocal links in this area with other organisations, offering a wide range of special ticket deals.

Crucial has been our evolving relationship with the universities over the past two years. *Entertaining Paradise* and *Another Night : Medea* were included on the syllabi of the universities of New South Wales, Western Sydney and Wollongong theatre and performance studies courses, and we supported these associations with discounted tickets, forums and lectures.

Another Night : Medea had notable success in widening its audience demographic - particularly in encouraging music audiences to enthusiastically experience contemporary performance practice. The age demographic was consistently and evenly ranged between teenage and over 60 throughout the season.

The involvement of Harley Stumm as producer of *The Slippage* will certainly enhance the marketing of the project. Harley's experience will be instrumental in developing and guiding strategies with the company and their publicist.

The multi-disciplinary nature of *The Slippage* will target a wide range of theatre, dance, music, film and contemporary performance as well as queer, gay, lesbian and transgendered audiences. The publicity budget has been increased, proportionate to the larger than usual scale of this opera Project production.

RATIONALE & LOGISTICS

In *The Slippage* The opera Project is greatly extending its ambitions in terms of production scale and vision, boldly stating its role as pro-active cultural historians on a platform that is a departure for the company. At the same time, it maintains the intimate processes of collaboration that have emerged over our eight years of "chamber" practice. It brings together a very large ensemble of senior artists, all of whom are very familiar with the company's political vision and aesthetic.

Despite this increased scale, the company is maintaining the dollar level of its usual requests to the funding boards. The realization of this project is therefore dependent on the simultaneous support of a number of boards. Given the scale of the project, the company is for the first time collaborating with a very experienced outside producer, Harley Stumm, who will contribute on both a logistic and creative level, bringing expertise and support to a company that has already proved its production abilities over several years

The Slippage is an extraordinary show case of artists who have been major players in Australian contemporary performance practice over many years (up to two decades in some cases), and

whom are all still very active practitioners. This is a production that will excite both experienced and new audiences, touching as it does on so many recognisable genres and media - **chaotic, virtuosic, outrageous and intelligent. It will explore theatre as a "grand genre" - a subject that rarely, in this country, has such an assembly of experienced collaborators to contemplate and realise its vision.**

Letter to Theatre Board of the Australia Council and the NSW Ministry for the Arts

25th March 2004

Dear members of the Theatre Board,

RE: *THE SLIPPAGE*

The opera Project has received notification that the New Media Arts Board of the Australia Council was unable to support the final component of *THE SLIPPAGE* project in its recent round. This 25% short-fall in funding will have a dire impact on the realisation of the work.

As a small project based company we have always embraced the uncertainties of funding and adapted our output accordingly. We have been privileged to receive considerable support at both Federal and State levels over several years. We are also aware that the compromises we have had to make have, at times, meant that expectations (our own, our audiences' and our funding supporters') for the potential of the ideas have not always been met. If *THE SLIPPAGE* was but one component of a funded program it might be judged in the context of other works and the priorities of an overall and long-term mission of the company. But The opera Project has not worked on that basis, and each individual work must be viewed on its own terms and justify itself accordingly. The opera Project has always thought this a quite honest and reasonable circumstance.

THE SLIPPAGE proposed a large scale work with many collaborators, and is unfortunately now seriously compromised. A scaled-down production is certainly possible with the available funding, but to request such a variation of grant based on this reduced budget would actually propose a quite different project, and we would not be acquitting the intended purpose of the funding. This is an open admission about where we should honestly "draw the line", lest some people get angry and others get seriously burnt.

And so it is with great regret that The opera Project has decided that *THE SLIPPAGE* project cannot be fully realised in these circumstances and that our funding should be returned to the Theatre Board and the NSW Ministry for the Arts. This decision has been very painful to make, but supported without exception or reservation by every artist involved in the project. We are all still very committed to the concepts, vision and components of *THE SLIPPAGE*, and will most probably return to you in later rounds with new, more thoroughly planned strategies for you to consider.

We thank the Board most sincerely for the support given to the project and wish to emphasise our regret for not being able to proceed. We trust you will embrace the reasons for our decision and the returned funding in good faith.

Though we know it is not for us to contribute or decide, we certainly hope the returned funds will be diverted to another initiative that supports the development of contemporary performance practice in Australia.

yours faithfully,

Nigel Kellaway

Program notes

Annette Tesoriero & Nigel Kellaway

in association with

The opera Project Incorporated
Maestros Petro Panini and Frederico Foccacia
of San Carlo Opera House, Naples
L'academia del' Amore in Cucina, Bologna

present Dr Choux Choux Baguette and Mario Grissini in

a postcard from Napoli

The Women's College, 10th December 2003

We first encountered Dr Choux Choux Baguette and Mr Mario Grissini at the baggage claim at Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris, in 1992 when we were touring Europe with The Sydney Front's *Don Juan*. A fiery altercation was quickly resolved (we have learnt that Dr Baguette can be ferociously territorial when she believes her baggage is threatened), business cards were exchanged and a remarkable relationship was forged.

We first had the pleasure to present this remarkable duo at the Tilbury Hotel in Sydney in 1993, and also toured them to Perth that year (though Mr Grissini had an unfortunate recurrence of an old and persistent infectious disease and had to be substituted at the last moment by pianist Cathie Travers). In subsequent years we have been able to tour them far and wide, from Canberra to Kalgoorlie, from Wagga Wagga to Wollongong. Our presenting of them in Hong Kong in 1995 played no small part in the decision of the mainland Chinese government to rescue the island from further Western Cultural Imperialism. It was there also that Dr Baguette's experiences with the young and fit stage crew fostered her ongoing fascination with all things Oriental; vis-a-vis her random interpretations of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. That engagement also brought them to the attention of Hong Kong based Australian expatriate producer Ted Marr, who enticed them to lecture at his New Year's Day Sydney Opera House multicultural dinner-forum during the Millennium celebrations - to enormous ooh-la-la!

It is with great pleasure that we welcome them back to Sydney for this festive presentation. We hope you will find the evening instructive and entertaining.

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway, Producers

Dr Choux Choux Baguette

Choux Choux Baguette was born in Italy of French parentage during the 20th century. Her mother was a noted amateur figure skater who had lived in her youth next door to a 3rd cousin of Maria Callas on the outskirts of Athens. Her father was highly respected for once having shared a railway carriage from Florence to Rome with a Nobel Prize winning geo-physicist. With such illustrious connections the young Choux Choux was destined for a remarkable performing and academic career.

Dr Baguette's concerns are far reaching, covering diverse territories of 19th century opera, French Art Song and the more experimental field of spontaneous hysterical utterance. She has secured an international reputation over many years for eschewing any requirement to learn more than one page of any major operatic score, and concentrating on her much emulated ignoring of established rhythmic structures and her free interpretations of all composers' intentions. Her much anticipated autobiography, "I Do It My Way - adventures in musical decoupage" is due for release in the New Year.

Over the past several decades Dr Baguette's hectic touring schedule has precluded her from teaching vocal master classes at all major conservatoires across Europe and the United States.

Dr Baguette and Signore Grissini's stellar collaboration grew from a fortuitous meeting at an Adult Further Education evening class on Boules at the Sourbonne (Paris) under the tutelage of the former manicurist to Simone de Beauvoir and the Duchess of Windsor. Dr Baguette's first major academic paper had a substantial (though now discontinued) print run, translated into English as "Arias with Balls".

Mario Grissini

Mario Grissini was tragically and inexplicably orphaned at birth, but miraculously adopted and subsequently groomed by the kind bachelor companion of Cardinal Petit-four (1896-1970). Vatican influence resulted in an exchange scholarship to Wadonga (Australia) at the tender age of 14, where he graduated with a credit (class B) in Grade 5 piano studies with the Australian Music Examination Board. Such precocity was quickly recognised in Europe, and he was immediately contracted as accompanist's page turner in Madame Biscetti's Le Petit Opera de Savoy, based east of Prague, enjoying the next 17 years touring regional centres of the former Soviet Union. (A short documentary on his craft, "Sticky Fingers", created some controversy when shown at the Wapping International Film Festival in 1994.)

Mr Grissini's long appointment as secretary-emeritus to Dr Baguette has ensured an ongoing and keen study of the cultures of remote and underpopulated locations. He shares with Dr Baguette a particular academic interest in the more peculiar habits of young and fit maritime workers.

... recent media selections

"Madame Baguette is truly ... a soprano ... of (genius) ... (and exquisite) vocal colour ... It can (never) be said that she sacrifices the intentions of the art form ... and ... her interpretations remind us that here is ... a (rich and rewarding) musical culture that should never be ... abused."

Tel Aviv Times, 1998

"Exploring a Puccini score is like licking a fresh abalone."

a highlight from Choux Choux Baguette's

"Madame Baguette's performance in the ... (title) role of ...Madama Butterfly ...is a flagrant demonstration of how it should ... be interpreted."

Sakura Shimbun, Japan, 1994

"The role of Carmen is very identifiable."

Choux Choux Baguette interviewed in Discography, 1991

"Maestro Grissini is an interesting pianist ... and now plays with greater accuracy since foregoing his once signature hair gel."

Chattanooga Spectator, 2001

"Neapolitan sailors can be very forgiving."

Choux Choux Baguette and Mario Grissini in a joint exposé, Napoli Chronicle, 2003

CHOUX CHOUX BAGUETTE

postcard from Napoli

1. Welcome by Tiffany Donnelly

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Dr Tiffany Donnelly, and I am the Vice Principal of The Women's College.

I welcome you all this evening to our Common Room, and am privileged to introduce two very special guests.

Dr Choux Choux Baguette and her associate Signore Mario Grissini have made only a few short visits to Australia over the past decade, and have shared their illustrious research on a number of theatrical, social and academic platforms. Those of you who have already benefited from their presentations, will understand how privileged we are to have them here in Sydney for just one evening, and I understand that a number of you have also flown in particularly to be here this evening.

Professor Baguette and Mr Grissini's research has focussed, throughout their long collaboration, on extreme and unexpected expressions of emotional revelation and cliché. Dr Baguette is widely

respected for the sudden expansive outbursts in her presentations, and for her seminal contribution to the exploration of links between musical cadence and Freudian hysteria. She has lectured internationally on the semiotic relationship between packaged dairy produce, early 20th century French waltzes and superfluous body hair, and her recent field work in Naples has complemented this fecund expertise with rigorous inquiry into marine biology and its retail potentials. She looks forward to furthering this ground-breaking research with young and fit Australian tour guides on the Great Barrier Reef in the coming week.

I should take this opportunity to thank Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway for their devoted and patient work in negotiating Professor Baguette and Mr Grissini's travel here. Indeed, Annette has just collected them from the airport, though she has just rung me to say that there has been a problem at Customs with Dr Baguette's more perishable lecture tools. Hopefully they will be arriving here any minute now, traffic permitting.

As we wait, I should perhaps add that this evening's presentation has been made possible only through the enthusiastic co-operation of a number of organisations, both here and abroad: The opera Project Incorporated, Sydney; San Carlo Opera House, Naples (with particular acknowledgment to Maestros Petro Panini and Federico Foccacia); and a research partnership between a number of Australian universities and L'Accademia del' Amore in Cucina, Bologna (where Dr Baguette is Professor Emeritus). All of us are presently fighting (or should I say negotiating) for the privilege to publish Professor Baguette's most recent doctoral thesis, entitled "Ways with Fish".

.....
It appears they have arrived!

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dr Choux Choux Baguette and Signore Mario Grissini.

2. Choux Choux and Mario enter

Mario - 2 suitcases - food case to table
music case to piano

Choux Choux - shopping trolley with kimono to stage
small case with props to small table on stage
baguettes and flowers

3. SHORT LECTURE AT LECTERN

"recent time in Naples, studying the music, habits and proclivities of Neapolitan sailors"
" music, love and seafood"

Mario moves quietly to piano and warms up softly

4. **PICATORE 'E PUSILLESCO**

5.	Carmen:	La, la, la.....	TAKING OFF GLOVES SEES HER FINGERNAILS - SCREAMS
----	---------	-----------------	-----------------------------------------------------

Tosca:	Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore non feci mai male ad anima viva Con ma furiva Quante miserie conobbi, aiutai...	FILING HER NAILS ON BAGUETTE BREAKING BAGUETTE
--------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------

Carmen:	La, la, la...(repeated)	BAGUETTE / CASTANETS
---------	-------------------------	----------------------

Tosca: perch, perche Signor, Ah..... THROW BAGUETTES

6. Don Jose: ... le salut demon ame PEANUT BUTTER ON BAGUETTE
Je l'aurai perdu pour que toi,
Pourque tu t'en ailles, infame,
Entre ses gras rire de moi!
Non, parle sang, tu n'iras pas!
Carmen, c'est moi que tu suivras!

Carmen: Non, non, jamais!

Don Jose: Je suis las te menacer!

Carmen: Eh bien! frappe moi donc, ou laisse moi passer.
BAGUETTE IN MARIO'S MOUTH

7. **CA TU NUN CHIANGE** SITTING BESIDE MARIO ON PIANO STOOL

8. **CARMEN - Bizet Seguidilla** MOVING INTO AUDIENCE WITH ROPE
BRING MAN ONSTAGE TO TIE HER UP
"PISS OFF"

"non, non, scusi!!!!!"

9. **RESTA CU' MME** ON CHAIR

(Footy half-time: Untie, Water spray, Towel)

10. CHOUX CHOUX SETS UP TABLE FOR LECTURE
PUTS IN RUBBER GLOVES

11. **LA FRANGESA!** FIRST VERSE AT PIANO -

TEACH AUDIENCE CHORUS

SECOND VERSE MOVING THROUGH AUDIENCE, CONDUCTING

12. SEES OCTOPUSSY IN PIANO

Tosca: O Mario, non ti muovere....
s'avviano...
taci....vanno....scendono...scendono...
Ancora non ti muovere.....

Ti soffoca il sangue?

(Scarpia: Sorcorso!) THRASHING MARIO WITH OCTOPUSSY

Tosca: Ti soffoca il sangue?

(Scarpia: Aiuto!)

Tosca: Ah!

(Scarpia: Muoio, muoio!)

Tosca: E ucciso da una donna!

(Scarpia: Aiuto!)

Tosca: M'hai assai torturata!

(Scarpia: Soccorso! Muoio!)

Tosca: Odi tu ancora? Parla! Guardami! Son Tosca! O Scarpia!

Muori donnato! Mouri! Muori! Mouri!

E morto?

Mario: Morto

Tosca: Or gliper dono

13. Piano interlude MOVES TO TABLE AND LAYS OUT THE OCTOPUSSY

14. Carmen: Pour la derniere fois, demon,
Veux tu me suivre? Veux tu me suivre?

Non, non!! GRABBING A BAGUETTE
Cette Bague(tte), autre fois,
tu me l'avais donee, Tiens!

Eh bien! donee!! STABS HERSELF WITH BAGUETTE

Vous povez m'arreter. STAGGERING TO STAGE
C'est moi qui l'ai tuee!
Ah! Carmen! ma Carmen! adoree!

GATHERS HERSELF

15. **NON TI SCORDA DI ME** AT PIANO FOR RECIT AND FIRST VERSE
MOVING AWKWARDLY TO DOOR DURING 2ND VERSE

"SCUSI - TOILETTE"

16. Choux Choux exit to toilet. QUICKLY RE-ENTERS - "MARIO!
CUCINA ALLA JAPONESE!
SUSHI - SASHIMI - ORIGAMI
SCUSI

MARIO FOOD PREPARATION SCENE

Mario dresses as Butterfly "CHO CHO SAN!" - plays first phrase of *One Fine Day*.

CHOUX CHOUX ENTERS IN A FURY -
DRYING HER HANDS ON HER ACADEMIC GOWN

17. **SANTA LUCIA LUNTANA**

AT PIANO

18. (Mario continues *One Fine Day* as Choux Choux dresses in Kimono)

19. **ONE FINE DAY - Puccini**

THROWS FLOWERS - "SUZUKI! HONDA! MITSUBISHI!"

20. Carmen: est un oiseau rebelle
Que nul ne peut apprivoiser,
Et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'appelle,
S'il lui convient de refuser.
Rien n'y fait, menace ou priere,
l'un parle bien, l'autre se tait
Et c'est l'autre que je prefere,
Il n'a rien dit: mais il me plait.

L'amour. l'amour, l'amour, l'amour.... MOVING THROUGH AUDIENCE

Tosca: ma nel ritrar costri... GRABBING A MAN
il mio solo pensiero
ah! il mio sol pensier sei tu! Tosca, c'est moi!!

21. **'O MARENARIELLO**

AT TABLE WITH MAN

FEEDING HIM

WALTZING WITH HIM IN REPEATS

CUTTING MUSIC SHORT -
TAKES MAN TO SIT AT PIANO

22. **DARLING, JE VOUX AIME BEAUCOUP**

CALLS MARIO BACK TO PIANO TO ACCOMPANY

23. Carmen: Pour la deniere fois, demon,
Veux tu me suivre? Veux tu me suivre?

Non, non! SHOOING MAN AWAY
Cette bague(tte), autre fois GRABBING BAGUETTE
tu me l'avais donnee, Tiens!

Eh bien! dam.....Non! THROWING AWAY BAGUETTE

Tosca: Presto su! Mario, Mario! RUNNING TO PIANO

Su, presto! Andiam!
Su, su!

FRISKING MARIO - FINDS RUBBER KNIFE
IN HIS POCKET
PLAYS "E" ON PIANO

Mario Mario!

Morto! Morto! Morto!
O Mario...morto?...tu?... cosi?
Finire cosi? Finire cosi?

Butterfly!

STABBING HERSELF

Carmen!

O Scarpia!

Butterfly!

Tosca: Ti soffoca il sangue?

STABBING MARIO

Mario: Soccorso!

Tosca: Ti soffoca il sangue?

Mario: Aiuto!

Carmen: Eh bien. Frappe moi donc.

Tosca: E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!

24. SHORT ILLUSTRATED LECTURE RE "BASTARDOS"

Mario plays short interrupted "Scarpia/Tango" intros

25. TANGO DELLA GELOSIA

AT PIANO

26. QUICK THANKYOU -

WONDERFUL TO BE BACK HERE IN AUSTRALIE
BUT WE'RE BOTH TRES FATIGUE
BON NUIT

BOTH EXIT

27. Closing remarks by Tiffany Donnelly:

We would usually now have a question and answer session, but Dr Baguette and Signore Grissini are quite exhausted after today's long flight from Naples, and have requested a more informal chat over drinks in the courtyard, kindly prepared by Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway, who have been slaving in the kitchen for the past hour.

On behalf of The Women's College, The opera Project, San Carlo Opera House Naples and L'academia del' Amore in Cucina Bologna, I thank you all for joining us this evening.

And Choux Choux and Mario (if I may be so informal) have asked me to extend a very merry Christmas greeting to you all.

Chapter 11: 2004

(The year of *Psychopaths*)

THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

Co-created, directed and performed with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Katia Molino, Nigel Kellaway, Karen Cummings. Co-writer: Amanda Stewart. Composer: Stephen Adams. Video Artist: Peter Oldham. Lighting: Simon Wise. Co-production with Performance Space, Sydney as part of NEW MARDI GRAS.

Awarded a Fellowship by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council to devote the next two years to his continuing research in theatrical, operatic and contemporary performance practices.

STRANGERS IN THE THEATRE

Directed and performed solo work as part of ARTRAGE and PRIDE festival, at The Bakery, Perth, WA.

PRELOVED

Co-created, performed with a briefly re-united SYDNEY FRONT, short work for the 21st Birthday celebrations of the Performance Space, Sydney.

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Annette Tesoriero/Nigel Kellaway - Christmas Recital Program

Operatic dirty work

Keith Gallasch
(Reproduced with permission)

I thought she was rather attractive in a strange way...She had beautiful manners and a low voice and she smoked incessantly. She didn't walk or behave in a butch way at all, she was well-bred and had a kind of elegance. Yet her loneliness showed in her face—a cloudiness, an ugliness really—which would go when she laughed, a strange low chuckle. ...Sex with her was like being made love to by a boy. Her hands were very masculine and big and she was hipless like an adolescent boy. She wasn't at all repelled by the male body, she was intrigued by it.

Ronald Blythe in Andrew Wilson, *Beautiful Shadow, A Life of Patrica Highsmith*, Bloomsbury, London 2003

A vengeful jilted diva (Karen Cummings), a manic female director (Katia Molino) and a drag queen extra (Nigel Kellaway) with a psychotic attachment to the persona of a Hitchcock killer clash on the set of a new film. In The opera Project's latest music theatre extravaganza, hot on the heels of the popular success of *Another Night: Medea* (2003), the audience too are extras, cajoled and abused by the director as she shapes her deadly melodrama under the glare of the lights (designer Simon Wise) and through the probing eye of the camera (video artist Peter Oldham). A memorable work-in-progress showing 2 years ago and a slice offered at the Performance Space 2004 program launch revealed a wickedly funny, queer blend of opera, Fellini (or is it Wertmuller, or Caviani?) and Patricia Highsmith a la Hitchcock.

Using a combination of live and pre-recorded visual images the video work will not only suggest the cinematic environment of the narrative and what's happening offstage but also blur the real and the actual in line with the characters' fantasies. While the audience will see itself as seen by the camera, each night one male will enjoy the privilege of playing the leading man in the director's movie-making.

And if that's not enough to whet your appetite for blood and hysterics in a swirl of red roses and big screen camera gyrations, performance poet Amanda Stewart has co-written the off-beat libretto. No stranger to new music, Stewart is a member of the Machine for Making Sense ensemble and in 1997 she created *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior* with composer Colin Bright.

The musical score for *The Audience & Other Psychopaths* is by Sydney-based composer Stephen Adams. His participation is a welcome new dimension to The opera Project's predilection for radical displacement of opera classics from the 17th to the 19th centuries into the 21st. Adams' task is a very special one, to compose for the "disembodied voice."

Director Nigel Kellaway says he's always seen opera as "an intensely physicalised theatre form," especially in the sheer physicality of the voice. One of the original intentions behind this work when it was first conceived, some 4 years ago, was to tackle the "disembodied voice" in performance. But the problem, as Kellaway saw it, was how to corporealise it so that the audience could treat the voice as a serious entity even if they couldn't see where it was coming from. They could at least imagine the body and the place from which it was emanating. The solution is to offer a few character and narrative hooks. This woman is in the dressing room, refusing to come on stage. "Is she the ex-lesbian mother of the B-grade film auteur? Or a fantasy voice from the film director's neurotic desire to be loved, loved, loved?" asks Kellaway.

The disembodied voice is performed by Cummings. In fact, save for a passage from a Rossini overture accompanying the filmmaking, the music and the soundscore for the work entirely comprises a pre-recorded Cummings singing Adams' compositions and delivering Stewart's text. Kellaway describes Adam's creation as "a huge choral work for a single and multi-tracked voice." No musical instruments are used.

Stephen Adams has a background in choral music, experimental rock bands and theatre, as well as training in formal composition with Peter Sculthorpe. His exploration of the human voice includes two major a capella works, *Memory Pieces* (1995) for the Sydney Chamber Choir, produced on CD by Tall Poppies and performed across Canada in 1999 by the Canadian Ensemble de la Rue, and *Desires: Movements Toward The Divine* (1997) for the Song Company, premiered live on ABC Classic FM Radio and performed on tour in Italy.

Adams says that his major focus as a composer has been on the voice whether solo, choir, in music theatre or digitally interpreted. In particular he's interested in music's relationship to other things, especially the texts of performance poets such as Amanda Stewart and Ania Walwicz. He likes "the obsessive quality they share about language, kicking between semantic overload on the one hand and discarding it on the other," pushing language to the limits but "demanding it say things as clearly as possible."

For *The Audience & Other Psychopaths* Adams recorded his own long vocal improvisations, wrote them down with modifications and gave these "relatively fully developed melodic lines" to Cummings whom he recorded. He edited and organised these fragments, changed the pitch here and there and began to shape the overall soundtrack for the performance. Some of the pieces "became independent lines and some of the sounds slough off and have a life of their own as Karen's voice continues on." As the performance progresses "the space gets more and more sonically cluttered with bits of her, as opposed to the opening where she's in one naturalistic space, the dressing room. This shifts to become an aurally omnipresent soundscape."

As ever, The opera Project will offer strong performances, this time from artistic director Kellaway whose extensive career in performance is founded on majors in piano and composition at the Universities of Melbourne and Adelaide, training in performance with Tadashi Suzuki and his Suzuki Company Of Toga and with Min Tanaka in Tokyo. Katia Molino trained in corporeal mime (and performed with Entr'acte Theatre), with Suzuki Tadashi in Japan, in stiltwalking and aerial techniques (working with Stalker and Marrugeku) and recently performed in Stalker's *Incognita* at the Perth and Melbourne International Arts Festivals. Soprano Karen Cummings is committed to performing contemporary music. She has sung in opera, cabaret and recital, appearing as a soloist with the Victorian State Opera and Opera Australia and performing the premieres of several Australian works including Andrée Greenwell's *Laquiem* at The Studio, Sydney Opera House (1999).

Outside Opera Australia and Pinchgut Opera's delivery of the classics and rare productions of new works from Music Theatre Sydney, it's The opera Project that music theatre audiences are increasingly turning to in Sydney for pleasure and provocation. Amidst the rude hubbub of New

Mardi Gras 2004, *The Audience & Other Psychopaths* should provide lovingly crafted and memorable transgressions of every kind: "Archetypes to offend everyone in the gay community," quips Kellaway.

The opera Project, *The Audience & Other Psychopaths*, part of New Mardi Gras, Performance Space, Sydney, Feb 10-21

Keeping it reel SMH Metro February 6, 2004

*Drag queens, sopranos and "hasbians" provide the melodrama on a B-grade film set in **The Audience and Other Psychopaths**, reports Jacqueline Maley.*

THE AUDIENCE AND OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

Performance Space, 199 Cleveland Street, Redfern Tuesday to February 21

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Media Release

The opera Project Inc. & Performance Space

in association with New Mardi Gras present

THE AUDIENCE &

OTHER PSYCHOPATHS

A bent operatic thriller (or a thrilling opera)

Witness a live movie shoot each evening – and watch it all turn hysterically awry. Truffaut, Cassavetes, Wertmuller and Hitchcock – all blurred in a comic fantasy of daring and queer persuasions!

The latest work from Sydney's wickedest music theatre company, The opera Project. In the hands of director Nigel Kellaway, opera is outrageously over-the-top, and all the world's a stage for divas, drag queens and miscellaneous megalomaniacs.

Within the confines of a dilapidated film set, three remarkable performers each approach the thriller genre from a very different bent ... truly bent!

Soprano **Karen Cummings**, prominent Australian contemporary music exponent, plays the diva who refuses to appear on stage, jilted in "un-nameable" love, bitter, and seeking revenge on all in her sights.

Katia Molino, the thinking wo/man's 'mind and body of contemporary performance practice', revels in all the vanity of an Italian B grade film auteur, as she herds the extras around the set of her deadly melodrama.

Nigel Kellaway surrenders his better known megalomaniacal roles to flirt as the sadly irrelevant drag-queen movie extra, gradually confuses his neurosis with disturbing psychopathy.

As ever, with The opera Project, it's an extravagantly larger than life experience, under Kellaway's baroque direction, all exquisitely framed by the writings of legendary performance poet **Amanda Stewart** (of Machine for Making Sense) and composer **Stephen Adams** and captured/projected live each night by **Peter Oldham's** camera under the blaze of **Simon Wise's** lighting.

The opera Project Inc is a contemporary performance company, interested in examining theatrical structures, and in particular those structures which hold up our notion of 'opera'. Its works include: *The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves* (1997), Kellaway's *This Most Wicked Body* (Adelaide Festival 1998), *The Terror of Tosca* (1998), *Tristan* (1999), *El Inocente* (2001), *Entertaining Paradise* (2002) and *Another Night: Medea* (2003).

Each new work has brought radical surprises to delight its audiences, and ***The Audience and Other Psychopaths*** will pursue that notoriety for the outrageously unexpected.

February 10 - 21 Tues - Sat 8pm

Performance Space 199 Cleveland Street, Redfern

\$18 / \$15 / \$12 (Tues 17 & Wed 18 \$12/10)

bookings 9698 7235/ boxoffice@performancespace.com.au

Media enquiries: **Michaela Coventry** 9310 7935 / 0412 535 548
michaela@performancespace.com.au

RealTime April / May, 2004 by **Keith Gallasch**
(Reproduced with permission)

Sweet carnage

Not all those attending The opera Project's *The Audience and Other Psychopaths* get to realise the promise of the production's title, but one of their number does get to play murderer. This act is perpetrated in an upside down world where the theatre becomes frantic film set, the audience transformed into extras, Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* is invoked in drag and some murky sub-romantic business transpires between a manic Italian female film director and an off-stage diva. It all ends badly with only the audience member (cast as the film's lead) surviving the climactic off-stage mayhem.

This aesthetic mix and moral carnage is further complicated by a beautiful score from composer Stephen Adams, setting Amanda Stewart's wild grab-the-world-by-the-throat text for the diva, and instant cinema-scale images of the live performance from video-maker Peter Oldham. The work's furious dynamic means that on occasion the score is drowned by stage action, the soprano's delivery of the sung text sometimes less than intelligible (surtitles, please) and some apparently key moments make little sense. As well, Nigel Kellaway's chain smoking, tottering blonde is out to have Kellaway the performer (seen on screen) murdered. For those who know the artist's oeuvre, this doubling took them back to his acclaimed durational work, *This Most Wicked Body* (1994). For everyone else there was little time to reflect on reflexivity as the show fairly belted along and moments of opacity were tolerated and soon forgotten as hysteria mounted.

The Audience and Other Psychopaths is primarily and wildly comic. Kellaway is at his funniest in the recorded scene in which, looming against the Sydney Opera House, he catches the ferry and then clumsily pedals a bicycle to the Lane Cove murder site. Elsewhere he has the right kind of droll obtuseness that echoes Robert Walker's villain in the Hitchcock film, both funny and frightening. The moment when he cracks with a shriek is chilling, pushing past melodrama. Katia Molina is the whirlwind director, issuing orders in a flood of Italian and English, performing mourning, outrage and death in her own film in an endless rush of hilarious and inexplicable costume changes, and quarrelling via mobile phone with the diva—Kellaway muttering derisive asides about “lesbos-ism.”

The Audience and Other Psychopaths is a wild ride, a little uneven (the off-stage diva device never quite gels despite fine singing, hauntingly layered and textured in the recording) but endearingly lunatic, a fantasia of inversions, reversals and, as always with The opera Project, assaults on the artforms and genres we love but must not let rest. The play of light (designer Simon Wise) and projected image is particularly potent here, cutting across forms to yield a convincing cinematic theatricality with some eerie, memorable images conjured with the flick of a cigarette lighter or the alternation of screen and scrim. And it is striking how an audience member projected onto a huge screen is given unexpected presence, when the slightest movement of lip or eye is magnified to suggest meaning.

The opera Project, ***The Audience and Other Psychopaths***, performers Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molino, soprano Karen Cummings, director Nigel Kellaway, composer Stephen Adams, co-writer Amanda Stewart, video artist Peter Oldham, lighting Simon Wise

**Performance Space,
Feb 10-21**

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Feb 17th, 2004

by PETER McCALLUM

Strangers in the night share a voyeuristic pact most foul

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Sometimes even psychopaths turn tedious

Colin Rose - THE SUN-HERALD 15th February 2004

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Critic's rating: **1/10**

reply to Colin Rose (Which on the recommendation of Fiona Winning, I did not send)

16th February 2004

Dear Colin Rose,

I am writing to you, partly in response to what appears to be a very personal attack on me in your review (Sun-Herald 15/02/04), and partly because of my responsibilities as director of a company of exceptional collaborators who, though you have totally ignored them, deserve to have their justifiable pride and concerns for their work on THE AUDIENCE & OTHER PSYCHOPATHS in some way represented.

Your printed review and phone call of last Wednesday morning focussed on my pillaging of literary and film masterpieces. I would have thought the reason why I do not directly credit artists such as Patricia Highsmith and Marquez in my programs was bleeding obvious! The people (and in some cases huge Hollywood studios) responsible for substantial estates have similar (or even more dishonourable) concerns as some executors such as the nephew of Samuel Beckett. As a serious, though impecunious, contemporary Australian theatre artist I will NOT be denied the right to interrogate, interpret, reflect upon, argue with the opus of major artists whom I overwhelmingly respect. I do not write academic papers. I am a theatre maker ("auteur", rather than interpreter) and so insist on the right to engage the tools of my profession in mounting this contemporary dialogue. Yes, unfortunately it is a case of "legality be damned". Is this the response you were after? I have intentionally held back until after you've filed, but I'm sure you appreciate why.

In your few allotted column inches you might have chosen to pick over our success, or otherwise, in tackling what the rest of our audiences, from a lot of feedback, appear to think the work is about:

- You eschew any mention that the work is music theatre. OK, any comparison with Sondheim, Lerner and Lowe, "The Boy from OZ" or even OA's "Lindy", "The 7th Wonder" and "The Golem" would be inappropriate - even dumb. But you might have considered the work of composer Stephen Adams and Amanda Stewart (a seminal Australian sound poet) in exploring a textural landscape that negotiates a semantic overload whilst at the same time endeavouring to articulate quite explicit meaning.
- The manipulation of spoken and sung texts moving in waves of multi-layered sound from a single directional speaker to an immersive audience surround questions the propriety of the mediated and disembodied sung voice, regarding our notions of "opera" as a 21st century medium (and the historical precedents for these devices in the much earlier work of Henze, Stockhausen and even Menotti).
- The confounding plethora of visual images and sensory experiences, both live and re/produced (and how this pertains to the currently persuasive discourse on "new" and "old" media in performance).
- How differently sexual/gender stereotypes are negotiated on the live stage, to how they are received on film. It is interesting to note that those who rightfully demonstrated outside the cinemas showing "The Silence of the Lambs", a decade or more ago, are the same audience that seems to intellectually embrace our theatrical cliches of hysterical lesbians and psychopathic transvestite murderers. I wonder why? Is there a different mechanism at play here? We find it worth examining. Do you?
- In its blatant references to the earlier repertoire of the collaborating artists and the nomenclature of all the performers (real and virtual), the conundrum this presents the audience in discerning the

"real" from the "fictional", and how this might implicate their complicity. How does the history of a writer differ from that of the performer or the audience? Isn't that perhaps a question central to the artefact of theatre?

- Intentionally provoking and problematising (through the disconcerting mix of live video close-ups, via mirrors and pre-recorded details) the audience's conscious decision about how they are variably seduced by the live performer and the pixelated version.

- An intentional dramaturgical comment on how video is so habitually engaged in contemporary theatre and dance as just another techno-wallpaper, and a distraction from a paucity of ideas.

- You point, in your review, to the lack of any really good jokes in the work, suggesting perhaps that our intention was to create a comedy. Nothing could be further from the fact - although we are not adverse to raising the odd wry smile ("titter" I think is the word you used) from our audience. Our audience is not stupid - we engage in a conversation, not a bludgeoning (that might refer to the issue above, re stereotypes).

... I could go on, at considerable length, but I'll spare you. Did none of these issues occur to you?

I fear for your well-being as a writer, Colin. It is the work of The opera Project that, for several years, has been but one focus of study in our tertiary institutions, in the consideration of the generation and development of ideas and stagecraft. And so, as more students graduate to creating new work and commanding influence in contemporary theatrical practice, I am afraid that you might find the inevitable "sea-change" increasingly difficult to reconcile. Certain absolute attitudes re the "correctly written play" will gradually, but certainly, lose their currency, and certain authoritative demands will prove to be anachronisms. Impressionism, post-impressionism, cubism, fauvism, abstract-impressionism etc etc did NOT invalidate 19th century realism as a spectacular painterly epoch. But other more pressing concerns emerged, and it simply meant that a new (and much later) movement of neo-realism was needed to reassert the impressive power of the realist image, but as a power that could no longer claim any pretension toward "absolute truth" or the "mandatory".

Perhaps I have proffered more ideas in this letter than warranted, but please rest assured that you will never have to write about The opera Project's work again.

yours sincerely,

Nigel Kellaway

P.S. You shared your opinions about our work with, potentially, many thousands of readers. If, in this response, I have insulted your intellect and experience it is because you have demonstrated scant evidence of those qualities in your review. My letter is, however, personally addressed to you (though I have shared it with my immediate professional peers connected with THE AUDIENCE & OTHER PSYCHOPATHS). I leave it to you to decide whether it would be appropriate to forward this letter to your editor for publication.

ACQUITTAL REPORT to the New Media Arts Board, Australia Council

the audience & other psychopaths

Performers: Karen Cummings Nigel Kellaway Katia Molino

Director:	Nigel Kellaway
Text:	Amanda Stewart
	Nigel Kellaway and Katia Molino
Music:	Stephen Adams
	Sound Engineer (2001) Mark Ward
	Peter Oldham
Video Artist:	
Lighting Designer & Production Manager:	Simon Wise
Sound Operator & Stage Manager:	Barbara Clare
Original Dramaturgy (2001):	Melita Rowston
Publicists:	Michaela Coventry & Harley Stumm
Graphic design:	Suzanne Boccalatte
Photography:	Heidrun Löhr
Incognito film appearances:	Deborah Pollard Eric Molino
Season:	February 10th - 21st, 2004 Performance Space, Sydney

Project description and Process

The opera Project had already acquitted development funding in 2001 from the NSW Ministry for the Arts for an initial exploration on ***The Audience & Other Psychopaths***. Over a 6 month period each of the three intersecting "works" (of Kellaway, Molino and Cummings/Stewart/Adams) were explored quite individually. After an initial intensive 1 week workshop considering a draft structure, the collaborators went their separate ways and wrote in virtual isolation. Its several parts presented a riot of dramaturgical possibilities. The collaborators then regrouped for a 3 week period to collide their material. As structured material emerged the collaboration of video artist Peter Oldham and lighting designer Simon Wise entered the process. The results were presented one night to an invited audience in October 2001. The development process had resulted in a rich accumulation of material for further exploration and "a million loose ends". The feedback from peers and our own self-assessment defined the ongoing process to complete the work. In the more than 2 years that elapsed between that development process and our eventual ability to complete and stage the work in 2004, the principal artists continued their conversations and musings on how they would like to address the obvious short-comings in the work to date. In mid 2004 Kellaway, Molino, Stewart and Adams spent 2 intensive days in meeting, finalising solutions that Kellaway had accumulated and drafted over the 2 year hiatus, and planned a strategy. Stewart and Kellaway then collaborated in writing additional off-stage dialogue scenes for Molino and Cummings, which were recorded and worked into the score by Adams. In January 2004 the pre-recorded video sections were filmed, edited and synced to the emerging sound on quadraphonic DVD. The budget then afforded a 4 day rehearsal period for Kellaway and Molino and a 10 day bump-in and technical rehearsal session, culminating in a 8 night performance season.

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The Audience & Other Psychopaths collided an array of media including scripted theatre, physical performance, performance poetry, opera, video and radiophonic work. It involved a flexible and affordable application of sound and video technology, referencing work in a number of different contemporary media to produce a distinctive hybrid performance work.

It is a bleak comedy, presenting three parallel and intersecting scenarios, performed simultaneously in the theatre - each with their own logic and structure, and working through their own intersection of theatrical means and media. They explored the climate of paranoia and conspiracy theorising that proliferates around the public's (and subject's) need to interpret public acts as significant and meaningful:

Nigel Kellaway performs, in the guise of a drag queen movie "extra", a one-sided (contrived) dialogue with a member of the audience - a reflection on a story by Patricia Highsmith. Two strangers meet. They both have someone in their lives they wish to be rid of. Kellaway proposes a pact - that they each commit a murder on behalf of the other. With no apparent motive they would both avoid arrest. This scenario is the starting point for our narrative conceit. The relationship that develops between these two strangers, as opposed to the actual crime, is the focus. Nigel interrogates and cajoles his victim, who may well wonder what lies beyond the drag queen's mask ... and then suspect that a murder may be committed, in which he (the audience) may be implicated.

A drag queen all too often expresses the neurotic - iconically dressed, grasping at his assumed identity with all his socially bestowed masculine articulacy, and yet despairing of his inaction. But, in this work, he acts - the neurotic is transcended in psychopathy. This is an alternative transgendered voice - one not propelled by carnal impulses.

Katia Molino performs the role of a "film auteur" in the process of shooting a movie (or perhaps B-grade television soap opera!). Certain theatrical processes are reflected in the deconstructive nature of film making, in which scenes are shot out of sequence (in stark contrast with the powerful thrust of Kellaway's linear narrative). She casts the audience as both extras and some leading actors in her movie. By chance, she casts Kellaway's audience victim as her romantic co-star. Yes, she is also the star in her movie (in the tradition of Truffaut, the great theatrical actor-managers, et al).

Her "film" is performed in Italian language (foreign/inarticulate to most in the audience). Does the "voiceless" performer present a cipher to which the audience attaches its own meanings, or can she exert her own control on the myriad readings? Or is this overwhelmed by the articulacy of her "expressive" body?

The performances of Molino and Kellaway are filmed by video artist Peter Oldham both prior to performance and live onstage, their images multiplied on the two large projection screens at either end of the open space. The response of our audiences lauded our intersection of performance, video and sound. There was a clear dramaturgical purpose to the video. The audience is constantly shifting their gaze between the close-up projected image of the performers and their live performance in the space. This presented a unique challenge for Kellaway and Molino as they constantly negotiated the different demands of theatre and film acting. Also, as the camera scans the audience and their close-up images are projected large on the screen, that they suddenly become protagonists, despite doing very little other than observe. Over the past year or so Performance Space has improved their video facilities with high quality, matching projectors and professional DVD players, allowing us to play them in sync with our third video source (the live camera), seamlessly switching these three sources live between the projectors. We were able to mix the prerecorded and live images across the space, achieving a much more interesting blend, and posing questions of what is 'real' and what is 'constructed' much more clearly than in our 2001 development.

The Audience and other Psychopaths has no live musician. Two actors, a cameraman and the audience take the stage. The recorded sound is the voice of another protagonist - the voice of the unseen (disembodied) soprano who, from her offstage dressing room, plans a physical act of revenge against her former lover, Katia Molino. (ie. dynamiting the building and its audience). Karen Cummings (soprano) performed a recorded spoken and sung monologue written by performance poet Amanda Stewart in collaboration with composer Stephen Adams. The

declamatory, yet disembodied, interior voice operated as an extended and uncensored stream of consciousness, though physically controlled through the recorded medium, using a 4-speaker surround system to create a dynamic theatrical and choreographic presence in sound. The resulting musical work pushed Cumming's disembodied voice to a considerable degree, ransacking the cultural resources of spoken and sung female roles from the blues to the operatic to the techno. Our mission in this work was to create a disembodied score that acted as a presence competing with the authority of the physical bodies onstage, influencing or even possessing the bodies/actions on the stage. This has emerged as one of the most challenging interdisciplinary processes The opera Project has explored, as it poses not only technical challenges but also those of a meta-theatrical nature. Our strategy in this latest process was to develop a much stronger theatrical / narrative relationship between Karen and the onstage material (particularly in inventing the fraught emotional relationship between her and Katia Molino). We got a lot closer, in this process, to our goals than in 2001, but have contemplated the possibility that our initial goal/thesis was in fact largely impossible. But still, the different theatrical means of communication in these three disparate characters and their controlling media (music/physical performance/soliloquy) and their interaction drive toward an examination of a culturally defined 'articulacy'/'inarticulacy'. We are contemplating issues of power as the audience asks which (if any) of the three works presented are dominant? Who is controlling whom? Who perhaps has killed, or will be killed by whom? The audience is implicated in this fiction of performance.

Successes, challenges and Impact of the project.

The process of creating *The Audience & Other Psychopaths* has been an agonisingly protracted affair - for which The opera Project shoulders total responsibility. Initial discussions between Stephen Adams and Nigel Kellaway and planning began in January 2000, but we were unable to secure support in 5 applications. We eventually applied to the New Media Arts Board for support to realise *The Audience & Other Psychopaths* because other more discrete artform funding bodies had, perhaps, found it difficult to accommodate the emerging work within their specific artform constraints.

The 4 years from conception to final realisation have demanded a certain tenacity (some might call it "pig-headedness"!) and an enormous loyalty, patience and commitment from all the collaborators. There has been a positive side to this: ample time for the ideas to settle. We are very aware, though, of how the process has threatened to dissipate our energies, and how a certain desperation to fulfil our commitment to the project has led us to embrace perhaps too many compromises. The budgets on the successive applications over the 4 years were gradually reduced from \$49,000 to \$21,000. This has put an enormous strain on everyone involved in the project. Many aspects of the vision could never be explored. This experience of making work on compromised funds has certainly played a part in our recent decision to return the funding for our next work *castrati* to the Theatre Board and NSW Ministry for the Arts.

Audiences:

The opera Project normally plans its seasons to coincide with university semesters, and carefully negotiates relationships with performance and dance faculties. This has been extremely beneficial to our box office over the past few years. It was a gambol to move this season to February to coincide with Sydney's New Mardi Gras. We had hoped to attract a stronger gay and lesbian audience, in lieu of our forfeited student crowd. Unfortunately the resources and priorities of the Mardi Gras Festival organisation were not such that they could offer much support. However, as the season developed, we certainly noticed an increasing gay audience. The demographic was, as usual for the company, very broad. Though the numbers were disappointing, it was encouraging to see many people lured to Performance Space for their first time.

We were always aware that the work had the potential to offend a number of people, with it's cliched hysterical lesbian, lipstick "has-bian" and asexual psychopathic drag queen. But it seems the sheer frivolity of the work undermined most offence. Certainly it dismayed some of the audience: "What's it about?". From a socio/political position - not much!

Given that *The Audience & Other Psychopaths* has no live music component, The opera Project was keen to support a new ensemble, **LE CONCERT FRANÇAIS d'australie**, by providing the theatre free of charge for their inaugural recital of Louis-Nicolas Clérambault's solo cantatas, *Medée* and *Pirame et Tisbé*, featuring long-time collaborator of The opera Project, countertenor Peretta Anggerek. They presented their recital on Sunday 15th February, on our "day off", to a capacity audience.

Challenges and successes for the artists:

The Audience & Other Psychopaths is very different from the opus created by The opera Project over the previous 6 years. The opera Project does not believe it should necessarily develop a particular "house style". It's concerns have always been in hybrid practice, readily embracing a plethora of artform influences, technologies and readings. We have always eschewed any lavish or expensive "dressing" of our work, and so the processes employed in making each work are always evidently reflected in the product.

The work presented us with several artistic and technological challenges. The interplay of video from multiple sources with full surround quadraphonic sound and integrated live performance was relatively new territory for us all. Our accomplishments in this area were widely lauded by our audience. Clearly, neither video nor sound were mere "wallpaper" for the live performance. This was a performative and "hybrid" challenge, and we hope to see the results reflected in others' work in this area.

The tireless work of production manager Simon Wise must be acknowledged here. He "makes things happen", solving technological problems, inventing and building devices with almost no financial outlay; always attentive to his collaborators' requirements and concerns. It's perhaps worth noting that The opera Project (and particularly Nigel Kellaway) is still Simon's longest term and most regular collaborator and confronts him with new interesting challenges on every production.

We were very keen to have Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch as dramaturgs on the work. They had seen the work-in-progress presentation in 2001 and were enthused by its potential. They had clear ideas of what elements needed development, and suggested several solutions to obvious problems at the time. However, the work continued to develop in the minds of the other collaborators in the 2 year hiatus, and script revisions emerged. The budget was only ever going to afford a minimal fee for dramaturgy in a very short studio time. When Keith and Virginia saw the revisions already made, they both felt that we had taken the project so far, and were well on the way to solving several of the problems, and felt their fees might be better spent on other budget points. Their responses to the final production were extremely positive and gratifying.

Both writer Amanda Stewart and composer Stephen Adams considered *The Audience & Other Psychopaths* a uniquely rewarding experience, involving them in media and collaborative processes that were quite new to them. The opera Project tends not to compartmentalise responsibilities. All artists are keenly aware of the challenges and concerns of each other, and share in the process of problem-solving. It has been instructive for us all to have been immersed in all aspects of the production from its conception 4 years ago, and equal witnesses to its development.

Both Katia Molino and Nigel Kellaway were rewarded by the considerable attention paid to the success of their performances - meticulously developed over a number of years.

None of the collaborators can honestly say we truly "enjoyed" the protracted process of creating ***The Audience & Other Psychopaths***, but it was a work with elements to which we were all joyously committed. We all have strong reservations about several aspects of the eventual product, but it is still a work we are immensely proud of. We are confident that we resolved the major problems (at these those that concerned us), even though they perhaps still remain a mystery to others.

Support:

The Audience & Other Psychopaths would never have been realised without the tireless support of Performance Space. Rehearsal space, 2 of the 3 weeks in the theatre free of rent (enabling an all important 10 days of technical set-up and rehearsal), use of their data projectors free of charge, and their provision of Michaela Coventry as publicist - all meant that the lion share of the budget could be dedicated to nominal fees for all the collaborating artists.

The opera Project thanks the New Media Arts Board for its enabling of the company's endeavours to support the work of a number of mature and notable artists at a time in their careers when they are proving a capacity to produce their best and most complex work, and their commitment to a hybrid practice that strives to revitalise the more discrete artforms, guiding them toward alternative outcomes.

the audience & other psychopaths

EXPENDITURE

FEES	Kellaway	3500.00
	Molino	2500.00
	Wise	2000.00
	Oldham	1800.00
	Barbara Clare	1500.00
	Adams	2000.00

	Cummings	400.00	
	Stewart	400.00	
	Publicist	2000.00	
	Crew	181.82	
	Salary Oncosts	520.00	16801.82
PROD Rent		7500.00	
	Electricity	246.30	
	Light bulbs etc.	106.00	
	Sets and Props	355.66	
	Costumes / Makeup	144.17	
	Video hire / production	680.00	
	Sound production	30.00	
	Speaker Hire	450.00	9512.13
ADMIN General		335.27	
	Eftpos charges	44.09	379.36
PROMOT.	Mardi Gras Ad	50.00	
	Poster Print and design	1910.00	
	Ad design	200.00	
	RealTime Ad	297.50	
	SMH listing	730.80	
	SSO Ad	400.00	
	Poster distribution	604.55	
	Video documentation	250.00	
	Video edit and prints	200.00	
	Food and Wine	252.22	4895.07
Box office share to Performance Space			668.80
TOTAL			32257.18

INCOME

Grant		21000.00	
Interest		318.45	
Program sales		298.30	
Box office		3444.00	
Sponsorship/in kind	Rent	5000.00	
	Publicist fee	2000.00	
	Video projectors	600.00	
TOTAL			32660.75
profit			403.57

The Audience and other Psychopaths

2004 FINAL

Katia discretely chooses a man in the audience to play the leading male role (Guy/Luigi), and explains the simple parameters of his role.

Scene 1 *KATIA IN FOYER*

Katia: Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Katia Molino - the director and star of this evening's film shoot.

Thankyou all for making yourselves available, and for being on time, as we have a lot of scenes to get through this evening. We'll be shooting all the scenes out of order, this evening, so don't worry if you can't understand what's going on - you're just extras.

We'll be starting with the final scene in the movie, and you will all be required, so could I ask you all to make your way quietly onto the sound stage - and please don't sit on the seats, until I give you permission.

Scene 2 *Audience enters theatre, Katia organizes them around the space:*

(on microphone)

QUIET, PLEASE!

All women blonde, or pretending to be - beside the director's chairs.

All men 175 cm tall, or over - on the right hand.

Any other women in dresses or skirts on the left hand wall - and also all men under 30 years of age (please be realistic, gentlemen).

And the rest please just scatter yourselves around the space and act naturally.

Now we need someone to play Petro, the Gynaecologist.

You'll do - good hair - now just sit here and look authoritative.

You be playing opposite the mega-soprano Karen Cummings, in the role of Rosa, the Astro-physicist.

She's running a bit late (as to be expected), but will be joining you soon.

Don't worry - you won't have to sing - Ms Cummings makes quite enough noise by herself.

Now we going to need a Mario - someone a bit older - with a hint of the "sugar daddy".

You! Perfect! Just sit down here and look distinguished....Mmm ... molto elegante!

And now, I'm very honoured to introduce (though he hardly needs introducing!) the award winning actor and "household name" ... star of the recent Hollywood blockbusters *FESTIVE BLOOD* and *BAGDAD CAPRICE*, and the now cult "indie" film *NYMPHOMANIACS IN TRANSIT*,

And ofcourse I should mention his stellar stage career - most recently in the Jacobean tragedy *THE BITCHES OF BOLOGNA* with June Salter, Amanda Muggleton (*spit*) and the adorable Hugo Weaving at the Sydney Opera House.

Ladies and gentlemen ... MR GUY HAINES!!!

A big round of applause, please!!!

Wardrobe!!! (*Barbara Clare brings red jacket - with lighter in right-hand pocket*)

I'm so very honoured ... and Guy's very honoured to be playing in the leading male role of Luigi Nobile, opposite me ... in MY movie.

We've already developed a very ... special relationship ... haven't we, Guy?

Guy's responded so generously and intuitively to my demands, and I know there's going to be a lasting ... friendship.

Now, Guy, we're starting with the final scene, when you're so tragically dead

(arranges Guy on ground, centrestage)
You look wonderful, Darling!

Where's Karen?
Karen?
Karen !

*(Katia opens dressing room door and enters-
2-3 seconds build of opera music atmos)*

Katia: What the fuck are you doing? Get dressed and get downstairs now!

Karen: He's down there, isn't he?

Katia: Look, it's just a film, you fuckwit.

Karen:

Oh, is that you, Guy? Hello, Guy.
Oh, Guy! Guy!

The great director - Katia Molino

... with her B-grade has beens and spaghetti
trash....

How dare you!
That's it. You can go on without me!
I'm not coming down.

Karen: I'll kill him! You two faced cunt!

Katia: Fine! You're out!

(Katia's steps on stairs live)

Karen: Katia, come back! I mean what I say!
I'll fucking kill him!!

(SUDDEN CUT TO SILENCE AS KATIA SLAMS DOOR)

(Katia hastily re-casts a member of the audience as Rosa)

Katia: We need a body double. You'll do! Sit here. You don't have to sing in this scene - just think "big" and loud.

Katia:

Grow up!

Karen Cummings - Miss Lemon Delicious ...
backing vocals
and TV jingles...

Fine.
Fine!

Now, everyone, this is a funeral, so I need you all to look very concerned, and concentrated on my performance.

Except, ofcourse, you Guy - you're dead.

Peter, Are you ready?

Peter (cameraman): Yes

Katia: Roll camera. Sound. And ACTION!

Live FILM SHOOT - projected on large screen
MUSIC: Rossini - overture to *L'italiana in Algeri*
Pre-recorded VIDEO 1 on small screen

(Katia at the funeral of Flavio, who she slowly discovers is in fact Luigi)

Katia: Ciao, Ciao, condoglianze, poverello Flavio.

Pietro! Rosa! Povero Flavio, mi fa così dispiacere, che sciocchezza, incredibile, chi poteva fare questo nemmeno aveva trente anni, era buono come il pane, è così triste, che tragedia.

Ma perché mi guardate così? Cosa vuole dire questo sguardo? Ma non è Flavio?

Se non è Flavio allora chi è?

at 2.25 *(Throw flowers - mourning hysterically over the body - screaming her revenge)*

No!!! Misericordia no! No Luigi no! Non il mio Luigi! Ammazzatemi, annazzatemi, per l'amore di Dio.

Non ne posso più.

Ma perché, ma chi chi.

(She sees Mario, and approaches in a rage.)

Mario? Mario, Mario perché è morto?

Bastardo, ladro, assassino!

Quando to prendo tra le mani....

at 3.05

(There is a sudden gun shot on the sound recording - Katia falls to ground, and vainly attempts to crawl toward Luigi's corpse, reaching to his hand - a Lina Wertmuller moment)

(Suddenly Nigel appears at the theatre doors)

Scene 3

Nigel: I'm sorry, I'm late

at 3.33 Katia: **CUT!!! (Video image snap to black at 3.35)**

Nigel: How the fuck do I get in? This way?

Yes, I know I'm late - I try not to make a habit of it. It's just that I've been involved in a bit of an incident.

But I'm OK I'm actually feeling very strong right now. Well, hello there!

Katia: You're here for the secretary scene?

Nigel: Yes, that's right. My agent warned me it's very small role, but I know it's going to be incredibly liberating!

Katia: We won't be needed for another hour.
(Katia moving Guy to chair in front of large screen)

Nigel: That's fine - I'll just wait over there....
Or should I go to makeup straight away? It always takes an eternity!
(moves to proscenium lip, leaving brief case on upstage table)
(To audience) I've made a bit of a start though - I went to David Jones this afternoon and bought one of their new foundations. You don't think its a bit pale, do you? Well, you know, there's a simple remedy for that - blush, blush, blush, blush, blush ... can't get enough of it! I thought I'd do pink! And what do you think about the nails? My thought was burnt orange - just to set off the outfit.
Tell me, what have you got on your face?! I'm not sure it works. But you're just an extra in the shadows, so it's probably OK.....

(Katia bashes Nigel with a foam baseball bat, and exits to dressing room)

Nigel: (staggering down the space to Guy)
Jesus!!! Did you see that?
I need you as a witness, Buddy! - that's work place harassment!
The fucking cunt bashed me!
O God, hold me! No, not like that! I need help!
My makeup's a mess, and I want to feel so close to my period, I could scream but I won't.

(takes cigarette). Got a light?
Oh, I think you do - I think there's one in you right hand pocket.
See? - I was right. Thanks (steals lighter)
Some people say I'm psychotic ... sorry ... psychic ... ofcourse I couldn't possibly comment.
Oh, don't worry - I'm not pregnant. No innocent will be harmed.

Katia: (entering from dressing room with 2 suitcases. Karen is warming up in dressing room)
Listen Karen, if you still want the role, get your fucking arse into gear!!
(to blondes) Blonde's by the director's chairs!

Nigel: (lights fill the space - Nigel recognizes Guy) Hey! I know you!

Katia: (To Nigel) Hey you! Didn't I make myself clear? PISS OFF!!

(Nigel sets himself at distant cafe table in front of small screen, with an ashtray.)

Scene 4 FILM SETUP

Katia: Now, blondes, don't look at the camera - you're just tourists.
Do we have children?
Simon I asked for children! Is that too much to ask for? A simple request - just a few blonde children!!

(Katia exits in fury to dressing room)

Karen! Are you getting dressed or aren't you?!

Scene 5

Nigel: Aren't you Guy Haines?

Oh sure you are, I saw you blast Hugo Weaving into total actorly oblivion on the Playhouse stage last season. Got one those nominations, didn't you?

Oh, I certainly admire people who do things.

Oh, I'm sorry - I'm so rude! - my name's Nigel. Nigel Kellaway.

Prerecorded VIDEO 2 *on small screen - a fast catalogue of photographs of NK in performance over the past 10 years.*

Nigel: See? *(show ring with insignia)*

I suppose you think it's corny- "Ni-gel" - but my mother gave it to me, so I have to wear it, just to please her. One should always make an effort for a "loved-one", don't you agree?

Oh look, I really don't talk that much - you go ahead and watch. *(Indicating video of Nigel on small screen)*

They tell me he's absolutely riveting!

Scene 6

Katia: *(from dressing room)* Well fuck you, Karen. I'll ask Guy!

(Katia enters in gold frock, asks Guy to zip her up 2nd chair beside Guy)

Nigel: *(to audience)*

It must be very exciting, being so important.

Oh, people who really do things are important.

I mean - look at me - I don't seem to do anything - just a spot of typing - the odd email ...

Katia: *(giving Guy some keys)* I think you left these at my place last night...they're my spare set.

(Katia exits, turning , midstage, to blow Guy a kiss and giggle)

(Nigel offers a cigarette to Guy)

Nigel Ciggie? ... No? ... I smoke TOO much!

(Lights cigarette - stops to contemplate the lighter)

From 'K to G'? 'K' to Guy. I bet I can guess who 'K' is - Katia Molino. You see, I sometimes turn the arts page and see the society section, and the pictures. Katia Molino - she's very beautiful! She's Antonio Molino, the famous film director's daughter, isn't she?

Oh yes, I'm quite a reader. Ask me anything, I've got the answers. Even news about people I don't know. Like who wants to marry whom, once his wife gets her divorce.

(Katia throws 2 more bags down dressing room steps)

Nigel: Oh, sorry, there I go again - too friendly! It always happens - just when I meet someone I really like and admire - and then I open my big mouth.... just pretend I'm not here.

Scene 7

LIVE FILM SHOOT: **SAN MARCO PIAZZA SCENE -**

Katia: Everyone! Train station, Venezia. I want everyone looking very tired and disappointed. Roll Sound ... and Action!

(Sound - Street Atmos with short interludes of Karen singing Rossini arias)

(Katia is waiting at the station with the blondes - she is late and the vapparetto is not arriving.)

Scusate, ma quando viene questo treno, sono qua ad aspettare per più di un'ora.
(She rushes by foot to the Piazza where she meets Luigi/Guy at table in front of large screen and gives him one of 2 plane tickets)

Luigi!

Che manicomio stamattina, io non ne posso più.

Prima non trovavo le borse, e poi il tassi era in ritardo, e il treno, dov'è il treno. Chi lo sa. Vi cercavo, non vi ho visto. Ai portato il Passaporto? Le carte? Oh menomale. Non poteva dormire ieri sera, pensavo solo a te. Guarda, ancora si vede la vostra bocca sul mio corpo. L'attra notte ho sognato che le mie gambe erano fatte de cioccolata, e tu le mangiavi. E tu cosa sogni? Tu non dici niente, tu non parli mai. Prima che mi scordo, I biglietti. Allora, ci vediamo, vado, a domani.
Ciao bello.

(Katia slowly exits to dressing room)

Nigel: *(approaching Guy)* So, when's the wedding?
You and Katia Molino. It was in the paper.
Oh don't tell me! Bigamy?! Well yes, I guess so, in your present predicament.

But right now, I suppose divorce is a fairly simple operation... No?...

Well, anyway, it sure is wonderful having you as company here this evening.

Say, why don't we

Sorry? You're going to Lane Cove? Who would want to go to Lane Cove?

Oh, that's right - Lane Cove, the old conjugal patch - a little chat with your wife about the divorce?

Well, Guy, I DO wish you luck.

Say, listen, if that's the case, why don't we have catering send us some drinks up to the dressing room right now - just the two of us - something bubbly - about the only kind of bubbles in my life, at the moment.

(Leading Guy toward dressing room) And we'll drink to the next Mrs Haines.

(Katia enters from dressing room in red and white checked suit)

Katia: *(to Nigel)* Hey you! You still don't get it, do you?! Hands off the merchandise and FUCK OFF!!!

(Katia takes Guy back to his seat)

Prerecorded VIDEO 3 on small screen (**VIDEO 2 CONTINUED** with NK in dressing room footage superimposed)

Katia: Just a few more scenes, Guy.

And then we can go home and *(giggling and frottage)*

(Katia exits behind big screen)

Nigel Sure, I went to acting school. I got kicked out of three of them - drinking, not quite committed enough.

(sitting opposite Guy)

Not like you, eh Guy?

Sure - I'm just a bum.

Nigel says I'm a bum - he hates me.

He thinks I ought to catch the 8.40 bus every morning, punch a time-clock somewhere, and work my way up from the bottom selling camping equipment or something. I don't think so.

I can tell you, I get so sore with him sometimes, I could kill him.

Well, I want to do something.

Oh yes, I've got a theory that one should do everything before one dies.

Like, have you ever driven a car blindfolded at 150 K an hour? I did.

And I flew a jet plane. Almost blew all that sawdust right out of my head! And I'm going to make a reservation on the first commercial rocket to the moon. Oh, yes - I've got very big plans!

Honestly, I do!

Well, OK, I know I'm not like you, Guy.

You're lucky. You're smart.

Marrying the famous film director's daughter. That sure enhances the career!

Hey, hey, hey, take it easy, Guy. I like you, remember? I'm your friend.

I'd do anything for you.

(Video stops)

(Katia's mobile rings on stage - Nigel answers it - Katia enters in bra and panties)

Scene 8

Prerecorded VIDEO 4 - MASSACRE (on small screen)

edited footage of the massacre scene from Visconti's movie

THE DAMNED.

music track 1.02 mins - start film at 7secs = 55sec video

(3 x rings = 7 seconds)

Nigel: *(live onstage with mobile phone)* Hello

Karen: It's me. Don't hang up.

(Nigel: Sorry?)

Karen: I'm sorry.

(Nigel: No, really, it's me that's sorry. Listen, should I pass you over to my boss?)

Karen: No, not that...listen...when this is all over...when it's...just you and me again...you know...we'll just get in the car like before and we'll just...we'll go north again, just like before...just you and me...and the dogs...remember...late afternoon...that golden light...as we...so soft...so...
...there's nothing to worry about...nothing at all...I'll take care of him...I'll take care of everything...as always...nothing to worry about. I'll have the car out he back at...

(Nigel: No, sorry, I don't drive ... No, I had my dog put down last week ...)

Karen: Katia, I really feel quite... *(Nigel hangs up on her - video to black)*

Nigel: *(to Katia)* I think that was for you.

Katia: Peter, come with me! I'm getting an AVO against that singing cunt, and I want this documented... as evidence!

(Katia exits to Karen's dressing room, followed by Peter)

Nigel: *(to Guy)* I'm not sure we were supposed to hear that. Excuse me.

(Nigel moves to sit at Mario's table)

Nigel: Very embarrassing! I just hope the press don't get hold of that.
Lesbostism - it leaves a very unpleasant taste in the mouth!

(FADE TO BLACK as dressing room door closes)

Scene 9 KAREN'S DRESSING ROOM

Prerecorded VIDEO 5 on both screens. *Camera follows Katia into Karen's dressing room. Katia slugs down a glass of bourbon, and puffs on a cigar in silence, as she changes into a silver dress and wig. TOTAL 1.07 MINS*

(Karen ARIA section A - slow cabaret)

I really feel quite disorientated...
I've been involved in a little incident...
it was a... well anyway let's not ... let's just say... let's just say that I that I... chose to...
to ah... externalise my pain...

at 46 secs (section B - Baroque scream)

it...it...it...
... a scream... yes a scream... a scream ... yes a scream... a scream

Scene 10

Live video - **MURDER PLOT**

Dressing room door suddenly flies open and out dances Katia in a silver disco frock and wig, followed by Peter with camera. She carries a ghetto blaster playing Italian 1980's pop music. She dances towards Guy/Luigi's table as Karen continues to sing

(Karen Aria - da capo section A - slow cabaret)

I really feel quite disorientated...
I've been involved in a little incident..

KATIA TURNS OFF GHETTO-BLASTER AND PASSES GUY THE GUN IN SLOW MOTION, INDICATING MARIO

Nigel: *(to Mario)*

I think she's looking at you.

(Katia TURNS ON GHETTO-BLASTER and exits behind large screen as her ghetto blaster fades to silence)

You don't think my outfit's a bit severe, do you?
Well, Hell, I like it! And I'm dressing to please only myself, these days. Now that Nigel's let me down. But please, don't think I'm bitter. I'm not!
Hey, has anyone told you how much you look like Guy Haines, the actor?
I think it's the bone structure - such soft eyes
But then again, it might be just the lights.
Please, take my card.

Scene 11

KAREN - INTENTIONS CLEAR

(Nigel moves slowly to dressing room as LX fades to Black)

Karen: *(singing)* *Aria - exaggerated slow sprechstimme*

how vulnerable
trapped in a special place
inhaling each other's breath
shedding each other's skins
trapped in her delusions
who is the most attractive?
who will be eliminated?

(Phone dialling x 2)

(monologue on phone - Katia live on phone behind scrim , trying to interject)

Katia: Pronto!

Karen: It's done...it's all ready. I've set the timer...I just thought I'd let you know...

Katia: Look, Karen...

Karen I've got a bomb up here you fucker!...*Now* will you listen to me?...Listen to me!...You'd better scrap your little sex and death fantasy now, darling...Momma's here...I'd advise you to get everybody out of here in the next twenty eight minutes...JUST LEAVE THE BOY!

KAREN KNOWS...
KAREN KNOWS BEST...
WHAT KAREN DID NEXT...
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO KAREN?...
ANNA KAREN...
WHO'S AFRAID OF KAREN?...
KAREN IN LOVE
KAREN'S CHOICE...
ALL ABOUT KAREN...
IN BED WITH KAREN... (*sexual heavy breathing*)
KAREN GOES CAMPING...

(Katia slams down phone)

(Live Video close up on Nigel, as he appears in his dressing room door)

Nigel: What did you say your wife's name was?
Miriam? That's right - Miriam Joyce Haines
I suppose she's played around quite a lot.
Don't get upset Guy - it's all too frequent these days.
And, hey, what do you care - what with Katia Mol..... whatever....

Karen: (*recitative - slow intent whisper*)
so tenuous so soft her voice on the mobile one fuse box 14 lines dust and frayed plastic
the wires naked so fragile suspended at the point before the pleasure so perfect so fragile the
stations the terminals splitting dissembling the ports and connections so tenuous soft her
voice on the mobile disconnected red disconnecting blue the frayed steel the gaps in between so
fragile so perfect

Nigel: (*at upstage table*)
Hey listen, want to hear one of my ideas for the perfect murder?
The busted light in the bathroom, or the carbon-monoxide in the garage?
Hey, what's a life between two guys? Some people are better off dead.
Like Nigel or your wife, for instance.

Karen: (*aria - operatic musing*)
She was wearing gold.
I remember being entranced, being entranced by her once
(*spoken*) it was her silence.

Nigel: (*centrestage*)
Oh, that reminds me of a wonderful idea I had once. I used to put myself off to sleep at
night just figuring it out:
Like, let's say, you wanted to get rid of your wife.
Like, let's just suppose you had a very good reason .
But obviously you'd be afraid to kill her.
Why? - because you'd get caught.
Why? Because you've got a MOTIVE.

(Nigel moves to Guy's table)

Karen: *(recitative - edgy alternating chant/whisper)*

1 fuse box
28 drops on average
it's no accident
a cry
a series of numbers
it's all interconnected
it's all in a mess!
there are no accidents!
only ideas!
What a mess!

Nigel: *(Sitting opposite Guy)*

So, here's my idea - it's so simple:
Two guys meet accidentally, like you and me -
No connection between them at all - never even met each other before.
But each guy has somebody he'd like to get rid of.
So - guess! - mmm! - THEY SWAP MURDERS!
Each guy does the other guy's murder for him, so there's nothing to connect them.
Each guy murders a total stranger.
It's like: you do my murder, I do your's - your wife, my Nigel.
CRISS-CROSS.
Oh, we do talk the same language, don't we, Guy! You think my theory's okay, don't you?
You like it! CRISS-CROSS!

Scene 12 Live Film: CHASE SCENE -

(Nigel exits behind large screen)

*Katia runs from behind large screen in wedding dress - throwing her shoes at the camera, her bridal bouquet at Rosa, in fury.
She exits to her dressing room*

Katia: Brutto!! Vecchio!! Se non mi va non mi va e basta!!
Io non ne posso piu.
È mal'educato, stronzo, cretino!!
Finocchio!!
Se lo vuoi è tuo!!

Scene 13

(Nigel behind main screen at front door)

Nigel: What day is it today? Saturday? Guess who I was last Sunday!
Oh, I'm just reflecting - on a body that can't really exist.
He was here - we all knew his name - spoke it every day.
Then suddenly he's gone.
What do YOU remember?

(start sound) **Prerecorded VIDEO 6** (starting in Black)

Karen:

so soft

that warmth pastel late afternoon

gold gold shredding the room into
tiny pieces souvenirs precious bits that

Nigel:

The name or the body?
I'm very, very concerned about my hands -
I want them to look absolutely perfect.
Unfortunately, I still bite my nails.

But I'm alright - don't worry about me.
I took my vitamins yesterday, Mummy -
a whole bottle full.

And besides, right now, I've got a North Shore
ferry to catch.

(Nigel leaves space, closing doors - **FADE TO BLACKOUT**)

Scene 14 **KAREN'S INTERNAL WORLD**

at 1.17 Prerecorded VIDEO 6 on both screens -

Nigel getting into taxi...Nigel running along Circular Quay...Nigel on ferry...Nigel furtively approaching Miriam's front door - ring the bell...Miriam answers door - dressing gown, glasses, hair in rollers, green face mask, smoking...Strangling. Miriam's glasses dropping onto a rug. Shot of her legs lying on rug...Nigel picking up lighter and glasses from rug...Nigel on ferry - eating icecream - putting on Miriam's glasses.

Karen: It started to look like junk gold bits of pink fluff
the curve of her arm her breath my face buried pushing deeper no I'm never coming out
staying here for ever closer please closer
the first breath her skin so warm pale her smell her gaze her breast rounded warm so soft

at 3.37 Nigel movie stops *moving into Katia very slowly turning on the spot for 11 minutes, slowly stripping naked for the camera*

KATIA ENTERS

(Katia stretches washing line across the space onto which she hangs and pegs large white bed sheets, assisted by the audience. She moves to Guy/Luigi and kisses him chastely on the forehead. Then slowly she moves back through the sheets, pursued by the Peter and camera, slowly stripping as she makes her slow exit to the dressing room.)

like this it's it's but i and sometimes these things just who would have ever it just totally
came out of the it could happen to any day every day patching up the unexpected

at 4.01 a dog circles its tail an unfamiliar smell a word perhaps some means of escape a word is
always the way back the way back to the next escape the next place a means of repeating
reproducing a series of constantly shifting reproducing bits and pieces

at 5.08 *(Katia hanging sheets)*

each little girl/boy born into it into a little girl/ boy learning to eat their words

at 5.25 Nigel: Guy!

their mother tongue a father tongue which speaks them totally unprepared for these things
just happen they didn't mean to it it's just that totally unpleasured in such things

at 6.07 Nigel: Over here, Guy!

at 6.10 98% unprepared in the beginning 48 drops on average that's just what happens wording
the milk patching up the unexpected cleaning up the bits and pieces precious bits pale

at 6.18 her smell gold shredding milking the word the first wound

at 7.05 reproducing repeating souvenirs precious bits that start to look like any day every day it's
later that things get even more complicated that's just the beginning it happened before I
before it she bits and pieces sometimes things just don't

at 7.37 (3 x telephone ring) the left over bits and pieces of things that didn't
(*Katia moves to answer phone*)

at 7.45 (*Katia mimes against her own voice as she walks upstage*)

Katia: Pronto!

Karen: Hello darling...

Katia: Look...I told you...

Karen: Not long to go now, darling. I'll meet you at the back with the car in 15 minutes.....

Katia: Look Karen. I've had it. I told you! I'm not coming!.....

Karen: Too late. Too late. Too late, late, late for that, *darling*.

Katia: I'm not going anywhere with you. For fuck's sake, leave me alone!

Karen: I'll never leave you. Don't worry. I'll never...

Katia: Look...Fuck off, and leave me alone. There is nothing between us.
It's over! Finished! Done!

Karen: Fine, darling, if that's what you want, I understand. Fine.
Yes, it will soon be over... for us all.
You're right, of course...so sorry, darling...so.....

(*Katia hangs up - SLOW MOTION RUN TOWARD GUY - SHE KISSES HIM*)

(*spoken bit prior to singing*) Fine...fine darling...everything as you like it...
(*eerily calm in passive aggressive mode*) ...of course...you wouldn't like to miss out on any
of the action, would you...would you like some coffee, darling?...is it hot enough,
darling?...more milk, darling?...more milk...more milk...my darling...fine...fine...
(*changes mode to aggressive*) You don't believe me, eh?...you don't listen!...you never
listen!...So you can go up with the rest of them!...if that's the only way I can convince

you...you must understand, you know...I just want you to understand, you know...you will...you'll see soon...you and G...G...Guy...everything will be clear soon, darling...Mark it...CUT! CUT! CUT!...

(KATIA WALKING THROUGH SHEETS, FOLLOWED BY CAMERA)

sometimes these things just...you know...cleaning up the bits and pieces...48 drops on average....

cleaning up the bits left over at the edge before the pleasure
Don't touch me!

This place is a dump! you'll never escape. eating your words eaten up eat up eat your pumpkin!

I may as well be invisible.

(Katia exiting toward dressing room - Nigel on Proscenium)

you told me that you. you said you'd never. you said I was your. you said that you'd. what I never said.

it's the it's it's it's spilling through the gaps

living my life around what i can't say I closer... please closer..

This place is a mess! This place is falling to bits!

th th th it's it's

s t kt r

s tkr r the the

pp t p p t

uffering ombas

CHrrrrrrrr arcoleptic p! s e altation

the the

sh sh sh t t t

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(Karen speaks)

(Katia renters in an office suit.

The sheets fall to the ground and are cleared away.)

She certainly was an impressive woman

It was her silence.

(Katia brings a table and chair centrestage)

We'd been apart for some time.

She wanted to meet.

I said that she didn't realise how dangerous that was.

She wouldn't listen of course. That's what I like about her.

Katia moves Guy/Luigi to sit at table with some paper work and pen.

Katia: The secretary scene.
(To Peter) Where is she?
Don't worry, we'll start

Scene 15 THE SECRETARY SCENE

Prerecorded VIDEO 7 on small screen

Clouds moving - a saturated blue sky - hyper-real

Live Video: *Peter constantly circles the action, filming Guy/Luigi, Nigel and Katia.*

Katia: Buon giorno.

Luigi Nobile.

Katia Molino (*gives Guy/Luigi her business card*)

Finalmente, mi hanno parlato di te tante volte.

Ah stai facendo le somme adesso.

Hmm, bene.

Io di queste cose ci capisco proprio un bel niente.

Il vostro ufficio è molto elegante!

Ah, mamma mia, che bella vista!

Se vede Il Colosseo da qua, e Piazza Navona, Il Foro Romano, La Citta del Vaticano, La Fontana di Trevi...

Nigel: (*Light slowly up on Nigel at side of space - LIGHTS CIGARETTE*)

Hello Guy. You don't seem very pleased to see me.

And I've brought you a little present.

Katia: Hai mai pensato di visitare l'Australia? Ho delle bellissime fotografie dell'Australia a casa, le vedete vedere.

(*Takes a room key from her cleavage and drops it tantalizingly into his lap*
Suddenly turns in surprise as Nigel enters with 2 coffee cups)

Nigel: I've brought you your coffees, sir

(*Takes off his glasses and places them on the table in front of Guy*)

Recognise them? Oh no, they're not mine - they're Miriam's.

It was very quick, Guy.

She felt no pain - all over in no time.

Katia: (*in fast forward - chaotic and possessed*)

Buon giorno.

Luigi Nobile.

Katia Molino (*gives Guy/Luigi her business card*)

Finalmente, mi hanno parlato di te tante volte.

Ah stai facendo le somme adesso.

Hmm, bene.

Io di queste cose ci capisco proprio un bel niente.

Il vostro ufficio è molto elegante!

Ah, mamma mia, che bella vista!

Se vede Il Colosseo da qua, e Piazza Navona, Il Foro Romano, La Citta del Vaticano, La Fontana di Trevi...

Nigel: Yes, I knew you'd be surprised,

but there's nothing for us to be worried about - noone saw me ...

.. (Only Miriam).

Katia: Hai mai pensato di visitare l'Australia? Ho delle bellissime fotografie dell'Australia a casa, le vedete vedere.
*(Takes a room key from her cleavage and drops it tantalizingly into his lap
Suddenly turns in surprise as Nigel re-enters with 2 coffee cups)*

Nigel: I've brought you your coffee, sir
And I was very careful, Guy - even when I dropped your cigarette lighter,
I went back to pick it up. *(Placing the cigarette on the table)*

(Katia tells Nigel to close the imaginary window curtains. She continues with a slow motion silent replaying of her scene)

Nigel: Oh, come on Guy, ofcourse I can get away with it!
Why should I go to Lane Cove to kill a total stranger?
Unless it was part of a plan, and you were in it.
Remember, you're the one who benefits - you're the free man now -
I didn't even know the girl.

(Katia is groping Nigel at the table)

Katia: How's about a little smile, sweetheart?

Nigel: How dare you! I'm after respect, goddamn it!
Not a snog over the photocopy machine!

Guy, if you go to the police, you'll be turning yourself in as an
accessory -
You had the MOTIVE!
You wanted it - we planned it together in the last scene, remember? -
CRISS CROSS.

I've brought you your coffee, sir!

(Nigel, Katia and Peter suddenly confront Guy/Luigi at the table)

Nigel: Guy, we need to talk about Nigel.
I've tried to make it really simple for you.
I've got a plan of the theatre and his dressing room already made up - see?

(Katia is growling madly at Nigel and Luigi, slowly exiting)

Nigel: I've brought you your coffees, sir
And the cutest little pistol I picked up in a pawn-shop.

I'm beginning to feel like I don't really exist.
I'm just someone I met once?
But I can't remember how to fill in the gaps -
I can't even remember what the gaps are.
DON'T CALL ME CRAZY!!!!

You know, you're not yourself, Guy.
You must be tired - I know I am - I've had a very strenuous evening!
But I know that when you've had a chance to think things over, you'll see I'm right.

(Placing the pistol on the table in front of Guy)

Nigel should be in his dressing room any minute now.

Scene 16 KAREN'S DEMISE

(Camera follows Nigel as he exits to his dressing room door)

Prerecorded VIDEO 8 (beginning in Black)

Karen: No! I'm not coming out! I'm never coming out!
Piss off! I said out now! I've had it with you! This time I have had it!
I love you. You smell! I've had it with you! Forgive me.
This time I have had it!
you're all complicit in it!
you're all a pack of putrescent pervs!
**LISTEN, IT'S MY BOMB, YOU FUCKERS -
AND WE'RE ALL GOING TOGETHER!!!**

at 24 secs:

Nigel: *(at dressing room door)* Guy!!!??? *(exits up stairs)*

Katia: Guy!!! This is our chance. Please Guy. Take it...take the gun!!
*(Katia drags Guy up to the dressing room, followed by Peter - closes door
THEATRE FADE TO BLACK)*

at 43sec: on small screen
Mad dressing room scene

Karen: *(recitative - wild fast cutting multi layered attack)*

at 1.48

Katia: Guy!!! This is our chance. Please Guy. Take it...take the gun!!

No Guy, not the camera man!

at 1.58 (gun shot - video goes to black - TOTAL BLACKOUT)

Nigel: Guy, ME!! ... ME!! ... ME!!
(gun shot) Thankyou, Guy

Karen: Katia! I love ...
(gun shot - operatic scream)

Katia: Guy!...we have (the whole world ahead of us).....Guy!!! ... Guy!!!

(4 x gun shot s- Katia screams - then silence at 2.30)

***(10 second pause - Guy enters the space, hangs coat over back of chair, places the gun
and his keys on the centre table, takes lighter and exits***

In November 2003 I eventually succumbed to pressure (or was that bullying?) from people such as Sarah Miller and Fiona Winning to submit an application to the Theatre Board of the Australia Council for a 2 year Fellowship (2 x \$40,000). They had listened to me whingeing for too many years about how difficult I was finding it to support my practice. So I wrote what was perhaps my most painfully conceived application - I actually find it much easier to talk about a project than to talk about myself. I thought it was probably the worst application I had ever written - but at least it was going to get people off my back!

Oddly enough, I was awarded the Fellowship.

NIGEL KELLAWAY

My work over the past 25 or more years has been made on short-term contracts. Many projects have been funded, but rarely have long term development processes been supported. Development time has been donated, but haphazardly. Still, I have been expected to produce original, generally profound and well finished productions. I have succeeded, on occasions. My keenness to maintain a core of regular collaborators over several years has sometimes been questioned, but has enabled some notion of development from project to project. My work serves a community, providing a platform for many exceptional artists to work on. In turn, they have welcomed the opportunity for exploration offered few other places in their artistic environment.

A surprise is expected with every new work - and that is difficult with what now usually amounts to an average of 4 weeks of creative rehearsal on each. I generally need to prepare (write) the works meticulously, in relative isolation, before rehearsals begin. Sometimes I have creatively linked projects to allow development, inviting criticism for "re-hashing" a concept.

I keep applying for more production funding, and have been remarkably successful, over the years, in demonstrating a certain tenacity in making work happen. I have been able to churn out more original works than many theatre artists in Australia over the past few decades, and hope that I have contributed in some way to the development of performance practice.

But my own practice, product driven as it has needed to be, has not allowed for much personal development in any radical way. Project and commission budgets fund immediate product, and the fees never stretch beyond that. (eg. a \$8000 fee is for a rare and major project that usually requires 5 months of total dedication, mostly in isolated preparation.)

I have too many planned projects awaiting realisation. But I am running out of ways to reconcile these ideas with the pragmatics of living as a middle-aged, independent artist in Sydney. This fellowship application is a request for necessary research and learning time, and the odd moment to reflect positively on what I am doing, and how it might benefit the performance environment in which I work.

I am proposing 3 major projects for research and development and a substantial period of observation in Europe:

THE BODY PROJECTS

1. TRANSVESTISM (January - December 2005)

A new solo performance (re)visiting the actor as imaging / "dressing" as "the other", as a visitor, a self declared outsider, an observer, a pretender, a (cross)dresser, a shy exhibitionist enabled by the construct of theatre.

It will be ten years (*This Most Wicked Body* 1994) since I have considered exhibiting myself as a solo performer and speaking so intimately with my audience, exploring how they might perceive me. The work will explore transvestism as a symbolic gesture (NOT a guy in a frock!) - the actor moving freely between identities. I plan to work individually over an 12 month period with 6 - 8 women writers. I will propose a few "left-field" notions of transvestism and ask them each to draft a ten minutes monologue, which we will then develop "one-on-one". The writers that I have spoken to thus far include Jai McHenry (France), Amanda Stewart (NSW), Virginia Baxter (NSW) and Josephine Wilson (WA). I will give them free reign to interpret my proposal as they wish. Most are very familiar with my "onstage presence" and are keen to exploit and challenge it.

The outcome for the fellowship will be a work-in-progress showing of the material, in late 2005. It will include documented (video) outcomes for the *BODY OF THE MUSICIAN* project. In a full production outcome the opportunity would arise to feature some of those instrumentalists on stage with me - perhaps a different guest each night.

This is a fascinating project for both myself and the writers, as they will potentially have the opportunity to work through all the creative stages from early discussion, through writing and development to staging. My previous solo work has often been built around a pillaging / adaption of (usually dead and male) writers whom I have never had the opportunity / permission to collaborate with. This two-way dialogue will be an enormous privilege.

2. THE BODY OF THE MUSICIAN (April 2004 - April 2005)

An extensive research project - a potential book/folio of interviews and essays leading from, and interspersed with, my own observations on my roles as an actor and a pianist. It will be a text aimed at contemporary performance practitioners. The interviews (recorded in collaboration with video artist Peter Oldham) will be with senior and virtuosic instrumentalists who see themselves as interpretive rather than primarily creative artists. The subjects will be chosen (in consultation with Gerard Willems and Roland Peelman) from a rich pool of artists including Richard Tognetti (violinist/conductor), David Miller AM (piano accompanist), Gerard Willems (concert pianist/former ballet repetiteur), Mick Nock (jazz pianist), Ian Cleworth (percussionist/composer), Roland Peelman (conductor/accompanist), Don Burrows (jazz wind player) and Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichordist/cabaret pianist). This list is just touching the surface of the pool, and I will certainly be expanding it well beyond the men I have proposed here.

Actors often think of instrumentalists as a bit daggy, onstage - they obviously haven't studied their theatre craft. When they work with me, instrumentalists generally express surprise at their new awareness of how an audience perceives the (their) body on stage - they have been unwittingly "fictionalised". They ask questions about how walking onto a concert platform relates to walking onto a theatrical stage. Some will initially interpret "the body" as "presence", or want to talk about "live" performance as adverse to "recorded" - they will need some encouragement to explain their "performative body", and what this means to them. What I imagine will emerge will be very different to the sometimes narcissistic vision of many actors - it will be about their bodies "mediated" through an artefact.

I want to know about their formative experiences as artists, how they first discovered and reflected on notions of "the abstract". As interpretive artists how do they reconcile their relationship with the composer - is it more than just "serving the vision" - what are their own desires/vision/ego in relationship to the composer's - what do they learn about themselves from the composer ? Instrumentalists are less comfortable with their performative bodies than actors or dancers - but I know that the most experienced have considerable knowledge about their physicality in relation to their audience - proposing an alternative approach for an actor to consider. In my experience, musicians are remarkably articulate regarding these issues, and speak about "performance" with refreshing, enthusiastic and economic candour.

3. THE RAMEAU PROJECT - FRENCH BAROQUE OPERA (April 2004 - Feb 2006)

Why am I concerned with the "operatic" form? Partly because of my musical education and intuitions. Partly because of my personal inclinations toward the theatrically provocative, the ambiguous, the outrageous and the degenerate - all of which "operatic" expressions exemplify.

At its inception (circa 1600) opera insisted that it be a hierarchy with the text dominating the music. Historically, however, opera has overturned this domination and revealed that words, music and action flourish as one within the sensual realm of the audience. This destruction of the supremacy of language makes opera a fit subject for the enthusiasm of the deviant. The eighteenth century critic Count Algarotti described the musical element of opera as ... *effeminate and disgusting: when music grows all powerful, words turn about and recoil upon themselves..... Music encourages words to behave like sodomites, overturning the natural sources of pleasure and meaning.* By the end of the 19th century Oscar Wilde was clearly suggesting that musical utterances awaken a homoeroticism in the listener because they evade explicit meaning. Opera, a hybrid of words, music and action, is therefore regarded as morally tainted. Degenerates aren't satisfied with just one artistic medium - they want everything - all at once. They desire opera's

ambiguity. I'm now too old to be embarrassed by these theatrical indiscretions, and my work with The opera Project testifies that my explorations in the operatic genre are far from conservative. I work to undermine entrenched operatic preconceptions and paradigms.

Performance of baroque opera in Australia is generally limited to the repertoire of the Italians and English. But my interests lean more toward the history and practices of the French Baroque, being perhaps the least prescriptive of all operatic forms in terms of structure, musical and theatrical style and content. I am particularly drawn to the overt musical style - it is elegant, wildly theatrical, particularly rich in sonorities and is peculiar for its radically improvisational nature of musical realisation. *"French Baroque music is wonderfully alive - created by people of flesh and passion, people who were alive, as we are alive. It is not just pretty. It should not be relegated to the status of museum piece ... (it is) vigorous, dramatic, sweet, unforgettable and, most importantly - alive."* (Nigel Ubrihien, my collaborator on *another night : medea* [The opera Project] and *cantata* [Stopera] in 2003 - two realisations of French Baroque "operatic" works.)

I plan to research and develop a new theatre work contemplating the French Baroque operatic oeuvre, with particular reference to the genius of that period - Jean Philippe Rameau. Rameau composed many operas and "acte de ballet" of less than a hour's duration, so they were typically mixed and matched to present an whole evening's entertainment as the occasion demanded. His work is mostly more concerned with colour (orchestrally) and movement (the dance) than with plot and libretto - rich source material indeed!

I envisage an all male performance work exploring themes of male promiscuity - prostitution, machismo, phallic symbolism (French Baroque theatre music is littered with these gestures), the ecstatic orgasm, followed musically by ennui (Rameau plays endlessly with this idea within predetermined Baroque musical structures), operatic "promiscuity" (wanting everything at once!), exhibitionism (display of the voice and body in performance), physical and vocal bravura (and its potential for expressions of violence), narcissism (as expressed in the French penchant for elaborate musical ornamentation), the sense of "licence" in French Baroque opera (suggesting that anything is permitted, so long as it works!)

Collaborators on this project will include Peretta Anggerek (countertenor), Didier Frederic (baritone), Dean Walsh (dancer), Brian Fuata (performer), Clive Birch (bass), Nigel Kellaway (performer / director), Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichord / musical director) and Damien Millar (dramaturg).

The style of the work will be typically eclectic and contemporary, taking its lead from the swung rhythms and almost jazz idiom favoured in the French Baroque. The instrumental music of the period was built largely around particular dance structures. Our task will be in finding contemporary devices / modes of social representation to (under)mine.

process:

1. My own research of Rameau operatic scores, and also his solo cantatas. Dramaturgical research on themes of concern in the operas of the period. Rameau was a polished exponent at undermining contemporary practices - irreverent and knife-edge satire are hallmarks of much of his work. Time in Europe to watch operas in rehearsal - the houses in Paris, Prague and Brussels are noted for their radical contemporary interpretations of French Baroque operas.
- 2 Writing a new "opera" - An extended writing period, with certain Rameau musical material in mind and regular consultation with musical director Nigel Ubrihien and dramaturg Damien Millar, considering a wealth of French literary sources (Genet, Cocteau, Proust., et al).
- 3 Once ideas have begun to formulate, some discussion and feedback from the collaborating performers - how they would imagine developing the emerging material, further down the track. Opportunities might arise for some workshopping of the ideas with the collaborators.
- 4 (February 2006) An informal semi-performed presentation of the developing material with the collaborators discussing their visions for a completed work.

TRAVEL - "THE SPACE" - EUROPE

(May/June - Sep/Oct 2005)

I intend to spend 4 - 6 months researching in Europe. As I have noted earlier, Australia is not yet exactly a goldmine of contemporary interrogation into music theatre (particularly not Baroque) practice. I am in dialogue with a number of artists in Europe that specialise in interpretation of the French Baroque repertoire (in both period/"authentic" performance and radical contemporary manipulations). These artists / organisations include *Les Musiciens du Louvre, Grenoble* (France) and its musical director Marc Minkowski and his regular collaborating stage director Laurent Pelly; *Les Arts Florissant* and director William Christie (Caen, France); *Tyl - Stavovske Divadlo* (Prague) and the large scale production work at the *Monniere* in Brussels. I am expecting to not only watch their performances, but also their rehearsal / staging processes. This will be an opportunity to immerse myself in the practice of artists who have responsibility for the living history of a repertoire. My responses will be peculiarly Australian, and particularly concentrated on the concepts of the performer in space and in time ("the phrase") that have been major signatures of my work over the past decades.

I also wish to visit two major centres - Hotel Proforma's new "Hotel for Art" which is being built in Orestad, near the centre of Copenhagen, as an institute to house both the company's own work and other new trends within the performance tradition and multimedia art; and Theatre du Soliel's Cartoucherie complex in Paris. I partly want to watch these companies' productions in progress, but also to see how they have negotiated the creation of important cultural spaces servicing a broad hybridity of practice. I am interested in the proposed relocation of Sydney's Performance Space to Everleigh Street, and how it might be compromised (however necessarily) by political and economic interests. Performance Space has been pivotal in my career and I am dedicated to its servicing of ongoing and important hybrid practice. I hope that with some lengthy and up-to-date observation of internationally respected and emerging spaces in Europe, my opinions, expertise and reputation might be considered of value to local decision makers. I intend to liaise with both the directorate and board of Performance Space and the NSW Ministry for the Arts in my discussions with these spaces.

RATIONALE

I have grown as a theatre artist over the past decades thanks to my various concerns and experience in music, dance and performance. In particular, my musical expertise has determined a unique vision for my theatrical practice - alternative structures - alternative aesthetics. I no longer see myself as a "messenger for post-modern performance" - that was the 1980/90s. I'm not a traitor to the cause - that history strongly informs my work - but my focus now is in highly specialised areas - MUSIC / SPACE AND BODY / PERFORMANCE IDENTITY - all of which have concerned me over the past 30 years, but are now far less divisible in my practice. My last substantial study period was in 1984-85, working with Suzuki Tadashi and Tanaka Min in Japan. This was an experience that profoundly influenced my (and others') ensuing work in Australia, encouraging me to broaden my ideas about discrete practices and to develop a far more "hybrid" vision of performance.

The projects I am proposing over the 2 years of the Fellowship give me space to listen to and watch other artists, without the pressure of immediate production. Other artists will have a chance to brutally respond to my own early processes, knowing that there is no urgency for outcome. A 4 - 6 month period in Europe would be a chance to wander, watching processes and ideas that don't pertain just to the projects I have planned. New processes and concerns will certainly occur to me - visions challenging those which I have had to develop in my own restricted orbit. I will NEVER admit to imminent "burn-out", but some personally directed financial assistance over the next couple of years to explore ideas that impassion me might fuel an ongoing investment in, and interrogation of, Australian contemporary performance practice.

Artist's significant achievements - Nigel Kellaway

As an artist dedicated to the production of new works, my major achievements have been those works that have inspired me to explore further, and also that have had some influence on the practice of others. The experiences most profoundly impacting on my career have involved opportunities to explore and express my concerns regarding the body within an architectural space, the influences of musical structures on theatrical form, the defining relationship between performer and audience in the theatrical space and the exploration of various mediums of performance virtuosity.

Works (experiences/achievements) that I value highly have been:

- In 1985 I was invited to work extensively with Suzuki Tadashi in Japan, learning much about the body consciously relating to the 3 dimensional stage space, concepts of the actor's "transformation" on stage from an Asian cultural perspective (which anchored my own performing consciousness and has been enormously influential in the development of contemporary practice across Australia over the past 2 decades) and an actorly virtuosity complementing that of the pianist and dancer, of which I was already well aware (if not supremely masterful!)
- **FANTASTIC TOYS** (1986) - as acting co-director of the Australian Dance Theatre (SA) when the company had the resources to employ 15 full-time dancers - a large scale contemporary ballet made over 6 months of rehearsal. The most concentrated collaboration with a composer (Sarah de Jong) I had enjoyed at that stage.
- As co-founder of **The Sydney Front** (1987-93), I am proud of the contribution it made to Australian performance culture. I consider its most important works to have been:
- **THE PORNOGRAPHY OF PERFORMANCE** (1987-88) - an early exploration of the deconstruction of text and narrative logic, the perambulatory theatre space and the honing of the "Suzukian" body in a European context.
- **DON JUAN** (1991-92) - enjoying a substantial development period and lengthy touring schedule (over 100 performances internationally) with the company at its peak of physical discipline and energised ensemble practice. Almost a contemporary dance-theatre work within the framework of a Rococo comic opera.
- **FIRST AND LAST WARNING** (1992) - working from an extreme economy of theatrical material, and audience interaction/participation on a particularly epic, sinister and manipulative scale.
- **THIS MOST WICKED BODY** (1994) a 240 hour (10 day) marathon "solo" performance - one of my most challenging and revealing projects, pushing the actor to the limits of his endurance, struggling with the notions of virtuosity and proposing a powerful thesis on fiction vs reality in the theatre - one that has resonated in all my work since.
- **THE SINKING OF THE RAINBOW WARRIOR** (1997) by Amanda Stewart and Colin Bright with The Song Company for the Sydney Festival - my most ambitious exploration reconciling music and the body in an architectural space - an opera staged in an epic outdoor location on Sydney Harbour.
- Works with **The opera Project**:
- **THE BERLIOZ : our vampires ourselves** (1997) - a work devoid of spoken text, and created on a predominantly musical structure. A ground-breaking work about our notions of "opera".
- **THE TERROR OF TOSCA** (1998) - immersed myself in a solitary 12 month writing and composing process (derived from material initiated in a 1995 work, FRIGHT!!), and achieved a result, in collaboration with my fellow performers, in which narrative was driven equally by text, music and dance.

- **ANOTHER NIGHT : MEDEA** (2003) - to date, my most successful balancing of text and music. The inspiration for this work was my long term collaboration with Regina Heilmann and designer Simon Wise (amongst others). Certain relationships mature and enable an intimate dialogue that transmits immediately to an audience, articulated without being overtly indicated.
- **CANTATA** (2003) for Stopera (ACT) - a double bill of French Baroque "operas" which a company of 22 professional performers, in collaboration with musical director Nigel Ubrihien, during which I began to understand the contemporary potential of the French Baroque oeuvre. In the multiple roles of writer, director and principal actor in a 2 week rehearsal process with a company I had never worked with before, I certainly reflected on the reasons why I generally make my work with long-time collaborators.

When I began my performing career, in the still modernist early 1970's, "eclecticism" was a term of abuse. Now, I am very proud of a selective eclecticism married to an astute historical literacy and all-important virtuosity.

My work has reflected on numerous contemporary social issues over the years, but common to it all has been a passionate concern for alternative theatrical forms and self-evident structure.

My work, when at its best, celebrates the theatrical artefact and its many cultural histories.

the italians ...

Annette Tesoriero and **Nigel Kellaway** with special guest **Dominic Sepe**

Women's College University of Sydney, 15th April 2004

1. **Tu ca nun chiagne** (1915) Ernesto De Curtis (1875-1937)
2. **Cangia, cangia tue voglie** Giovanni Battista Fasolo (1600-1665)
3. **Intorno all'idol mio** Marc' Antonio Cesti (1623-69)
4. **Ragion Sempre Addita** Alessandro Stradella (1645-1682)
5. **'OPaese D' 'O Sole** (1934) Vincenzo D'Annibale (1894-1950)
6. **Deh, piu a me v'ascondete** Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747)
7. **'A Vucchella** (1907) Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)
8. **Ideale** (1882) Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)
9. **Luna D'Estate** (1911) Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)
10. **Nel Lasciarti, O Prence Amato** Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801)(from "L'Olimpiade", 1784)

interval

11. **Pur dicesti, o bocca bella** Antonio Lotti (1667-1740)
12. **'A Frangesa!** Pasquale Mario Costa (1858-1933)

13. "E Spingole Frangese (1888) E. De Leva
 14. Core 'ngrato (1911) Salvatore Cardillo (1874-1947)
 15. O Del Mio Dolce Ardor Christophe W. Gluck (1714-1787) (from "Elena e Paride", 1769)
 16. Non più mesta Gioacchini Rossini (1792 - 1868) (from "La Cenerentola")
-

from application to the NSW Ministry for the Arts

THE RAMEAU PROJECT (working title only)

Director/Writer: Nigel Kellaway

Performers/Co-Writers: Regina Heilmann
Nigel Kellaway
Dean Walsh
Brian Fuata
Peretta Anggerek (counter-tenor)
Didier Frederic (baritone)
Clive Birch (bass)

Musical Director: Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichord)

Consulting Dramaturg: Damien Millar

Consultants: Lighting: Simon Wise
Costumes: Annemaree Dalziel
Sound: Liberty Kerr

Development period: January - December 2005
(Development showing, Performance Space, December 2005)

opera / 'opra / 'opara (It, from L: service, work, a work)

The opera Project Inc. is a non profit incorporated association founded by Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero in 1997. Its mission is to create an ongoing process of examination of contemporary theatrical structures, their histories, and in particular those structures which hold up our notion of 'opera'. It aims to do this within a forum of collaboration between committed artists

who share a history in contemporary performance. Over the past six years a flexible ensemble of established and highly experienced artists, committed to the vision of The opera Project, has emerged. All the company's completed works have contemplated themes of vocal (sung and spoken) and physical articulacy within a highly visual context, each from very different positions.

THE PROJECT - THE ISSUES

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will entail the researching and development of a new theatre work contemplating the French Baroque operatic oeuvre, with particular reference to the genius of that period - Jean Philippe Rameau (1683-1764). Rameau composed many operas and "acte de ballet" of less than a hour's duration, so they were typically mixed and matched to present an whole evening's entertainment as the occasion demanded. His work is mostly more concerned with colour (orchestrally) and movement (the dance) than with plot and libretto - rich source material indeed!

Why is The opera Project concerned with the "operatic" form? Partly because of our musical expertise and intuitions. Partly because of our inclinations toward the theatrically provocative, the ambiguous, the outrageous and the degenerate - all of which "operatic" expressions exemplify.

At its inception (circa 1600) opera insisted that it be a hierarchy with the text dominating the music. Historically, however, opera has overturned this domination and revealed that words, music and action flourish as one within the sensual realm of the audience. This destruction of the supremacy of language makes opera a fit subject for the enthusiasm of the deviant. The eighteenth century critic Count Algarotti described the musical element of opera as ... *effeminate and disgusting: when music grows all powerful, words turn about and recoil upon themselves..... Music encourages words to behave like sodomites, overturning the natural sources of pleasure and meaning.* By the end of the 19th century Oscar Wilde was clearly suggesting that musical utterances awaken a homoeroticism in the listener because they evade explicit meaning. Opera, a hybrid of words, music and action, is therefore regarded as morally tainted. Degenerates aren't satisfied with just one artistic medium - they want everything - all at once. They desire opera's ambiguity. The work of The opera Project testifies that our explorations in the operatic genre are far from "correct" or conservative. We work to undermine entrenched operatic preconceptions and paradigms.

Performance of baroque opera in Australia is generally limited to the repertoire of the Italians and English. But The opera Project's present interests lean more toward the history and practices of the French Baroque, being perhaps the least prescriptive of all operatic forms in terms of structure, musical and theatrical style and content. We are particularly drawn to the overt musical style - it is elegant, wildly theatrical, particularly rich in sonorities and is peculiar for its radically improvisational nature of musical realisation.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will aim toward a large scale theatre installation exploring ideas of "identity slippage" and all that infers in contemporary culture. It will contemplate the theatrical act in terms of facade, construct and artefact. It will concern itself with issues of "wholesomeness" vs "degeneracy"; the "natural" vs the "fake". It will be a truly "hybrid" performance work, finely balancing the juxtaposition of musical, dramatic and dance/physical forms and material.

The history of opera attempts to hide some shocking secrets behind the veils of exquisite music and stupendous theatricality. And this history perfectly reflects similar conundrums faced in presenting the "essential truth" as paraded by the contemporary actor, the "truthful body" in contemporary dance, and the dilemma of the elaborately constructed "lies we call theatre", and how theatre art struggles to reconcile itself with everyday contemporary experience.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will be an, *almost*, all male performance work exploring themes of male promiscuity - prostitution, machismo, phallic symbolism (French Baroque theatre music is

littered with these gestures), the ecstatic orgasm, followed musically by ennui (Rameau plays endlessly with this idea within predetermined Baroque musical structures), operatic "promiscuity" (wanting everything at once!), exhibitionism (display of the voice and body in performance), physical and vocal bravura (and its potential for expressions of violence), narcissism (as expressed in the French penchant for elaborate musical ornamentation), the sense of "licence" in French Baroque opera (suggesting that anything is permitted, so long as it works!)

The style of the work will be typically eclectic and contemporary, taking its lead from the swung rhythms and almost jazz idiom favoured in the French Baroque. The instrumental music of the period was built largely around particular dance structures. Our task will be in finding contemporary devices / modes of social representation to (under)mine.

THE ENVISAGED STRUCTURE

This proposal reflects how ideas develop. It is an extension, 12 months down the track, of elements proposed in our 2003 application for "*The Slippage*". (Please refer to "**Rationale and Logistics**".)

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will involve an installation of "operatic exhibits", vocal, physical, musical and visual, through which the audience will roam. These overlapping, sometimes simultaneous, performance works will celebrate and question many clichés associated with the 18th century operatic tradition as perceived by the 21st century eye. They will capitalise on the aesthetic seductiveness of the most striking of these phenomenon - the heightened voice (spoken and sung) and body.

This installation will feature two discrete but simultaneously performed and intersecting works. A starting point for these will be the writings of the Greek lyric poet Anacreon (6th century BC) who contemplated with considerable grace, wit and irony his obsessions with love, wine and the brevity of life. His work was a popular inspiration to the composers and writers of the French baroque period. One of Rameau's most enduring works was an "opera / acte de ballet" pillaging Anacreon's writing and ideologies. Our musical performers (Peretta Anggerek, Didier Frederic, Clive Birch and Nigel Ubrihien) are eminently experienced to play havoc with the enormous diversity of available material, in collaboration with Nigel Kellaway's perverse invention.

The other work, developed in initial isolation, will be a duet for performers Dean Walsh and Brian Fuata - two performers of contrasting experience, skills and maturity, but sharing exceptional physical stage presence. Kellaway will explore with them a myriad of scenarios, referencing the intricate "dance" structures of Rameau's opera/ballets and reflecting on the homo-erotic tension inherent in the work's over-arching theme of male promiscuity.

Simultaneously with this "museum" installation, a third more narratively logical performance will take place - a stark and vicious confrontation between Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann - a reckoning with Jean Genet's great theatrical text, *The Maids*, in which two women / men / children / spinsters / humiliated servants play out games of identity, dominance, passivity and self-annihilation.

Heilmann and Kellaway have enjoyed a long and rewarding performance collaboration over the past 15 years. This process will allow them time to rigorously explore the Genet material and create anew, rather than their often rushed process of "quick pillage, restructure and learn the lines". Genet's text will be a mere springboard to a quite originally written component of the overall work.

THE PROCESS

1. **July - December 2004** - Nigel Kellaway's research of Rameau operatic scores, and also his solo cantatas. Dramaturgical research on themes of concern in the operas of the period. Rameau was a polished exponent at undermining contemporary practices - irreverent and knife-edge satire are hallmarks of much of his work. This component of the process is supported by Kellaway's 2004-06 Fellowship from the Theatre Board of the Australia Council.
2. **January - February 2005** - Kellaway's initial writing period, with certain Rameau musical material in mind and regular consultation with musical director Nigel Ubrihien and dramaturg Damien Millar, considering a wealth of French literary sources (Genet, Cocteau, Proust, et al) and the lyric poetry of Anacreon.
3. **March 2005** - Initial discussion with and feedback from the collaborating performers - how they would imagine developing the emerging material. Further writing.
4. **April - June 2005** - Workshopping of the first 2 of 3 separate works in the studio:
 - a) Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann on what has developed from Kellaway's exploration of the Genet source material.
 - b) Dean Walsh and Brian Fuata in workshop with Nigel Kellaway.
 Both processes will have input from dramaturg Damien Millar.
5. **July - October 2005** - As part of his Fellowship, Nigel Kellaway will be spending 4 months of 2005 researching in Europe. He is in dialogue with a number of artists in Europe that specialise in interpretation of the French Baroque repertoire (in both period/"authentic" performance and radical contemporary manipulations). These artists / organisations include *Les Musiciens du Louvre, Grenoble* (France) and its musical director Marc Minkowski and his regular collaborating stage director Laurent Pelly; *Les Arts Florissant* and director William Christie (Caen, France); *Tyl - Stavovske Divadlo* (Prague) and the large scale production work at the *Monniere* in Brussels. This will be an opportunity to immerse himself in the practice of artists who have responsibility for the living history of a repertoire. His responses will be peculiarly Australian, and particularly concentrated on the concepts of the performer in space and in time ("the phrase") that have been major signatures of his work over the past decades. Kellaway's last substantial study period was in 1984-85, working with Suzuki Tadashi and Tanaka Min in Japan. This was an experience that profoundly influenced his (and others') ensuing work in Australia, encouraging him to broaden his ideas about discrete practices and to develop a far more "hybrid" vision of performance. His travels and experiences in 2005 promise new insights to enrich his and others' practice.
6. **November 2005** - Development workshop of the 3rd separate work with the singers and musical director Nigel Ubrihien on the Rameau / Anacreon material. It is envisaged that the eventual production will include a small band of instrumentalists to fully realise Rameau's music.
7. **December 2005** - A short intensive period bring all the collaborators together to explore an assemblage of the various material. During this period the consultants (Liberty Kerr, Annemaree Dalziel and Simon Wise) will have an opportunity to observe the process and input into the emerging work. An informal semi-performed presentation to an invited audience of the developing material with the collaborators discussing their visions for a completed work.

RATIONALE & LOGISTICS

It was with considerable grief that The opera Project made its decision to return its 2004 funding for *THE SLIPPAGE*. (* Please refer to the explanatory letter in the support material.) **THE RAMEAU PROJECT** is a fresh strategy for *THE SLIPPAGE*, in appreciation that major new work cannot be made in a few months. The proposed extended development period will also afford time for the company to explore a greater range of production partners (beyond the normal suspects of NSW Ministry and Australia Council) for the eventual realisation of the work.

In **THE RAMEAU PROJECT** The opera Project is greatly extending its ambitions in terms of production scale and vision, boldly stating its role as pro-active cultural historians on a platform and scale that is a departure for the company. At the same time, it maintains the intimate processes of collaboration that have emerged over our eight years of "chamber" practice. It brings together a sizeable ensemble of senior artists, most of whom are very familiar with the company's political vision and aesthetic.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT benefits from similar circumstances to The opera Project's 1998 production of *THE TERROR OF TOSCA* - a work that many have considered our most thoroughly completed. In that instance Nigel Kellaway was a recipient of the Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship, which afforded him 12 months to research, write, compose and prepare for the creative rehearsal period with his collaborators. His present Australia Council Fellowship affords this project even greater support, to these ends.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT is an extraordinary showcase of artists who have been major players in Australian contemporary performance practice over many years. The multi-disciplinary nature of this project will target a wide range of theatre, dance, music, and contemporary performance as well as queer, gay, lesbian and transgendered audiences, when it eventually reaches production in 2006. This is a production that will excite both experienced and new audiences, touching as it does on so many recognisable genres and media - **chaotic, virtuosic, outrageous and intelligent. It will explore theatre as a "grand genre" - a subject that rarely, in this country, has such an assembly of experienced collaborators to contemplate and realise its vision.**

The above Application was unsuccessful, which challenges me in my ability to satisfactorily acquit my Fellowship by April 2006

the neapolitans ...

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway

with **Domenico Sepe**

Women's College, University of Sydney, 15th July 2004

18th century operatic arias

- 1. Chi vuol la zingarella** Giovanni Paisiello (1741-1816) (from *Gli Zigari in fiera*, 1789)
- 2. Stizzoso, mio stizzoso** Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) (from *La Serva Padrona*, 1733)
- 3. Notte, Dea del Mistero** Niccolò Piccinni (1728-1800) (from *Le faux Lord*, 1783)
- 4. Ma che vi costa, signor tutore** Tommaso Traetta (1727-1729) (from *Didone abbandonata*, 1757)
- 5. Resta in pace, idolo mio** Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801) (from *Gli Orazi e i Curiazi*, 1794)
- 6. Nel Lasciarti, O Prence Amato** Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801) (from *L'Olimpiade*, 1784)

interval

songs from the salon and music hall

7. **'A Vucchella** (1907) Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)
8. **Te voglio bene assaje** (circa 1839) Raffaele Sacco (after Gaetano Donizetti)
9. **Lu Cardillo** Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870)
10. **Santa Lucia Luntana** (1919) E. A. Mario (1884-1961)
11. **I' te vurria vasà!** Eduardo Di Capua (1865-1917)
12. **La fiera de Mast'Andrea** (Anon - traditional Neapolitan)
13. **Core 'ngrato** (1911) Salvatore Cardillo (1874-1947)
14. **'E Spìngole Frangese!** (1888) E. De Leva

Domenico Sepe

Born in Naples, Domenico Sepe took his first piano lessons at the age of five.

He studied piano under Maestro Sergio Fiorentino, and the violin under Maestro Luigi Schinina at the **S. Pietro A Majella Conservatorium** of Naples.

In the USA he studied composition and jazz improvisation under the guidance Morris J. Lawrence, Director of Music at **Washtenaw College, Ann Arbor Michigan**.

He has performed and recorded in Italy and the USA with jazz musicians James Senese, Maria Pia De Vito, Martin Joseph, Beatrice Redding, Richie Haven and many others.

He has been involved in numerous Neapolitan lyrical and theatrical productions, including a play by Raffaele Viviani, directed by Maurizio Scaparro and presented in 1987 at the **Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto**. Recently he has performed with the tenor Franco Iori.

Jazz has allowed Domenic to express aspects of his personality, whereas his cultural legacy is maintained alive through Neapolitan music.

strangers in the theatre

performer/writer/director **Nigel Kellaway**

(with strong references to Patricia Highsmith,
Alfred Hitchcock, Raymond Chandler and others)

video **Peter Oldham**

recorded text -

excerpts from The opera Project's

the audience and other psychopaths

writer **Amanda Stewart**

composer **Stephen Adams**

performer **Karen Cummings**

light and sound operation **Nicholas Higgins**

with thanks to:

Simon Wise, Katia Molino & Deborah Pollard
The staff and management of Artrage, Pride,
Sarah Miller & Derek Kreckler, Cathie Travers, Cat Hope, Vinn Pitcher, Sally Richardson, June
Newman

strangers in the theatre was developed with oblique assistance from the Australia Council for the
Arts and the NSW Ministry for the Arts.

Nigel Kellaway is individually supported by the Australia Council for the Arts.

Presented by **Artrage** as part of the WA PRIDE Festival
Tues October 19 - Thurs October 21, 9pm
The Bakery Artrage Complex, Northbridge, Perth

STRANGERS IN THE THEATRE

Nigel Kellaway (2004)

(This first section - before DVD Chapter 1 - is partly improvised)

For Christ's sake!! I don't need a fucking ticket!! I'm the artiste!! STUPID!!!

How the fuck do I get in here? This way?

I'm sorry, I'm late I try not to make a habit of it. It's just that I've been involved in a bit of an
incident.

But I'm OK I'm actually feeling very strong right now.

Is anything happening? Well, perhaps I'm early - That's fine - I'll just sit over here....
Or perhaps I should go to makeup straight away. It always takes an eternity!
I've made a bit of a start though - I went to David Jones this afternoon and bought one of their new foundations. You don't think it's a bit pale, do you? Well, you know, there's a remedy for that - blush, blush, blush, blush, blush ... one can't get enough of it! I thought I'd do pink! And what do you think about the nails? My thought was burnt orange - just to set off the outfit.
Tell me, what have you got on your face?! I'm not sure it works. But you're in the dark, so it's probably OK.....

I am sorry, you can't sit there. Didn't that have a reserved sign? I particularly asked front-of-house to keep that seat free. Do you mind moving?.....
Oh no, please, there's a seat just over there. Oh, Heavens to Betsy! ... Not a fucking clue ... I have no idea why they reserved this seat ... you know, they just don't listen!
Now come on - let's be bold, now ... I know you've got it in you! Such a confident young man!

Could we have some sound, please?

(Leads Guy onto stage)

DVD Chapter 1 (Sound only - Wagner "Flying Dutchman" Overture)

Oh, we're starting! Now get a wriggle on! I intend to have fun this evening!

*(Seats "Guy" - gives him cigarette lighter.
Unpacks brief case -
ashtray, theatre plan, gun, cigarettes. **Looks for lighter** -
(fade DVD over 6 seconds).*

Got a light?

Oh, I think you do - I think there's one in your right hand pocket.

See? - I was right. Thanks *(steals lighter)*

Some people say I'm psychotic ... sorry ... psychic ... of course I couldn't possibly comment.

Oh, don't worry - I'm not pregnant. No innocent will be harmed.

Hey, aren't you Guy Haines? The actor?

Oh sure you are, I saw you blast Hugo Weaving into total actorly oblivion on the Playhouse stage last season. Got one of those nominations, didn't you?

Oh, I certainly admire people who do things.

Oh, I'm sorry - how rude! - my name's Nigel. **Nigel Kellaway.**

DVD Chapter 2 (Image only - Photographs of Nigel)

See? *(show ring with insignia)*

I suppose you think it's corny- "Ni-gel" - but my mother gave it to me, so I have to wear it, just to please her. One should always make an effort for a "loved-one", don't you agree?

Oh look, I really don't talk that much - you go ahead and watch. *(Indicating video)*

They tell me he's absolutely riveting!

(to audience)

It must be very exciting, being so important.

Oh, people who really do things are important.

I mean - look at me - I don't seem to do anything.

(Nigel offers a cigarette to Guy)

Ciggie? ... No? ... I smoke TOO much!

(Lights cigarette - stops to contemplate the lighter)

From 'K to G'? 'K' to Guy. I bet I can guess who 'K' is - Katia Molino.

You see, I sometimes turn the arts page and see the society section, and the pictures. Katia Molino - she's very beautiful! She's Antonio Molino, the famous film director's daughter, isn't she? Oh yes, I'm quite a reader. Ask me anything, I've got the answers. Even news about people I don't know. Like who wants to marry whom, once his wife gets her divorce.

Oh, sorry, there I go again - too friendly! It always happens - just when I meet someone I really like and admire - and then I open my big mouth.... just pretend I'm not here.

So, when's the wedding? (Stop DVD)

You and Katia Molino. It was in the papers!

Oh don't tell me! Bigamy?! Well yes, I guess so, in your present predicament.

But right now, I suppose divorce is a fairly simple operation... No?...

Well, anyway, it sure is wonderful having you as company here this evening. Say, why don't we

Sorry? You're going to (Lane Cove)? Who would want to go to (Lane Cove)?

Oh, that's right - (Lane Cove), the old conjugal patch - a little chat with your wife about the divorce?

Well, Guy, I DO wish you luck.

Say, listen, if that's the case, why don't we have catering send us some drinks up to the dressing room right now - just the two of us - something bubbly - about the only kind of bubbles in my life, at the moment.

And we'll drink to the next Mrs Haines.

DVD Chapter 3 (Image only - Photos and moving image of Nigel)

Sure, I went to acting school. I got kicked out of three of them - drinking, not quite committed enough.

Not like you, eh Guy?

Sure - I'm just a bum.

Nigel says I'm a bum - he hates me.

He thinks I ought to catch the 8.40 bus every morning, punch a time-clock somewhere, and work my way up from the bottom selling camping equipment or something. I don't think so.

I can tell you, I get so sore with him sometimes, I could kill him.

Well, I want to do something.

Oh yes, I've got a theory that one should do everything before one dies.

Like, have you ever driven a car blindfolded at 150 K an hour? I did.

And I flew a jet plane. Almost blew all that sawdust right out of my head! And I'm going to make a reservation on the first commercial rocket to the moon. Oh, yes - I've got very big plans!

Honestly, I do!

Well, OK, I know I'm not like you, Guy.

You're lucky. You're smart.

Marrying the famous film director's daughter. That sure enhances the career!

Hey, hey, hey, take it easy, Guy. I like you, remember? I'm your friend.

I'd do anything for you.

(to another audience member) Say, has anyone ever told you how much you look like Guy Haines - the actor?. He's very famous! He's a very good friend of mine. Oh, yes - I think it's the bone structure - such soft eyes. But, then again, it might be just the lights. Oh, please, take my card.

(Walks upstage - Lights cigarette. _

As Nigel turns back to Guy - Stop DVD)

What did you say your wife's name was?

Miriam? That's right - Miriam Joyce Haines

I suppose she's played around quite a lot.

Don't get upset Guy - it's all too frequent these days.

And, hey, what do you care - what with **Katia Mol**..... whatever....

DVD Chapter 4 (Sound only)

*Karen: so tenuous so soft her voice on the mobile one fuse box 14 lines dust and frayed plastic
the wires naked so fragile suspended at the point before the pleasure so perfect so fragile
the stations the terminals splitting dissembling the ports and connections so
tenuous soft her voice on the mobile disconnected red disconnecting blue the frayed
steel the gaps in between so fragile so perfect*

Want to hear one of my ideas for the perfect murder?

The busted light in the bathroom? The carbon-monoxide in the garage?

Hey, what's a life between two guys? Some people are better off dead.

Like Nigel or your wife, **for instance**. *(Stubs out cigarette)*

DVD Chapter 5 (Sound only)

Karen: She was wearing gold.

*I remember being entranced, being entranced by her once
(spoken) it was her silence.*

Oh, that reminds me of a wonderful idea I had once. I used to put myself off to sleep at night just figuring it out:

Like, let's say, you wanted to get rid of your wife.

Like, let's just suppose you had a very good reason .

But obviously you'd be afraid to kill her.

Why? - because you'd get caught.

Why? Because you've got **a MOTIVE**.

DVD Chapter 6 (Sound only)

Karen: 1 fuse box

28 drops on average

it's no accident

a cry

a series of numbers

it's all interconnected

it's all in a mess!

there are no accidents!

only ideas!

What a mess!

So, here's my idea - it's so simple:

Two guys meet accidentally, like you and me -
No connection between them - never even met each other before.
But each guy has somebody he'd like to get rid of.
So - guess! - mmm! - THEY SWAP MURDERS!
Each guy does the other guy's murder for him, so there's nothing to connect them.
Each guy murders a total stranger.
It's like: you do my murder, I do your's - your wife, my Nigel.
CRISS-CROSS.
Oh, we do talk the same language, don't we, Guy! You think my theory's okay, don't you?
You like it! CRISS-CROSS!

What day is it today? (Tuesday)? Guess who I was last Sunday!
Oh, I'm just reflecting - on a body that can't really exist.
He was here - we all knew his name - spoke it every day.
And then suddenly he was gone.
What do YOU remember?
The name or the body?
You know I'm very, very concerned about my hands -
I want them to look absolutely perfect.
Unfortunately, I still bite my nails.

But I'm OK - don't worry about me.
I took my vitamins yesterday, Mommy -
a whole bottle full!

And besides, right now, I've got a North Shore ferry to catch.

(Nigel exits theatre)

DVD Chapter 7 (Sound and Image - Murder of Miriam)

Guy ... over here, Guy.
(Enters theatre - moves to Guy)
Hello Guy. You don't seem very pleased to see me.
And I've brought you a little present.

(Takes off his glasses and places them on the table in front of Guy)
Recognise them? Oh no, they're not mine - they're Miriam's.
It was very quick, Guy.
She felt no pain at all ... all over in no time.

(Moves to chair)

Yes, I knew you'd be surprised,
but there's nothing for us to be worried about - noone saw me ... (Only Miriam).

And I was very careful, Guy - even when I dropped your cigarette lighter,
I went back to pick it up. *(Placing the cigarette lighter on the table)*

Oh, come on Guy, ofcourse I can get away with it!
Why should I go to (Lane Cove) to kill a total stranger?
Unless it was part of a plan, and you were in it.
You're the one who benefits - you're the free man now -

I didn't even know the girl.

(Lights cigarette)

Guy, if you go to the police, you'll be turning yourself in as an accessory -
You had the MOTIVE!
You wanted it - we planned it together in the last scene, remember? - CRISS CROSS.

(Stubs out cigarette)

Guy, we need to talk about Nigel.
I've tried to make it really simple for you.
I've got a plan of the theatre and his dressing room already made up - see?
And the cutest little pistol I picked up in a pawn-shop.

I'm beginning to feel like I don't really exist. *(standing)*
I'm just someone I met once?
But I can't remember how to fill in the gaps -
I can't even remember what the gaps are.
DON'T CALL ME CRAZY!!!!

You know, you're not yourself, Guy.
You must be tired - I know I am - I've had a very strenuous evening!
But I know that when you've had a chance to think things over, you'll see I'm right. Now, you
come along with me, Guy. No, don't argue. Never argue with me.
(Taking Guy by the hand and leading him toward the dressing room)

Nigel should be in his dressing room any minute now.

(Nigel and Guy exit to dressing room. Wait 10 seconds)
DVD Chapter 8 (Sound only - Gun Shots)

(Guy enters ... places pistol on table ... exits theatre)

END

from application to Theatre Board of Australia Council

TRANSVESTISM (working title only - retitled **SLEEPERS WAKE! Wachtet Auf!**)

Performer/

Composer/interim director: **Nigel Kellaway**

Co-Writers:

**Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry,
Amanda Stewart, Josephine Wilson**

Musicians:

Nigel Ubrihien, Margaret Howard, Catherine Tabrett

Production assistance Simon Wise

Development period:

April 2005 - March 2006
(Development showing March 2006)

The work will explore transvestism as a symbolic gesture. (This is definitely a FROCK-FREE-ZONE!) The actor moving freely between performative identities, assuming "the other". This application is for funding to support the collaborating artists on a work that is part of Nigel Kellaway's present Theatre Board Fellowship program.

Transvestism will be a development process - the collaborative writing of a work, matching 4 disparate theatre writers/artists (Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Amanda Stewart and Josephine Wilson) with performer/director/creator Nigel Kellaway. The purpose is to afford an extended creative period to challenge the artists involved and to develop a new and provocative performance work for our audiences.

The scene: This is a real space into which we have come to listen to a concert. A pianist, violinist and 'cellist perform a set of variations on another set of variations - Nigel Kellaway's compositional musings on J.S.Bach's Goldberg Variations for solo harpsichord. Kellaway is in the audience. He vocally and physically shares his listening experience with this audience of which he is part. Reflecting the lack of logical development in this set of strict musical closures, his shared experience is without any particular aim. No revelation is intended, but he trusts his fellow audience will travel on particular journeys with him. He assumes their complicity.

In this format the 4 women writers have (as have composers Bach and Kellaway) total freedom to invent on a male body. They are not bound to explain or conform to each others' ideas. As an actor, Kellaway may relish a similar freedom of interpretation - even vertigo!

The impetus: In many of Kellaway's devised works some innocent player (a performer or spectator) is tricked or bullied into assuming a role, apparently (or in some cases, truly) involuntarily.

These works focus, in part, on that person's struggle to fulfil the demands of their enforced role. The mechanism of their "transvestism" is laid bare. Theatre is revealed as "artefact" - a creation - a lie - a game of deception, self-delusion or escapism. Something is always "going wrong" and appearances are all important. These are people struggling to maintain their dignity. Their audience is aware of it, and this provides a pivotal tension in the work. These works reflect on questions of identity - WHO AM I ... AT THIS MOMENT? - mirrored in the "reality vs fiction" dilemma, that is essential to the theatre.

These works might pretend to be confessional, but they obviously aren't - it's all an elegant lie, blatantly fabricated, impersonal, illusory. Kellaway uses his assumed identity, (often his nomenclature, "Nigel") as a weapon on stage. A strategy to niggle at audience complacency, pointing a finger at the melo-dramatic, never concealing the trick or wanting to condescend, sharing with his audience the mechanism that is theatre - "alive" and "in the present".

He has expressed in early conversation with his collaborators his dissatisfaction with the congealing of the ethos of experiment and surprise in hybrid/postmodern performance into a fixed genre and audience familiarity. So how to upset this catastrophe? What are the scabs worth picking at? What are the questions of identity with which a middle-aged elitist white guy might provoke a jaded, over-educated middle-class palate, or surprise one that is not?

Kellaway is an odd hybrid of the "contemporary performance artist" and the "character actor". As the performance artist (legacy of a couple of decades of post-modern association) he always positions his corporeality in terms of his "identity". The character actor in him is a device to protect him from the boredom of utter narcissism, audience ennui, and laziness in his craft. *Transvestism* is partly about this fractured performance identity: PERFORMING/ACTING AS A RATHER UNDIGNIFIED PROFESSION - but one that is sympathetically viewed.

5 WRITERS and a performer

This project involves 4 women, all incidentally with heterosexual preferences. 4 women with considerable knowledge of a range of male psyches. 4 women with substantial bodies of work contemplating identity in performance.

Kellaway wants some distance from himself - his condition. He might be a bit odd, a bit alternative - but still a bloke. He has chosen 4 writers who know just sufficient about him (or how he presents himself) to write with some objectivity - an imaginative glimpse of the possible many men that might be performed by him. The solo performer is alone onstage. The cut and thrust of relationships and tensions "played out" are lonely affairs. "His" only protagonists are himself and an audience of strangers. What is he to do? Confess? Why? Who is interested in the baring of a fictional creation? Perhaps they are merely interested in the notion that they might be interested in him.

Josephine Wilson (writer) (please refer to full letter in support material)

"Central to my interest is the figure of 'Nigel Kellaway'. In the performances of Nigel I have seen I have been attracted to the performative excesses (in the best possible sense) of Nigel's work. I am also interested in the way that the character of 'Nigel' has been mobilised within performance, only for the autobiographical to be firmly disavowed or allied. I propose to address some of the issues that arise around the concept of an creative performer's desire for creative shift, or change, within a model of theatre or cabaret that is popular in origin. Nigel's work is often in intense dialogue with European traditions of opera, theatre and music. I am interested in exploring a model of performance that eschews the 'high' in favour of the 'low'. These 'low registers' have been present in work that I have seen of Nigel's, and erupt in some of the melodramatic excesses of his work, but have not as far as I know really been the main character in a drama. Nigel and I are television kids. We watched Dean Martin, Dave Allen... For me, television and not theatre is a central character in the piece. Nigel in a black suit, white shirt, collar undone, scotch in one hand, piano at the other. It suggests the potential to establish intimacy and trust with the audience. In his performance work, Nigel toys with the audience; there is constant 'pulling the rug out'. While I do not propose to write an autobiographical one-man show (God help us!) I am interested in the kind of relationships and registers that might be possible in this 'Me and The Piano' format. It is an elastic space for song, story, anecdote and rumination; it is a form in which the concert pianist meets the entertainer. It is a kind of straight role."

Virginia Baxter (writer) (please refer to full letter in support material)

Like Wilson, Baxter brings a keen dramaturgical eye and experience to the project. She is very well aware of Kellaway's characteristics as a performer, and is entranced by the musical possibilities and challenges of the work.

"Nigel Kellaway in the persona of an insomniac actor sits at the piano listening to/playing sections of the music and falling into various para-insomniac states ie between wakefulness and sleep. Perhaps lighting plays an important role in conjuring these states such that he is sometimes in blinding light, at other times barely visible.

In these states the insomniac reveals the uncertain state of his relationship with himself as actor/performer."

Jai McHenry (writer) (please refer to full letter in support material)

McHenry brings to the project her enormous experience at the coalface of performance, her understanding of the contract a performer makes with his/her audience.

"One part of what identifies the performer is costume, giving clues as to how they might be read by their audience. In thinking about dressing for a role I was struck by the idea that audiences too have dressed for the theatre. They have dressed, however haphazardly, for their role. This struck me as being interesting terrain. We dress for dinner, for work, for fun. But we dress as ourselves. How might we dress, obvious notions of drag and dress-up aside, as "other"? How might Nigel dress/play as himself, as one of them, as other? Who might this "other" be? And how might the audience's own choices implicate them in all this?"

Amanda Stewart (writer) (please refer to full letter in support material)

Stewart comes to the project with an intimate knowledge of Kellaway's voice - an instrument that can interpret poetic nuance and reflects his musical instincts and skills. She is concerned about audience as a collective of individuals, carrying their own individual baggage. Kellaway's presence amongst them ensures that they are not anonymous. This fluidity of role (between spectator and performer) interests her - and the moment that Kellaway surrenders his performative "power" to become an observer.

Nigel Kellaway (composer)

"I have developed as a theatre artist over the past decades thanks to my various concerns and experience in music, dance and performance. In particular, my musical expertise has determined a unique vision for my theatrical practice - alternative structures - alternative aesthetics. My focus is in highly specialised areas - MUSIC (form, tempo, dynamics, extended phrase) / SPACE AND BODY / PERFORMANCE IDENTITY - all of which have concerned me over the past 30 years.

What I don't want to make is a work comprising 4 discrete short pieces, hobbled together either side of an interval. Once the initial writing has been done, the real challenge will be assembling the "parts" to form a coherent whole.

Part of my contribution as a "writer" on the work will be as composer - or rather, arranger. My starting point is Bach's Goldberg Variations for keyboard, but as an "arrangement" for keyboard (piano or harpsichord), violin (modern or Baroque) and either 'cello or viola da gamba, to be played live on stage. This will be more than a literal arrangement of the Bach, but a considerable restructuring and reassessment of the original. **The variation form in *Transvestism* will work as metaphor - are we all given an aria in our life on which we write our set of variations?** I will write the music quite separately from the other writers' initial processes, so as not to direct their emerging material in any particular way. My music will simply be thrown into the mix, and we'll see what place it has in the scheme of things, later in the process - and rethink it accordingly."

Nigel Kellaway (performer / interim director)

"My concerns regard the body within an architectural space, the influences of musical structures on theatrical form, the defining relationship between performer and audience in the theatrical space and the exploration of various mediums of performance virtuosity.

It is now 10 years since I developed my last major solo work, *This Most Wicked Body*. And so it is time to attempt a more mature offering. But requires a re-thought process. How to embark on a quite new direction at 50? It probably a good time to start, but the text book hasn't been written. You know how much hard work it's going to be. And you now know that you are not the centre of the universe."

PROCESS & LOGISTICS

The schedule for the project over a 12 month period has been kept intentionally fluid, to adapt to the artists' other commitments. First drafts will be completed in April-June 2005.

The writers will be working initially in virtual isolation, albeit in close collaboration with their performer. Baxter, Stewart and Kellaway are conveniently located in Sydney. Kellaway will be France in July/August 2005 to work with McHenry as part of his Fellowship travels. He will make another extended trip to Perth to work with Wilson in December 2005. His work with all the writers will incorporate "get dirty on the floor" workshops. Also, email will enable all the collaborators to constantly chat and compare notes.

The outcomes of the collaboration will be assembled in a video documented showing in March 2006. This will also involve the collaboration of the 3 musicians (Nigel Ubrihien, Margaret Howard and Catherine Tabrett) - 3 exceptional artists with the skills to cross over between contemporary

and baroque styles, and with experience and concern for the ideas of Kellaway's work. Their input will be an initial workshopping, criticism and reading of Kellaway's composition.

The next stage of realising a production of *Transvestism* will require that all the collaborators come together to work on the outcomes of this initial development - but that is all in the future. All the collaborators agree that in the event of a further realisation the involvement of a director would be an enormous bonus, in freeing and challenging Kellaway as a performer. But who? A number of artists have been mooted, but we have agreed to forge ahead with this first development stage alone. What emerges will suggest the right director - it would be inappropriate to decide on or approach anyone at this stage.

RATIONALE

This application is the product of detailed conversations between Kellaway and the 4 writers. The emerging theme seems to be about how an audience perceives a performance. How do we as writers and performance makers "mind the gap", and converse with those spectators "on the train", looking out on what is dashing by?

It is also a request for funding to enable Kellaway to pay his collaborators professional fees and so acquit a major component of his Fellowship program.

Kellaway's work has often focussed on the interpretation of writers he has never met -he has manipulated their work to suit his own "auteurship". This project places him in immediate collaboration with 4 writers who will make very specific and personally motivated demands on him. - 4 enormously disparate and experienced artists - 4 writers with knowledge and skill to stir the cultural and historical pot of 20th century existentialism, modernism, expressionism and post-modernism from a forcefully 21st century perspective. Kellaway will be challenged. But also supported in an exploration of alternative ways to create a work and then expose "himself" in ways that interest him, his collaborators and his audience.

SUPPORT LETTERS

Amanda Stewart

I am writing in support of The opera Project's *Transvestism* proposal. I am very pleased to be one of the writers that Nigel Kellaway has approached to be involved with this project.

Kellaway is a unique performer, dramaturge, director and actor. This proposal offers a rare opportunity to work closely with him to develop a new, solo performance text.

I would like to initially explore an experimental process where I generate quite different forms of text and performance scenarios and see how he responds to this material. After assessing this process together, I would then engage in a second writing stage where I develop and refine the ideas that we agree to be the most successful. We would also begin negotiating the over all structure of the piece with the other writers. The last stage would involve the final shaping and editing of the texts and their integration into the finished, collaborative work.

Producing text for a solo performer is an interesting challenge. I have respected Nigel Kellaway's work for many years and feel that collaborating with him on this project will extend my own understanding of performance/theatre. I have worked extensively as a solo writer/performer myself but usually in poetry, music or intermedia contexts. This project offers me the chance to write for

another solo performer who is also integrated within the writing process. I think this will be very beneficial for my own writing and understanding of theatrical forms.

Jai McHenry

Nigel and I have a working history spanning now 15 years. During that time we have collaborated (and conspired) in numerous ways. But this project proposes, for us, an altogether new working relationship, with Nigel as performer and myself working as part of a team of writers who will provide him with text.

When first Nigel approached me with the idea of being one of 4 women writers for his solo work *Transvestism* I was, to put it mildly, intrigued. I was intrigued for a couple of reasons. Nigel has a history of sourcing text which he then subverts, sometimes butchers, often reinterprets but certainly rarely leaves as written. Otherwise he writes for himself. Here he was expressing a wish to have a performance text written for him. And written not, as is often the case, on the floor as part of the rehearsal process. Secondly, the idea that he would want to work with a team of women didn't really surprise me but his choices did. We may appear a rather disparate group, not just in our varied theatrical histories but in the fact that we live miles, some could say worlds, apart. I wondered what we might achieve over such distance. That Nigel would want to take such risks was a strong part of what initially drew me to the project. And I was thrilled at the idea of writing as part of such a team.

I have worked already with Virginia Baxter and jumped at the chance to do this again. I am familiar with Josephine Wilson's work and we have on occasion toyed with the idea of collaborating but until now there hasn't been the opportunity. Amanda Stewart and I have never met but I find her work inspiring and though it may be long after the realization of this project before we have the chance to meet in person, I feel extremely positive regarding the possibilities of collaborating with her. Of course it is Nigel who will bind this band together and certainly working once again with him will be a joy.

We have naturally begun a dialogue around the potential direction we may take. Initially I wasn't exactly enamoured of the idea of what could, potentially, be yet another opportunity to see Nigel in a frock. The title might seem to imply this likelihood. But as discussion progresses it becomes clear that the concerns of the work go much further.

Whilst Nigel and I have had a common interest in the interrogation of the performer/audience relationship, it should also be noted that neither of us have any interest in revisiting the past. Nigel has said quite clearly in our initial discussions for *Transvestism* that he wants to be pushed, to go somewhere new. Given this I have begun to think about how I might massacre Nigel's performer/actor persona.

Personally I am interested in proposing this transvestite as he/she dressed as "other". One part of what identifies the performer is costume, giving clues as to how they might be read by their audience. In thinking about dressing for a role I was struck by the idea that audiences too have dressed for the theatre. They have dressed, however haphazardly, for their role. This struck me as being interesting terrain. We dress for dinner, for work, for fun. But we dress as ourselves. How might we dress, obvious notions of drag and dress-up aside, as "other"? How might Nigel dress/play as himself, as one of them, as other? Who might this "other" be? And how might the audience's choices implicate them in all this?

I am very excited at the possibility that I might have the opportunity to explore these ideas further with such a great team. Nigel will be coming here to France in 2005 when he is in Europe as part of his Theatre Board Fellowship. We plan on spending some weeks developing these ideas

further. As to how the collaborative process may advance with the other writers, well it's a bit of "let's see" for the moment. But I have supreme faith in Nigel's talent in steering the boat. At the same time he should be sure that this group of women will give it a damn fine rocking. After all, he HAS said that's what he wants.....

Josephine Wilson

I write to express my delight in being invited to participate in the first stage of the project "Transvestism" for the Opera Project. This letter functions both as evidence of my commitment to the project, as well as support for the project when it goes before the Theatre Board of the Australia Council.

My interest in the project is firstly in the process. I will be working with three other writers, and while the writers are separated by geography, I envisage that the process as it develops will encourage dialogue and exchange between the four women involved. While there will be dialogue, I understand that the different writing practises of the participants will be respected. Writing can be very isolating, and I welcome the collaborative spirit of this project. I have worked collaboratively on a number of projects, most significantly with Linda Carolli in on-line projects conducted between Queensland and West Australia. I find this to be a very intriguing model for writing, as it often enables a very direct engagement with 'the page' that is not always possible in fact-to-face dialogue.

Central to my interest is the figure of 'Nigel Kellaway'. I have not had the opportunity to see all of Nigel's work, but in the performances I have seen I have been attracted to the performative excesses (in the best possible sense) of Nigel's work. I am also interested in the way that the character of 'Nigel' has been mobilised within performance, only for the autobiographical to be firmly disavowed or allied.

From my discussions with Nigel via email and more recently in Perth, I propose to address some of the issues that arise around the concept of an creative performer's desire for creative shift, or change, within a model of theatre or cabaret that is popular in origin. Nigel's work is often in intense dialogue with European traditions of opera, theatre and music. I am interested in exploring a model of performance that eschews the 'high' in favour of the 'low'. These 'low registers' have been present in work that I have seen of Nigel's, and erupt in some of the melodramatic excesses of his work, but have not as far as I know really been the main character in a drama.

I intend to write 'An Evening with Nigel.' Nigel and I are television kids. We watched Dean Martin, Dave Allen... For me, television and not theatre is a central character in the piece. This kind of format - Nigel in a black suit, white shirt, collar undone, scotch in one hand, piano at the other - operates as a kind of boundary for my writing; what I need in the absence of a central thematic. It suggests the potential to establish intimacy and trust with the audience. In his performance work, Nigel toys with the audience; there is constant 'pulling the rug out'. Nigel has expressed in conversation his dissatisfaction with the congealing of the ethos of experiment and surprise in hybrid/postmodern performance into a fixed genre and audience familiarity. The two pieces of music that Nigel has given me function in some ways as metaphors for the co-existence of the high and low: Bach's Goldberg Variations and Tom Wait's Waltzing Matilda. While I do not propose to write an autobiographical one-man show (God help us!) I am interested in the kind of relationships and registers that might be possible in this 'Me and The Piano' format. It is an elastic space for song, story, anecdote and rumination; it is a form in which the concert pianist meets the entertainer. It is a kind of straight role. That is what I propose to explore in my piece.

Virginia Baxter

I look forward very much to working on the TRANSVESTISM project with Nigel Kellaway and other collaborators.

THE INVOLUNTARY TRANSVESTITE or NOT NIGEL KELLAWAY

Some early ideas from Virginia Baxter

Insomnia

I was interested in your information about the Goldberg Variations and the fact that Bach had been commissioned to write them by an insomniac, and your comment that the intended listener could have had absolutely no interest in music. Also I think the state of semi-wakefulness offers some performative possibilities.

Acting/Performing

Rather than seeing the difference between actor and performer as strict, I'm interested in the blurry line between—in this case "the elegant lie" that is the real Nigel Kellaway jockeying for stage space with the uber-"Nigel Kellaway"

An aspect of your performance persona which has always intrigued me is your presence at the piano when you seem to reflect a quite different self.

The Involuntary Transvestite

Nigel Kellaway in the persona of an insomniac actor sits at the piano listening to/playing sections of the music and falling into various para-insomniac states ie between wakefulness and sleep. Perhaps lighting plays an important role in conjuring these states such that he is sometimes in blinding light, at other times barely visible.

In these states the insomniac reveals the uncertain state of his relationship with himself as actor/performer.

This could be written as a number of short pieces or as one. One, for instance, might take the form of a nay saying sequence, a string of denials in which you elaborate on "Nigel Kellaway" as:

No ordinary transvestite
Not part of a queer culture
Not Nigel Kellaway!

2004 marked the 21st Birthday celebration of the official founding of Performance Space at 199 Cleveland Street, Redfern.

On the 4th November was a cocktail party, at which 5 "Legends" were acknowledged for their contribution to the Space over the 21 years: founding director of Pspace Mike Mullins, architect and former Chair Brian Zulaikha, SMH dance critic Jill Sykes, photographer Heidrun Lohr and performance maker Nigel Kellaway.

On November 6th a large party was "staged". Members of The Sydney Front were invited to collaborate on a 10 minute work for this event, *PRELOVED*.

Clare continue to talk. Nigel and John descend to work with the unpartnered, moving them (subtly!) to E and preparing them for the march.

4. March

Radetsky March breaks abruptly into the space. Chris, John and Nigel hurry around assembling the Naked and the Slips into marching formation at E. On the music cue, all march diagonally across the space to the central exit (SM drops the rope), to the foyer. John, Nigel and Chris re-enter, naked from the waist down, marching alone. They reach the centre of the space when the music cuts.

Clare (who has been talking inaudibly throughout) comes back into focus to give the last word for about 5 seconds, then blackout.

Body of work

Adam Geczy, *The Australian*, 27 November 2004

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Microfiche holdings available in the Fisher Library, University of Sydney
<http://opac.library.usyd.edu.au/record=b1518725>

xmasagain!
(and we're going global)

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway

Women's College, University of Sydney, 9th December 2004

from France

1. **Me voici dans son doudoir** Ambroise Thomas (1811-96) (from *Mignon*)
2. **Madrigal dans le style ancien** Vincent D'Indy (1851-1931)
3. **Que fais-tu, blanche tourterelle** Charles Gounod (1818-93) (from *Romeo et Juliette*)

from Italy

4. **'A Frangesa!** Pasquale Mario Costa (1858-1933)
5. **Core 'ngrato** (1911) Salvatore Cardillo (1874-1947)
6. **Stizzoso, mio stizzoso** Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) (from *La Serva Padrona*)

from Germany

7. **Youkali** (1915) words Roger Fernay music Kurt Weill
8. **Wei lange noch?** (1944) words W. Mehring music Kurt Weill

a very short interval

from America

9. **Johnny One Note** words Lorenz Hart music Richard Rogers (from *Babes in Arms*, MGM 1939)

- 10. How About You?** words Ralph Reed music Burton Lane (from *Babes on Broadway*, MGM 1941)
- 11. Paris Is A Lonely Town** words E.V.Harburg music Harold Arlen (from *Gay Pur-ee*, UPA 1961)
- 12. You Made Me Love You** words Joseph McCarthy music J. V.Monaco (from *Broadway Melody of 1938*, MGM 1937)
- 13. Alone Together** words & music H.Dietz & A.Schartz (from *Flying Colors*, 1932)
- 14. Embracable You** words I.Gershwin music G.Gershwin (from *Crazy Girl*, MGM 1943)
- 15. Come Rain Or Come Shine** words Johnny Mercer music Harold Arlen (from *St. Louis Woman*, 1946)
- 16. Bidin' My Time** words I.Gershwin music G.Gershwin (from *Girl Crazy*, MGM 1943)
- 17. I Happen To Like New York** words & music Cole Porter (1931)
- 18. If Love Were All** words & music Noel Coward (from *Bitter Sweet*, 1929)
-

Chapter 12: 2005

(Part-way through a Fellowship)

32 SHORT SCENES ON THE DICHTERLIEBE

Co-created with Rosalind Crisp a full evening work for dancer and pianist with music by Robert Schumann. Created in residence at the Centre Nationale de la Danse, Paris and premeiered at Performance Space, Sydney

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Review - 32 Short Scenes on the Dichterliebe - Jill Sykes - SMH

Annette Tesoriero/Nigel Kellaway - French Nights Recital Program

Annette Tesoriero/Nigel Kellaway - Christmas Recital Program

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway in **Génies de la Mer**

a short program of French songs about water, travel, sirens, enchantment, longing, all things maritime ... and more

introduced by Daina Fletcher (senior curator, Australian National Maritime Museum)

Thursday March 31st, 2005 at 7.00pm

Women's College, 15 Carillon Avenue, University of Sydney

Air de Philis
from Le Carnival

Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-87)
words by Moliere

O Nuit, désese du mystérie

Niccolo Piccinni (1728-1800)

N'offrez plus a nos yeux
from Hippodamie

André Campra (1660-1744)

Divinités du Styx
from Alceste

Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714-87)

Madrigal dans le style ancien

Vincent D'Indy (1851-1931)
words by Robert de Bonnières

Le Charme Op.2, No.2

Ernest Chausson (1855-99)
words by Armand Silvestre

Sérénade Italienne Op.2, No.5

Ernest Chausson (1855-99)
words by Paul Bourget

Amour d'Antan Op.8, No.2

Ernest Chausson (1855-99)
words by Maurice Bouchor

Les Berceaux Op.23, No.1

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
words by Sully Prudhomme

Clair de lune Op.46, No.2

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
words by Paul Verlaine

Lied Maritime

words and music **Vincent D'Indy** (1851-1931)

from **Les Nuits d'été (Summer Nights) Opus 7 (1834)** **Hector Berlioz** (1803-1869)
poems by Theophile Gautier

Sur les Lagunes
L'île Inconnue

NAPOLI: il mistero, il sorriso, la voce

UN CONCERTO PER RIVIVERE LA PASSIONE ITALIANA ATTRAVERSO LE CANZONI DI
NAPOLI - an afternoon of popular Neapolitan songs

Annette Tesoriero (the voice), Domenico Sepe (the charm), Nigel Kellaway (the mystery)

Sunday May 1st, 2005 at 3pm

Dural Country Club, Old Northern Road, Dural

Introduced by Dr. Raffaele Marcellino

O Paese D' 'O Sole (1925)

Vincenzo D'Annibale (1894-1950)
words by Libero Bovio

Te voglio bene assaje (circa 1839)

Raffaele Sacco
(after Gaetano Donizetti)

A Vucchella (1907)

Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)
words by Gabriele D'Annunzio

Ideale (1882)

Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)
words by Carmelo Errico

Luna D'Estate (1911)

Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)
words by Riccardo Mazzola

I' te vurria vasà! (1900)

Eduardo Di Capua (1865-1917)
words by V. Russo

La fiera de Mast'Andrea

(anon - traditional Neapolitan)

Core 'ngrato (1911)	Salvatore Cardillo (1874-1947) words by Riccardo Cordiferro
Non ti scordar di me	Ernesto De Curtis (1875-1937) words by Domenico Furno
Tango della Gelosia (1930)	Vittorio Masheroni (1895-1972) words by Peppino Mendes
Interval	
Piscatore 'e Pusilleco (1925)	E. Tagliaferri words by E Murolo
'O Marenariello (1893)	S. Gambardella
Tu ca nun chiagne (1915)	Ernesto De Curtis (1875-1937) words by Libero Bovio
Lu Cardillo	Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870)
'A Frangesa!	Pasquale Mario Costa (1858-1933)
'E Spingole Frangese (1888)	E. De Leva words by Salvatore Di Giacomo
Michelemmà	(anon - traditional Neapolitan)

Application to Australia Council (Theatre) & NSW Ministry for the Arts

THE RAMEAU PROJECT (working title only)

Director/writer/designer:	Nigel Kellaway
Principal Performers:	Regina Heilmann, Nigel Kellaway, Dean Walsh, Brian Fuata, Peretta Anggerek (countertenor), Didier Frederic (baritone), Clive Birch (bass)
Musical Director/harpsichordist:	Nigel Ubrihien
Dramaturg:	Damien Millar
Composer/sound artist:	Liberty Kerr
Design: lighting:	Simon Wise
costumes:	Annemaree Dalziel
Video artist:	Peter Oldham
Development period:	February - August 2006
Rehearsal/Performance season:	December 2006 - February 2007

opera / 'opra / 'opara (It, from L: service, work, a work)

The opera Project Inc. is a non profit incorporated association founded by Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero in 1997. Its mission is to create an ongoing process of examination of contemporary theatrical structures, their histories, and in particular those structures which hold up our notion of 'opera'. It aims to do this within a forum of collaboration between committed artists who share a history in contemporary performance. Over the past eight years a flexible ensemble of established and highly experienced artists, committed to the vision of The opera Project, has emerged. All the company's completed works have contemplated themes of vocal (sung and spoken) and physical articulacy within a highly visual context, each from very different positions.

THE PROJECT - THE ISSUES

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will be a large scale theatre work exploring ideas of "gender and power slippage" and all that infers in contemporary culture. It will contemplate the theatrical act in terms of facade, construct and artefact. It will concern itself with issues of "wholesomeness" vs "degeneracy"; the "natural" vs the "fake". It will be a truly "hybrid" performance work, finely balancing the juxtaposition of musical, dramatic and dance/physical forms and material, in view of a discrete visual design.

Jean Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) composed many operas and "acte de ballet" of less than a hour's duration, so they were typically mixed and matched to present an whole evening's entertainment as the occasion demanded. His work is mostly more concerned with colour (orchestrally) and movement (the dance) than with plot and libretto - rich source material indeed! Why this concern with the "operatic" form? Partly because of our musical expertise and intuitions. Partly because of our inclinations toward the theatrically provocative, the ambiguous, the outrageous and the degenerate - all of which "operatic" expressions exemplify.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will be a performance work exploring themes of (essentially) male promiscuity - prostitution, machismo, phallic symbolism (French Baroque theatre music is littered with these gestures), the ecstatic orgasm, followed musically by ennui (Rameau plays endlessly with this idea within predetermined Baroque musical structures), operatic "promiscuity" (wanting everything at once!), exhibitionism (extravagant display of the voice and body in performance), physical and vocal bravura (and its potential for expressions of violence), narcissism (as expressed in the French penchant for elaborate musical ornamentation) and the sense of "licence" in French Baroque opera (suggesting that anything is permitted, so long as it works!)

The aesthetics of the work will be typically eclectic and contemporary, taking its lead from the swung rhythms in the French Baroque. The instrumental music of the period was built largely around particular dance structures. Our task is in finding contemporary devices / modes of social representation to (under)mine, in a monumental study of power and corruption, dominance and submission.

STRUCTURE

A collision of "operatic exhibits", capitalising on the aesthetic seductiveness of the most striking of theatrical phenomenon - the heightened voice (spoken and sung) and body.

This exhibition will feature three discrete, but simultaneously performed and intersecting theatrical works:

1. A trio of operatic "divos" (Anggerek, Frederic and Birch) - three outrageously degenerate symbols of corrupt power and depravity. A starting point for this component will be the writings of the Greek lyric poet Anacreon (6th century BC) who contemplated with considerable grace, wit and irony his obsessions with love, wine and the brevity of life. His work was a popular inspiration to

the composers and writers of the French baroque period, particularly Rameau. Nigel Kellaway will be spending some weeks in the libraries of the Paris Conservatoire and Opera (as part of his Theatre Fellowship) later in 2005, researching potential Rameau repertoire for this component.

2. The second work will be a duet for performers Dean Walsh and Brian Fuata - two performers of contrasting skills, but sharing exceptional physical stage presence. Kellaway will explore with them a myriad of scenarios, referencing the intricate "dance" structures of Rameau's opera/ballets and reflecting on the homo-erotic tension inherent in the work's over-arching theme of male promiscuity. Kellaway and Brian Fuata have already commenced work on developing potential scenarios and fragments of text exploring a classic psychopathic relationship between dominant and submissive partners, hell-bent on indiscriminate murder. This material will then be built on in collaboration with composer Liberty Kerr, with the vision of a contemporary DJ driven sound/music score.

3. Simultaneously with this "museum" of theatrical exhibits and scenarios, a third more narratively logical performance will take place - a stark and vicious confrontation between Nigel Kellaway and Regina Heilmann - two collaborators that have notably explored at least seven deeply dysfunctional "heterosexual" relationships on stage over the past 15 years. This time it is a reflection on themes explored in Jean Genet's great theatrical text, *The Maids*, in which two women / men / children / spinsters / humiliated servants play out games of identity, dominance, passivity and self-annihilation. This component was an early focus in Kellaway's Fellowship, leading to the drafting of an early scenario, which was further developed by Kellaway and Heilmann in collaboration with harpsichordist Nigel Ubrihien in April 2005. The text and action are developing in structural relationship with Rameau's Keyboard Suite in E Minor (1724)

Design

The stage and lighting designs will be discretely conceived components, prescribing the ordering and staging of the theatrical and musical material. Kellaway and Wise have already conceived of an arc of light that moves in a single action across the space, defining a single central climax of action, "book-ended" by a *crescendo / accelerando* and *diminuendo / rallentando*. This is not about making theatrical material and then pointing lights at it. It is deliberately considering theatre lighting akin to a musical language with attendant time-based dynamics.

A signature of Kellaway's work is the fairly empty (though functionally furnished) space delineated by light and the (un)/costumed body. Long term costume collaborator Annemaree Dalziel will realise the dominating physical design component. Peter Oldham's video design will be a feature of the lighting - both abstract and narrative devices (and colour) projected directly onto the stage surfaces and bodies.

Music and Sound

One dominant feature of the work will be the live performance of extant music by J.P.Rameau - a complete suite for harpsichord and various vocal solos, duets and trios from his operas, *acte-de-ballet* and religious motets. The vocal and instrumental ensemble are all experienced exponents of the French baroque repertoire, and most have collaborated with Kellaway on several occasions over the past 6 years.

Rameau's 18th century music places us in a truly rarefied atmosphere - both strange and challenging - at once brittle and brutal, utterly "at one" with its time in history. Sound artist / composer Liberty Kerr will contribute a driving sound score in which this acoustically sung, spoken and played material is contextualized in what an audience would certainly recognise as their own "contemporary landscape".

LOGISTICS

It was with considerable grief that The opera Project made its decision to return its 2004 funding for *THE SLIPPAGE*. **THE RAMEAU PROJECT** is a fresh strategy, in appreciation that major new work cannot be made in a few months. The proposed extended development period will also

afford time for the company to explore a greater range of production partners (beyond the normal suspects of NSW Ministry and Australia Council) for the eventual realisation of the work.

The Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney has indicated that they might want to continue their support of the process by nominating the work as their major project for examination in 2006. This would entail the supply of venue for the July/August workshop and a fee of \$10,000. Their favourable decision on this is pending the success with our applications to the Australia Council and NSW Ministry.

The company is, at present, in conversation with Virginia Hyam at the Sydney Opera House and Fergus Linehan, director of the Sydney Festival, about the possibilities of staging the work. Fiona Winning has already indicated that she would like the production at Performance Space, and yet is supporting our efforts to showcase the work on a heightened platform.

The budget in this application has been costed on a realistic 2 week season at Performance Space. In the event of these other producing partners coming on board, the expenditure and income figures will obviously inflate considerably, in line with the addition funds they provide.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT benefits from similar circumstances to The opera Project's 1998 production of *THE TERROR OF TOSCA* - a work that many have considered our most thoroughly completed. In that instance Nigel Kellaway was a recipient of the Rex Cramphorn Theatre Scholarship, which afforded him 12 months to research, write, compose and prepare for the creative rehearsal period with his collaborators. His present Australia Council Fellowship affords this project even greater support, to these ends. As part of this fellowship, Kellaway is researching, writing and workshopping components of the work.

In 2004 he prepared structures and preliminary texts for workshopping, explored musical repertoire and dramaturgies and drafted design concepts. In April 2005 he workshopped with Regina Heilmann (co-performer) and Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichord/musical director) elements of the Genet inspired scenes, as residents at Sydney University's Department of Performance Studies. In September / October 2005 Kellaway will be based in Paris, and will have access to the libraries and archives of the Paris Opera and Conservatoire (the two foremost repositories of Rameau's operatic scores in the world) for the further exploration of potential musical and theatrical repertoire. His European sojourn will also involve a lengthy residency with noted German composer and theatre creator Heiner Goebbels - a master at contextualizing extant musical and textural repertoire in astounding new theatre work.

All the collaborating artists have already crowded schedules in 2006, and so are all keen to spread their fees and times on this project over extended periods (which suits the gestation of the work very well).

February - April 2006	initial meetings with the "creative team" (director, writers, designers, sound artists) re structuring and finalising initial drafts and components.
July / August 2006	Workshop rehearsals with the full company. (Potentially in residence at the Rex Cramphorn Studio, University of Sydney)
September-November 2006	"Re-writes" by the "creative team". Costume/set/video manufacture begins.
December 2006 / January 2007	Final rehearsals - Full company
January or February 2007	PERFORMANCE SEASON

RATIONALE

In **THE RAMEAU PROJECT** The opera Project is greatly extending its ambitions in terms of production scale and vision, boldly stating its role as pro-active cultural historians on a platform and scale that is a departure for the company. At the same time, it maintains the intimate processes of collaboration that have emerged over our eight years of "chamber" practice. It brings together a sizeable ensemble of senior artists, most of whom are very familiar with the company's political vision and aesthetic.

The history of opera attempts to hide some shocking secrets behind the veils of exquisite music and stupendous theatricality. And this history perfectly reflects similar conundrums faced in presenting the "essential truth" as paraded by the contemporary actor, the "truthful body" in contemporary dance, and the dilemma of the elaborately constructed "lies we call theatre", and how theatre art struggles to reconcile itself with contemporary experience. Performance of baroque music in Australia has tended to concentrate on the repertoire of the Italians, Germans and English. But The opera Project's present interests lean more toward the history and practices of French baroque theatre music, being perhaps the least prescriptive of all operatic forms in terms of structure, musical and theatrical style and content. We are particularly drawn to its overt style - it is elegant, wildly theatrical, decadently rich in sonorities and is peculiar for the radically improvisational nature of its musical realisation.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will be the culmination of 3 years concentrated research and development by Nigel Kellaway on a particular vision - one that reflects a 30 year disparate theatrical career and attempts to make sense of his wealth of experience, technique and aspirations.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT will be an extraordinary show case of artists who have been major players in Australian contemporary performance practice over many years (more than two decades in some cases), and whom are all very active practitioners. The multi-disciplinary nature of this project will target a wide range of theatre, dance, music, and contemporary performance as well as queer, gay, lesbian and transgendered audiences. This is a production that will excite both experienced and new audiences, touching as it does on so many recognisable genres and media - **chaotic, virtuosic, outrageous and intelligent. It will explore theatre as a "grand genre" - a subject that rarely, in this country, has such an assembly of experienced collaborators to contemplate and realise its vision.**

EUROPE 2005 - Intinerary

August 18 - September 2 **ZURICH**

Zuercher Theater Spektakel

Works seen:

19/08	SUNKEN RED RO Theatre / Guy Cassiers	Theatre
20/08	PERFORMERS ON TRIAL Simon Aughterlony & Thomas Wodianka	DanceTheatre
21/08	RICARDO III MAPA TEATRO	Theatre
24/08	JOURNEY TO THE MOON William Kentridge & Archimia Quartet	Film & Music
25/08	HOMECOMERS Tomas Schweigen & Magic-Net	Theatre
26/08	ARIA! Orkestra Ben Jeger	Music
27/08	SESTINA Muziektheater Transparant / Wouter Van Looy	Music Theatre

28/08	PSICOSIS 4.48 MAPA TEATRO	Theatre
1/09	WOHLGELITTEN IN WOHLIGELEGEN KUMPANE	Dance Theatre
2/09	BR.#04 Societas Raffaello Sanzio / Romeo Castellucci	Theatre
3/09	GOOD SAMARITANS New York City Players / Richard Maxwell	Theatre

September 3-4 GENEVA

4/09	MAX BLACK Heiner Goebbels	Music Theatre
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September 5 - 17 PARIS

Two weeks in residence at the Centre National de la Danse with dancer Rosalind Crisp to create a duet *32 Short Scenes on the Dichterliebe*.

September 18 - 22 WARSAW

22/09	LANDSCAPE WITH DISTANT RELATIVES Heiner Goebbels and ENSEMBLE MODERN	Music Theatre
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September 23 - 29 VENICE

Venice Biennale

Works seen:

23/09	I ONLY APPEAR TO BE DEAD HOTEL PRO FORMA	Music Theatre
24/09	MORE VIA NEGATIVA	Theatre
24/09	JO Cameron Jaime & Keiji Haino	Film / Sound
25/09	WEATHER REPORT Chris Watson	Film / Sound
28/09	SURROGATE CITIES Heiner Goebbels and LA FENICE	Music / video

September 30 - October 16 PEYMEINADE

Two weeks with Jai McHenry in the south of France, collaborating on the initial writing of *Sleepers Wake!*

October 17 - 29 BERLIN

works seen:

22/10	MADAMA BUTTERFLY Puccini / Komische Oper	Opera
23/10	THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO Mozart / Komische Oper	Opera
27/10	PELLEAS ET MELISANDE Debussy / Deutsche Oper	Opera

October 30 - November 1 DRESDEN

2/11	ARIADNE AUF NAXOS R. Strauss / Semper Oper	Opera
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November 2 - 8 NUREMBERG

One week in Nuremberg watching the early staging rehearsal of Helen Malkowsky's new production of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* at the Nuremberg State Opera. My time with the production was cut short due to an imminent death in my family, requiring me to return to Australia a couple of weeks earlier than planned.

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLANDER Opera

Romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen von Richard Wagner
Nuremberg State Opera, Opening 03.12.2005 19:30 Uhr
Musikalische Leitung: Johannes Fritzsch
Inszenierung: Helen Malkowsky
Bühne: Harald Thor
Kostüme: Tanja Hofmann
Choreinstudierung: Edgar Hykel

Cast: Guido Jentjens (Daland)
Christiane Libor (Senta)
Erin Caves (Erik)
Teresa Erbe (Mary)
Carsten Süß (Der Steuermann)
Jürgen Linn (Der Holländer)

Notes kept whilst on tour in Europe

EUROPE 18/8/2005 - 12/11/2005

18/08 - 02/09

Zurich

Xtra Hotel 118 Limmatstrasse (44) 448 1595

Zuercher Theater Spektakel

Hotel to Festival site: Tram 13 to Burkliplatz
Bus 165 / 161 (direction Rote Fabrik) to Landiwiese
site office (044) 488 1880

Festival director: Maria Magdalena Schwaegermann
O79 77 555 88 Mmschwae@aol.com

Friday 19/8

SUNKEN RED Ro Theater (Belgium)

Director: Guy Cassiers
Writer: Jeroen Brouwers
Actor: Dirk Roofthoof
Design: Peter Missotten

More literary than narrative.

A lone man on an enormous stage.

Seemingly unrelated details and obsessions gradually and finally come together to make absolute sense. Everything is connected.

A frightening glimpse at illness - this man is sick because he is damaged / deeply hurt.

The actor has an amazing ability to throw lines and words away - but they float in the space.

Just a simple monologue - so personal. I cried at the end of the curtain call - I was just so exhausted - nearly 2 hours of non-stop monologue.

About European women and children held in internment camps in Jakarta by the Japanese in 1843-45. Torture and humiliation.

* It is the subject matter that makes this powerful theatre. The "style" is complementary - huge, but understated - "in service".

* Acting - no histrionics. This man is self-pitying / self-loathing / afraid of both living and dying. But he keeps it to himself. He is happy to share his story, but he doesn't demand our sympathy. So, of course, we share with him his pain and fear ... and do sympathise.

As we both fought back the tears, Robyn Archer turned to me at the end and said "So is that enough fucking art for you, Nigel?"

20/08 Guy Cassiers' Talk

That moment of intense nothingness - "Nothing happens".

Only after his mother's death, does he allow himself to look back at his childhood. After years of denial.

Like Proust, he is dealing with the past.

The Japanese question - Cassiers says that is an issue that is never talked about in Europe.

Construction - like a Bach composition - you can see the structure.

* Theatre is a lie. It asks the question "WHAT IF?" - and so gets very close to the truth.

21/08

RICARDO III Mapa Teatro, Bogota, Columbia

The only other times I have seen productions of Richard III were in about 1975 - an impenetrable student production in Melbourne by Peter King in dirty singlets. And then in 1986 at the Adelaide Festival, by the Rustaveli Company in Georgian - breathtaking!

And now this production in Spanish with German surtitles. So I still don't have a clue what happens.

But it was intermittently moving. Lots of skulls on stage. And was clear that Shakespeare's themes of lust for power, corruption and damnation are the driving passion for this Columbian company. It seemed a very moralistic reading of the text.

The acting is often quaintly clumsy - sometimes a bit self-conscious.

Once again I am hearing really good sound design.

The all male cast works well in the male and female roles - not too many gender cliches.

Sometimes I am reminded of Suzuki in their attempts to stylise the action and delivery.

A slow accumulation of skulls on the stage floor, throughout, drawing out a crucifix shaped acting space.

Actors scattered upstage - and then suddenly in a slow procession downstage - very Suzuki, and very striking!

The moralism of the production is interesting. I would personally find it hard to take such a position. I would simply play the action out as it is written. I would be AMORAL, I suppose.

Music in the Streets of Zurich

21/08 - in the band stand at the Quay. Pouring with rain. A few couples with a sound system, dancing tangos. All very understated - nothing showy - just SOCIAL DANCING.

Each evening a very cute young Caribbean boy play 2 steel drums on the festival site, by the restaurants, around dinner time. Bach Preludes and Fugues. He even ornaments them correctly. And all by memory!!

23/08 - THE ARCHIMIA STRING QUARTET (Italy). They have just finishes a performance with the William Kentridge films. They have collected around a bench in one of the restaurants - well supplied with beer. And they play cheeky, cheeky music. Vivaldi spiced with Salsa rhythms. Mozart that segues effortlessly into Jimi Hendrix. Puccini meets Led Zeppelin. Exceptional musicians!! One of the impromptu highlights of the festival.

24/08

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE FILMS WITH THE ARCHIMIA QUARTET

Really well written music by the contemporary South African composer, Phillip Miller, accompanying beautiful films of Kentridge's animated drawings.

About corruption and loss in South Africa between 1989 and 2003. Subtle reflections on apartheid and democracy.

Some haunting mixes of live music and screen sound.

But this is still just music accompanying the film. The films were made first. The only "immediate" dialogue between film and music is what we as an audience experience.

But really remarkable playing from the quartet, with extraordinary moments of sync with the film.

Also a "prepared" piano with them - some really clever sound moments - and very simple!

A VERY ADULT EVENING IN THE "THEATRE"!

27/08

SESTINA Muziektheater Transparent, Belgium.

Monteverdi madrigals and songs, and Petrarch's sonnet "Trionfo della morte".

Traverse stage - pretty set - a central pool of water and some bare trees and scattered leaves over the floor. A large projection screen at one end - A park at night. A nice touch are the surtitles (in German) that are attractively hand-written.

* MUSIC THEATRE HAS TO BE MORE THAN THIS!!!

Five singers shuffling around the stage for an hour with sorrowful expressions, singing quite beautiful music BADLY! It's nothing more than a semi-staged concert, with too much money thrown at it. The singers are appallingly untrained and inexperienced actors.

A pretty set does not make a piece of theatre!!

The sound design is naff. The lighting design is amateur. The costumes are ghastly! Why the allusion to the mid 19th century? Is that all "romanticism" means to these guys?

Nothing is going on - just song after song with translations in the screen superimposed over really obvious photos of gardens at night. And they call it a "multi-media work"!

And the curtain calls (5 of them!) were truly shocking - almost embarrassingly funny.

Choreographed and full of self-importance - completely inappropriate given the paucity of the work.

Perhaps this is a case for all directors being forced to perform in their own work. Rather than dashing around the foyer every night, looking intense, and smug and inspired. Perhaps they would then begin to appreciate how bad their work is.

(Makes me feel quite good about my own work!)

03/09

Goodbye to Zurich. 12.04 train to Geneva. The carriage has quotation from Le Corbusier etched just below the luggage racks.

What did I like about Zurich?

People smile when you smile (great orthodontic work!) ... but I guess anyone would, earning the kind of money they seem to!

So clean.

People drink a lot - even get drunk. But I never saw any violence.

The boys are beautiful. Skin! The young are slim, despite all the dairy produce they consume.

The city, the lake, the alps - fantastically beautiful.

The public transport system is so efficient - and so expensive! - it works on an honour system, though in two and a half weeks I never saw an inspector.

Everyone seems to speak 4 languages fluently.

The pollution is not so bad.

Cars drive very slowly, and the pedestrians absolutely rule the roads.
The Swiss are incredibly punctual (Swiss watches and all that!)
Why, even in summer, do so many people carry around ski stocks ... or are they hiking sticks?
Yes the Swiss are friendly and polite - though not overly gregarious. They don't seem to talk to strangers. Has this something to do with prosperity?
It appears on the surface to be a multicultural and tolerant society.
Dogs everywhere! In restaurants and on the trams. And so well socialised!
The Swiss seem to avoid confrontation.
Good public art (apart from all those dreadful sponsored teddy bears!)

HELLO GENEVA - HAD MY LAPTOP STOLEN AND CHF300, ON THE STREET OUTSIDE MY HOTEL!!!!

Spent hours in a police station and trying to organise things with immigration to get to France the next day. A nightmare! And I've lost 2 weeks work on the computer. And all my email access, that I'd spent so much time and money preparing before I left Sydney, is gone the next 3 months. But there is nothing I can do about it - just have to forget about it, breathe deeply and get on with what I have to do next.

Then found my briefcase dumped at the back of a nearby church - thank God my passport, airline ticket and work folder were left in it. But I've already bought a replacement train ticket to Paris - will I get a refund tomorrow?

Heiner Goebbel's **MAX BLACK**, and then a bad sandwich and couple of beers down by the lake alone - at an icecream joint packed with Muslim Arabs. I'm the only person here drinking alcohol. The restaurant brings the men sweet smelling hookers to smoke. Sitting opposite Geneva's famous "jet" fountain. Lots of very hip young black guys strolling past. They all seem to have white girlfriends. There is no-one here that looks vaguely Swiss.

MAX BLACK

Music and Mis en scene: Heiner Goebbels
Solo actor: Andre Wilms

04/09

To Centre Nationale de la Danse:

Metro Rambateau - Line 11, direction Marie des Lilas to REPUBLIQUE (2 stops)
Change to Line 5, direction Bobigny to HOCHE (9 stops)
Sortie RUE HOCHE
Maximum 30 minutes.

Drinking Bierre Blanche avec citron - Hoegaarden (Dutch) Euro 3.40 at Cafe le Cactus

Meet Barbara Campbell, Thursday 8th, 8.30pm in the foyer
Studio 8413, Citie des Artes, 18 Rue d'Hotel de Ville.
0616 419 679 / mob 0418 04 33 49

05/09

Ah! Paris! Zurich is so pretty and clean - Paris is dirty - and much more beautiful and crowded and exciting!

Fantastic 18th century apartment - big! Belongs to the Sydney Morning Herald's Paris correspondent - he's on holiday in the south of France for 2 weeks. Centre of the Marais district

(it's so gay it makes Oxford Street on a Saturday night look positively hetero!) - 4 minutes walk from Notre Dame - what a position! And the food is quite good.

Just finished the first day of work with Ros Crisp (after 3 weeks away from a piano) - a great day. I'm really enjoying it.

My French is dreadful - and they certainly don't speak English here! The Parisiennes are great - they work so hard at being Parisienne - cool, arrogant and a bit rude. I find it funny. I admire their effort. And there are dogs everywhere! (And dog shit).

Sitting on a restaurant terrace, nice lamb cutlets with green beans and a half bottle of good white wine.

I'll go home now and try to work out how to use my host's fax machine (it's all in French) and send a cheerio to Taka. And I need to do some preparation for tomorrow's rehearsal. It's so good to be working! And Ros has a real European energy.

06/09

Bad Middle Eastern restaurant in the Marais - too expensive.

A young couple at the next table. She's French, he is perhaps Italian. Both speaking English. About 20 years old. She is a serious flirt - and so French - she knows how to appeal. Cute and sexy and confident. She talks about how her mother is always dieting, and sitting in bed reading magazines and waiting for her husband to ring to say when he might come home (he obviously has a mistress.)

The boy's English is not so good, so he doesn't speak much. He's probably a bit intimidated also - I know I would be!

Last night on the Metro from Republique, a busker with a sound system and playing divine saxophone. Great music! And perfect volume.

Rehearsals with Ros Crisp

Monday 5	9.30 - 1.30	Studio 7
Tuesday 6	9.30 - 1.30	Studio 7
Wednesday 7	10.30 - 1.30	Studio 7
Thursday 8	9.30 - 1.30	Studio 7
Friday 9	9.30 - 1.30	Studio 9
Monday 12	10.30 - 1.30	Studio 9
Tuesday 13	10.30 - 1.30	Studio 9
Wednesday 14	10.30 - 1.30	Studio 7
Thursday 15	1.30 - 5.30	Studio 6
Friday 16	1.30 - 5.30	Studio 6 4.00pm Public showing

07/09

Back at Les Philosophes for dinner - the plat du jour - tonight it's duck with aubergine and sweet potato mash. Beautiful for 11 euros. Plus another half litre of reasonable white wine.

A guy comes into the restaurant with a tiny and rather old daschund cross in his bag. Sits down and pops the dog out on the banquette next to him - all completely natural and acceptable.

arrive Warszawa Centralna 8.55 Euros 193

Portos Hotel U1 Mangalia 3A
 02 / 758 Warsaw
 0048 22 320 2000

19/09

So here I am in Warsaw. What the fuck am I doing here?! Apart from spending about \$1000. The train trip from Paris via Cologne was awful. A 3 hour wait outside the Dom in Cologne - cold and hungry - absolutely paranoid about luggage I dragging behind me. A ghastly couchette with a Polish or Russian woman that wouldn't shut up. The border guards "smashed" the door open at 4.30am - the passport Gestapo. Changed money at Warsaw Central Station. 6 hours later I still have no idea what the currency is called. What a miracle I found the hotel - thanks only to a young office girl that travelling that way. A bus way out to a depressing Soviet era wasteland of high-rise blocks. Room is Spartan, but it's fine - 1960's lino and bare walls. Bus into the city and found the theatre. Will try to get in tomorrow. Wandered down appears to be the main restaurant strip. A quite reasonable beef salad and a couple of beers at 3.00pm. Probably back to the hotel for a nap, and then work out where to find dinner out in the Gulag. This ain't Paris - and certainly no-one is as pretty.

But the restaurant's coffee is certainly better than on the train - the worst I think I've ever had - I couldn't drink it.

The police here are so dressed up! And they march around buildings with rifles and bayonets fixed. And all the churches appear to be locked.

20/09

Had planned to meet Stephan Buchberger (Heiner Goebbel's dramaturg and "assistant") today at the theatre. But I think I might be a tourist instead ... after all, it's just going to be a lot of techies bumping in, and Heiner doesn't arrive until tomorrow.

Appalling breakfast at the hotel - grey coffee again! And a room full of fat Polish women with truly bad hair! At least the boys wear the crutches of their jeans at a more flattering height here in Poland.

Park Lazienkowski - astonishing! The Belvedere Palace looks very official and closed to the public. But the small summer palace on the lake is open and utterly gorgeous. With a fabulous folly of a ruined amphitheatre - probably holds around 400. Has an orchestra pit as well! Cafe at the back - almost empty - the waiter looked at me for 20 minutes before serving me. \$6 for a reasonable cappuccino. The whole setting is very gracious - not at all pompous - everything on a friendly scale. And a cut boy who runs a very camp little gondola for hire on the lake. Best keep moving! A little man sits in the toilets in the park, collecting 1 (whatever the currency is called) for every use - no chance of this being a beat!

Nothing to do around the hotel late at night, so I'm tucked up in bed re-reading Michael Tournier's THE ERLKING. reflecting on what it is to be grotesque - a monster. "Monster" comes from the Latin "monster" - to show. The monster is only a monster when in public - walking the streets of Warsaw. Some go un-noticed. Is there such a thing as "the monster within"? Is the amnesiac pianist in my new solo a monster? I would like him to be. The monster that slowly reveals himself. Yes there are ugly people around. But there is beauty. And there is weariness - the lines of suffering, of sadness. Saw an exhibition of photos from the Warsaw Jewish Ghetto. I recognised them, and so didn't want to look too closely.

The old here seem to view us foreigners with such obvious suspicion - a disdain born of centuries of foreign oppression. Is that why they lock all their churches? To keep out the infidel? Protect their space from the monsters?

And all the men really do wear Lech Walesa moustaches!
Another seafood restaurant for dinner. Hey, I've eaten the best food I've had in Europe over the past 2 days. Maybe the Polish incomes are really low, and I'm eating seriously posh. But the seafood risotto this evening for \$14 was heaven! And the restaurants down this strip are all very "designed". The toilets are all like luxury apartments.
It's Tuesday, and I haven't spoken to a soul since Friday afternoon.

21/09

National Theatre - Teatr Wielki
Plac Teatralny 3
Stephan Buchberger (Heiner's assistant) 0049 171 54 78897

Wednesday 2.00pm - 6.00pm
7.00pm - 10.00pm

Thursday 2.30 - 5.00pm Dress Rehearsal
7.30pm Opening Night

LANDSCHAFT MIT ENTFERNTEN VERWANTEN LANDSCAPE WITH DISTANT RELATIVES

Composer / director: Heiner Goebbels
Conductor: Franck Ollu
Sets and Lights: Klaus Grunberg
Costumes: Florence von Gerkan
Director's collaborator: Stephan Buchberger
Actor: David Bennent

ENSEMBLE MODERN
DEUTSCHER KAMMERCHOR

(first performed at the Grande Theatre de Geneva)

23/09

Warsaw to Venice 280 Euros
Warsaw Terminal 1 10.15am
to Copenhagen Terminal 3 (arrive 11.35am)
Copenhagen Terminal 3 12.50pm
to Venice Marco Polo (arrive 14.45pm)
Hotel: ALBERGO CASA PERON
Sallizada San Pantalon 84
30135 Venezia
Tel 041 71 00 21

HOTEL PROFORMA at Teatro alla Tese Cinquecentesche I only appear to be Dead

Director: Kirsten Dehlholm
Music: Manos Tsangaris
Sound: Simon Stockhausen
Actor: Ninna Steen

Choir: Danish National Choir (14 singers)

Disappointing really. Quite nice set - 28 metres wide and only about 5 metres depth. The music was quite nice in spots - some good singers. But the theatrical material was really very drab - like Musiktheater Transparent - but better costumes. HUGE DESIGN BUDGET! But it's like bad workshop exercises for singers. One dancer playing Hans Christian Andersen - fantastic presence - but the director has no idea what to do with her - so she does nothing.

24/09

MORE

VIA NEGATIVA from Slovenia

WHAT ABSOLUTE TRIPE!!! Bad and boring performance art dredged up from the 1960's. Do these people think we're idiots?! And the director telegraphs his directions to the actors from the prompt side - who does he think he is? Kantor? The performers each have one action to do - all around dreary food abuse. And they try to kid us that they are responding to the requests of their audience - but it's all so blatantly faked. THIS IS APPALLING! And a the packed audience (300?) roar their approval - along with a clearly delighted Romeo Castelluci. What is going on here?

As we ran across town to Teatro Goldoni near the Rialto we eavesdropped on 2 English academics dashing along with us, raving about "pure action". I feel like I'm in some kind of time-warp. How does such appalling drivel play at the Venice Biennale? Your work seems only visible if you get academics to talk about the ideas that inform the work. Make it simple enough (read "vacuous") and they can expound endlessly about their own concerns. But what about the work??

The next show for the evening (**JO** - and film about Jean D'Arc in Orleans and hot dog eating championships in America by Cameron Jaime, with a live performance by Japanese noise artist, Keiji Haino), was an event I will never forget. I was hysterical by the end. I've never experienced volume in the theatre like it. I was laughing, sweating, crying - completely out of control. I could hardly breathe. And it was complete SHIT!!!! I was furious. In a state of utter catharsis (?) that the theatre has never given me before. And it was the cheapest trick I've ever encountered - I felt raped! A vicious and nasty physical assault. No doubt the academics were in ecstasy.

25/09

VENEZIA! Leaves me speechless. Don't think it's changed in the 30 years since I was last here (perhaps not even for 100 years). Still millions of tourists in late September. Impossible city - lost every 10 minutes. Hotel is miles from San Marco - have been hopelessly lost both nights I've tried to get home from Arsenale. And there is no emergency taxi I can catch - just keep walking. But it feels safe even late at night in dark alleys, trying to make my 1.00am hotel curfew. The weather is divine. Venice is expensive, but everything is relative to Zurich.

Ah yes, Venice is romantic ... if I was feeling that way inclined.

I'm going to try a way to get across town and avoid the Rialto today. Via La Fenice - good luck, Nigel! Perfect city for dogs and children - they can run where they want - no cars. But how do they learn road sense?

26/09

Not feeling 100% today. Recovered from the fluid bowels of Paris. Now it's chesty mucous. But I don't feel sick. Maybe it's just a bit of a hangover. A great final night with Nikki Heywood last

night. Campari at Cafe Florian in San Marco. 15 euro each! (5 euro charge for the bad music). Great seafood restaurant and then drinks and drinks and drinks near La Fenice. Have decided to cancel the Mulhouse trip. Just can't face a long expensive journey and 3 nights of hotels to see just one piece of theatre, probably in German with French surtitles. Jai McHenry has said to come straight to her place on Thursday. Good idea. Hey, I'm 50. I think I'm doing pretty well after nearly 6 weeks on the road, and doing it reasonably cheaply. It's emotional as much as physical tiredness.

Dinner tonight (after a long saga of booking a train to France and cancelling the Mulhouse hotel) on the wrong end of the Grand Canal - the station end. But hey! - there are vile waiters and those who shine. And this guy is so friendly. Haven't really ventured out of my little corner of Venice today. By last night, blisters were forming on my toes - the same shoes every day.

Is Venice magical? Not really - not when it's owned by tourists. But just imagine it without them (if that was economically viable). Then, yes indeed, it is magical. It is almost obscenely beautiful. There is something evil reflected in all this sparkling water and mirrors. The wake behind a vaparetto at night is silent and ominous. The monsters hide down dark alleys. This is truly a city to welcome vampires. A city of shocking secrets. The city in which you discover the darkest part of your soul - and that is permissible - this city almost invites it.

Order another quarter litre of house white - "picolla". It's only 10.00pm. 12 hours before my call at La Fenice with Heiner Goebbels. Met him by chance as I was drinking with Nikki last night. He was wandering through the Campo alone on his way back to his hotel. He didn't sit down with us - he doesn't drink or smoke ... and I'm not writing an academic paper on him!

27/09

10.00am rehearsal. **SURROGATE CITIES** at La Fenice. What a knockout!!!

An orchestral "Production" - HUGE!!

This is seriously exciting music. Energy. Colour. It's quite manic. And beautifully presented video and lighting. Heiner loves to extend the reaches of the instruments.

Time to rethink the piano trio and Goldberg Variation for my solo. Obsessive rhythms. His cadences are rhythmic more often than tonal.

Interesting that he has chosen to write the piece as a dance suite - Sarabande, Courante, tec. Cities carry histories? Is that the metaphor?

7.00pm at about the only internet cafe in Venice>

FUCK!!!!!! The Australia Council has funded the Rameau Project. Perhaps I should dash immediately to Cafe Florian for another \$20 Campari Soda to celebrate!

And I feel so proud of myself. I can find my way from the station to my hotel, to the Academica bridge, to La Fenice, to San Marco, to the Arsenale, through some very good campi - all without a map!

And I can ignore rude waiters. Venice is fine!

The water gets to me. This is a spiritually dangerous city. Every campo seems to have a church. Perhaps a good thing - sanctuaries from the sin that broods in the alleys and canals. Palazzi with shocking histories. How do you live in Venice in good health? Does the water in these canals circulate, or just stagnate.

Is this a city to make art in? Or is any more art merely superfluous? Is that why they have the Biennale? - art from other places, but ephemeral. If ever I made a work for the Biennale, I'd ask to paint a church, permanently. So it could remain until Venice eventually sinks and disappears - like the Gardens and Libraries of Alexandria and Babylon.

Had dinner this evening with the Opposition Energy Spokeswoman of Denmark. Wasn't very interesting. But she did tell me that 9 people were killed in 2002 (?) at the Roskilde Festival when the main stage collapsed. Apparently none of the big name bands want to play there now.

28/09

SURROGATE CITIES performance to open the Venice Biennale Music Program.

It's a tough piece. And loads of technical problems. For one whole section the sampler didn't work, so we had a very exposed violin solo.

Had drinks with Stephan Buchberger after the show. Apparently Heiner was not at all happy. La Fenice has just been opened after being gutted by fire in 1997. Stephan said he hoped it would burn down again!.

29/09

Have to check out of my hotel by 11.00am, and my train to France is not until 11.00pm. An epic effort to keep walking between cafes.

The Doge's Palace. Not at all what I remembered from 30 years ago. Paid 11 euros to get in, so I took my time and read everything. The main councillors' hall is one of the largest rooms in Europe. After another great fire (in 1577?) much of the palace had to be rebuilt, and is stuffed with Veroneses and Tintoretts. What do I do with all this? It leaves me all a bit wobbly.

<u>Train Venice to Nice</u>	22.52 arrive 9.45
<u>Train Nice to Cannes</u>	10.10 arrive 10.33

02/10

adapted from Michele Tournier's THE ERLKING (page 147)

I must pursue this narrative with a zeal. How can I make you understand that I expect something from this place - this stage - this evening - a sign, a portent ... I don't quite know what. And that foraging in this text seems a way of expediting a message addressed to me alone. I am enjoying entering into the richness and intimacy of a text I am beginning to love.

16/10

Easy Jet E9LLM36		
Nice Terminal 2	depart 15.45	
arrive Berlin Schoenefeld	17.45	228.49 euro

EASTSIDE CITY HOTEL

www.eastsidehotel.de

+49 (0)30 29 38 33

Mulhenstrasse 6

D-10243 Berlin

(nearest station WARSCHAUER S or U Bahn)

17/10

So what do you do in Berlin for 2 weeks?

Monday - discover where the fuck you are. My hotel is not on the map I have. Bedroom facing the EastSide Gallery (murals on the largest remaining section of the wall). The tourist buses arrive every 10 minutes.

And it's a wasteland! Where is the nearest station into "town"? Ofcourse I find it - and don't get lost!

Unter den Linden - Brandenburg Gate - the outside of the Reichstag - Unter den Linden - a really bad currywurst - a decent cup of coffee - 2 hours in the Dom, one of the most beautiful cathedrals. And I overcome my worst fears and climb the cupola. So terrified I can't really look at the view. They've built a huge stage in front of the altar and a theatre group is performing a play - big fruity performances - some kind of Faustian confrontation with the Devil. Nice moment when the Devil lit up a cigarette - in a cathedral!

Dinner - not a bad Thai curry. (No less "German" than my next night's Cuban fish restaurant - full bottle of Italian Soave white wine and what they claimed was Ernest Hemmingway's favourite dish. Why the hell not?!)

But back to Monday. Easily found my way home, truly exhausted. In the bar to drink a litre of beer and a nice chat with a very cute and very camp Mexican boy in Berlin for the night. We say goodnight outside my room.

18/10

The Pergamon Museum. 8 euro with a headset commentary. My knees almost gave way as I entered the first gallery - a massive construction of the great staircase to the Pergamon Altar. I have never seen ancient Greek art on this scale before. Weird in an interior context. It becomes a giant set. Tourist scatter themselves over the 25 enormous steps, in quiet concentration on their headsets. Overhead is a giant filtered skylight.

An other room with a towering 4 story facade to some ancient market place.

Then on and on through enormous galleries stuffed with classical treasures. And upstairs a huge Islamic exhibition. And more galleries of great Byzantine Temple reconstructions - a whole avenue of brilliant blue tiled walls.

Walking out 3 and a half hours later I was feeling quite giddy. Walking up a deserted street beside the canal I kept losing my balance. A bit scary.

My "Hemmingway" dinner. A young girl sitting alone keeps nervously smiling at me. She has a map. so I assume she's another lonely tourist. I invite her over to help me with my bottle of wine. She's Swiss and 18 years old and staying in a hostel for a week - just arrived today - her first trip away from home. She doesn't get along with her father.

We pay our respective bills and leave the restaurant together, causing many raised eyebrows from the waitresses. Outside, I give her 3 kisses, and warn her that she really shouldn't smile at older strange men in restaurants. I tell her she was lucky that I was gay. She didn't seem to mind, and we parted ways. Lonely people on the road.

19/10

Not much today. Some time in a CD shop - had its own little concert hall with a grand piano and 10 seats - very camp!

Then the Altes Museum. More Greek antiquities (but more domestic than architectural), and its famous Egyptian Gallery with the head of Neffertiti. Not as stunning as the Pergamon. Little bits and pieces really don't grab me. But the gallery building is fantastic. Designed by Prussia's master builder, Karl Friedrich Schinkel - he of the famous Magic Flute set. A neo-classical

masterpiece. There's an astonishing view from a door on the 1st floor looking over an enormous domed circular room lined with 2 floors of large Greco/Roman statues - all men on the ground floor and all women on the 2nd floor balcony. And 2 small doors opposite open through to outer sun-filled galleries. Through the lower door you see the famous Greek statue of the "praying boy", and above you have a perfectly framed Neffertiti.

Sat outside on the steps and contemplated the great facade of the Dom. Then a good German dinner of sliced pork and potatoes cooked in field mushrooms and cream. And a large beer. I'm in Berlin!!

SLEEPER WAKE! (notes)

The ballroom dancers need a whole narrative. That is why NK is interested in them. Is one of them himself? In the same way that he is the pianist? Is he watching himself being played out by real and imagined/remembered people?

Does NK remember how to dance? How to play the piano? Does he remember the dancing woman or the "other man"?

This the story of 3 people played out against a backdrop of greater catastrophes. The letter could be useful here - to narrate the story.

20/10

Charlottenburg Schloss. German Baroque on an intimate scale. The "new" wing was a modest retreat for Frederick the Great. From enormous state rooms to the most intimate studies and bedroom. Completely gorgeous. All rooms facing south to catch the sun. That Baroque style where each room enters another in a kind of endless corridor. Where the clothes stored? Where is the kitchen? Downstairs, miles away from anywhere I assume. Loads of gold and silver on the walls, but still a kind of softness. I like the man. He's refined and gentle. It's very opulent, but not pompous. That's the baroque sensibility I need to capture in the Rameau Project - the human touch - a natural ease. Like Frederick, I am a foreigner trying to capture a French sensibility and make it my own.

GOLDBERG VARIATION - Number 10

Fast - marcato.

Bass voice - 'cello

Tenor Part - piano doubled at 2 or 3 octave distance

Top part - violin

Lots of chords in string parts and piano (eg. 'cello's first note)

Bar 13-16 all parts slipping up to a cadence in high tessitura, and then way of into quietening discordant harmonies. Pulsing quaver or crotchet beats throughout.

This variation might grow from a Variation 5 - like bass riff.

GOLDBERG VARIATION - Number 25

Piano playing sections as written / broken up.

Violin and 'cello slipping and sliding in very high register around the accompanying chords.

Long pauses / stillness / fading away / fading in.

Piano trailing away in atonal melisma ... into silence or repeated notes.

Interspersed my action or text. Stopping to listen. (Perhaps NK plays this variation)

Piano runs extended over an octave more than written - stretching across the keyboard

22/10

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Komische Oper

Directed by Calixto Bieiti

Conductor: Daniel Klajner
Design: Alfonso Flores
Costumes: Anna Eiermann
Lighting: Frank Evin

Stupendous kitsch!!! Had my serious doubts at the beginning. The curtain rose on a fabulous revolving set. A sort of pleasure house - all silver palm trees and garish plastic furniture. A brothel catering to every fantasy. Not really Japan - more like Hawaii. Or more Shinjuku than Yokohama. Television sets showing Bruce Lee movies.

Butterfly is a prostitute. As is Suzuki. And ofcourse there is the obligatory lesbian relationship between them. Sharpless is a pimp. The Bonzo is a terrifying drunken client who bonks Butterfly at the beginning of Act 2. In fact every man seems to have his way with her at some stage.

Butterfly is played by Juliette Lee in a shocking Marilyn Monroe blonde wig. There are blow jobs, hand jobs, doggy-fucking ... endlessly. It's a bit like an Almodova movie with g-strings (a really bad look!). But it works! ... for all its childishness. What could have been a really crass twist at the end when she murders her child and Suzuki, and is left raging with a samurai sword around the stage as the curtain falls - it is terrifically moving.

Oh, and the male chorus are drag queens.

The musical ensemble is a tad shaky at times. Juliette Lee is lovely - a well focussed voice. And she takes risks. Endearingly clumsy - she even dares to look daggy at times.

"One Fine Day" as a dream sequence with Pinkerton in a white cowboy suit on a huge motorised bucking bronco was hysterical - but again it worked.

The great love duet was truly athletic - they did it in the bath, on the floor, in the bed, on the back of the cow. All the time humping away in 3/4 time to the music. But why, oh why, were they still wearing their undies??!! Hadn't anyone told them it doesn't really work very well that way? And, by some miracle she got pregnant! But full marks for the multiple orgasms from them both - terrific stamina and timing!

The twenty children appearing in Butterfly's long orchestral realisation scene, with frightful blonde curly wigs and virgin white suits and confirmation dresses - shooting it out with rifles, as Butterfly's tiny child peddles his little tricycle amongst them was truly alarming - and quite inspired.

23/10

DIE ENTFUHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL

Conductor: Kirill Petrenko
Same artist crew as Madama Butterfly

Another Bieiti production at the Komische Oper. After all the simulated sex in undies in Butterfly, the night before, I wasn't exactly looking forward to another opera from him set in yet another brothel.

I should not have worried. UTTERLY SENSATIONAL - 2 and a half hours with no interval, and absolute joy!!! TOTALLY ABJECT!! Rooting like rabbits, and certainly no undies in this show. Appalling violence. A bloodbath - breasts sliced off, brutal slashings, a kneecap shot to pieces. Naked singers in fully functioning showers cut down in a rain of bullets. Blood smeared on shower screens. Urinating on stage. Prostitutes, gangsters, drunks and junkies.

Even on her first appearance on stage in her animal cage, Konstanze is covered in the most shocking bruises. The violence against women is sickening. All these pathetic men are drawn into it - even Belmonte. There is hardly a caress in the entire work. All these guys are driven by their dicks. It works because we are always being brought to the delusion that dicks equal power - but of course that power is as transitory as a hard-on or an ejaculation.

All the sweetness of Mozart is completely stripped away. Long chilling periods of silence as we're left to contemplate the horror of what is going on. The final moment as the curtain drops and Konstanze shoots herself in the head makes absolute sense - even if it is a considerable piece of directorial license.

AN UNMITIGATED TRIUMPH!!

At the nipple slicing moment (the climax of Konstanze's most divine arias) people started shouting from the audience. I turned around and saw at least 10 people on their feet shouting "This is not Mozart!" Others shouted back "Yes it is!" And then the conductor held the silence as close on 50 people stormed out. It was almost as though it was staged - it was obviously expected, at least. A stupendous moment! After an endless stillness the Bassa says very softly "das ist...." I didn't hear the end of his line as someone from the house shouted "Mozart!!!"

Here there is no triumph of love. No resolution. Just blood and bleakness ... and the chilling irony of Mozart's sublime music.

Up there with my Guy Cassiers experience. WORTH THE TRIP TO BERLIN, ALONE!!

OK, some of the stagings moments are a bit clumsy. But I think that has more to do with the performances than the actual material. (Maybe a 2nd cast).

The rehearsals must be confronting, at times, for the poor singers - but here some fantastically committed performances.

The two tenors: Belmonte had a divine voice, and Pedrillo, stripped to the waist and artfully tattooed had a divine body and a fine voice. It's a fiendishly difficult role to pull off, and this boy is a fine actor - the hip street kid, way out of his depth.

After the Butterfly production I was beginning to fear that opera, even when it is very "good", is verging on the plain silly. The construction is just too transparent. Then someone like Bieiti comes along and (given the right opera) explodes the structure and finds meaning.

Seraglio is slight, dramaturgically. So he piles layer upon layer of abject gore on top of it. But he doesn't destroy anything - he asks Cassiers' great question about the essence of theatre: WHAT IF?

And so you are drawn into it, whilst at the same time recoiling from it. It's an intensely dynamic relationship you have with what is unfolding - both theatrically and musically. YES! Bieiti is very musical!!!

Could this production happen at Opera Australia? The audience wouldn't tolerate it, and the singers wouldn't do it! And the management would find some excuse to pull the production before it made 2nd rehearsal.

Yes indeed Bieiti thinks sex on stage is provocative, but also that violence and hopelessness packs an even greater punch.

Interesting to compare the use of the revolve in both the Bieiti productions. In the Mozart, where the tempo of the music is generally faster, the revolve moves much slower than in the Puccini, and I think less often. Or is the Puccini, in fact faster paced? I am confused.

25/10

Six more days completely alone. The hotel and the rain - feeling serious cabin fever.
So ... **Potsdamer Platz**.

This is a city that knows how to build! The shock of history. The capital of Europe. Desire and huge money! Let's have a vision to fill a gigantic hole in a city.

Let's commission the world's greatest architects. Let's take risks. And we'll do it fast. Draw up a plan, and run "ape-shit".

But there is history to consider. Berlin's great neo-classical architect believed that architects must understand all the cultural components of their times - art, music, theatre, food, wine, gardens, internationalism ... all the things that concerned the people for whom he was building.

And so here in Potsdamer Platz we have restaurants, offices and NEW TECHNOLOGY.

It is breathtaking!!

Its entrances (via rail technology) are the 2 gigantic railway stations (one for the U-bahn, the other for the S-bahn). Monolithic brutal caverns. When you have a huge space ... EMPTY IT!! It is shockingly beautiful. Such courage!

Of course it could still be much better - you see compromises everywhere. It would be great to see Renzo Piano's original master plan for this enormous devastated cold war site.

This is what I love about Berlin. It is a city of Architecture ... SPACE. They are critically aware of creating history. And because of its recent history they create maniacally - layer upon layer. They are not overly concerned with aesthetic purity. Slash and burn with a wondrous recklessness. The dirty bits aren't glossed over - they are revelled in. Paris takes its time to create extraordinary beauty. Berlin has guts! And a weird kind of confidence. Where else could there be the Island of Museums? Still under renovation. Berlin is a building site! Eyes on the future! Eyes always on its past! MY KIND OF CITY!!!

GOLDBERG VARIATION - Number 15

Canon at the 5th in inversion.

Left hand shared between piano and 'cello.

Very soft - legato - andante - all pleading suspensions

Strings could be con sord.

Piano delicate arpeggiated chord, often across the beat.

Runs in the bass part of the piano.

Bell like effects at top of piano, repeated notes.

Do not be afraid of piano occasionally doubling other string phrases, particularly in another octave and off rhythm.

26-27/10

A profound delicacy of touch! The sounds of flutes - Frederick the Great's instrument of choice - and of harps. Like Mozart, I dislike these instruments. And yet I have spent 2 days in a blissful quiet after all the brutal excitement of Potsdamer Platz.

Wednesday's long trip out to Potsdam / Brandenburg. And then the 10 kilometre hike around Sans Souci Park. "Sans Souci" / "Without Care". Another fantasy of Frederick II.

His first plan was simply to terrace a hill for grape vines. Then a quiet little personal palace for himself.

Then the monstrous New Palace - with a huge theatre, remarkable shelled grotto ... and on and on. But that was mainly for the big official functions.

It is his Sans Souci Palace that steals the whole show. So modest in scale, yet resplendent in baroque refinement.

For him to entertain his exclusively male guests (his estranged wife never entered the place).

Each bedroom leads onto the next (in classic baroque style). The explanation being that his

guests entered and left their apartments via the French windows onto the terrace ho-hum!

There seems an overabundance of classical sculptures of young naked men (the coyly draped statues of girls are designated to the most public spaces).

And Watteaus to burn!!

The gardens are endless - gracious avenues - and in the gold of autumn they are a slice of heaven! They should be explored on horseback. Chapels, mausoleums, Chinese pagoda, grand Roman folly, ornamental full-scale Dutch windmill, lakes and bridges, fountains ... and vistas!!!!!!

After that how cruel the Deutsche Oper looks on Thursday night. Dreary is the only word. But acoustics to die for! And a truly gigantic stage.

PELLEAS ET MELISANDE

Conductor: Jacques Lacombe

Director, Designer, lighting: MARCO ARTURO MARELLI

Pelleas: John Mark Ainsley

Melisande: Veronique Gens

Golaud: Tom Fox

Yniold: Sunhae Im

Arkel: Harold Wilson

Genieve: Ceri Williams

Ein arzt: Guillaume Antoine

Three and a half hours of Debussy. A divine cast. Exquisite production - utterly understated. JUST DEBUSSY!!!!

And perhaps the most monumental set I have seen. And certainly the best rain I've ever seen on stage - buckets of it falling on water and loads of mist.

A brutal faux concrete castle built on a scary angle / tilt. Huge sections cantilevered over the stage. And everything sunk waist deep in water. What is the loading on that stage??!! They row boats from wing to wing.

This is not the production for a quick matinee performance bump-in.

Beautiful performances from every singer. This truly a class act. None of the vulgarity of Bieiti. But that's OK. I had no idea how beautifully made Debussy's opera was. It is truly one of the greatest works in the canon. I leave the theatre transported. Another part of Berlin's love affair with France!

29/10

My worst day so far. And my last in Berlin. Queue for an hour outside the Reichstag. I really want to see Norman Foster's monolith. But I give up. Some other decade.

A wander down to the Holocaust Memorial. Now this is GREAT ART!! Thousands of grey concrete blocks all of identical floor dimensions, in rigidly straight avenues, but all of varying heights. And the whole huge site has been landscaped in beautiful waves. The point? Perhaps that you can always be seen. There is no hiding! However, kids shriek and run in glee, trying to hide from each other. I'm a bit shocked, in my quiet wanderings ... but, fuck it, let them play. The war was a long time ago. And in memory of one appalling part of it is a work of such austere beauty. Why shouldn't it be a children's playground as well?

Time to get out of Berlin.

30/10

Hotel: CITY-HEBERGE
Lingnerallee 3 DRESDEN
0351 485 9900

In a restaurant in the Neustadt of Dresden. They play Rolling Stones, Carly Simon, Boy George and Simon & Garfunkel really softly, and without a hint of irony. If I have to eat another salad of badly chopped iceberg lettuce, tinned corn and salty mayonnaise I'll scream!

I really had no idea why everyone went on and on about how the bombing of Dresden was one of the greatest crimes in cultural history. Until I saw it!!
The view along the river Elbe must be one of the most beautiful in the world - especially lit at night. And they've rebuilt most of it.

What a time to arrive in Dresden. Today is the official reopening of the Frauenkiche - rebuilt after standing as rubble for 60 years. One of the greatest splendours of Baroque Europe - reconstructed from dust. Thank God the Soviets didn't bulldoze it - they thought the ruin a telling monument to the Cold War and the evil Americans and British.

And it seems the whole of Europe is here to see it. Television helicopters, every major politician in Germany. and "millions" of Germans.
Couldn't get within 500 metres of it. The whole city is closed off.

But there it stands - resplendent! I doubt if I'll get inside, in my 3 days here.
This is one of the most emotional days in post war German history. The Frauenkirche is a symbol like no other (except perhaps the Reichstag). Not just of German Protestantism, but the German people themselves. Tomorrow is a public holiday, so it's probably going to be another impossible day.

31/10

I've fallen in love! With the ultimate frivolity. The ZWINGER in Dresden. Built just opposite the Schloss. For royal tournaments - what ever they might have been! The ultimate gesture in Baroque excess. Not even practical. Almost a folly. But huge and ravishingly beautiful. It makes me laugh. My spirits are lifted immediately, just walking into that grand courtyard. Went there yesterday, again today, and will probably go there again tomorrow morning. Of course it now houses a fabulous gallery of C15th - C18th art and a great armoury. But who gives a fuck! It's the sheer exuberance of the architecture that rocks me. Absolutely my favourite "building". Did the RAF miss it? Apparently not, but it all looks very authentic to me. I must come back to Dresden in 5 years - perhaps then they'll win the European Cultural Capital. By then we'll be able to visit the rebuilt Schloss and maybe Dresden will look less of a building site.

1/11

I've been spending a lot of time recently immersed in Baroque architecture. A world of ostentatious privilege. It's only now in the C21st that someone as lowborn as I can gain access to it (for a hefty entrance fee!) The outer facades of these buildings tease. What lies within? And even when you've seen the wallpaper, how close can you get to owning the living experience? These themes of privilege and servitude seem to fit well with Genet's THE MAIDS and our proposed baroque treatment of it in THE RAMEAU PROJECT. Allowing the audience a "backstage peep", but denying them the full splendour of what goes in on-stage. Pay your entrance fee, and stay behind the ropes and bollards. Keep your voices down and DON'T TOUCH! Sorry, the audio guide only comes in English.

2/11

ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

at the Semper Oper.
Another Marco Arturo Marelli production.
With Deborah Voight in the title role - WOW! - what a voice!
But a week later, that is really all I remember of it. It was a wonderful production - very un-messy, with another wonderful set. He doesn't let his productions upstage the opera. And so it is simply as good and as bad as what Richard Strauss wrote.
I'm not transported, as in his Pelleas. But that is perhaps because Ariadne is a very silly piece, with beautiful music.

3-8/11

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLANDER

Romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen von Richard Wagner
Nuremberg State Opera
Opening 03.12.2005 19:30 Uhr

Musikalische Leitung: Johannes Fritzsch
Inszenierung: Helen Malkowsky
Bühne: Harald Thor
Kostüme: Tanja Hofmann
Choreinstudierung: Edgar Hykel

Cast: Guido Jentjens (Daland)
Christiane Libor (Senta)
Erin Caves (Erik)

Teresa Erbe (Mary)
Carsten Süß (Der Steuermann)
Jürgen Linn (Der Holländer)

9/11

Train Nuremberg to Zurich 11.47am (via Munich) arrive Zurich 5.47pm

The train is almost totally empty for the entire trip.

Hotel: Martahaus

Zahringerstrasse 36
www.martahaus.ch
+41 (0)1 251 4550
CHF 115.00 for one night

Here I am on my 50th birthday and my last night in Europe. Back in Zurich where I began. Sitting alone in a bar in the "old street", drinking a beer. Wondering if Taka's mother has died today, or if he made it back to Okinawa in time. I haven't heard anything yet, so maybe he did. Will check my email tonight.

It's nice to come back to Zurich. Feels familiar. It is much colder than 3 months ago, and the tourists have gone - a sleepy little city.

Let's walk up past the central station to my old hotel (XTRA) and have dinner - a decent restaurant - and see if anyone there remembers me.

How embarrassing! A great meal - a small serving of very good lamb for \$35 and a glass of wine for \$15. Same staff - some of them remember me ... vaguely.

And then a young American couple sit at the table beside mine ... and say "Shucks, if it's a birthday, let's spend up on the cordon bleu". And so I interrupt them and ask if it's a birthday.

They say "no" and get back to their conversation. I bury myself in my writing. They must think I'm just weird, or a sleaze. DEATH AT DINNER! It's MY birthday, for Christ's sake!!!!!!!!!!!!

Zurich / Geneva / Paris / Warsaw / Venice / Peymeinade / Berlin / Dresden / Nuremberg and back to Zurich. 9 cities. I'm tired. I want to see Taka. Paris is burning, and I'm flying to Tokyo tomorrow - it's bound to be safe there.

Listening more carefully to the American couple at the next table. They are evidently old friends.

And they talk and talk. My conversations seem to be always dotted with long, long silences.

Funny, meeting up with Graham Cox after so many years. We talked mainly about opera, which I know little about. But amazing really, that a friendship can be rekindled after so many years in alien worlds. Perhaps we would have dug deeper if I'd stayed another 10 days. Or perhaps it would have ended in silence. Silence - it's one of the themes of my work really.

It's only 8.00pm and I'm already fairly drunk. The brain wants to slow down, but it won't. I want to keep going. Feeling reckless. Terrified about the next 2 days of flights and the 12 hour wait in Narita airport. So close to Taka, yet so far. I wonder when he'll get back to Sydney.

Indeed far too drunk! My last night in Europe ends in one of the more humiliating mistakes I have made.

10/11

Bus to airport 10.40am CHF 19.00

5 hours sleep, still probably a bit drunk, and making my way to Zurich airport.

What a great 50th birthday that was!!

Flight: JL 5072 1.00pm (arrive Tokyo 8.55am 11/11)

11/11

10.30am in a cafe in Narita airport. My clock is saying it's 2.30am. Very shaky indeed. What the fuck do I do for the next 10 hours?

... Manage quite a few hours dozing on a bench. And so feel a little better. A couple of beers at 7.30pm - try to knock myself out for the flight. I have an aisle upstairs so it might be bearable. Yes, I'm sure I'll survive ... only 9 and a 1/2 hours.

I'm rather glad I had to do this horrible trip via Tokyo. I feel comfortable here. The people are familiar, and I can speak enough of the language. And it feels safe. Only 99% aware of my bags ... be careful, Nigel!!!

Flight JL 771 9.00pm (arrive Sydney 8.30am 12/11)

dance and music -
an evening recital with Rosalind Crisp and Nigel Kellaway
(or *32 Short Scenes on the Dichterliebe*)

PRESS RELEASE - October 31st, 2005

Rosalind Crisp and Nigel Kellaway celebrate an Australian Premiere

December 1 – 3 will see **Rosalind Crisp** and **Nigel Kellaway**, two of the countries most highly lauded performance artists, in recital together for the first and last time at Performance Space. With a performance history at the venue's current location spanning 19 and 25 years respectively,

Rosalind and Nigel will present the Australian premiere of a work developed in residence at the Centre national de danse, Paris in September of this year.

DANCE AND MUSIC - 32 Short Scenes on the Dichterliebe contemplates the nature of performative virtuosity and the niggling problems that arise for artists, even at the highest level of experience, and their shared, genuine enjoyment of the material as it emerges each evening.

Rosalind Crisp's work as an artist sits between the choreographing of movement and her practice of improvisation for performance. Her performance works are an intense inquiry into movement vocabulary. It is with this language that she seeks to "speak" to her audience, to include them in the negotiation of the dance.

Kellaway has been a leader in the development of avant-garde and hybrid performance practices in Australia over the past two decades. Kellaway continues his role as Artistic Director of The opera Project Inc. (founded in 1997) and also works widely as a freelance director and performer. In 2004 he was awarded a senior artist's Fellowship by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council to devote the next two years to his continuing research in theatrical, operatic and contemporary performance practices.

Thursday 1st – Saturday 3rd December at 8pm (\$12 conc, \$15 members, \$20 full)

(Preview Wednesday 30th November 8pm, \$10)
At Performance Space, 199 Cleveland Street, Redfern

artist statements from the program

Rosalind Crisp

Parallel to my development of the choreographic ideas in **dance** (shown at Performance Space last week) I have been seeking different contexts in which to place the work that might both provoke me the dancer to the approach the material differently, and that might open another "reading" of the dance for an audience.

When I heard that Nigel was coming to Europe I entertained the idea of a possible collaboration, colliding my obsession with the choreography and his obsession with creating theatrical meaning and structure. As well, I could help but imagine the delights of playing on stage together. Nigel and I have watched each other's work for almost 20 years but never collaborated nor been alone together in the studio. I had a residency at the Centre National de la Danse in Paris in September and in we went. **dance and music** was created in 2 weeks, thanks to Nigel's extraordinary experience as a maker, musician and drinker and my endless choreographic excavations. It has been fascinating to go along with him and enjoy a totally different performance-making process to my own, on the one hand to guard the particularity of the choreographic material and on the other to expose it to a totally different theatrical aesthetics.

My enquiry into dance is addressed through the body. I am engaged in a corporeal practice of using multiple sources interchangeably to propose an unstable body, one that is continuously reforming and deforming, without resolution.

dance project 2005/2006 has so far involved extensive research in my own body and periods of research with other dancers, sound and visual artists with showings and performances at the end of each stage in Paris, Berlin and Sydney.

Central to this process has been my ongoing dialogue with French dance writer, critic and academic at Paris VIII University, Isabelle Ginot, and my collaboration with Australian dancer, Lizzie Thomson (who has worked with me over the past 8 years). Lizzie spent 3 months this year with me in Paris with support from the Australia Council. Our danced dialogue throughout this year has been central to the development of the work in my own body and my ability to gain a clarity and distance from it.

After Performance Space Lizzie and I will show **dance** at Dancehouse in Melbourne. I will then show a 20 minute solo of **dance** at the Festival Fait d'hiver in Paris in January 2006. Then premiere in May a full-length **dance - solo** I will make in collaboration with Isabelle Ginot, at la Condition Publique in Roubaix (north of France) with a commission from the Centre Choreographique National de Roubaix Nord - Pas de Calais which I hope to bring back to Sydney later in 2006.

Nigel Kellaway

Part of my "working week" is spent in the isolated practice of piano accompaniments for singers. Alone, I consider the accompaniments as pure pianistic sound, before I confront my collaboration with the singer and contemplate "the song". One of my favourite (though certainly most demanding) works has always been Schumann's monumental song cycle for solo voice and piano, "Dichterliebe" (Poet's Love) of 1840. Sixteen brief settings of text by the great German romantic poet Heinrich Heine, contemplating love, loss and longing. The piano parts could perhaps be interpreted as the centrepiece of the composition - the singer seeming to float their "interrupted" thoughts over these divine and almost complete pianistic inventions. So I thought "why not float the dancer's body", indeterminately over this piano material - crack open Schumann's structure? It seemed an interesting response to Rosalind's essential performative question: "WHAT IF?"

The piano part in the "Dichterliebe" is extraordinary in that it contains absolutely no ornamentation. Of course, it begins with one of history's most famous appoggiaturas (faltering, anticipatory notes), post-Mozart and pre-Wagner .. and the vocal part is full of them, throughout. Indeed, to me, Rosalind's present dance trajectory could almost be a comment on / antidote to the art of both Baroque and Romantic appoggiaturas.

But there are no trills, turns or ornamental fancies in this piano part! It is pure and solid structure; not a single note superfluous to the argument. But then, so unexpectedly in the closing bars, after the singer (dancer) has "left the stage" in mid-phrase, unable to say any more, the piano is left to reflect on an earlier theme and, as if in revelation, momentarily explores two brief, beautiful and pleading melodic embellishments around two fleeting notes. A shocking indulgence ... but sort of forgivable, given the circumstances! Then, almost embarrassed, we tear away in strident chords to eventually close slowly, quietly and confidently - resolving remembered sounds that at the beginning were so tentative. I ponder on whether Rosalind's dance is devoid of, or entirely made of, ornamentation. We have happily discussed and entertained both options. What constitutes structure? Ideas? Fancies or base concepts? Built architectural forms ... what is seen?

Our provocation is in the meeting of this pianist and this dancer. Rosalind seems to be eschewing the primary motivation of any specific action - interrupting it - and then staggering forward in response to the fall-out. She challenges herself to never repeat a gesture (within the habitual constraints of her inscribed body). Whereas, however quixotic this particular division into sixteen contrasting energies is, Schumann allows himself much space to revisit and reflect on motifs. Herein lies a tension - and a dramaturgical momentum for this "dance and music" work. To absent a central vocal focus of Schumann's music seems the correct response to Rosalind's "dance by accidents". Inviting the listener/watcher to ponder on what might have been ... what is missing ...

removing the subject matter and considering what remains ... as pure abstract gesture .. available to our own "projections" ... evolving over 50 minutes.

And how wonderful to devise this piece with Rosalind in Paris, where we live daily amidst a thousand years and more of "in-your-face" architecture ... Gothic, Medieval, the fancies of the Baroque and Rococo, Neo-classicism, 19th century perversity, Art Nouveau, seering Brutalism, Post-modern outrage and all else ... a playground in which to contemplate honest structure, ornamentation, virtuosity, intended meaning and perception.

Sydney Morning Herald

03/12/2005

A magical blend of two disciplines performed to a different beat

dance & music

Performance Space, December 1

Reviewed by Jill Sykes

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Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway in

french nights in the gardens of spain

Nigel Kellaway - Thirteen Years - Chapter 12 - 2005

Thursday July 21st, 2005 at 7.00pm

Women's College, 15 Carillon Avenue, University of Sydney

Air de Philis from Le Carnval	Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-87)
N'offrez plus a nos yeux from Hippodamie	André Campra (1660-1744)
Le Charme Op.2, No.2	Ernest Chausson (1855-99)
Amour d'Antan Op.8, No.2	Ernest Chausson (1855-99)
Les Berceaux Op.23, No.1	Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
Clair de lune Op.46, No.2	Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
Sérénade Italienne Op.2, No.5	Ernest Chausson (1855-99)
ENRIQUE GRANADOS (1867-1916)	Amor y Odio
	La Maja de Goya
	La Maja Dolorosa (no 2)
	El tra la la y el punteado
	El Mirar de la Maja
	La Maja Dolorosa (no 3)
	El Majo Discreto
JOAQUIN RODRIGO (1901-1999) Con que la lavare?	Vos me matasteis
	De donde venis, amore?
	De los alamos vengo, madre

(had an arm injury, and had to be replaced by another pianist at the last moment)

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway in **xmas ... again!**

Thursday December 8th, 2005 at 7.00pm

Women's College, 15 Carillon Avenue, University of Sydney

Air de Philis	Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-87) from Le Carnval
N'offrez plus a nos yeux	André Campra (1660-1744) from Hippodamie
ENRIQUE GRANADOS (1867-1916)	Amor y Odio
	La Maja de Goya
	La Maja Dolorosa (no 2)
	El tra la la y el punteado
	La Maja Dolorosa (no 3)
	El Majo Discreto
JOAQUIN RODRIGO (1901-1999) Vos me matasteis	De donde venis, amore?
	De los alamos vengo, madre

How About You?	words Ralph Reed music Burton Lane
Paris Is A Lonely Town	words E.V.Harburg music Harold Arlen
You Made Me Love You	words Joseph McCarthy music J. V.Monaco
Embracable You	words I.Gershwin music G.Gershwin

Come Rain Or Come Shine words Johnny Mercer music Harold Arlen

Bidin' My Time words I.Gershwin music G.Gershwin

I Happen To Like New York words & music Cole Porter

Quand on n'a que L'Amour words and music Jaques Brel

encores:

Santa Lucia Luntana

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas words Hugh Martin music Ralf Blane

Chapter 13: 2006

(End of the Fellowship)

SLEEPERS WAKE! Wachet Auf!

Co-created, directed and performed in a work-in progress. Writers: Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Amanda Stewart, Josephine Wilson. Composer and solo actor: Nigel Kellaway. Musicians: Margaret Howard (violin), Catherine Tabrett ('cello), Michael Bell (piano). Lighting: Simon Wise. Created as artists in residence at Performance Space, Sydney.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT

Commenced development on a new work with THE oPERA PROJECT INC. Performers: Regina Heilmann, Nigel Kellaway, Brian Fuata, Dean Walsh, Peretta Anggerek (countertenor), Didier Frederic (baritone), Clive Birch (bass), Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichord and musical director).

Developed as artists in residence at the Centre of Performance Studies, University of Sydney.

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NAPOLI: ill mister, ill sores, la voce

UN CONCERTO PER LA PASSION ATTRAVERSO LE CANZONI DI NAPOLI - an afternoon of popular Neapolitan songs

Annette Tesoriero (the voice), Domenico Sepe (the charm), Nigel Kellaway (the mystery)

Sunday March 26th, 2006 at 3pm Dural Country Club, Old Northern Road, Dural

Introduced by Dr. Raffaele Marcellino, Research by Peter Tesoriero

O Paese D' 'O Sole (1925)	Vincenzo D'Annibale (1894-1950) words by Libero Bovio
Te voglio bene assaje (circa 1835)	Raffaele Sacco (after Gaetano Donizetti)
A Vucchella (1907)	Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916) words by Gabriele D'Annunzio
Ideale (1882)	Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916) words by Carmelo Errico
Reginella (1917)	Gaetano Lama words by Libero Bovio
I' te vurria vasà! (1900)	Eduardo Di Capua (1865-1917) words by V. Russo
La fiera de Mast'Andrea	(anon - traditional Neapolitan)
Core 'ngrato (1911)	Salvatore Cardillo (1874-1947) words by Riccardo Cordiferro
Turna a Surriento	Ernesto De Curtis (1875-1937) words by Gianbattista de Curtis
Michelemmà	(anon - traditional Neapolitan)
Piscatore 'e Pusilleco (1925)	E. Tagliaferri words by E Murolo
'O Marenariello (1893)	S. Gambardella
Tu ca nun chianne (1915)	Ernesto De Curtis (1875-1937) words by Libero Bovio
Lu Cardillo	Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870)
Santa Lucia (1848)	Teodoro Cottrau 1848 words by Enrico Cossovich
'A Frangesa! (1893)	Pasquale Mario Costa (1858-1933) words by Ferdinando Russo
'E Spingole Frangese (1888)	E. De Leva words by Salvatore Di Giacomo
Funiculi Funicula (1880)	Luigi Denza words by Peppino Turco

SLEEPERS WAKE!! Wachet Auf!!

GRANT ACQUITTAL

(The following is an excerpt from the 2004-06 Fellowship Acquittal Report)

Development Period: 1st April 2005 - 1st April 2006
Public showings of work-in-progress: 31st March & 1st April 2006
Performance Space, Sydney

Performer / Composer / Director / Administrator: Nigel Kellaway
Collaborating Writers: Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Amanda Stewart, Josephine Wilson
Musicians: Michael Bell (piano), Margaret Howard (violin), Catherine Tabrett ('cello)
Production Assistance / Lighting Design: Simon Wise
Video Documentation: Peter Oldham

The vision of the writers on *Sleepers Wake!* was to create a collaborative work for the voice of a single man on stage.

I approached the four writers in 2003, all of whom had worked with me on projects over the past 15 years, and all of whom had some familiarity with each others' work.

Geography was always going to present challenges in the collaborative aspect of the project. I, Baxter and Stewart are Sydney based artists, whereas Wilson lives in Perth and McHenry lives in the south of France. This project would clearly have been impossible without the internet!

The project was supported by both my Fellowship and a New Work development grant awarded in 2005, to support the fees for the writers and to initiate a formal studio workshop period on the work.

Brief overview of process:

Concrete concepts were discussed between myself, Baxter and Stewart in mid 2004, and also over lengthy phone conversations with McHenry, around that time. I spent a week in Perth in September 2004, meeting with Wilson and playing with more concerns and ideas. All this was drawn together in preparation for the development grant application and, more importantly, laid the

ground work for all our subsequent discussions. Everyone had different interests they wished to pursue, but we all eventually focussed on the central idea of "amnesia" - it seems a very flexible device that could embrace a plethora of concerns.

Over the ensuing 12 months the four writers (and me as composer) wrote in complete isolation, sharing our drafts with each other as they emerged. I was able to spend a concentrated two weeks with McHenry in France in October 2005.

The phones ran hot throughout 2005!

A deadline was eventually set for the writers to present their completed drafts on 1st February 2006, giving me a month to consider their disparity and to come up with some kind of coherent assemblage of the material and his music, before hitting the rehearsal studio in March. It was remarkable how many common resonances there were in these first drafts.

The available collaborators were invited as artists-in-residence at Performance Space for four weeks in March 2005, leading up to two informal showings to interested peers. For the first three weeks I worked in the studio venue with Baxter and Stewart. This was a process of restructuring, cutting, re-inventing, considering the relationships that emerged between the four writers' material, at times merging the material. An overview of what constituted a new work emerged gradually, in the context of the new meaning and sense of import the copious text took on via the physical sound of my voice and body's presence. What began as nearly 3 hours of text was gradually chiselled down to around 80 minutes.

In the fourth and final week of the residency the work moved into the theatre at Performance Space, where the musicians joined the project for three rehearsals (the first time any of the music had been heard!), and Simon Wise joined the team to lend his technical assistance and some very simple lighting for the purposes of the public showings. Both public showings were preceded by a short introduction to the process by me in the foyer, and followed by a forum / discussion in the theatre with Baxter, Stewart and Wise, encouraging formal feed-back from the audience. Given the fact that the text was being constantly revised up to an hour before the showings, I delivered his performances with "script in hand". This had the fortuitous effect of reminding the audience that this man had indeed been written on by others - a device that could well be used in some sections of the completed work.

The writing:

I was adamant from the outset that this work was not to be four discrete pieces from the writers. The task was to ensure that all these disparate texts were embodied in a single "coherent" voice and body. So clearly the writers' disparate themes and concerns had to find some common ground. "Amnesia" proved a most useful device - a forgetful (perhaps even damaged) man who can (re)invent himself as anything at any time. Just a few ideas need to return to haunt him throughout the piece, in order to give it coherence. Amnesia also emerged as a metaphor for both the personal and the political - positing that we are defined both as individuals and as a nation by what we remember, but also by what we choose to forget.

The movement, to and fro, between the 1st and 3rd persons emerged quite naturally. The audience must sort out whether everything this man talks about pertains intimately to him. He is clearly unsure himself. Consequently, the work purposefully eschews any pretension of "a man's linear journey" toward self-knowledge.

Most of the writing (and certainly the audience) is cogniscent of the music as being written by the man on stage (though he doesn't seem terribly aware of that himself). A powerful theme emerges regarding a man's intense relationship with his music - his tool for remembering.

The music:

I have always had a deep concern about how we "remember" music. The processes of listening to popular contemporary music are different to the way we approach music from another historical period. We inadvertently create different rules and means of association across genres and time. But what occurs if we suddenly forget the rules? When we can't place what we are listening to in a value system?

I found myself in Berlin for 2 weeks in 2005, filling a gap between two European gigs. Afternoons were spent exploring that chaotic city's mad collision of Baroque and 21st century architecture, and everything between. Evenings were spent at the city's great opera houses. Mornings and late nights were spent in the cafe of my impossibly hip Eastside hotel, with an open Urtext score of J.S.Bach's Goldberg Variations for harpsichord and a book of blank manuscript paper. Without a handy keyboard I blind-sketched my own seven variations, which provide a kind of backbone to the work. My sound track through this process was an absurdly eclectic mix of music (modern and trad jazz, rap, house, R&B, heavy metal, Bob Dylan and Beach Boys classics, film scores, German pop, et al) constantly bombarding the cafe sound system.

The outcome was a strange decontextualising of Bach's original sounds and ideas - finding new popular forms in which to express the same seriousness and commitment that Bach brought to his own inventions and 18th century popular concerns. My variations reflect forms and sounds from quite disparate periods - early 20th century French Romanticism, classical music boxes, John Cage's sparse textures, Dankworth's dense blue's chords and funky rhythms etc. They provide a slightly disorientating experience in the listener: there are certainly the remnants of the Bach which anyone can recognise, but in all the wrong context.

The public showings:

The audience capacity in the theatre was reduced to 50 per night. Peers were invited and subscribers to the Performance news letters and quarterlies were aware that it was on. Admittance was free. Over the two showings a total of 113 were squeezed in. About half of them remained for the feed-back sessions after the shows. I also received many valuable emails regarding the work in the ensuing week.

Though not specifically asked to write, Peter McCallum reviewed the Saturday night showing very positively and intelligently in the Sydney Morning Herald a week later. (Review enclosed)

These public showings were a very important part of the process. They provided the pressure of some kind of "deadline", to arrest the often airy ruminations that can drift between collaborators working on such a long process. We were forced to articulate our work to date in some solid form - throwing something concrete to our audience and inviting their response.

Also, a public showing crystallises a process in a way that no number of private runs in a studio can do. It energises the artists, and brings a heightened performative attention to the material. I carefully explained to the audience in my introductions what they were NOT going to see, and described the showings as merely "a presentation of words and music, and a hint of the performative presence of a man, written on by four women". The audiences seemed to take all this in good faith, and their responses afterwards thankfully addressed the large dramaturgical issues, rather than details of (non)production.

We were pleased to find that the audiences understood the central concerns of the work. They perceived it strongly as about a man and his music.. The free movement of association between the 1st and 3rd persons was well received by most. There was a general concern that this whole dilemma faced by the amnesiac has at some time to become truly terrifying - a complete loss of self. The work obviously had resonances for many in the audience - we are all getting older ... or our parents are. Forgetting is inevitable, mysterious and frightening for us all. Who are we, if we are not ourselves?

The audience were extremely positive about the counterpoint created by the constant collision of such disparate voices. Also, a strong response to the spaciousness and simplicity of the stage and the judicious care with which it was utilised.

The music was very well received, though some asked whether it's controlled form and sense of "finish" might not at some stage collapse. Yes, we think there is one more variation to write, in which everything wobbles out of control and is responded to in the text!

Both showings were meticulously filmed by Peter Oldham, as a record of the work to date.

The personal benefits:

The project provided all the principal collaborators with enormous challenges and rewards. The inability to bring everyone together in the same room was obviously problematic. McHenry and Wilson were clearly frustrated at times, and the responsibility taken on by Baxter and Stewart to protect all the intentions was certainly onerous. But we were all quite pragmatic and appreciative of the realities of the situation.

The initial proposal for the work was, in retrospect, a provocative one: four mature women invited to write upon a middle-aged man. I sensed intuitively from the outset that this was going to result in many interesting alternatives. Put simply: for millennia men have been writing upon women's bodies ... why not "turn the tables"? When asked in the feed-back sessions about this, I somewhat flippantly said that ! "didn't want to talk about his dick". These were women that didn't really care about this man's testosterone, sexual identity or proclivities. They were going to contemplate on a very different reading of a man's body, to one that would come from four men! Different concerns, different perceptions, a different kind of fondness (I incidentally approached four heterosexual women, though all comfortable about any "queer readings" that might arise).

Thankfully, the geographical awkwardness of the project did not overwhelm the real strengths of the process. The five collaborators each brought quite different experience, expertise, performative style and concerns to the project. And fortunately, the dreaded monster called "obsession" was never to rear its ugly head. We all saw the project as an alternative adventure, requiring an openness to, and careful consideration and respect of, each other's ideas. "Preciousness" was certainly not flavour of the year! We are all proud to have created the germ of a work that is quite different to that we would make alone or with another group of artists, and yet one that represents all of our individual concerns in some satisfying manner.

Perhaps I enjoyed myself the most. It has been a cherished and liberating experience to be "written upon" by four such various women. This is difficult and dense text. The acrobatic nature of the rapid changes in conflicting voices has been a terrific challenge. Something that has pushed me into a relaxed and reflective mode of performance - which well suits a performer in his maturity. This is certainly a very different work to my last major solo work of twelve years ago, *This Most Wicked Body*!

The project has pressured me to both explore and explain my musical concerns. I have not "composed" music for others to perform in nearly thirty years. This was a scarifying experience. Not to hear any of the music until the final week of the process was unsettling for everyone involved - a certain faith was required. The expertise, understanding and extraordinary generosity that Michael Bell (piano), Margaret Howard (violin) and Catherine Tabrett ('cello") brought to the work was thrilling. Their unsolicited decision to change call times to earlier hours for their own unpaid extra rehearsal was deeply appreciated by everyone. The whole experience of revisiting my composition interests and to have my work performed and so well received has rekindled a confidence to continue exploring this part of my long overlooked history.

The future:

I had a "wrap" session with Baxter and Stewart in the week following the showings. McHenry and Wilson have viewed the DVD and returned excited responses and lists of tasks. There is work to be done. Much of this was evident even before the showings, but the pragmatics of the written and rehearsed music suggested that we should just go ahead with what was on the present page.

Tasks at hand:

- a serious restructure of some of the extant material, particularly the first 20 minutes (more anarchic and energetic) and the final scenes.
- some careful text and music re-jigging to ensure a better marriage.

- a few new short sections of text, and a new final scene written in collaboration with a music variation (the "collapsing scene" mentioned earlier).
- much finessing of text that we are basically happy with, but know can be more astutely observed, pack a stronger theatrical punch and roll off the tongue more fluidly.
- a throw-out of some of the text, now that we are clearer on the intentions of the work as a whole. We do, however, believe that the entire work should sit at around 80-90 minutes. It takes this duration for a contemporary audience to invest in this kind of material.

We invited a good cross section of producers in Sydney to the showings. We are well aware that funding priorities are demanding that independent projects are well aligned to the interests of established producers. Disappointingly, none of them took the opportunity to see the work. So we will now embark on the adventure of trying to meet with them, with a fine video record to hopefully excite their interest.

We also have some producers and festival contacts nationally and internationally who might be keen to explore the future of the work.

The design of the work is still in its early conceptual state. It requires a very large stage, on which the lonely man wanders. The walls and lighting rig need to be very distant - indeed imperceptible. I and Simon Wise have already had constructive sessions in discussion.

It is rare for a newly devised Australian solo work NOT to indulge in autobiography (particularly featuring a mature and known performer in the "profession"). This is an unclouded exploration of, and departure from, a specific and entrenched genre. And one that rigorously explores its relationship to allied artforms (in this particular case, music and the "dream state" it can invoke).

SLEEPERS WAKE! - Development Budget - 2006

EXPENDITURE

FEES:

Writers:	Virginia Baxter	1300.00		
	Jai McHenry	1300.00		
	Josephine Wilson	1300.00		
	Amanda Stewart	1300.00		
	Nigel Kellaway	1140.00	6340.00	
Musicians :	Michael Bell	700.00		
	Margaret Howard	550.00		
	Catherine Tabrett	550.00	1800.00	
Production assistance (Simon Wise)			750.00	8890.00

<u>PRODUCTION:</u>	Sets/costumes/props	44.55		
	Piano tuning / cartage		470.00	514.55

VIDEO DOCUMENTATION: 360.00

ADMINISTRATION 230.65

TOTAL **9995.20**

INCOME

Australia Council Grant 10000.00

TOTAL **10000.00**

The opera Project Inc.

DRAFT 1/11/06

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SLEEPERS WAKE!! - WACHET AUF!! PROLOGUE

*Piano and chairs and stands for violinist and 'cellist, OP of centre.
A 2 metre white tarquette square upstage.*

Audience enters.

'Cellist stands beside the stage at a microphone with a clip board and list of the booked audience's names. She greets the audience, checks their tickets, and asks their names (which she repeats into the microphone) in order to check her list. She asks others their names, so she can add them to the list - chatty and informal.

NK enters with audience, but rather than joining them in the auditorium, he "sneaks" onto the stage and takes another microphone from the set.

Violinist and pianist (dressed in stage-hand blacks) set the stage with tables and chairs and scattered papers around the space.

NK speaks over the 'cellist, a little awkward and cautious at first:

A guy goes to see his psychiatrist. He's not happy. He tells the doctor he is troubled by memories he can't quite place.

And what are these memories? asks the doctor. Describe to me exactly what you remember.

Well, says the man, I remember a long stream of thin, bedraggled women with shawls on their heads, clutching babies wrapped in old blankets, dragging their toddlers by their arms, stumbling up the side of a mountain. Every now and then they turn back, as if terrified.

The doctor nods his head.
So, was it cold, or was it hot?

I remember snow.

Good! Very good! And were these women speaking? Were they foreign? Could you recognise their language?

No. No, there was no talking. Anyway, I was too far away to hear. But there was the sound of a piano. Or it could have been a harpsichord. And the sound of wailing. Crying. As if something bad might be about to happen just around the corner, on the other side of the mountain, or had already happened, in the place they had come from.

Anything else?

Yes. Some of the women were lying on the ground. Strewn - is that the word?

Strewn is a good word for bodies on the ground, says the doctor. (*soft laugh track*)
And were they dead? ... or alive?

Dead, I think. One of the women's dresses was ripped open and her breast was exposed. Next to her, near the exposed breast, was a baby. It looked like a newborn. I thought it was dead - it's eyes were glazed over. But then, suddenly, it moved its eyes.

So, says the doctor, it was alive. Good. We're finally getting somewhere with these memories.

But, doctor, I have no idea where this was! Or when it was! It could have been Kosovo, Kurdistan, 1944 or 2005. I was so far back I couldn't see properly - I couldn't even tell you if it was in colour or black and white. I do, however, remember that there was no one in the lounge with me at the time, we'd recently had cable installed, and the reception was excellent. (*Laugh track*)

NK is enthused by the reception, and becomes more animated

Another famous case involved a man who could remember just less than a day. He lived his life in an eternal present. 'Every day is alone by itself,' he would say every day, sometimes twice. We humans can choose - indeed we are compelled - to abandon the past in order to feel happiness. And that is what I am doing here tonight and every night on the network. Here in the eternal present.

So, welcome to the Nigel Kellaway Hour.
A state of non-existing? A flat world.
Everything equivalent. Reducible. Pliable. Possessable. Possible. Sayable.
Where everything memorable is guaranteed forgettable.

*All audience is seated the 'cellist has placed the list on the table.
She moves to NK and politely asks him to take his seat in the audience*

and then takes her place beside the piano - to read a book.

STAGE AND HOUSE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK - a long wait in the dark.

SCENE 1

How long do they expect us to wait, do you reckon?
No announcement? Nothing. Extraordinary.

A light eventually comes up on a chair, downstage Prompt.

Ah, here we go
A light ... A chair (Great! Riveting stuff ... no wait ... wait ...)
A man walking onto the stage
A middle-aged man. Black suit. A man of the theatre.
Taking his seat, there in the light
Smiling at us all, settling in his seat

PAUSE Lights come up on the musicians area - 'cellist, alone, reading her book

More lights - centre stage. Three musicians poised to play.

5 metres, from here to there
Between us and them
Two states of mind
5 metres. That's all

Any minute now, we here will decide when this performance begins
The sound of our breathing will drop, as they take all the oxygen out there
And we disappear for a time

We hear music.
Music which observes neither end nor beginning.
Variations - a set of variations on a theme.
Music with neither climax nor real resolution.
Music which, like Beaudelaire's lovers, 'rests light on the wings of the unchecked wind'.

LONG PAUSE Light comes up on the front row of audience

Another light
Another man ... Listening to the music.

He is younger/older than the first man.
Another costume ... (*describe his clothing*)
He looks around.
He stands.
He hesitates
And then he walks onto the stage ...

Light comes up on white tarquette area, centre stage

Into that light.

Watching the musicians. Listening to the music.
Smiling. Fidgeting. His hands in his pockets, looking back toward the audience.

To where a woman sits. ... *(describe her clothing)*
Watching the man on the stage. Listening to the music.
Smiling. She stands and walks onto the stage and stands beside the man in the light.

They look at one another. At the musicians. Back to the audience.
Looking ... fidgeting ... smiling ... at one another.

And then they begin to dance ... in time with the music
Very slowly ... smiling ... holding, looking at each other ...
Faces, fragments of objects.
Her legs moving back and forth, back and forth in perfect time with the music.
Ah! ... Here is sense! Synchronisation!

(NK moving onto the stage again)

Joining them on the stage.
Keeping his distance ... not wanting to intrude.
Weaving his private way across the dance floor.
Re-acquainting himself with the stage ... a lazy pas de bourree ... and then moving on ...
toward ... the piano.

(He sits at piano, stabbing at a G)

G ABCDEF G

(plays an A) H? Ah no ... you begin again, don't you? GA B

(he plays a repeated soft B)

(to the 'cellist) I once met a man who had no memory of ever learning the piano.
And yet he could play anything by Bach, Beethoven or the Beatles.
Why his musical repertoire extended only to composers beginning with the letter B *(plays a B)*, he could not say, for sure.
He thought it might be his mother's fault - some issue with the alphabet.
Or maybe it was caused by a knock on the head.
What do you think? he asked me.
What do I think?
I think this condition is either literal or metaphorical, that's what I think, or it's something else.

But what else is there? said the man. I mean, it has to be either real or imaginary, right?

Wrong, I said, wrong, wrong, wrong. We have to go beyond ...
(grabs script from the piano and peers at it, then reading) ... beyond Trauma. We have to
leave behind this wound culture, this gouging, renting, endless plane-crash of a culture.
Let's leave all German words and ideas behind right now. Let's stop thinking that the
opposite of forgetting is remembering.

(to audience) SH!!
Listen to us all, *(pause)*
Remembering everything. *(pause)*

(reading again) Births. Deaths. Opening nights, the first day TV went colour.
We put up plaques, build museums, archives, make memorials to make sure we don't forget, right? To ward off amnesia? Right?
Or so we can forget the filthy details. *(throws away paper)*

(to the 'cellist) I said to the man: Perhaps in order to do the big "B" (Beethoven, Bach, Beatles) we have to forget everything that is not B? Perhaps you can B, or not B, but nothing in between.

*NK plays a Ligetti like exploration on the single note B, over several octaves.
Violinist and Pianist enter dressed in concert attire, walk to tarquette, and stop.*

*Glenn Gould recording of Variation 25, very soft, as though offstage.
NK stops playing and listens carefully to the Gould recording.*

Glenn ... Gould?

*NK nods off to sleep.
The pianist and violinist pass across the dance floor.
Violinist takes her seat, as pianist hovers behind NK at the piano.*

*Pianist taps NK on the shoulder. Glenn Gould recording stops.
NK suddenly awakens, leaping to his feet.*

Something has happened to them! That couple pressed, locked together!
(to pianist) I'm sorry - I very rarely sleep. I'm afraid to wake up and lose that image.
What would I have then? Without a past, something at least, even an invented one,
I might as well be dead.

NK wanders centre stage.

Pianist sits and plays an A (D minor triad), for the strings to tune.

They found him last weekend wandering by the sea. In a wet dinner-suit.
They took him to a hospital. He wouldn't, or couldn't, say a word.
But he played the piano beautifully ...
... Bach - and what seemed to be his own melancholy compositions ...
... arrangements of something vaguely familiar.

*Tuning finishes with pianist spinning away with a short Eb diminishes
referent to a Kurt Weill song.*

The hospital staff came to hear him play in the chapel.
There was no clue as to who this man was. He was carrying no ID, no money.
And he seemed calm, almost vacant.
But there was something disturbing about him ...
... something you couldn't quite put your finger on ...
An enigma.
Had something so terrible happened to him?

For the next two days he spent most of his time in front of the television.
God knows what he saw.

SCENE 2

*Pianist plays the solo **ARIA** (with repeats).
NK tracing a grand, slow and meandering "entrance"
from upstage to the table - a lost man:*

(softly, under the music at Bar 21, 2nd repeat)

And then it started. He started, Speaking. And it was as if he would never shut up.

Today Tonight in 60 minutes, a Current Camilla Affair. Our Mary, a Hillsong, a CSI of an Oprah

for men who want to be lesbians

Condal

eased for Kerri Anne at 2 for 5

9/11. a John-of an FTA, Our Kyiie. Our

Cate.

Our Warney Leyton Thorpedo. Cronulla, Kosovo, Kurdistan, Sharks. Iraq.

Plastic surgery prices are coming down, you know.

The ultimate home renovation. \$999.66 cents ... including GST.

ARIA finishes

Funny how quickly enigmas collapse and become boring. It's the deferral that's exciting.

So this was all that was on his mind?

Televised fragments spilling out of his mouth?

Insatiable demand for connection. With someone, with something.

reorganising paper - throwing them around. FAST DELIVERY

Constantly knitting, stitching, mending a world that escapes him. A world constantly on the verge of not-existing. Unable to actually generate any real sense of continuity, he fabricates an endless stream of pseudo-stories, pseudo histories populated by phantom

characters . A virtual world, disconnected, discontinuous, yet all inclusive, beyond ethics, guilt, accountability, reason. Hermetic, heavenly perfection. Immaculate. Happiness?
(*pause*) Vacant.

(*pause*) So why don't I ever talk about myself?
I'm harmless enough ... well to do ... sort of savvy ... articulate

Variation Number 13

SCENE 3

(NK breathes in and then a deep sigh)

Easy does it ... The anxious breath before...

Conducts in: PIANO PLAYS Intro to Variation 13

Sliding hopefully from the pontoon
From land to sea ... and back
Evolution rewinds in an instant
Executed between phrases
Civilisation in a semitone

Feet up on desk - dropping in and out of sleep

Section A (*finishing in 'cello and piano repeating bottom D through the following:*)

Not exactly easy listening, but ...
No insults, no shocks to the system here
This piece is a little too familiar for me.
But new to you perhaps.
Everything burrows its way into memory, don't you find?
While you try to just live it.
We'll just let it be
Let our eyes leave the ... ah ... the road for a bit
Let the music work on us
Soon our eyes will fix on the forehead of the violinist ... and we'll be gone

Section B :

When I first heard this music I can't remember
In fact, right now I can't remember much at all
I wore this suit
The last thing I expected was immersion

(Falls asleep)

*Music finishes.
Recording of Gould playing Variation 13 heard in the distance.*

1955. Glenn Gould playing Johann Sebastian Bach's Goldberg Variations. I first heard them when I was 12 years old ... I think.
He recorded this music at the age of 20 something, just a few months before I myself was born ... November 1955.
Ah! Now that comes out of the blue! Let's be exact here! The 9th of November 1955.
Hey! That's what birthdays are for ... a confirmation: "I became" ... "I am" ... still ... I think.

(moving upstage) That Glenn Gould recording ... Late 1955.
Have I a debt to repay?
No ... I have no memory of that ... indeed, I have no memory at all.

So, if I have no memory, well, think of it - "life's clean slate!"
I simply begin again. Start over. Begin a new history, get a new ball rolling.
What an opportunity, hey? - guilt free, regret free, pain free.

And then just construct a timeline ...
Whip these seemingly random snapshots into order, and ... Voila!!
Everything starts to mean something. That might do!

Still ... this music, these glimpses, sensations ... they have to come from somewhere.
But where? A place I've been before? And was I seen? Spotted? Recognised?

I don't like the idea that out of the blue, someone, sometime, might claim to know me.
Or some version of me. And try to place me at the scene of some crime yet to be answered for. I want know before someone else tells me, before someone challenges my fiction, someone claiming to have been there.
After all this is MY life. MY past. MY story. MY memory. I don't want to receive second-hand!

But hey! This could be fun. A treasure hunt. But performed in stealth. I must slip under the radar: Bluff everyone. Appear to have a past - but nothing set in concrete, of course.

piano vamp 1:

Thus any nasty little unwelcome surprises can be dealt with.
Immediately ... in **Variation Number 5:**

string section 1 NK conducts/dances

piano vamp 2:

Yes, I see myself playing a role, or perhaps, more accurately - rehearsing a role.
Something like this:

string section 2 NK conducts/dances

piano vamp 3:

No! fuck it! I'll just make it all up.

Tricky though. That problem again: someone might recognise me. What then ? Very embarrassing!.....

string section 3 NK conducts/dances

piano vamp 4:

No! I'm not at all sure about this.

What if this life I dig up - is a frightful, horrible, shameful thing?

Or even worse - what if its utterly, excruciatingly even, just..... plain..... dull?

string section 4 NK moves to bar stool

SCENE 4

A man is driving along in his car one afternoon on a flat, lonely stretch of road in Wyoming. In the distance, he sees an enormous billboard. This surprises him, because there have been no other billboards on this "lonely stretch of Wyoming road."

As he drives on, the image comes into sharp relief, and all at once he sees that it is a gigantic photograph of a man that he knows. It is in fact, him. He is the man on the billboard.

He stops right in front of it ... gets out of the car ... and looks up at the inflated image. He sees that in the photograph he is at least twenty years younger than he is now. Up on the billboard, not only is he smiling broadly, but his teeth are extraordinarily white, which shocks him, because his teeth have never been particularly white, nor very straight, and he hasn't laughed out loud since he was four years old.

In the photo the man is wearing ... a tuxedo?. His hair is dark, glossy, and shows none of its present grey. And in his hand the man is holding a glass - cut crystal - with an inch of what looks like a single malt whisky.

(Pauses, taking a sip of water).

Now, unlike the man in the photo, this man has never been much of a drinker, nor has he ever owned a tuxedo.

Moving closer, he can see that there are thirty-two related pieces that have been placed together to make him whole. His nose is composed of four of the squares, his mouth, three. What effort, he thinks, to make me large and luminous. Yet, close up, he can count the thousands of individual pixels, which give - at a distance - the illusion of wholeness.

The more the man looks at the billboard, the less himself he feels. A terrible wave of sadness washes over him. Here he is, as he has never been: tall, glossy, larger-than-life, gorgeous, and a happy drunk, to boot.

He returns to his car. He twiddles the dials on the car radio - a lonesome cowboy song by Dean Martin. At the other end of the dial he discovers the faint, thin cadences of J.S.Bach. He chooses Dean Martin.

(Dean Martin recording MEMORY LANE)

Driving on, he sees that the billboard has been placed on the outskirts of some kind of town - South Pass City, the most famous of Wyoming's Ghost Towns

Have I simply forgotten the party, the drink, the suit, the camera, the whiteness of my teeth? Or ... you know how when you look at a photo of yourself taken decades ago ... had he simply never recognised his own youthful beauty?

Unlikely - he is a man who has always been aware of his own strengths. It is his failings that always escape him.

Or has his image been stolen? Somewhere, someone has taken a photo of him and imported it into some digital realm and manipulated the hell out of him without him knowing.

But why? There's nothing written on the billboard. No clues. But there he is, a nostalgic icon of heterosexual masculinity. *(laugh track)*

Why would anyone put a billboard of me up on the outskirts of an abandoned ghost-town?

Getting back in the car, winding up the windows and locking the door. Head in his hands, he thinks:

What happened to my youth? *(laugh track)*

What will it be like to be old? *(laugh track)* To die?

To forget? *(laugh track)* ... and be forgotten?

(Gould recording Variation 15, very soft)

Can you hear that?!

What can I say?

There's nothing to say

I don't recall these notes at all

This is completely new to me

I'm astonished

There's a reason for amnesia

There are things to look for, you won't want to find

Melanomas?

Mathematics?

*(pauses to listen again to Glenn Gould,
and then moves to stand behind the pianist to follow the music)*

A canon in 3 voices at the interval of a 5th.

(Pianist starts playing the first half of Bach's Variation 15)

tenor entry - a descending phrase: 2, 2 and then 1 semitone.

treble voice, at the interval of a 5th, but in inversion (ascending).

tenor voice - 2nd descending phrase: 2, 2, 1, 2, 6, 1, and 6 semitones.

treble voice : ALMOST exact inversion, this time at the interval of a 4th, which of course is a 5th in inversion.

All neatly resolving back to the tonic key in Bar 7.

Or the instruments might share and swap between voices, back and forth, back and forth.
(moving to table)

Cerebral or Divine
Whichever you decide
I'm your interpreter
Your interlocutor, if you like
Interrupter ... your irritant.
Go with it
I'm here for you ... Variation number 15

(Into NK Variation 15)

VARIATION 15

*NK following the score - In sections to fit with variation phrases:
Musicians stalling at the end of phrases,
with the piano repeating a quaver at the same pitch.*

1. How was it that he could stitch together these stories so spontaneously?
Somehow he had remembered the rules.
He knew his cues. How to mirror the expected responses. How to seem present.
2. He could spin anything into his story. Justify, link, rationalise everything.
And yet he was in a perpetual state of stress. Distress. You could see it. In his eyes.
Numbed. Gutted. He said he was comfortable, relaxed ... happy even.
Really? A man with no soul? No memory?
3. He wants to be noticed. He's on display. The whole world's watching and about to be impressed. He doesn't notice the way people look at him. He is oblivious when they move away. And he is so proud to be Australian.
4. His ability is to patch and repatch meaning. It is wilful, his obliteration of the past.
5. Ofcourse, in the end what rescues him is his own lack of depth - the very superficiality of his life. He knows nothing else and this saves him. His lack of insight is his salvation.

Nietzsche calls this "active forgetting" He tells the story of a cow.

The cow, says Nietzsche, lives without boredom or pain, because it does not remember. Having no past, it is happy. But because it can't remember, it can't confirm that in fact what it feels IS happiness.

This sense that the past gives and takes away inspires the expression "contented as a cow" – which is a kind of dumb contentment.

Of course, sometimes I just...

(High speed performance with Gould recording VARIATION 20)

clocks, you know clocks... Ptolemy, the Greeks you know.. stars, seasons, mathematics..

Music is mathematics, god.

It's all Wissenschaft.. you know..

But the Poms got the clock right... hiding their failings in precision... keeping units in place... no wonder the church was worried.

I was lost. Every great captain in the illustrious Age of Exploration became lost.

But that didn't stop 'em.

While Bach wrote his voluptuous songs for God, more and more vessels were sailing to conquer. They killed and were killed. They all got lost. All at sea they were.

I was clever at school you know. that's one thing I can remember.

It's all genetics. I was just born this way. I was born talented.

He married his cousin, you know. and if it hadn't been for men... mendel.. mendelssohn we probably wouldn't have known or cared.

*Silence - NK smiles, and then is confused for a moment.
Shuffles through papers on the table and then moves to the bar stool*

SCENE 5

A man comes home from work late evening, ready for sleep, and finds a note pinned to his pillow.

Takes note from coffee table and reads:

" Nigel,

For years I have asked you to change. I have begged you to quit smoking, stop drinking, and to cook dinner at least once a week, and, quite frankly Nigel, the business with the rabbit was the final straw. That and Christmas with your parents.

So I have left you. You will notice, however, that most of my clothes are still in my cupboard. Please refrain from responses involving scissors or the rabbit, and don't even think about touching my photo albums.

The CDs are yours. I never did like your taste in music. All that Berlioz and Puccini. For Christ's sake Nigel, this is the 21st century. Get with it!

I will, however, take the Bach.

As for financial matters, my solicitor will be writing to you with a deed of disclosure in the next few days. I think you will find that I have been running things efficiently and transparently in that department. I am not sure yet about the house in Watson's Bay.

I will have to see what they say about its value vis a vis Whale Beach.

Personally, I would prefer the holiday "shack". I want to be near water on the weekends. I have taken up yachting. Ralph is keen on boats, and has a large, aggressive dog.

God, Nigel, I can't tell you what a relief it is to be with a man who wants to fuck me up the arse without feeling guilty. I don't know what you've been playing at all these years Nigel, but I can tell you that if you can't spot a fake orgasm by now, you ought to give up.

Don't forget to give the rabbit her water.

Regards, "

Places note on coffee table.

This note is very confusing. To begin with, I live in Marrickville, and I've never had Christmas with my parents.

I do, however have a long-term partner, but we've never lived together, and there is certainly no real estate to dispute. Despite a childhood talent for musical theatre there is no chance that life will have an Oliver-type twist in the final act : my partner and I occupy the supply-and-demand ends of the contemporary performance sector.

Neither of us hold out any hope of ever owning our own home - let alone a "shack" in Whale Beach.

And cooking has never been an issue. Indeed, I'd been planning a meal on the way home on the train the very night I found the note - Rigatoni Sorrentino and Peppers Siciliano from Patsy's in New York, the infamous hang-out of Sinatra and the Rat-Pack. And then there was the question of the rabbit. A dog, yes! a cat, possibly, a guinea pig might even be on the cards, but a rabbit? The man called his partner. Of course, he thought. It is all an elaborate joke. The telephone rang and rang, and eventually a recorded message kicked in. He heard his partner's voice: "Nigel, I have gone to America to find myself." He rushed over to his partner's house. And there he found it ... a map of Wyoming and Nebraska open on the bed ...with a red circle around a tiny speck ...clear as day ...South Pass City.

A BREAK (DEAN MARTIN RECORDING - "MY LADY LOVES TO DANCE")

*NK re-sets the stage - shifts the papers around a bit.
Sits at Downstage prompt seat. Calls for music to stop.*

SCENE 6

Let's move to tomorrow at 10 am. And where were you on the (*tomorrow's date*) at 10 am Ms... (*picking a woman's name from the audience list*)?

I was here, waiting for you. I was waiting. It's all because of the clocks you know. The myth of synchronisation.

10.45 am.

(*to musicians*) How long does she expect me to wait, do you reckon?

No announcement. Nothing. Extraordinary!

miming a small puppy passing by with its owner

Hello beautiful ... yes Hello! ... a boy or a girl? ... how old is she? ... fully vaccinated yet? ... What is she? ... oh, right ... yes I can that ... (*puppy licks NK's face*) ... you are a gorgeous girl, aren't you! ... yeah ... see ya later ...

Well, anyway I expected this. This is what one spends most of one's time doing of course, waiting. Inadvertently it disempowers you.

We'd arranged to meet for coffee. So, I waited. But she never came. I sat here and I waited for something that never came. I was romantic, delirious. The unattainable is delicious. This waiting was perfection! So the next day I waited again. I waited, knowing that she would never come. It was as if I was in some sort of trance, some half sleep. Where everything remains possible and nothing occurs. This seductive half life. One eye on the clock waiting for something that never comes.

*Turning to contemplate the white tarquette square, upstage.
Solo piano - a Kurt Weill song in the style of a Spanish Habanera*

The same image. The same music. Back and forth, back and forth.
His hand moving across her....
Her hand moving across his...
And me framing them both ...

Detached, removed. Perfection!
And I sought the same excitement again. To BE the outside.
The outside framing the inside.
A man at the edge of himself savouring the unthinkable.
Silent, unmoved. And more alive than ever before.

(Standing on chair to pluck a script from above)

11.15.

He looked down. His penis had been cut off.

This was no metaphor, She had removed it. *(pause)*

She was last seen at the supermarket. *(pause)*

Strangely, I feel no pain.

This is the image that will become me. I remind people of their incompleteness.

That death is ever present.

That all these little stories we are telling ourselves ... are precisely ... nothing.

(Climbing down of the chair and making his way to table)

I left the cafe. Outside it was business as usual. Everything horrifyingly normal.

It was me who had changed.

Something was wrong with me. Very wrong. I was wrong.

That's why I'd gone to meet her. To set things right.

Something was wrong ... Variation number 10.

(conduct it in, and following the music in his score)

SCENE 7

VARIATION 10 - Section A

RECITATIVE (in 8 sections) *(reading from the score)*

- 1 Feeling lost? Like you've been here before?
 Don't worry. Soon enough we'll be moving on ... going nowhere
2. Each variation is an individual artefact.
 There are no climaxes, no outcomes, no closure
3. Eventually we'll be back where we began ... at the aria ... the sarabande
 There's stability here. if nowhere else ... absolute safety
4. The theme is not terminal but radial.
 According to Glenn Gould, like memory
 "Resting lightly on the wings of the unchecked wind" ... for Beaudelaire.
5. How about you?
 (reads audience names from the clipboard left by the 'cellist on the table)
 Each to his own.

6. O O ... Oh! ... Yes! ... Oh, yes
I am talking to Bach. I understand his dialect
Extended, voluptuous music section, on Variation No 28
7. I want to reply
8. In my Variations I wander anywhere. You can try to follow if you like.
But you won't catch me
There's JSB and me! Sorry, you're on your own.

VARIATION 10 - Section B

NK reads the audience list:to himself

O fuck! Who invited you? Glib aficionados ... Buffs ... Jocks ... Performance purists ...
Queer eyes ... Piss off! Don't stand on any platforms, (*audience name*). Don't get too
close to the fire, (*audience name*) ... Oh piss off!

But, you innocents, true believers. You who are all ears. Welcome to the project!
Variation 18

*Nods off to sleep.
Light snaps up on tarquette. NK suddenly awakens with a start*

Why can't I sleep? 8 hours a night. 16 if you're a cat.
The bigger you are the less you need. Elephants? - 4 hours I think.

'Cellist plays repeated octave pizzicato Bs (intro of Variation 18)

Shh! (*NK creeps to tarquette*)

From here I can watch without being seen, even though I suspect they know perhaps their
12 year old boy is here, watching, all the while.

The gramophone opens and a record drops into place.

(Variation 18 begins)

Ah! Their feet circling the space.

Shoes. Fine black heels. Elegant heels. Slim ankles. Bare legs.

Sliding apart and then back together. Turning and turning.

Sliding in rhythm with those fine black heels.

A heel leaves the ground and disappears from view, masked by the edge of the light.

Tension in this pause

relief as that shoe gently touches down and they turn on one another once again.

Hypnotised - staring into the middle distance.

The flesh and the blackness whirl past.

The gentle shuffling and sliding sounds as they turn and glide.

This is a beautiful moment. A classic little Oedipal drama

Seeing without watching, hearing without listening. Far away and yet ... totally present.
A 12 year old boy lost in the music ... becoming one with the dancers.
More than that - becoming the dance.

music finishes - piano continues to repeat the top D

Imagining ...Holding her very close.
Dancing cheek to cheek.
Sniffing at her neck, her hair, her face, her lips.
Holding her tightly.
Trying to kiss her.
She is caught.

And then stillness ... quiet ... before ... Variation number 16

VARIATION 16 FRENCH OVERTURE

Pushing the woman aside.
Turning to face the other man.
(*pause bar:*) Looking at the man. Grabbing him by the shirt-collar. Struggling.
Pushing and pulling one another.
(*pause*) The woman stands.
She walks to the men who are fighting.
She grabs the hair of the boy who has tried to kiss her.
She pulls him off the other man.

(*final piano note:*) "Get out of my fucking life!!"

Light snaps to table. NK slowly walks back to table

(*folding paper plane*) ... the light hitting the water. Her legs moving back and forth, back and forth in perfect time with the music.

OK! I just made it all up. Let's blame Glenn Gould. For God's sake, I was only twelve years old ...
Ofcourse, sometimes I just

(Another Amanda Stewart high-speed text about falsely retrieved memories with the Glenn Gould Variation 20 recording - refer to the length of the "clocks" speech on page 11)

Music finishes - stillness

Please, don't be distracted by these explosions of vitality
These genteel ornamentations
Try to get your head around the bracing Germanic solemnity of it all.

Welcome to serious music

Throws paper plane at someone in the audience

Hey! You! Listen up!

Do you realise how fiendishly difficult all this is? Do you?

The rest of you ... Please, just relax

Enjoy how easy they make it seem (*gesturing to the musicians*)

For you

Ready?

Ready or not

Jump!

Now!

Dive

*Pianist plays solo **VARIATION 19**. The violinist and 'cellist lit, reading their books*

In

Go down

Go deep

Chasms open

And close around you

Let them

Don't think about the oven, (Clare)! ... You've definitely left it on!

This is the city of shadows ... Get lost.

NK drops off to sleep.

Suddenly awakens. Confused.

He listens to the pianist, and then slowly moves to stool.

Sits cross-legged, back to audience, reading a newspaper - a serious newspaper - The Times of London or The New York Times.

SCENE 8

NK folds the paper, places it on the coffee table, takes a page and swings around to the audience.

(reading from page) And so I said to the psychiatrist:

Have you noticed how normal television stops when there is a catastrophe? Advertising is suspended. Comedy is out. Disaster movies disappear from the schedule. And suddenly documentaries are all the go. History is in. Eventually, though, things must return to normal. Consumption must resume.

And that is my job. That is the job of a media personality. I visit the scene of the disaster, as a guest of a Children's Charity. Then I front a fund-raiser - a telethon is perfect. I can tell a few jokes - family jokes, like, "I just made a killing on Wall Street. I shot my broker!", or, "I've got a great doctor. If you can't afford the operation, he touches up your X-rays"

- the kind of material you can dig up on the internet. I do my bit to ease the viewer back in.

That is my job: to soothe, to entertain, to elide. I am here to help you forget - not all of the bad bits - oh no. Just the really awful bad bits. The bits that sneak in on CNN in the early broadcasts, the bits some Bolshi Independent manages to film before the networks get there. The body bits, the baby bits, when the bodies and the blood are still moving in the frame. Nobody needs to remember that. We remove that bit, quickly - digital technology - and then we add other bits. Nice bits. Bits about the brave families. Recovering victims. Regrowth, rebuilding. We mesh forgetting with remembering. That is what we do.

Dean Martin Song - "I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE, BABY"
*NK wanders the stage, absent-mindedly,
eventually arriving at the table.*

SCENE 9

What do you mean who am I now? I don't know who I am at all. I know I am not myself. And, anyway, why are you interested in me? The details of my life are of no interest. They'd make for one really dull night in the theatre!

(A music and text scene, revisiting and doubting much of what has been said so far. The music loses itself - falters, meanders.)

NK moving from page to page of written text.

including Ogden Nash/Kurt Weill words, sung at the end:

There seems to be a question,
And I don't know what tactics to use.
But if you could offer a suitable suggestion,
How could I possibly refuse?
When I'm a stranger here myself.

(moving into Variation 28)

(D/F# trills dying away)

No, I am not schizophrenic
I was playing an amnesiac
Who remembered music ...

*Turns toward the band, and watches the violinist leaving the stage
'Cello playing D - Bb*

And ... then I lost it. That's all ... Like Cornelia Rau, I slipped away.
Without a passport, stateless, absconded.
Waiting ... ahistorical ... deferred.
Losing touch ... the ability to be touched.
No unattended baggage ... Nothing seditious here.
I just didn't want to say any of this overtly.
Why? Well, because that would be too banal.
So I disguised it all, to share a few thoughts about music, myself, the world I live in, my fears, my loves ... and my audience.

The music transported me
And I had no visa.

*'Cello and piano continue with fragments of Variation 25,
ending in a jazzy playout of the Kurt Weill song, with the violinist joining from off-stage*

Forgive me.

Right now, I find myself a little bit under the weather.

The pianist leaves the stage - NK follows him upstage,

NK: Excuse me. Are you finished?

Pianist: Yes (*exits*)

*NK moves to the piano,
taking out an Urtext Edition of the Goldberg Variations and opening at the first ARIA
Finds a text in the score - laughs to himself.*

(reading the text to the audience) A famous case involved a man who could remember just less than a day. He lived his life in an eternal present. 'Every day is alone by itself,' he would say every day, sometimes twice. We humans can choose - indeed we are compelled - to abandon the past in order to feel happiness. And that is what I am doing here tonight and every night. Here in the eternal present.

(to 'cellist) Oh dear! I've said all this before, haven't I? Earlier this evening. Remember? No matter - it's worth reminding ourselves, eh? ... "lest we forget":
"... everything memorable ... guaranteed forgettable".
... everything I cannot say ...

*NK plays Bach's **Aria**, reading from the music.*

He drops off to sleep half-way through.

'Cellist stands, wakes him, and then exits quietly as NK completes the Aria.

He then turns the page to the 1st Variation.

Lights fade slowly to blackout as he prepares to "begin again".....

END

Sleepers Wake - Wachet Auf!

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

April 5th, 2006

by **Peter McCallum**

SLEEPERS WAKE!

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Funding application for Production

Sleepers Wake!! Wacht Auf!!

Artists: Performers:	Nigel Kellaway (actor/director)	Michael Bell (pianist)
	Margaret Howard (violinist)	Catherine Tabrett ('cellist)
Writers:	Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Amanda Stewart, Josephine Wilson	
Composer:	Nigel Kellaway	
Lighting:	Simon Wise	

Development period:	February 2007
Rehearsal and Performance season:	June 2007 (9 performances over 2 weeks) Performance Space, Sydney

SLEEPERS WAKE!! Wacht Auf!! is a new performance work for actor Nigel Kellaway and three live musicians (piano, violin, 'cello) contemplating memory, and the loss of it.

The scene: A real space into which we come to listen to a recital. A pianist, violinist and 'cellist performing a set of variations on another set of variations: Nigel Kellaway's compositional explorations on J.S.Bach's Goldberg Variations for solo harpsichord. Kellaway is in the audience. He reflects on the shared listening experience. Mirroring the lack of logical development in this set of strict musical closures, his observations are apparently without any particular aim. No revelation is expected, but he seems to assume his fellow audience will travel on particular journeys with him. He trusts in their complicity.

Gradually we understand that a central concern of this work is the relationship between the man and the music.

He confesses to a nostalgia for the vivid memories of 1960's variety-show television (Dave Allen, Dean Martin), in contrast with the "invisible", though potent, presence of J.S.Bach and the legendary pianist Glenn Gould. Herein lies an intriguing tension.

This is a man at the edge of recollection. He confuses all cultural and historical specificities. Part of the pleasure in this work lies in the pleasure of such disparate material meshing so comfortably: a challenging and off-beat perception of historical genres.

He acknowledges the terror of forgetting, realising that he is no longer in control. His is a world of intruding and confronting memories.

Strangely, this man seems at ease with this wild clash of disparate information. He doesn't need to intellectualise upon it. Nor does he need to assume a superior position to his audience. His mind is certainly scattered and absolutely open to suggestion. At times he suspects his audience understands more than he does. He clearly has a "history", but he won't bore us with it. The fact is, he doesn't remember much of it. What surfaces over an hour and a half are recollected sensations, sounds, structures, pain, joy and strange anecdotes about loss. Are they about him, or just gags he's borrowed along the way? Regardless, he shares with his audience his sense of wonderment at everything that emerges. He suspects he might be an actor who has been written upon - these texts he is performing have been written by someone else.

The process so far:

The work was initiated by Nigel Kellaway as one of a number of projects as part of his Australia Council Theatre Board Fellowship 2004-06. He approached the four writers in 2003, all of whom had worked with him on projects over the past 15 years, and had familiarity with each others' work. Concrete concepts were discussed in mid 2004, and over the ensuing 18 months the four writers (and Kellaway as composer) wrote in isolation, though sharing their emerging drafts with each other.

The project has already benefited from its inclusion in Performance Space's "artists-in-residence" program over four weeks in March 2006, in which many hours of rich material were assembled and fiercely edited, leading up to two informal showings of the work's first 90 minute draft.

The writing:

From the outset, this work was never to be four discrete pieces from the writers. The task has been to ensure that each of the disparate texts is embodied in a single "coherent" voice and body. So clearly the writers' disparate themes and concerns had to find some common ground. The idea of Amnesia proved a most useful device in creating the persona of a forgetful (perhaps even damaged) man who can (re)invent himself as anything at any time. Amnesia also emerged as a metaphor for both the personal and the political - positing that we are defined both as individuals and as a nation by what we remember, but also by what we choose to forget.

The work is quietly reflective, despite its many explosions of energy and humorous interludes. There is reverie and poignant anecdote. A movement, to and fro, between the 1st and 3rd persons emerges quite naturally in the writing - the audience assessing for themselves whether everything this man talks about pertains intimately to him. He is clearly unsure himself. Consequently, the work purposefully eschews any pretension of a man's linear "journey" toward self-knowledge.

The writers have collectively imagined a very interesting man, building on some perceived attributes of the real Nigel Kellaway to create a new and fascinating subject. Kellaway, in response, has happily entertained and explored these inventions, embracing the dark absurdity of a character that oddly resonates within him, regardless of all the fictional details. He sits comfortably in this embodiment of an extreme text.

The project provides the collaborators with challenges and substantial rewards. The initial proposal for the work was a provocative one: four mature women invited to write upon a middle-aged man.

For Kellaway it is a liberating experience to be "written upon" by four such various women. This is difficult and dense text. The rapid acrobatic leaps demanded by conflicting voices are a terrific challenge, pushing him into a more relaxed, reflective though vocally demanding mode of performance.

The music:

Kellaway has always had a serious concern about how music is "remembered". The processes of listening to popular contemporary music are different to the way we approach music from another historical period. We inadvertently create different rules and means of association across genres and time. But what occurs if we suddenly forget the rules? When we can't place what we are listening to within a value system? And what other memories might this music conjure?

Kellaway's variations on the *Goldberg Variations* are a strange decontextualising of Bach's original sounds and ideas - finding new popular forms in which to express the same seriousness and commitment that Bach brought to his own inventions and 18th century popular concerns.

Kellaway's variations reflect forms and sounds from quite disparate periods - early 20th century French Romanticism, classical music boxes, John Cage's sparse textures, Dankworth's dense blue's chords and funky rhythms etc. They conjure a slightly disorientating experience for the listener: there are certainly the remnants of the Bach original, which anyone can recognise, but in all the wrong context. They reflect on mathematics ... structure ... experience ... recollection.

The project demands that Kellaway both explores and explains his musical concerns.

He has not "composed" music for others to perform in nearly thirty years. The expertise and understanding that Michael Bell (piano), Margaret Howard (violin) and Catherine Tabrett ('cello") bring to the work is integral to its creation.

Bringing the project to Production:

After each of the March 2006 work-in-progress showings the audience was invited to respond with questions and observations. They clearly understood the central concerns of the work. They perceived it strongly as about a man and his music. The work had other personal resonances for many in the audience: we are all getting older ... or our parents are. Forgetting is inevitable, mysterious and frightening for us all. Who are we, if we are not ourselves? They were extremely positive about the counterpoint created by the collision of such disparate voices and the music. There was also a strong response to the spaciousness and simplicity of the stage and the judicious care with which it was utilised.

The work is already 80% complete. There are some writing tasks for the final development leading to rehearsal and production:

- some restructuring of some of the extant material, particularly the first 20 minutes (more anarchic and energetic) and the final scenes.
- some careful text and music re-jigging to ensure a better marriage, involving a finessing of the text.
- a few new short sections of text, and a new final scene to be written in collaboration with a new music variation, in which the musical structure and tonality fall apart - reflecting the mounting chaos of the actor's mind.

Both Virginia Baxter and Amanda Stewart will join Kellaway in the rehearsal studio in the weeks leading to production - an arrangement that worked spectacularly well in the 2006 development process. The out of town writers, McHenry (France) and Wilson (WA) are both very confident that their work will once again be well represented and honed in that process.

The design:

The envisaged stage is very large and sparsely decorated - a piano and necessary music stands and chairs centrestage, a bar stool and a table copiously piled with texts and music scores through which Kellaway sifts, searching for clues. A small and lonely man wanders about this expansive space - the walls imperceptibly distant, implying a vast perspective.

Kellaway needs to be body-miked for the production, freeing him from the hand-held microphones that potentially restrict his performance. (Hence, a sound operator is factored into the budget.) This offers the possibility of experimenting even more with the vocal variety inherent in the texts. Simon Wise and Kellaway have already discussed a potential lighting design, creating a world that responds to the musical suggestions and themes of loss in the work.

In Conclusion:

SLEEPERS WAKE!! has already received substantial Theatre Board support in its development stages. The budget reflects this in delegating the bulk of the request for rehearsal/production season expenses. There seems to be a genuine public enthusiasm for the work. We hope that, given the degree of creative investment to date by such a unique line-up of established and respected artists, the work will not be allowed to wither so close to completion.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT - Backstage Pass (to the Circus of Love and Hate)

The Rameau Project is a work three years in the planning. It was proposed as part of my Fellowship application. Initial ideas on one component of the work were workshopped in 2005 with Regina Heilmann and Nigel Ubrihien and myself.

In 2006 The opera Project were welcomed as artists in residence at the Centre of Performance Studies at Sydney University. 2 x 2 weeks workshops took place for the scrutiny of the students.

The first, in May, involved Dean Walsh, Brian Fuata, Nigel Ubrihien.

The second, in July, involved Regina Heilmann, Brian Fuata, Peretta Anggerek, Didier Frederic, Clive Birch and Nigel Ubrihien. Both workshops involved myself and documenter/dramaturg Bryoni Trezise.

The following text is what resulted from these two workshops

Funding has already been gained from both the Australia Council and the NSW Ministry to stage the work in 2007. The task now is to secure a suitable venue and additional subsidy.

The opera Project Inc.

THE RAMEAU PROJECT

Backstage Pass (to the Circus of Love and Hate)

*Ballet Bouffon en trois actes
précédé d'un prologue*

acteurs:

RH - Regina Heilmann NK - Nigel Kellaway
DW - Dean Walsh BF - Brian Fuata
PA - Peretta Anggerek (counter-tenor)
DF - Didier Frederic (baritone) CB - Clive Birch (bass)
NU - Nigel Ubrihien (harpsichord)
2 violins and viola da gamba

scenario:

Nigel Kellaway (director) in collaboration with the performing artists

spoken texts:

Brian Fuata

short excerpts from works by Jean Genet (*The Maids*)
and Jean-Philippe Rameau (*de la Mécanique des Doigts sur le Clavessins*),
all adapted by Nigel Kellaway

documentation and dramaturgical assistance:

Bryoni Trezise

music:

J.P. Rameau F. Couperin

M.A. Charpentier M. Marais

(all edited by Nigel Ubrihien - musical director)

original sound by Liberty Kerr

stage design:

Nigel Kellaway and Simon Wise

costume design:

Annemaree Dalziel

lighting design:

Simon Wise with video artist Peter Oldham

THE RAMEAU PROJECT

Backstage Pass (to the Circus of Love and Hate)

*Ballet Bouffon en trois actes
précédé d'un prologue*

PROLOGUE

Stage - bare table and chairs

Voice over of stage-manager (intermittent):

Ladies and Gentlemen of The opera Project, this is your 15 minute call
The house is now live.....
Heads on stage.
Dropping baton 37 to the deck. Could we have an electrician upstage, please.
(off-mic, aside) Dunno. Pierre's throwing a fucking tanti ...
I think the stage left ... *(cut sound)*
Stage crew for a final sweep, please. Mr Kellaway's brought to my attention a
slippery spot downstage prompt of the table - please see to it.
Could we have some mechs upstage now, please.
Is Marco onstage? We seem to have a fly problem. If he could deal with it?

BF enters, sweeping the stage

Ladies and Gentlemen, Act 1 beginners on stage.
Ms Heilmann's dresser to the OP wing, immediately please!

The telephone on the table rings - BF answers it :

BF: I'll let Madame know." *(Hangs up telephone)*

(to audience) Tonight before we meet, and we will meet, I know this for a fact. In fact, we have already met - countless times, before our sleep, a divine memory recollected through the bruises on my arm and all over my legs, we have met since God and the Devil

Voice-over: Front-of-house tabs in.

*Front curtain closes, BF brings microphone to centre downstage
Upstage curtain closes, upstage lighting boom drops
Musicians entering to their positions*

BF: I picked you for the reason that you were all available this evening. You were constant, and you were waiting.
I picked you out of the throng of people thrown together by distrust and apathy, and you seemed so simply sweet.
I picked you because you seemed like someone easy to fool and make me into one, and now both as fools let's see who is the stronger fool. You make me dumb and I am strong.
I picked you up by the sleeve of your torn shirt to wipe my brow, heavy with blood and pity.
I picked you to be a slave. I picked you to be an asshole ;
I picked you on a Friday, because Friday is my pay day. I picked you up in the parking lot.
And I picked you to be the most handsome lover, because you said nothing when we kissed. Your skin was a gesture ... a revelation so opportune.
We introduced ourselves to the dark, where we shook hands and kissed each other on the cheek. Clumsy and slightly nervous I missed your cheek entirely and kissed you on the neck, on the jugular to be precise.
You smelt like roses. In that moment my heart turned black, and from the webs in my mouth, came out a spider.

Voice-over: Stand by to drop up-stage tab and go. *(Musicians Tune)*

BF I find conversation to be quite a turn off, unless it's an instruction to change position, in which case I like conversation to be quite stern, base and loud!

Abandoned like a car driven criminally, I circled around where you were standing with that other gentlemen, and before whacking his head with my clenched fist I saw you with your hand reaching for the space in between his two open buttons, where inside lay a desperate chest laden with domestic duties and an ambiguous marriage.

The gentleman told you his name, and you said nothing, you circled you're index finger around his hardened nipple and asked if he was cold. "Emma", he replied nervously, "that's my wife's name."

Voice-over: Ms Heilmann is still waiting for her dresser. OP wing urgently!!

BF "You're not married at all you liar!" I said while laughing, "you fucking liar! Turn around!" We both laughed, and you picked me to be quite the entertainer. I was different, and now you love me. But we'll have to see how it all works out. We will have to see how hard you work. We will have to see how it becomes hard work. Emma, that's a good one!

ACTE PREMIER (BACK STAGE)

SCENE 1

Music: Overture Rameau PLATEE

Slow Introduction:

BF: You'll see when you meet them, the bitches are very demanding, hilarious, but demanding nonetheless.

Quick, let's see what you are made of They'll like you...I think.

*Front curtain opens to reveal table and upstage curtain
(BF strikes microphone to OP side)*

*Fast :The upstage curtain opens to reveal company contemplating a lowered lighting bar.
RH dressed in underwear, glancing urgently off-stage.
The bar rises.*

Singers and NK move to sit at table - panic attacks - and eventually to do their makeup.

E Minor Suite - Allemande

Structure A A B

B

(A) *(Music starting as just a solo line on the Harpsichord - building to a fuller sound)*

DW dressing RH / NK prompting her / RH agitated, brushing DW away:

NK: Get my dress ...

RH: *(to DW)* Get my dress. Quickly!

NK: The black spangled ...

RH: The black spangled dress.

Oh ... you *are* hideous, aren't you?

(to NK) You hate me, don't you? You crush me with your attentions ... your humility.

(to DW) I said the black dress, the one with spangles

NK: Threaten me ...

(A)

RH: Very well, then! Threaten me. Insult me.

Monsieur's misfortunes?

Am I to be at your mercy for having denounced him to the police?

I forced my hand to pen that letter - no mistakes in spelling or syntax, not crossing anything out - the letter that sent her lover to ... *(gasp)* MY lover

And so now Monsieur is led from prison to prison.

And I, his lover, mad with grief, shall follow him. To share his glory.

NK: Love ...

(B)

RH: *(to NK)* One should love a mistress. You should love and respect me!

(to DW) Ah! Get away from me! You smell like an animal ... some foul attic, where the lackeys visit at night ... the maid's room ... the garret!

The twin beds where two sisters fall asleep, dreaming of one another ...

the pinewood dresser ... paper flowers ...

the notorious skylight from which a half-naked milkman jumps to your bed! ...

(RH climbing onto chair)

NK: The fall ...

RH: What?

NK: The fall of your dress. I'm arranging your fall.

NK: Revenge ...

(B)

(RH moving to sit at table)

RH: You're taking revenge, aren't you?

But it is I who contains within me both vengeance and the servant, and give them a chance for life, a chance for salvation.

My unhappy lover heightens my nobility.

All you'll ever know is your own baseness.
You disgust me!
I despise you!

NK: And I despise you, too! *(Moving to RH)*
You think you can steal the milkman from me?
His youth and vigour excite you, don't they?
Admit it, Madame. *(NK pushing DW*

away)
You thought you were protected by your barricade of flowers?
Saved by some special destiny, by your sacrifice?
But you hadn't reckoned on a servant's rebellion.
Behold her wrath, Madame. The darkness is dangerous.

RH: So, here are the two maids,

NK: The faithful servants.

They stand before you.

Eager to play their roles.

Despise them.

But they no longer fear you. They're merged, in their hatred of you.

(to RH) They're taking shape, Madame.

RH/NK: *(to singers)* Kind Gentlemen. *(they curtsy)*

Couperin Trio **Tantum Ergo Sacramentum** *(RH and NK move upstage)*

*DW / BF conspiracy - bringing in the tea set - dropping in one pill -
offering tea to singers*

(Singers exit upstage - RH enters to table - refusing a cup of tea)

SCENE 2

BRIAN AND DEAN BEGIN "DUMB DANCE"

NK: *(upstage, to audience)* I loathe this garret!

E Minor Suite - Courante

Structure A A B B short reprise

(A) And I see it as it really is: bare and mean and plain
No, you're right, we don't have to put on a show.
No curtains to push aside, no rugs to shake, no furniture to caress ...
with our eyes or with a rag, no mirrors, no ... balcony.

(A) *(to RH)* Oh, don't worry, you'll still be able to play the queen, once Madame has retired for the night, strolling about the apartment, strutting on the balcony at two in the morning, greeting the populace parading beneath the windows.
You thought you were invisible on your balcony, didn't you? Eh?
(sits at table) Don't try to tell me you "walk in your sleep".

RH: I never!

NK: Nobody loves us. Regina!

RH:

(B) *Madame* loves us. She adores us!

NK: The way she loves her armchair ... her bidet ... her pink enamelled toilet-seat.

RH: But we can love one another.

RH:

(B) And Madame's kindness ...

NK: It's easy to be kind, and smiling, and sweet when you're beautiful and rich
But we are only the maids. The best we can do is give ourselves airs, while we're doing the cleaning or the washing up.....
Or treating yourself to histrionic parades late night in Madame's apartment.

RH: I never!

NK: I'm not afraid of you, Regina.

(Reprise) I know you hate me and that you're a sneak.
But be careful. I'm older than you.

ALL WATCHING DUMB DANCE AS IT CONTINUES

DW: one more time

RH: So what? Older! And stronger too?
I'm the one who's in danger in this game.

NK: What are *you* afraid of?
I've never killed anyone. I am a coward, remember.
I wanted to strangle Madame...

RH: Forget it!

NK: No I won't. You'll see what your sister's made of. What a servant girl really is.

RH: *(as Madame)* Stop it! ...

NK: Look how Madame suffers. How she suffers in beauty. Grief transfigures her, beautifies her. When she learned that her lover was a thief, she stood up to the police. She exulted. And so now she is forlorn and splendid, supported under each arm by the two devoted maids whose hearts bleed to see her grief. Her grief sparkling like the grief of her jewels, like the satin of her gowns, in the glow of the chandelier!
Regina, I will make up for the poverty of my grief in the splendour of my crime!

RH: You'll be found out.

Charpentier "Moliere Comedies" *Les Grotesques (Instrumental)*

NK: NO! ... because I understand everything. I keep my eye and ear to the keyhole. No servant ever listened at doors as I do. I know everything!

DW: You're being too dramatic!

"O, La Belle Symphonie" Trio - singers

(ending upstage, joining DUMB DANCE)

NK *(to men)* Let's try work a system where when the phone rings, she has to answer it.

RH: Why?

NK: I just find talking such a chore that I am really, really bad at. I just am, I break things, I forget things, I am late with things, I burn things, I dirty things after having cleaned things, I hate things ...Pass me a rag. I've spilt some mess on the floor And a bit over here *(leaves RH to clean up the floor - which she refuses to do)*

(to audience) There are some things that have to be said about the very nature of dirt. What is dirt, where does it live, how does it die?

SCENE 3

Telephone rings - all freeze - looking at RH. Eventually RH answers it:

RH: Hello Madame will be overjoyed ... Very well ... Good-bye Monsieur.

NK: Monsieur? *(RH moves upstage to tidy a costume rack)* **DW/BF "TRICK FLIRT"**

RH: The judge has let him out on bail.

NK: Well, you've done a fine job, haven't you! My compliments to you!.
Your denunciations, your letters, it's working out beautifully.
And now they'll probably recognise your handwriting. Perfect!

RH: Since you're so clever, you should have managed your strangling of Madame a little better. But you were afraid ... weren't you?

NK: It was Madame!

RH: Yes! And she unravels the clues. She points to our traces.

She discovers us, jeers at us. And it's your fault! You lacked the strength.
 NK: I couldn't look at her face. I tried to get to her throat ...
 RH: But you failed! And where you failed, I'll succeed! *(to musicians)* I'm ready. I'm ready to bite. I'll have my crown and I shall stroll about the apartment.
 NK: That's hardly reason enough to kill her!
 RH: For what other reason? What better excuse?
(to musicians, moving to them) Do you remember ... when we were young ...

E Minor Suite - Gigue en Rondeau 1

Structure A A B A C

A

RH:

(A) ... we read the story of Sister Holy Cross of the Blessed Valley who poisoned twenty-seven Arabs?
 She walked without shoes. She was lifted up, carried off to the crime.

(A) And do you remember, we read the story of the princess who poisoned her lover and her husband?
 She uncorked the bottle and made a sign of the cross over the goblet.

(B) As she stood before the corpses, she saw only death and, off in the distance, the fleeting image of herself being carried by the wind ...
 She made all the gestures of earthly despair.

(A) And do you remember, in the book about the Marquise, the one who poisoned her children?
 As she approached the bed, her arms were supported by the ghost of her lover.

(C) I'll be supported by the sturdy arms of the milkman. I'll lean my hand on the back of his neck. He won't flinch. And you will help me, Nigel. Nigel! *(move to*

NK)

Far away ... if I must go far away, you'll come with me. We'll board the boat together!

(A) We'll be that eternal couple, Nigel, the two of us, the eternal couple of the criminal and the saint. We'll be saved, Nigel, saved, I swear to you!

RH: And then we'll bury Madame beneath the flowers.

NK: And at night ... we'll water her *toes* ...

RH/NK: ... with a little *hose*!

E Minor Suite - Gigue en Rondeau 2

SKIPPING DANCE - ALL

BF and DW left alone at table.

SCENE 4

DW is dropping pills into the tea, not listening to BF at table

BF : I cry too much - I cry too easily, I am losing the plot. Boys and research - entire institutions crumbling under a limited vocabulary
(referring to DW) My lover. Who I hate. My undoing. My undone. My death and my deliverance. All I want now, is a good place on this table.

My call for help is a strange one. It is familiar, but not belonging to me. I have stolen it from my sleeping stupid lover who never keeps guard of his voice, where on this one mid-night, where my hands are the intuition of the gutter, I open his sleeping mouth, slither my digits down his gullet, grab hold of his sound to swallow it whole, and now roam around with an entirely different person contained when I speak. ... And what I could do with that!

Call his mother? (*picks up telephone*)

"Mother! It's been so long since we've spoken, and I just wanted to tell you that you're pussy stinks!" (*hangs up*)

Call his father? (*picks up telephone*)

"How's it going Dad? You watching the footy?! Would love to know who's winning, but I really want to rape your arse with a dildo in the shape of a crucifix and once you're all nice and loose, piss up your arse then cum all over your eyes! Get yourself ready, Dad, I'll be over in about ten minutes." (*hangs up*)

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC Rameau Musique Instrumental "LA RAMEAU":

RH and three singers dash onto stage to table.

RH: It's Madame!

DW: Are you sure you can go through with it?

RH: Ofcourse! How many do we need?

DW: Ten? Yes, ten pills in her tea. (*pushing tea toward her*) Will you do it?

RH: Yes. I've got the bottle in my pocket.

E Minor Suite - Le Rappel des Oiseaux

Structure A A B B

*UPSTAGE CURTAIN OPENS TO REVEAL NK DRESSED IN BLACK, AS MADAM BF arranging NK's dress. RH echoing NK's words.
Singers playing chess - DW and singers mirroring NK's physical gestures)*

NK:

(A) I've been trailing through corridors all night long. I've seen frozen men and stony faces. But I did manage a glimpse of Monsieur. From a distance. I waved to him.

RH: The crime, Madame! (*slowly dropping the pills into the tea*)

NK: Guilty or not, I shall never desert him, never.

(A) It's at times like this that you realise how much you love someone. I don't think he's guilty, but if he were, I'd become his accomplice. I'd follow him to his cell.

RH: The crime, Madame!

NK: He's been accused of the most idiotic thefts. But as a result of this preposterous affair, I've come to realise how deeply attached I am to him.

(B) Ofcourse none of this is serious ... **(short pause)**
But if it were, it would be a joy for me to bear his cross. I'd follow him from place to place, from prison to prison, on foot if need be, as far as the penal colony.
And then I'd force my way in, past the guards. I'd be utterly fearless.
Thank God, I've still got my wits about me. I'm ready for the fight.

RH: The crime, Madame! ... **(short pause - as she drops the 9th pill into the tea)**

NK: All right, it's true! It's just that I'm so upset. You can see what a state I'm in.

RH: Madame will wear the red dress?

NK: I'm giving up my wardrobe. Besides, I'm an old woman. I'm thinking of going into mourning. Don't be surprised if I do. How can I lead a worldly life when Monsieur is in prison?

RH: But Madame, it was Monsieur ... on the telephone!

NK: What do you mean?

RH: Monsieur rang.

NK: What are you talking about? Monsieur phoned?

RH: We wanted to surprise Madame. Monsieur's out on bail.

NK: And you didn't say anything? You fool!
What did he say?

RH: He was very calm ... and you have done well, Madame.

PA: *(to BF and DW)* Don't fuck this one up!

SCENE 5

DF and CB Couperin Lecons de Tenebre

"JOD": *BF approaches DW slowly, as RH drops the final pill into Madame's tea. Suddenly BF wraps DW in a violent head lock and drags him to the floor.*

WRESTING SCENE

Singers and RH/NK watch the "gladiators", as though in the Colosseum -

PA as referee.

"Manum suam ... CAPH"

BF: Don't fuck this one up. I have worked well and if all goes to plan, you will do your job with fine cut precision and bleed like the mother fucker that you are.

"MEM"

Darling, you have a bit of dirt on the corner of your mouth.
I'm sure anyone of the boys would be more than happy to lend you their foreskin, you fucken dirty little cunt.
You love it, don't you. You love the smell of it, when they clean you with their dirt. I've taught you well, haven't I? I can see their stench on you.
What a wondrous invention, you have become. The stench is the only thing that's holding all your internal organs in. It's quite fascinating.

"NUN de qua non potero surgere"

No exclamation mark, no exaggeration, no battering of your heavy eyelid, not even a capital letter. This is a little 'c' cock.
The everyday cock, the every man cock, the cock that crows three times in the third cubicle at your favourite toilet where Jesus is not denied, here Jesus is totally gobbled up! Body of Christ? Fucken, A man to that!! Amen for all the men.

And here, where my finger slides down, bruised cheek, dirt path, the carpentry skill of a glory hole

"Jerusalem ... ad Dominum Deum tuum"

NK: Can you all wait here, I just need to go do a piss. *(NK exits)*

BF: And so piss, he does. All over your head.
There where our finger slides - absolute happiness!

PA Rameau Cantata "Orphee" Air tres Gai ???????????

*DW and BF resolve their wrestling match
RH on telephone (obviously faking a conversation) at end of da capo section*

SCENE 6

NK: *(entering from upstage)* Who are you talking to?

RH: *(quickly hanging up)* Monsieur. He's out on bail.

NK: And you didn't say anything? You fool! (*sitting at table*) What did he say?

RH: He was very calm. And you have done very well, Madame.

E Minor Suite - La Villageoise (Rondea / 1er Reprise / Rondeau)

Structure A

B A

(*DW and BF are writing a letter, side of stage*)

NK:

(A) Come a little closer. Come on. Come here! Why ... you've got make-up on!

RH: I put a little powder on ...

NK: That's not powder, that's make-up.

(B) (*RH offers NK the "poisoned" tea*)

NK: I'm not thirsty.

RH: Madame *must* drink it. Otherwise ...

NK: Oh, stop nagging me.

(A) After all I've been through. I've a right to be out of sorts. In the first place, there's that business of the letters to the police ... I wonder who could have sent them.

RH: That's all over with. Monsieur is free.

NK: Thank heavens!

NK: (*pointedly, toward BF/DW*) But that still doesn't account for those letters.

DW: (*to RH*) Did she drink it?

BF: Obviously not.

RH: Is it my fault? The tea was ready.
I put in the pills. But she wouldn't drink it!
What do you want me to do?

NK: Just get on with it! (They're only sugar pills, for Christ's sake!)

E Minor Suite - La Villageoise (2d Reprise en Rondeau da Capo)

Structure C (28bars) A (16bars)

Company assembles at Table - DF and CB at each end - RH trying to slow them all down.

RH: Oh, let's wait a little while. It's a trap. Madame suspects something.

She's suspicious. We're being watched ... I feel something. Listen, we're being spied on. There's something here!

Something in this room ... that can record our gestures and play them back.

NK: You're raving.

RH: Softly, the walls are thin.

NK: **(A- reprise)** Who cares if the world listens to us and smiles and shrugs its shoulders and says we're crazy and envious!

No! I'm quivering, I'm shuddering with pleasure!

Telephone rings - passed to DF to answer it.

DF: Hello ... oui ... oui ... mais oui ... au revoir. *(hangs up)*

RH: Madame?

DF: Peut-etre.

SCENE 7

Didier tells the story of the Maids - Clive translates - all attentive:

DF:

À propos de deux servantes, sœurs,
célibataires d'âge moyen

Au service d'une orgueilleuse et cruelle
femme.

La nuit, quand leur maîtresse est de sortie,
elles s'amuse à des jeux fous et
désespérés.

Elles jouent chacune à son tour le rôle de
cette maîtresse qu'elles méprisent.

Elles s'imaginent vengeant leur propre
humiliation servile; des jeux dans lesquels
les servantes peuvent enfin soumettre et
torturer leur maîtresse:

(all begin to look at

PA)

déguisements interdits avec la garde-robe
de Madame,

plonger d'inoffensives pastilles de sucre
dans le thé de Madame s'imaginant qu'on
l'empoisonne,

ou même l'étrangler dans son sommeil.

peut-être concoctant des lettres destinées à
la police accusant à tort l'amant de Madame
de quelque crime fictif

simplement plaisir à la voir souffrir.

CB:

Didier would like us to reflect for a moment
on an old story ... a kind of parable, he
thinks ... part of the canon ... I think.

Of two servant girls, sisters, middleaged
spinsters.

In the service of a vain and cruel woman.

At night, when their mistress is out, they
amuse themselves in foolish and desperate
games.

They take turn in playing the role of their
despised mistress.

They imagine avenging their own servile
humiliation - games in which servants might
control and torture their mistress:

Forbidden dress-ups in Madame's
wardrobe,

dropping harmless sugar pills into
Madame's tea, imagining they are
poisoning her,

or even strangling her in her sleep.

Perhaps forging letters to the police falsely
incriminating Madame's lover in some
bogus crime ... simply to enjoy her grief.

All puerile fantasy, of course!

DF- ARIA Rameau "Les Amants Trahis" "Lorsque malgre"

"When, despite her inconstancy, I see a proud woman who thinks that I idolise her charms,
Ah! wouldn't I laugh then!
When a rival, puffed up with hauteur,
thinks me jealous of a conquest of which my soul is little concerned,
Ah! wouldn't I laugh then!"

(PA walks offstage as DF begins to sing. CB is sent off to bring him back to the table.)

DF:
(mute)
D'horribles méprises peuvent naître.
(mute)

(mute)
Pas de proclamation de la Révolution!

CB:
But silly pointless games can turn sour ...
Dreadful, deluded mistakes can be made.
And so there is no happy ending to this
story ...
No just retribution ...
No heralding of the revolution!

BF: So what is it's point?

CB: None whatsoever.

DF: (mute)

Tout est dans la façon de la dire.

...etc...etc...etc...etc

CB: The story in itself is not important.

It is all in the telling of it.

... and then on and on ... (*whispering*) and
on ... and on ... and on ...

PA - ARIA Rameau Cantata "Orphee" AIR GRACIEUX

"I recall of evidence of my triumph the beautiful eyes which excited me.
Such is the only reward, the only glory which can warm my heart."

The other performers drift away from the table.

BF sweeps downstage as downstage curtain closes.

(Table is stripped bare and moved Upstage.)

fin du premier acte

"Kneeplay" (in front of downstage curtain)

DF and CB "cruising" BF. (NK and DW drift in and out of scene)

DF:

La perfection du toucher consiste principalement dans un mouvement des Doigts bien dirige.

PA: "This thoughtful, pleasant man is stirred, troubled. He gives way at last to the violent emotion of his redoubled passion. Wait! Make just one more effort in your heart - it is done, and his eyes have met those of Euridice."

Ce mouvement peut s'acquérir par une simple mécanique, mais il faut qu'on sache la manier.

PA: "Sad hostage to the whim of Hades. Ready to leave these doleful shores, a cruel hand pulls her back among the dead. In vain with renewed harmonies, this desolate husband thought to move to Megaera. She is deaf, and it is only to the child of Cythera that he thus makes heard his pleading, his remorse."

Cette mécanique n'est autre chose qu'un exercice fréquent d'un mouvement régulier: les dispositions qu'elle demande sont naturelles à un chacun - il en est comme de celles qu'on a pour marcher, ou si veut, courir.

PA: "Cupid, Cupid, it is you who makes me err. It is your duty to make good the damage."

J'avouerai cependant que ce qui suppose une grande pratique dans la plupart des personnes, ne sera peut-être qu'une habitude acquise dans quelques autres.

PA: "Of the fires which you moved to inflame me, my dear wife is the victim. Cupid, Cupid, it is you who makes me err. Fly to the Underworld to make good the damage. Ah! why did they separate us for such a worthy passion?"

Mais qui et-ce qui osera s'attendre aux facilités de la nature? comment peut-on espérer de les découvrir, sans avoir entrepris le travail nécessaire pour parvenir à en faire l'expérience?

PA: "Cupid, Cupid, it is you who makes me err. It is your duty to make good the damage."

Et à quoi pourra-t-on attribuer alors le succès qu'on éprouvera, si ce n'est à ce travail même.

CB:

Perfection of touch consists in well-controlled movement of the fingers.

This movement can be acquired by a simple technique, but one has to know how to apply it.

This technique is nothing more than frequent exercise of a regular movement: the aptitudes for which it calls are natural to everyone - much the same as in walking or, if you like, in running.

I will however concede that that which implies a lot of practice to the majority of people may perhaps, for others, be a blissful encounter.

But who would dare to anticipate natural aptitudes? How can one hope to discover them, without having done the work necessary to reach this stage of experience?

And to what might one attribute the success which one will then experience, if not to this very work?

BF: Emma ... my wife's name is Emma.

DF: La jointure du poignet doit toujours etre souple: cette souplesse qui se repand pour lors sur les doigts, leur donne toute la liberte & toute la legerete necessaires: & la main qui par ce moyen se trouve, pour ainsi dire, comme morte, ne sert plus qu'a soutenir le doigts qui lui sont attaches, & a les conduire aux endroits ou ils ne peuvent atteindre par le seul mouvement qui leur est propre.

CB: The wrist must always be supple. This suppleness, which is then transmitted to the fingers, gives them all the ease of movement and all the lightness necessary: thus the hand which, by this reckoning is, so to say, inert, serves merely as a support for the fingers which are attached to it and as a means of conveying them to those parts which they cannot reach by their own particular movement alone.

DF - ARIA Rameau Cantata "Thetis" "Partez, Volez"

"Depart, fly, brilliant flashes, signal the master of the world!
Carry your lightning down to the waves! Set ablaze the world of the seas!
Sustain the just vengeance of the sovereign of the gods!
Make tremble the audacious one who seeks to scorn his power!"

BF: OK! I'm not married at all! I'm a fucking liar! OK!

DF:

Mais, on peut se passer, absolument parlant, (des doubles & des reprises d'un Rondeau), qu'on trouvera trop difficiles. (mute).

CB: It must be remembered, though, that the more one perseveres with the first principles, the further one will advance in one's career, for he who wearies of these principles is almost always the dupe of his impatience.

But on the whole, that which is found to be too difficult, can be omitted.

... because the player must not be bound by the impossible.

BF: Let me go! I'll pay you. How much? 200? ... 300? Just please let me go! (exits)

DF: J'y epargue a la memoire un infinite de regles, qu'on ne peut cependant mettre en usage, qu'apres avoir scu les faire passer du jugement au bout des doigts.

CB: I have endeavoured to spare the memory an infinite number of rules which can be applied only when one knows how to pass them from judgement to the finger-tips. All I have said with regards to the harpsichord applies in like manner to the organ.

(DF and CB bow to audience and exit as instrumental music begins)

ACTE SECOND (IN THE TUILLERIES)

Madame has had her billing and cooing, her lovers, her milkman ...

RH: That's enough! I don't want to play ...

NK: ... her morning milkman, her messenger of dawn, her handsome clarion, her pale and charming lover.

(RH begins to gag and retch)

E Minor Suite - 2d Rigaudon

Structure A A B B short reprise

NK: You are so beautiful, the way you wring your precious hands!
Your tears, petals oozing down such delicate cheeks.
You do amuse me, my dear Madame!

(RH is retching on the floor)

Go on, crawl like a worm! And you were going to follow in the wake of his boat?

Cross the sea? Aid and comfort your handsome exile?

Look at yourself! You are hideous!

The guards would snigger. People would point at you.

Your lover would hang his head in shame!

You're not strong enough, Madame! Not strong enough to even carry his bag!

(short reprise) RH:I'm tired. I'm not well!

E Minor Suite - Double du 2d Rigaudon

Structure A A B B short reprise

NK: Oh Madame! Please don't worry. I'm not jealous.
I don't need a thief ... not where I'm going. No, Madame. I am both the thief and
his slavish shadow. I move alone toward the shores. I know what my final destiny is
to be. I have reached shelter. I can be bountiful.

RH: It's late.

NK: It's never too late.

RH: Madame ... She'll be back any moment!

NK: Death is stalking you, Madame.

And no-one can hear you. Everyone's listening, but no one can hear you.

RH: I'm ill ...

NK: And I'll take care of you

(short reprise) *(RH collapses)* ... **(pause)** RH: I'm ill ... I ... I'm going to be sick
...(last 2 bars) *(RH exits, running)*

NK: There will be nothing more to add. I am confused as to what I am going to do tomorrow night, and I am confused that I don't care enough any more. I have betrayed my family and friends, with more than good reason, and what is

becoming is what is left is what is the consequence of years of nothingness on my part.

(to BF and DW) Clean up that mess. (NK exits)

DF and CB: Couperin Lecons - "JOD" (reprise with strings)

DW and BF clean stage

SCENE 3

BF: *(standing behind DW)*

This is dedicated to the one I love. Where night is just before dawn, I shall be thinking of himself, as myself, longing for something better than redemption. I have a score of fantasies stapled to loose things around my head, my house, notepads, walls with peeling paint and the fly of my pants. And in these anonymous beings, my want of a real lover. Where I imagine, from across some room, vacant lot or the confessional of some broken cathedral, having just entered so discretely obvious, I capture the imaginations of these men and they become embarrassed, red in the face for having spent their entire lives never to have known of me.

(standing behind CB.)

This is dedicated to the one I love. *(CB moves upstage)*

A fever runs to their head, imploding an urgency, that tonight might just be their last night of redemption, before I get swept away by the cute guy standing right next to them, or me, or by the bar, the bathroom, or across the road in the next bar, the next bathroom, or some bright room full of women.

(standing behind PA.)

This is dedicated to the one I love. *(PA moves upstage)*

And he will run, or stride, or whatever takes his style under his breath and brush ever so lightly my back, then suck my ear. And I will turn to him, as if talking to myself and chew his ear over how much I like his sacrifice.

(To DW, referring to DF) What an odd looking man, what's his name, do you think?. I've never had the chance to ask him. Let's pull the tape off from his mouth shall we?" And mad with anticipation, we'll rip the tape and instead of a mouth, our sacrifice will have the foreskin of a lamb. Delicious!

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC: Rameau Musique Instrumentale "LA MARAIS"

NK enters dressed in Red dress.

All men slowly circling DF, smiling at him - he smiles back at them

NK:: ... Madame is dead! ... laid out on the linoleum ... strangled with the tea towel.

No! ... I won't talk! I shan't say a word. I refuse to speak of any complicity in this murder ...

The dresses?

Oh, Madame could have kept them. My sister and I had our own. Those we used to put on at night, in secret. Now, I have my own dress, and I'm Madame's equal. I wear the red garb of criminals.

CB ARIA Rameau "Les Indes Galantes" Aria "Le Papillon"

"Inconstant butterfly, fly in this grove.
Stop! Suspend the course of your fickle passion!
Never have such beautiful flowers, under this bidding shade,
deserved to fix your loves"

A relationship between DF (working on his laptop) and BF that is left hanging.

DW observes this, competing for BF's attention.

DF laughs at the end of Aria (Something amuses him on his laptop)

NK: Monsieur is laughing at us? Monsieur thinks we're mad?
He thinks that maids should have better taste than to make gestures reserved for Madame?

(Singers move upstage, NK pursuing them, shouting at them)

Yes. I dare speak of these things!!
I've been a servant!!

But now I stand upright. And firm.
I'm the strangler ... the one who strangled her sister!

NK: You'll see me dressed ...

E Minor Suite - Musette en Rondeau Structure A A B A A C A D A A

(A) in red.
I'm going out.

Descending the great stairway accompanied by the police.
You on your balconies watching me make my way among the shadowy penitents!

(A repeat)

(singers follow NK in his procession downstage)

(B) I carry a torch.
The hangman close behind.
Whispering sweet nothings in my ear.

(A) The hangman's by my side! His hand on my waist. ... trying to kiss me! Let go of me! *(Harpichord stops abruptly)*

(in silence) You are trifling with me, sir! *(long pause)*

I will be led ...

(A) ... in procession, by all the maids of the neighbourhood,
by all the servants who accompanied my sister to her final resting place.
They'll all be wearing crowns, flowers, streamers, banners.
They'll toll the bell.

(DW and BF moving table centrestage)

(C) The funeral will unfold its pomp.
First come the butlers, in full livery.
The footmen, the lackeys in knee breeches and white stockings.
The valets, the chambermaids.
The porters.
And then the delegations from heaven. And I'm leading them.

(A) The hangman's lulling me. Whispering to me.
I am acclaimed ... pale ... and about to die ...
Such flowers! They gave her such a lovely funeral, didn't they?
My poor little sister!

(silence)

No It's no use, I'm obeying the police.
They're the only ones who understand me, now
They too belong to the world of outcasts, the world you touch only with tongs ...
And now I am the famous criminal.
No longer merely a maid. I now have a noble soul ...
And Madame's not forgetting what I've done for her ...
No, she must not forget my devotion ...

(all men kneel to pray downstage)

(D)

STUTTERING REPEATED TRILLS - LIKE A TELEPHONE RINGING.

ALL THE MEN LOOK BACK TO IT

BF ANSWERS THE PHONE

(A) *(Sound of distance thunder and lightning)*

<i>NK and DW move to table</i>	}	}	<i>all watching BF</i>
<i>DF moves to viola da gamba player</i>	}		
<i>PA and CB move upstage</i>	}		

BF: *(Hanging up telephone)*
(to audience) I am confused ...

I am confused as to what I am going to do tomorrow night, and I am confused that I don't care enough any more. I have betrayed my family and friends, with more than good reason, and what is becoming is what is left is what is the consequence of years of nothingness on my part. I understand that.

fin du second acte

ACTE TROISIÈME (DEATH)

SCENE 1

DF ARIA Rameau Cantata "Les Amants Trahis" "*Les desespoir*"

"Despair is only folly.

Accept that every day counts.
Remember there are plenty like Cloris, but for you there is only one life."

distant thunder continues

DF with viola da gamba player - gently caressing her hair

CB and PA ballroom dancing upstage

NK setting 6 seats downstage of table - looking upstage

DW appears to strangle BF - BF appears to be dead

*da capo: DW recoils in horror -
he attempts to flee, but PA catches him and pushes him to table.*

CB ARIA

Rameau

"Platee"

STORM SCENE

CB standing on table

"Gods, who hold the Universe in your hands,
See how the Elements declare war on us:
If there be any guilty mortals, then punish them with thunder,
And restore to the earth the calm and gentleness of its earthly destiny.
But I see Mercury descending!
Have my cries then been heard?"

PA, DF, DW and NK at table - "a storm at sea"

TELEPHONE RINGING ENDLESSLY - NO-ONE WILL ANSWER IT

CB rouses BF - DW is shocked.

"Mercury's descent"

***Upstage curtain opens to reveal RH
White dress, wig and makeup***

ALL settle at table - Storm subsides

SCENE 2

RH: Pour me a cup of tea!

(BF and DW obediently move upstage to prepare the tea with poison)

(to NK) I said, pour me a cup of tea!

NK: *(moving away from table) No, I won't.*

E Minor Suite - Tambourin

(with String drone building - possible violin parts)

RH Do as I tell you. I've decided to take the lead.
Your role is to keep me from backing out.
Nothing exists, now, but the altar where one of the two maids is about to
immolate herself ...

(1st reprise)

RH: Now, repeat after me ... "Madame must have her tea."

NK: No! ... I won't.

RH: Repeat, you bitch! .
"Madame must have her tea." ... "Madame will have her tea" ...

NK: Madame will have her tea...

RH: "Madame will have her tea" ...

NK: Madame will have her tea...

RH: "Because she must sleep" ...

NK: Because she must sleep...

(2nd reprise)

RH: "And I must stay awake."

NK: And I must stay awake.

RH: And I say: "My tea, please."

NK: But, Madame, it's cold.

RH: No matter! I'll drink it anyway. Come, let me have it.

(3rd reprise - *NK gives RH the tea*)

And you've poured it into the best, the finest tea set.

SILENCE: RH drinks tea - NK backs away, horrified.

SCENE 3

PA ARIA: Charpentier - MEDEE Act 3 Scene 7 "Dieux du Cocyte"

RH performs her lonely death-throws on table, unwatched.

*Singers, BF, DW assemble upstage to watch the lighting bar descend - and then they exit.
aria payout: (NK alone at the table, with RH's corpse)*

NK: The orchestra is playing brilliantly.
The attendant is raising the red velvet curtain, again. He bows.

Madame is descending the stairs. Her furs brush against the green plants.
Madame steps into the car. Monsieur is whispering sweet nothings in her ear.
She would like to smile ...
But she is dead. She rings the bell. The porter yawns. He opens the door.
Madame goes up the stairs. She enters her apartment ...
But Madame is dead.

(Brian sweeps the stage)

NK: Madame is dead ...
But her two maids are alive: They've just risen up, free, from Madame's icy form.
The maids are present at her side ...
Not they themselves ... just the hellish agony of their names ...
And all that remains of them to float about Madame's airy corpse is the delicate
perfume of holy maidens ... which they were ... in secret.
... Both beautiful, joyous, drunk and ... free!

**Harpichord: Francios Couperin - Deuxieme Livres de Pieces de Clavecin
Sixieme Ordre : *Les Baricades Misterieuses* (2.30mins)**

*NU and BF and string players exit
exit (leaving Harpichord "playing"), leaving NK alone with RH's corpse
NK dances alone, finally returning to his seat at the table*

Voice over: Standing by for curtain calls

fin du ballet

Curtain calls: *Singers, DW, BF and musicians take their calls.
RH remains dead, motionless, on table.
NK remains, trance-like, at table "waiting for the police".*

final curtain

drops

Barbara Campbell's 1001 nights

In **1001 nights**, Barbara Campbell performs a short text-based work each night for 1001 consecutive nights. The performance is relayed as a live webcast to anyone, anywhere, who is logged on to her website at the appointed time, that is, sunset at the artist's location.

A frame story written by the artist introduces the project's nightly performances. It is a survival story and it creates the context for subsequent stories generated daily through writer/performer collaborations made possible by the reach of the internet.

Each morning Barbara reads journalists' reports covering events in the Middle East. She selects a prompt word or phrase that leaps from the page with generative potential. She renders the prompt in watercolour and posts it in its new pictorial form on the website. Participants write a story using that day's prompt in a submission of up to 1001 words.

At the beginning of each webcast Barbara reveals the performance number stamped onto an individually-crafted tongue stud.

Prompt story by Dexter Filkins **The New York Times** Published: July 4, 2006

Circling the wagons in an Iraqi city

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TALKING, SITTING, STANDING by Nigel Kellaway July 4, 2006

Emilie doesn't talk to me these days. We're in Paris for the summer as she researches her doctoral thesis on some anachronistic French harpsichord techniques of the early eighteenth century. We've taken an adequate apartment in the Marais district. Day time temperatures hover around 38 degrees. Most outdoor excursions have been cancelled because of the probability of heatstroke. The curtains are closed. The place reeks of too many cigarettes and two too many bodies pressed together for too long. Emilie sitting transfixed at her computer. I, standing around at a loose end, watching today's Coalition games in Iraq on CNN.

"Once I've killed this thesis off, we'll invade Italy for a month," promises Emilie. My eyes drift across the lurid orange flocked wallpaper.

Come nightfall. "I'm going out ... grab a bite ... you hungry?" "Not really," mumbles Emilie. "Bring me back a baguette or something." I swipe a few pages, unnoticed, from her pile of reference notes. Perhaps I should show some interest in what she's doing.

Hoche is only a half hour from the Marais by train - 9 stops from République, direction Marie des Lilas. Reading those few pages from Rameau's *De La Mécanique des Doigts sur le Clavessin: "La perfection du toucher ... Perfection of touch consists of the well-controlled movement of the fingers. This movement can be acquired by a simple technique, but one has to know how to apply it."*

A ten minute walk along Rue Hoche. Tobacconists, internet cafes, low-rise Arab tenements. Past the brutal edifice of the Centre Nationale de la Danse and down to the canal. A handful of nervous expectant men and boys loitering along the banks. Standing, sitting, watching ... each other ... rarely talking.

That's when I see you.

"*Cette mécanique n'est autre chose ...* This technique is nothing more than frequent exercise of a regular movement: the aptitudes for which it calls are natural to everyone - much the same as in walking or, if you like, in running."

I circle around where you are standing with that other gentleman. I see your fingers reaching for the space between his two open buttons - that desperate chest laden with domestic duties and an ambiguous marriage.

"J'avoüerai cependant que ... I will however concede, that which implies a lot of practice to the majority of people may perhaps, for others, be a blissful encounter. But who would dare to anticipate natural aptitudes? How can one hope to discover them, without having done the work necessary to reach this stage of experience? And to what might one attribute the success which one will then experience, if not to this very work?"

Your index finger circling his hardened nipple, you ask if he is cold. I interrupt. "It's still 30 degrees." "I AM 30," you reply. I don't know why I believe you so easily, but it is dark and I'm in a rush.

"Emma," says the other man. "That's my wife's name."

"You're not married, you liar," I laugh. "You're a fucking liar! Turn around!" And I punch his head into the bonnet of an abandoned, uninsured Renault.

"La jointre du poignet ... The wrist must always be supple. This suppleness, which is then transmitted to the fingers, gives them all the ease of movement and all the lightness necessary."

There is blood on his nose, and his final expression is a kind of astonishment. And then he cries for his loneliness as you and I laugh. We kiss, and I think for that short moment you love me.

"Can we go somewhere?" you ask me. "No, I'm cooking dinner for my wife." And I walk away.

The other men down by the canal seem not to have noticed anything ... standing, sitting, watching ... each other ... rarely talking.

Back in the apartment I draw Emilie's attention to a passage from Rameau's keyboard treatise:

"Mais qu'on se souviennne ... It must be remembered, though, that the more one perseveres with the first principles, the further one will advance in one's career. For he who wearies of these principles is almost always the dupe of his impatience.

But on the whole, that which will be found to be too difficult can be omitted, because the player must not be bound by the impossible.

I have endeavoured to spare the memory an infinite number of rules which can be applied only when one knows how to pass them from judgement to the finger-tips.

All I have said with regards to the harpsichord applies in like manner to the organ."

by Nigel Kellaway, acknowledging Brian Fuata and Jean-Philippe Rameau.

Prompt story by Tim Butcher **Sydney Morning Herald** Published: October 18, 2006

Presidential sex scandal has Israelis transfixed

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PLANNING HIS NEXT MOVE by Nigel Kellaway, October 18, 2006

My partner Emilie has recently completed her PhD on perverse French Baroque musical practices, and now, with both of us still stranded in France, planning our next move, she's trying to earn our living as a freelance arts correspondent for any interested and willing newspaper. Her latest prey is the expat Aussie painter Justin O'Connell. She suspects he is a misogynist poof and worries that her English is not so good. So, regardless of the fact that I know next to nothing about the visual arts, I've agreed to craft the introductory correspondence on her behalf. Here are some excerpts from last week's emails. Nothing particularly illuminating. He avoids my questions and rabbits on endlessly about irrelevancies. I fear this might be a long and torturous assignment.

Monday.

Dear Mr Justin O'Connell, Thank you for taking the time to respond to my request. May I begin with some questions regarding your choice of circumstances?
I understand that, although an Australian citizen, you've been living in Italy for many years ...

Tuesday.

Dear Emilie, I have met, flirted and supped with sufficient cardinals to ensure my welcome in Rome. I paint religious subjects. Many artists have acquired that habit over the centuries. Two of my worst paintings hang in the vaults of the Vatican Museum. And so, all in all, my Roman residency over thirty years has been quite secure.

Wednesday.

Dear Emilie, Please forgive me. I don't have the head space to respond to those questions today. I am distracted by the legalities of maintaining my Palestinian house boy - Muhammad. He's living downstairs with his pregnant wife. They've recently "immigrated". He's from honest working class stock, and has, I suspect, been involved in some sort of trouble back home. I must not lose him as he is the model for my present painting - a very young St Peter with his fishermen. Their boat, that I've recently finished painting, is impossible - but will certainly never sink. Muhammad is much too beautiful to drown! But I expect any day now the thugs from the Italian Immigration Department will suddenly knock at my door and tear him from my canvas ...

And, incidentally, please do not preface your emails with the word "Hi". I abhor the word! It symbolises all that is vulgar about the internet - a tool I generally use only to download pornography.

Thursday evening.

Muhammad is an efficient house boy. What do I need at my age? A vacuumed floor, a clean dunny, some wine in the refrigerator, a little cheese. My apartment is quite modest, on the Via Michelangelo just off the Piazza Navona. (What is they say about "the worst house in the best neighbourhood"?) In the afternoons Muhammad sits for me, by the window with the sun on his face.

Since you ask, I must say Rameau and all that French twiddly stuff has never been to my taste. I'm listen to Beethoven piano sonatas at present. They have a muscularity that suits this painting.

Muhammad seems out of sorts today. He's been standing for two hours this afternoon in the stairwell, pretending to mend some fishing nets. He avoids my eyes. I try my best not to harass him, but what is on his mind? Planning his next move?

Friday evening.

Well that is certainly provocative! What are you suggesting? That Muhammad might be a dormant terrorist? Who am I to say? And do I care? I am a walking time-bomb myself! A 60 year old chain smoking alcoholic, penniless, poor prospects of employment, devoid of company, angry, and avoiding any appointment with the doctor who's going to pronounce me "fucked".

Saturday.

Ah, no! I might know a lot of people, but I have no real friends. I sit and drink and smoke at night alone, knowing that Muhammad is downstairs caring for his wife and dreaming of a son. But the painting progresses well.

Sunday morning.

Dear Justin, So pleased to hear the painting is coming along. When do you expect it might be finished? Will you sell it in Italy or in Sydney?

Sunday evening.

My dear Emilie, It is most unlikely to "sell". None of my work tends to "sell" these days. Still, I'm painting fast, as time is not on my side. I'm presently not at all well. But please do not mention this in your article! If I must, I will die quietly, and only Muhammad and his family may attend my funeral.

It is strange to imagine that I might pre-decease my elderly father. Generations pass in all the wrong order in these frightful times. And then some die in unreasonable grief.

No doubt strangers and others who notice my passing and care sufficiently, will arrange some lavish remembrance. Who knows - my prices might then rocket! For my part, as an uncertain Christian, I simply pray to some alternate Allah that Muhammad be cared for by someone who might understand. For he is far too special to waste.

PS. I have no doubt that you are the sweetest and most well intentioned young woman. But I am not sure we should meet in person. Let's just continue our correspondence from afar. I'm afraid you might discover, face to face, that I am the most terrible liar.

Annette Tesoriero and Nigel Kellaway in recital

Sunday 19th November 2006 at 3.00pm
Margaretta Cottage (17th Annual Glebe Music Festival)

Two songs by **Hector Berlioz** (1803 - 1869)

from *Les Nuits d'été (Summer Nights) Opus 7 (1834)* poems by Theophile Gautier

Villanelle
L'île inconnue

Me voici dans son boudoir **Ambroise Thomas** (1811 - 1896) from *Mignon*

Adieux de l'hotesse Arabe **Georges Bizet** (1838 - 1875)
words by Victor Hugo (*Les Orientales* 1829)

Two songs by Pauline Viardot-Garcia (1821 - 1910)
Havanaise (1880) words by Louis Pommey (1835 - 1901)
Madrid (c1880) poem by Alfred de Musset (*Contes D'Espagne* 1829)

Three Tonadillas by Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916) words by F. Periquet
El tra la la y el punteado (The tra la la and guitar-strum)
Amor y Odio (Love and Hate)
El Majo Discreto (The Discreet Gentleman of Madrid)

interval

Que fais-tu, blanche tourterelle **Charles Gounod** (1818 - 1893)
from *Romeo et Juliette*

Two songs by Paolo Tosti (1846 - 1916)
Ideale (1882) words by Carmelo Errico
'A vucchella (1907) words by Gabriele D'Annunzio

Three Neapolitan songs

Piscatore 'e Pusilleco (1925) **E. Tagliaferri** words by E. Murolo
Santa Lucia Luntana (1919) **E. A. Mario** (1884 - 1961)
Core 'ngrato (1911) **Salvatore Cardillo** (1874 - 1947)
words by Riccardo Cordiferro

Three songs by Kurt Weill (1900 - 1950)
I'm a stranger here myself (1943) words by Ogden Nash from *One Touch of Venus*
My Ship (1941) words by Ira Gershwin & Moss Hart
from *Lady in the Dark*
Wie Lange Noch (1944) words by Walter Mehring

2004-2006 Fellowship Statement of Income and Expenditure

INCOME	2004-05	2005-06	TOTAL
Fellowship Grant	40000.00	40000.00	80000.00
Interest on investment	1568.00	809.00	2377.00
Freelance earnings	2195.00	6810.00	9005.00
TOTAL INCOME	43763.00	47619.00	91382.00

EXPENDITURE			
Salaries and fees (NK)	26900.00	27250.00	54150.00
Oncosts (Super & Work Cover)	1465.00	1711.00	3176.00
Fees to other artists	500.00	800.00	1300.00
General Admin	604.00	1031.00	1635.00
Telecommunications	817.00	1771.00	2588.00
Airflights	960.00	2069.00	3029.00
Travel Expenses / allowances	500.00	12594.00	13094.00
Research expenses	-	3000.00	3000.00
Website design and maintenance	1200.00	818.00	2018.00
Compilation DVD edit and printing	700.00	320.00	1020.00
Laptop computer	-	1495.00	1495.00
Sound System	545.00	-	545.00
Home maintenance	1500.00	-	1500.00
Sundry expenses	1667.00	1010.00	2677.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	37358.00	53869.00	91227.00
PROFIT / (LOSS)	6405.00	(6250.00)	155.00

Concluding Statement from Fellowship Acquittal Report

The Fellowship has afforded me some time out from my 30 year hand-to-mouth career as an independent theatre artist: an extraordinary luxury! Although I can't claim that it has stimulated any concrete future opportunities for me, it has been a time to reflect on what urgently concerns me artistically and to realistically assess what might be possible . The down-side to taking such

an extended "time-out", is that I have found myself somewhat isolated from the coalface of practice and the community in which I have worked.

The Australian contemporary performance sector has changed enormously over the few decades of my involvement in it. It is now a quite large and competitive field, but one that still attracts fairly meagre financial support. There are so many young, adventurous, stimulated and potentially interesting artists struggling to be a viable part of it. In the present Australian climate it is perhaps inappropriate that we older artists persist in competing for funds dedicated to emerging ideas. We have been intermittently supported over the past few decades, already. With ever diminishing funds available we should perhaps stand aside and allow opportunities for others to develop their craft. (May they also have the good grace to know when their own time has come to resign particular processes and expectations.)

I am passionate about the 2 major works (*Sleepers Wake!* and *The Rameau Project*) I have developed as part of my fellowship, but am now ambivalent as to where they might fit in the broader cultural scheme. I persist because of my own fascination in their ideas and qualities as artefacts, but even more importantly out of respect for my collaborators and their sincere dedication to these projects, to date. But as one grows older personal health becomes a concern, and it becomes increasingly expensive to maintain a basic well-being - the older you get the more cash you need to simply keep living. Independent artistic practice becomes an economic impossibility. And so I am compromised in what decisions I make for my future - creative obsession and responsibility for others' investment are serious task-masters. I find myself on rather unstable ground.

I admit to having made several mis-calculations in my career. At the age of 50 I have secured no serious reputation in any of the discrete genres that I have intensively explored over 35 years - theatre, music, opera or dance. I am quite reasonably considered a dilettante in these fields - not a good look for a middle-aged artist. And internationally these are demanding discrete "industries" that have their own rules and measures of credibility. I've never made the effort to identify with or develop the necessary skills and relationships that forge a career in any one of these fields. If I had moved to Europe 30 years ago, I would have been forced to hone tough specialist skills, and could perhaps now be an Intendant at a well subsidised opera house with the resources to personally program and direct a range of provocative opera, theatre, dance and challenging hybrid works. But I didn't do that. And so now I need to take an alternative approach in imagining what I do in my second half-century.

The award of a Fellowship at this time of my life has enabled a humbling and instructive two years of reflection - an interim period of "time-out" for which I am extremely grateful.

Chapter 14: 2007

(The year of *Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf!*)

SINGING THE SPACE

Directed the official launch of Performance Space in it's venue at the CarriageWorks, Eveleigh, Sydney

SLEEPERS WAKE! Wachet Auf!

Co-created, directed and performed in. Writers: Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Amanda Stewart, Josephine Wilson. Composer and solo actor: Nigel Kellaway. Musicians: Margaret Howard (violin), Catherine Tabrett ('cello), Michael Bell (piano). Lighting: Simon Wise. Performance Space @ CarriageWorks

WINTERSONGS

Commenced development as pianist and creative collaborator, on a new solo work for soprano Karen Cummings, with composer Rosalind Page, bass player Abel Cross and choreographer, Kay Armstrong.

Contents

2007 Works and chapter contents Contributing Texts - Barbara Allen's "1001 nights" Singing the Space (Performance Space) - program Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf! - Media Release Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf! - Final Text Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf! - Acquittal to Australia Council Reviews - Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf! Peter McCallum - SMH

Bryoni Trezise - RealTime Tessa
Needham - Sydney Stage Online
Gaylourdes Blog

Budget - Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf!
Artistic Report - MetroArts masterclass

Barbara Campbell's 1001 nights

In **1001 nights**, Barbara Campbell performs a short text-based work each night for 1001 consecutive nights. The performance is relayed as a live webcast to anyone, anywhere, who is logged on to her website at the appointed time, that is, sunset at the artist's location. A frame story written by the artist introduces the project's nightly performances. It is a survival story and it creates the context for subsequent stories generated daily through writer/performer collaborations made possible by the reach of the internet. Each morning Barbara reads journalists' reports covering events in the Middle East. She selects a prompt word or phrase that leaps from the page with generative potential. She renders the prompt in watercolour and posts it in its new pictorial form on the website. Participants write a story using that day's prompt in a submission of up to 1001 words. At the beginning of each webcast Barbara reveals the performance number stamped onto an individually-crafted tongue stud.

Prompt story from **The Washington Post** Published: January 10, 2007

HITS IT HARD

Bush says plan to kill 'makes sense'. US president George Bush yesterday defended a Pentagon program to kill or capture Iranian agents inside Iraq, saying that US troops would use "all necessary measures" to protect themselves and Iraqi civilians from harm. "It makes sense that if somebody's trying to harm our troops, or stop us from achieving our goal, or killing innocent citizens in Iraq, that we will stop them," Mr Bush said in response to a question about the program. But Mr Bush and Defence Secretary Robert Gates both said US troops would not cross Iraq's border with Iran under the program, and the President said that he was still committed to resolving the dispute over Iran's nuclear program diplomatically. Senate Democrat leader Harry Reid said US troops must defend themselves in Iraq, but that the President needed congressional approval for any program that could "escalate this conflict" with Iran. Late last year, Mr Bush gave the military secret authorisation to kill or capture members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and any Iranian intelligence operatives suspected of arming or supporting Shiite militias in Iraq. The policy is based on the theory that Tehran will back down from its nuclear ambitions if the US hits it hard in Iraq and elsewhere, creating a sense of vulnerability among Iranian leaders. But the policy has attracted influential sceptics inside the Bush Administration and the intelligence community who are concerned that Iran could respond by escalating the conflict. The director of the CIA, Michael Hayden, counselled the President to consider that Iran could undertake its own program to kill or kidnap US personnel in Iraq or neighbouring Afghanistan. Mr Bush said it is "not accurate" that his goal is to widen a confrontation between the two countries. "We're going to continue to protect ourselves in Iraq and at the same time work to solve their problems with Iran diplomatically, and I believe we can succeed. The choice is the Iranian Government's choice," he said at a news conference. The director of the UN inspection agency that is monitoring Iran's nuclear program said yesterday that Iran planned to begin producing large quantities of uranium. In Tehran, the chairman of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, Alaoddin Boroujerdi, said Mr Bush's policy amounted to "terrorist" action that violated international law. In The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution condemning the Iranian Government's official denial of the Holocaust and a conference in Tehran last month that questioned the Nazi murders of millions of Jews during World War II. The resolution was drafted by the Bush Administration and co-sponsored by more than 100 UN members.

Emilie has flown back into Paris for the weekend to collect her things - clothes, books, photo albums, Cds. It's hit me harder than I'd expected. Gutted. I told Emilie I felt gutted. "That is probably where you belong", she said. Come again? "In the gutter - that is probably where you belong." Oh, Ha Ha! Is she really an utter bitch, or is it still just her "English-on-training-wheels"? The air in what was once our humble Paris apartment is fetid. No. Putrid!

I had been happy to accept the commission. I thought Emilie would be pleased. Four weeks' paid work in Berlin. A fine hotel on the Unter den Linden. Maybe some freebies to the Komische Oper. OK, they sing everything in German, but at least their Rameau would be seriously high camp, with all the appropriate ornamentations - that would please her. It had been years since I'd worked, and so directing an Australia Day musical benefit at the embassy in Berlin might be a fun gig. Great venue. Great ballroom. A hundred or so VIP guests standing around. So, best not to offend - nothing too provocative. Some expat opera singers, a few especially imported indigenous performers, a holidaying private school choir, a touring youth theatre group ... whoever we can dig up. Peretta Anggerek would apparently be in town. Hey! A baroque counter-tenor to entertain Emilie! I planned all the opening scenes of the benefit around him, only to find he was already booked to march in some Berlin gay pride carnival that night. The embassy tracked down some local Berliner called Emil who could sing much the same counter-tenor repertoire, and who's aunt lived somewhere in the Adelaide Hills, so they thought that was a close enough connection. Emil was, I suppose, quite cute. The perfectly pretty blond Kraut - a Christopher Isherwood wet dream with a fast vibrato and a fabulous bottom - bottom notes, that is. Black out. And then, the serene mania of Amanda Stewart's spoken voice, rabbiting on at ten-to-the-dozen about God only knows what. Tiny guttural explosions interrupting a myriad fragments of words. Thoughts. Gentle. Tantalising. Disturbing. And then a battery of lamps ripping shafts of light through a narrow doorway. Emil standing there, beside a splendidly brunette 'cellist. A soft Purcell ground bass, meandering through the darkened space and then Emil's tender high soprano voice, at first pleading and then enveloping. This is what I dream about. Light and sound. Time and space. A movement of the senses. The stillness almost imperceptibly vibrating. All suspended. Ah, sound! What would it be like to be deaf? Unresponsive to sound or music? The human utterance? To be dumb? Inarticulate? SILENT?

The Perth junior school choir is ridiculously cute. All stripped down to their undies ... with their teachers' permission. Backlit. Perfect angels. And then straight off to bed before "lights out". The ambassador's address is interminable, and how could I not have known that Emilie would meanwhile be rooting Emil in the embassy dunnies. The Hip Hop artists are pushing the boundaries, but it's only for two minutes, and I don't think anyone can understand a word they're spitting into their microphones. The odd spluttered "fuck" probably provides a kind of risqué frisson for this blue rinse set. I'm sure they think it's all very "with it". And I guess it provides the perfect soundtrack for Emil and Emilie's shenanigans in the powder-room. I love marching bands, but this one is truly dreadful. What is it about geriatric Ozzie expats in Berlin who think it's hip to oom-pah-pah? Still it's kind of perverse fun watching them hobble their way across the space. "Yep, that's right, gentlemen - straight out through those doors and close them behind you, please" ... and get a wriggle on! Ah! Silence before a smattering of polite applause.

Emilie was all too forthcoming about what had occurred that evening, as we stood at the taxi rank outside the embassy, and Emil loitered nonchalantly a little further down the road. "I'm bored," she said. Mmmm. "And I'm tired," I replied. "You never talk," she said. "And you never smile," I replied, and hailed a cab. Emilie sauntered down the road toward her quarry. Why is it I feel like a player in some 1970's François Truffaut soap opera? - yet, not nearly so well scripted, cast or directed. Emilie is no Fanny Ardant ... though she's French, and so perhaps she thinks she is.

The next morning I rang Emilie's mobile. We arranged to meet at a cafe near the Brandenburg Gate. I waited, but she never arrived. I'd sort of expected this. This is what one spends most of one's life doing, of course ... waiting. Inadvertently it disempowers you. I sat there and waited for something that never came. And so the next day I waited again, knowing she'd never come. I was in some kind of trance, some half sleep. When everything remains possible and nothing occurs. Eventually I sensed I'd overstayed my welcome, and so I paid my bill and settled further down the road ... sitting in the gutter ... gutted ... and feeling stupid ... truly dumb ... SILENT.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Nigel Kellaway, acknowledging Amanda Stewart

SINGING THE SPACE launching Performance
Space at CarriageWorks Sunday 25th February 2007,
6.00pm

in the foyer

Michelle Outram

"Not the Sound Bite!"

Speeches by Paul John Keating, Redfern Park, 1992, and
Edward Granville Theodore, Industrial Arbitration, 1929

Block Harmony

"Yil Lul" by Joey Gier

Ben Walsh Drumming
Company

Clare Britton

Puppet

Rowan Gray

French Horn

in the theatre

imPACT Hummers

Amanda Stewart

"Sound and Sense"

Timothy Chung and Catherine Tabrett ('cello) **"Music for a While"** by Henry Purcell Vic

Simms **"Welcome to Country"** Morganics, Brotha Black and WireMC Leichhardt Espresso

Chorus

(conductor Michelle Leonard) **"Gabagong"** by Stephen Leek Address by Her

Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, the Governor of NSW Marlene Cummins and

Annette Tesoriero **"Koori Woman Blues"** Address by Fiona Winning, Director of

Performance Space Annette Tesoriero and Timothy Chung,

with Catherine Tabrett and Rowan Gray ('cellos) (with imPACT Hummers) **"Pur ti miro, Pur ti godo"** by Claudio Monteverdi (arranged, Kellaway)

Morganics, Brotha Black and WireMC Leichhardt Espresso Chorus (conductor
Michelle Leonard) **"Dawn"** by Iain Graindage

Images by Heidrun Löhr (with imPACT Hummers)

throughout carriageworks

members of the NSW Railway Band Installations by Heidrun Löhr

(photographic) and Gail Priest (sound)

singing the space:

Director: Artistic Consultant:	Nigel Kellaway Annette Tesoriero Simon
Lighting Design: Sound: Ass.	Wise Nicholas Wishart Jane Grimley John
Stage Manager: Production	Versace
Assistant:	

for *performance space:*

Director: General Manager :	Fiona Winning Julieanne Campbell Caitlin
Associate Directors: Indigenous	Newton-Broad and Sally Breen Lily
Performance Broker:	Shearer Vic McEwan Rosie Dennis
Production Manager: Media &	Richard Manner Tallulah Kerr
Communications: Technical	
Manager: Administrator:	

for *carriageworks:*

Chief Executive Officer:	Sue Hunt Richard Montgomery Rita
Operations Manager:	Mastrantone Susan Hart Nathan McIlroy
Administrator: Finance	(Mollison Communications)
Manager: Publicity:	

some web sites of interest:

Clare Britton Brotha Black	www.mydarlingpatricia.com
CarriageWorks Marlene	www.brothablack.com
Cummins Nigel Kellaway	www.carriageworks.com.au
Leichhardt Espresso Chorus	www.marlenecummins.com
Morganics NSW Railway Band	www.nigelkellaway.com
Michelle Outram Pact Youth	www.lechorus.org.au www.morganics.info
Theatre Performance Space	www.stgeorgeplayers.com.au/railway.htm
Gail Priest Annette Tesoriero	www.michelleoutram.com www.pact.net.au
Ben Walsh	www.performancespace.cam.au
	www.snagglepussy.net
	www.divadiva.com.au www.benw.info

MEDIA RELEASE

Sydney Premiere

SLEEPERS WAKE! WACHET AUF!

A new work from Nigel Kellaway

Some Nostalgia for Glenn Gould & Dean Martin

Who is this man photographed recently on a beach nearby? On approach he spoke a dialect of musical memes, adolescent delusions, TV sound grabs, punch-lines and pedagogy. He hummed sound bytes from what a local lifesaver identified as Bach's Goldberg Variations.

Performance Space is proud to present the world premiere of *Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf!*, Nigel Kellaway's first major solo performance work since the notorious 240 hour marathon *This Most Wicked Body* in 1994.

Developed over two years in Sydney, Perth, the south of France and Berlin, *Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf!* is a unique and remarkable collaboration between Kellaway and the distinguished writing talents of Virginia Baxter, Amanda Stewart, Jai McHenry and Josephine Wilson.

Composed, performed and directed by Kellaway, this most surprising performance finds a man at the edge of recollection, harbouring a nagging desire to connect with the present. Adrift from cultural and historical specificities where nostalgia for Glenn Gould and Dean Martin washes up alongside political anxiety and an unreliable memory.

Kellaway was the first Australian actor to train with Tadashi Suzuki and his Suzuki Company Of Toga (1984-85) and also worked with butoh artist Min Tanaka in Tokyo. He was a cofounder of the performance ensemble **The Sydney Front**, with major productions including THE PORNOGRAPHY OF PERFORMANCE (1988), PHOTOCOPIES OF GOD (1989), DON JUAN (1991), FIRST AND LAST WARNING (1992) and PASSION (1993). In 1997 he co-founded with Annette Tesoriero **The opera Project Inc.**, a loose ensemble of actors, musicians and physical performers dedicated to the mission of reassessing "opera" (and its accoutrement) as a contemporary performance practice.

Writers: Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Amanda Stewart, Josephine Wilson

Composer: Nigel Kellaway Performers: Nigel Kellaway (actor/director), Michael

Bell (piano),

Margaret Howard (violin) & Catherine Tabrett (cello) Lighting: Simon

Wise

Performance Space @ CarriageWorks, 245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh 7-16 June, Wed-Sat 8pm

OPENING 7 June TICKETS \$25 FULL \$15 CONC (PLUS BOOKING FEE) Artist Talk Wednesday June 13 (after the show) BOOKINGS moshtix.com.au, 02 9209 4614, [moshtix](http://moshtix.com.au) outlets

Media Enquiries: Rosie Dennis 8571 9112 rosied@performancespace.com.au

SLEEPERS WAKE!! - WACHET AUF!!

PROLOGUE

Piano and chairs and stands for violinist and 'cellist

Audience enters. 'Cellist stands beside the stage at a microphone with a clip board and list of the booked audience's names. She greets the audience, checks their tickets, and asks their names (which she repeats into the microphone) in order to check her list. She asks others their names, so she can add them to the list - chatty and informal.

NK enters with audience, and takes a seat in the auditorium.

All audience is seated, the 'cellist places the list on the table and exits.

STAGE AND HOUSE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

8 metres, from here to there
Between this world and that
Two states of mind 8 metres.
That's all

Any minute now, we here will decide when this performance begins
The sound of our breathing will drop, as they take all the oxygen out there
And we disappear for a time

We'll hear music Music which observes neither end nor beginning
Variations - a set of variations on a theme Music with neither climax nor real resolution
Music which, like Beaudelaire's lovers, "rests light on the wings of the unchecked wind"

SCENE 1

(a long wait in the dark)

How long do they expect us to wait, do you reckon?
No announcement? Nothing. Extraordinary.

A light eventually comes up on a chair, upstage Prompt.

Ah, here we go A light ... A chair (Great! Riveting stuff) ... no wait ... wait ...
now I remember. A man walking onto the stage A middle-aged man. Black suit.
A man of the theatre. Composed. Taking his seat, there in the light Smiling at us
all, settling in his seat

PAUSE Lights come up on the vacated musicians area

More lights - centre stage. Three musicians poised to play.

Light comes up on the front row of audience

Another light Another man ... Listening to the music. He is younger/older than the first man. Another costume ... *(describe his clothing)* He hesitates and then walks onto the stage ... Into that light.

Light comes up on white tarquette area, centre stage

His hands in his pockets, looking back toward the audience ... To where a woman sits. ... *(describe her clothing)* Watching. Listening. Smiling. And then she, too, walks onto the stage and stands beside that man in the light.

(Sound effects - receding footsteps)

They look at one another, and then they begin to dance Her legs moving back and forth, back and forth in perfect time with the music. Ah! ... Synchronisation!

(NK moving onto the stage)

Joining them, though keeping his distance ...
Weaving his private way across the dance floor.
Re-acquainting himself with the stage ... And then
moving on ... toward ...

An autocue bounces up on a television monitor. "A man ..." Lights on stage cross to a back light on a stool at the side of the stage. NK moves to it, hesitatingly, and follows the autocue:

A man goes to see his psychiatrist. He's not happy. He tells the doctor he is troubled by memories he can't quite place.

And what are these memories? asks the doctor. Describe to me exactly what you remember.

Well, says the man, I remember a long stream of thin, bedraggled women with shawls on their heads, clutching babies wrapped in old blankets, dragging their toddlers by their arms, stumbling up the side of a mountain. Every now and then they turn back, as if terrified.

The doctor nods his head. So, was it cold, or was it hot?

I remember snow.

Good! Very good! And were these women speaking? Were they foreign? Could you recognise their language?

No. No, there was no talking. Anyway, I was too far away to hear. But there was the sound of a piano. Or it could have been a harpsichord. And the sound of wailing. Crying. As if something bad might be about to happen just around the corner, on the other side of the mountain, or had already happened, in the place they had come from.

Anything else?

Yes. Some of the women were lying on the ground. Strewn - is that the word?

Strewn is a good word for bodies on the ground, says the doctor. *(soft laugh track)* And were they dead? ... or alive?

Dead, I think. One of the women's dresses was ripped open and her breast was exposed. Next to her, near the exposed breast, was a baby. It looked like a newborn. I thought it was dead - it's eyes were glazed over. But then, suddenly, it moved its eyes.

So, says the doctor, it was alive. Good. We're finally getting somewhere with these memories.

But, doctor, I have no idea where this was! Or when it was! It could have been Kosovo, Kurdistan, 1944 or 2005. I was so far back I couldn't see properly - I couldn't even tell you if it was in colour or black and white. I do, however, remember that there was no one in the lounge with me at the time, we'd recently had cable installed, and the reception was excellent. *(Laugh track)*

(to audience, remembering, as he moves toward the piano:)

Another famous case involved a man who could remember just less than a day. He lived his life in an eternal present. 'Every day is alone by itself,' he would say every day, sometimes twice. We humans can choose - indeed we are compelled - to abandon the past in order to feel happiness. *(sitting at piano)* And that is what I am doing here tonight and every night on the network. Here in the eternal present.

(at the piano, stabbing at a G)

G ABCDEF G

(plays an A) H? Ah no ... you begin again, don't you? GA B

(he plays a repeated soft B)

I once met a man who had no memory of ever learning the piano. And yet he could play anything by Bach, Beethoven or the Beatles. Why his musical repertoire extended only to composers beginning with the letter B *(plays a B)*, he could not say, for sure. He thought it might be his mother's fault - some issue with the alphabet. Or maybe it was caused by a knock on the head. What do you think? he asked me. What do I think? I think this condition is either literal or metaphorical, that's what I think, or it's something else.

But what else is there? said the man. I mean, it has to be either real or imaginary, right?

Wrong, I said, wrong, wrong, wrong. We have to go beyond ...

... beyond Trauma. We have to leave behind this wound culture, this gouging, renting, endless plane-crash of a culture. Let's leave all German words and ideas behind right now. Let's stop thinking that the opposite of forgetting is remembering! ...

(to audience) SH!! Listen to us all, *(pause)* Remembering everything. *(pause)* Births. Deaths. Opening nights, the day TV went colour. We put up plaques, build museums, archives, make memorials to make sure we don't forget, right? To ward off amnesia? Right? Or to forget the filthy details!

I said to the man: Perhaps in order to do the big "B" (Beethoven, Bach, Beatles) we have to forget everything that is not B? Perhaps you can B, or not B, but nothing in between.

NK plays a Ligetti like exploration on the single note B, over several octaves (careful not to suggest that he can actually play the piano). Musicians enter. Violinist and Pianist walk to tarquette, and stop.

Glenn Gould recording of Variation 25, very soft, as though offstage. NK stops playing and listens carefully to the Gould recording.

Glenn ... Gould?

NK nods off to sleep. The musicians move to their playing positions. Violinist and 'cellist takes their seats, as pianist hovers behind NK at the piano.

Pianist taps NK on the shoulder. Glenn Gould recording stops. NK suddenly wakens, leaping to his feet.

(to pianist) What have you done with them!?! That couple pressed, locked together! I'm sorry - I very rarely sleep. I'm afraid to wake up and lose that image.

NK wanders centre stage, reading a newspaper that the pianist has handed him.

Pianist sits and plays an A (D minor triad), for the strings to tune.

They found him last weekend wandering by the sea. In a wet dinner-suit. They took him to a hospital. He wouldn't, or couldn't, say a word. But he played the piano beautifully Bach - and what seemed to be his own melancholy compositions arrangements of something vaguely familiar.

Tuning finishes with pianist spinning away with a short Eb diminished arpeggio a reference to a Kurt Weill song.

The hospital staff came to hear him play in the chapel. There was no clue as to who this man was. He was carrying no ID, no money. And he seemed calm, almost vacant. But there was something disturbing about him something you couldn't quite put your finger on ...

NK moving upstage.

For the next two days he spent most of his time in front of the television. God knows what he saw.

SCENE 2

*Pianist plays the solo **ARIA** (with repeats). NK tracing a grand, slow and meandering "entrance" from upstage to the table - a lost man:*

(softly, under the music at Bar 20, 2nd repeat):

And then it started. He started, Speaking. And it was as if he would never shut up:

Today tonight in 60 minutes 12 dead in Wyoming 10% unemployed 14 days without sleep she just cut it off and cooked it up - only 4.99 til Thursday - Classic Hits - Bach, Beethoven, Beatles - just 4.99 sophisticated, educated and he made a killing on Wall Street another aussie success story ready to serve in 3 minutes could be extinct in less than 3 years cunning, brilliant yet unhinged he was, and 90% unconscious No I'm not sorry dancing with sars like Kylie and Cate No it was actually Kurdistan, I think. terrible - nearly 2000 dollars just to fly to LA Plastic surgery prices are coming down, you know. The ultimate home renovation. 3999 including GST.

ARIA finishes

Funny how quickly enigmas collapse and become boring. It's the deferral that's exciting. So this was all that was on his mind? Televised fragments spilling out of his mouth? Insatiable demand for connection. With

reorganising paper - throwing them around - or furiously writing. FAST DELIVERY

Constantly knitting, stitching, mending a world that escapes him. A world constantly on the verge of not-existing. Unable to actually generate any real sense of continuity, he fabricates an endless stream of pseudo-stories, pseudo histories populated by phantom characters . A virtual world, disconnected, discontinuous, yet all inclusive, beyond ethics, guilt, accountability, reason. Hermetic, heavenly perfection. Immaculate. *(pause)* Vacant.

(pause) So why don't I ever talk about myself? I'm harmless enough ... well to do ... sort of savvy ... articulate

SCENE 3

(NK breathes in and then a deep sigh)

Easy does it ... The anxious breath before...

Conducts in: PIANO PLAYS Intro to Variation 13

Sliding hopefully from the pontoon
From land to sea ... and back
Evolution rewinds in an instant
Executed between phrases
Civilisation in a semitone

Feet up on table - dropping in and out of sleep

Section A *(finishing in 'cello and piano repeating bottom D through the following:)*

"Easy listening" ... No insults, no shocks to the system here This piece is a little too familiar for me. But new to you perhaps. *(laugh)* Every moment burrows its way into memory, don't you find? As you try to just live it. Just let it be Leave the ... ah ... the road for a bit Let the music work on you Soon your eyes will fix on the forehead of the violinist ... and you'll be gone

Section B :

(to himself:)

When I first heard this music I can't remember In fact, right now I can't remember much at all I wore this suit The last thing I expected was immersion

(Falls asleep)

Music finishes. Recording of Gould playing Variation 13 heard in the distance.

1955. Glenn Gould playing Johann Sebastian Bach's Goldberg Variations. I'm 12 years old ... I think. No, that's not right. He recorded this music at the age of 20 something, just a few months before I myself was born ... November 1955. Ah! Now that comes out of the blue! Let's be exact here! The 9th of November 1955. Hey! That's what birthdays are for ... a confirmation: "I became" ... "I am" ... still ... I think.

(moving upstage, thoughtfully)

Nope ... Gone. Everything gone.

Great! - "life's clean slate!" I simply start over. Begin a new history, get a new ball rolling. What an opportunity, hey? - guilt free, regret free, pain free.

And then construct a timeline ... Whip these seemingly random snapshots into order, and ... Voila!! Everything starts to mean something. That might do!

Still ... this music, these glimpses, sensations ... they have to come from somewhere. But where? A place I've been before? And was I seen? Spotted? Recognised?

What worries me is that out of the blue, one of you might claim to know me. Or some version of me. And try to place me at the scene of some unsolved crime. I want to know before someone else tells me, before someone challenges my version of events, someone claiming to have been there. I won't be verbally! After all this is MY life. MY past. MY story. MY memory. MY performance!

Still ... This could be fun. A treasure hunt. But performed in stealth. Slipping under the radar: Bluffing you all. Appearing to have a past -but nothing set in concrete, of course.

piano vamp 1:

Thus any nasty little unwelcome surprise can be dealt with. Immediately ... in **Variation Number 5:**

string section 1 NK conducts/dances

piano vamp 2:

Yes, I see myself playing a role, or perhaps, more accurately - rehearsing a role. Something like this:

string section 2 NK conducts/dances

piano vamp 3:

No! fuck it! I'll just make it all up. as I go along. Tricky though. That problem again: Someone might recognise me. What then ?

string section 3 NK conducts/dances

piano vamp 4:

No! I'm not at all sure about this. What if this life I dig up - is a frightful, horrible, shameful thing? Or even worse - what if it were utterly, excruciatingly even, just..... plain..... dull?

string section 4 NK moves to bar stool

SCENE 4

(autocue)

A man is driving along in his car one afternoon on a flat, lonely stretch of road in Wyoming. In the distance, he sees an enormous billboard. This surprises him, because there have been no other billboards on this "lonely stretch of Wyoming road."

As he drives on, the image comes into sharp relief, and all at once he sees that it is a gigantic photograph of a man that he knows. It is in fact, him. He is the man on the billboard.

He stops right in front of it ... gets out of the car ... and looks up at the inflated image. He sees that in the photograph he is at least twenty years younger than he is now. Up on the billboard, not only is he smiling broadly, but his teeth are extraordinarily white, which shocks him, because his teeth have never been particularly white, nor very straight, and he hasn't laughed out loud since he was four years old.

In the photo the man is wearing ... a tuxedo?. His hair is dark, glossy, and shows none of its present grey. And in his hand the man is holding a glass - cut crystal - with an inch of what looks like a single malt whisky.

(Pausing, taking a sip of water:) Now, unlike the man in the photo, this man has never been much of a drinker, nor has he ever owned a tuxedo.

Moving closer, he can see that there are thirty-two related pieces that have been placed together to make him whole. His nose is composed of four of the squares, his mouth, three. What effort, he thinks, to make me large and luminous. Yet, close up, he can count the thousands of individual pixels, which give - at a distance - the illusion of wholeness.

The more the man looks at the billboard, the less himself he feels. A terrible wave of sadness washes over him. Here he is, as he has never been: tall, glossy, larger-than-life, gorgeous, and a happy drunk, to boot. (laugh track)

He returns to his car. He twiddles the dials on the car radio - a lonesome cowboy song by Dean Martin. At the other end of the dial he discovers the faint, thin cadences of J.S. Bach. He chooses Dean Martin. (cue the sound operator)

(Dean Martin recording MEMORY LANE) Driving on, he sees that the billboard has been placed on the outskirts of some kind of town - South Pass City, the most famous of Wyoming's Ghost Towns.

Have I simply forgotten the party, the drink, the suit, the camera, the whiteness of my teeth? Or ... you know how when you look at a photo of yourself taken decades ago ... had he simply never recognised his own youthful beauty? Unlikely - he is a man who has always been aware of his own strengths. It is his failings that always escape him. (laugh track)

Or has his image been stolen? Somewhere, someone has taken a photo of him and imported it into some digital realm and manipulated the hell out of him without him knowing.

But why? There's nothing written on the billboard. No clues. But there he is, a nostalgic icon of heterosexual masculinity. *(laugh track)* Why would anyone put a billboard of me up on the outskirts of an abandoned ghost-town?

Getting back in the car, winding up the windows and locking the door. Head in his hands, he thinks: What happened to my youth? *(laugh track)* What will it be like to be old? *(laugh track)* To die? To forget? *(laugh track)* ... and be forgotten?

(Gould recording Variation 15, very soft)

Can you hear that? What can I
say? There's nothing to say I
don't recall these notes at all

There's a reason for amnesia There are things to
look for, you don't want to find Melanomas?
Mathematics?

*(pauses to listen again to Glenn Gould, and then moves to stand
behind the pianist to follow the music)*

A canon in 3 voices at the interval of a 5th.

(Pianist starts playing the first half of Bach's Variation 15)

tenor entry - a descending phrase: 2, 2 and then 1 semitone. treble voice, at the interval of a 5th, but in inversion (ascending). tenor voice - 2nd descending phrase. treble voice : ALMOST exact inversion, this time at the interval of a 4th, which of course is a 5th in inversion. All neatly resolving back to the tonic key in Bar 8.

Or you string players might share and swap between voices, back and forth, back and forth.

Cerebral or Divine Whichever you decide I'm
merely your interpreter Your interlocutor, if you
like Interrupter ... your irritant. Go with it I'm
here for you all ... in Variation number 15

(to players) Ready? Now not too slow.

VARIATION 15

*NK following the score - In sections to fit with variation phrases:
Musicians stalling at the end of phrases, with the piano repeating
a quaver at the same pitch.*

1. How is it I can stitch these stories together so spontaneously?
Somehow I remember the rules. I know my cues. How to mirror the
expected responses. How to seem present.

NK moves away from piano, but refers back to it, as though to his own ghost

2. He can spin anything into his story. Justify, link, rationalise everything. And yet he is
in a perpetual state of stress. You can see it. In his eyes. Numbed. Gutted. He says
he is comfortable, relaxed ... Really? A man with no soul? No memory?

3. He wants to be noticed. He's on display. The whole world's watching and about to be
impressed. He doesn't notice the way people look at him. He is oblivious when they move
away. And he is so proud to be Australian.

4. His ability is to patch and repatch meaning. It is wilful, his obliteration of the past.

5. Ofcourse, in the end what rescues him is his own lack of depth - the very superficiality of
his life. He knows nothing else and this saves him. His lack of insight is his salvation.

Now, Nietzsche talks about "active forgetting" He tells the story of a cow. The cow, says
Nietzsche, lives without boredom or pain, because it does not remember. Having no past, it is
happy. But because it can't remember, it can't confirm that in fact what it feels IS happiness.
This sense that the past gives and takes away inspires the expression "contented as a cow"
– which is a kind of dumb contentment ... (*mumbling*)

Of course, sometimes I just... (*High speed performance with Gould recording VARIATION 20*)

clocks, you know clocks... ptolemy, the greeks you know.. stars, seasons, mathematics..
Music is mathematics, god. It's all Wissenschaft.. you know.. But the poms got the clock
right... hiding their failings in precision... keeping units in place... no wonder the church was
worried.

I was lost. Every great captain in the illustrious Age of Exploration became lost. But that didn't
stop 'em. While Bach wrote his voluptuous songs for God, more and more vessels were
sailing to conquer. They killed and were killed. They all got lost. All at sea they were.

I was clever at school you know. that's one thing I can remember. It's all genetics. I was just
born this way. I was born talented. He married his cousin, you know. and if it hadn't been for
men... mendel.. mendelssohn we probably wouldn't have known or cared.

Silence - NK smiles, and then is confused for a moment.

SCENE 5

A man comes home from the theatre late evening, ready for sleep, and finds a note pinned to his pillow.

Takes note from table and reads - pre-recorded:

" Nigel,

For years I have asked you to change. I have begged you to quit smoking, stop drinking, and to cook dinner at least once a week, and, quite frankly Nigel, the business with the rabbit was the final straw. That and Christmas with your parents. They ignored me all through lunch, and then retired to the patio to practice their ballroom dancing - I've never felt so irrelevant in my life! So I have left you. You will notice, however, that most of my clothes are still in my cupboard. Please refrain from responses involving scissors or the rabbit, and don't even think about touching my photo albums. The CDs are yours. I never did like your taste in music. All that Berlioz and Puccini. For Christ's sake Nigel, this is the 21st century. Get with it! I will, however, take the Bach.

As for financial matters, I think you will find that I have been running things efficiently and transparently in that department. I am not sure yet about the house in Watson's Bay. I will have to see what they say about its value vis a vis Whale Beach. Personally, I would prefer the holiday "shack". I want to be near water on the weekends. I have taken up yachting. Ralph is keen on boats, and has a large, aggressive dog.

God, Nigel, I can't tell you what a relief it is to be with a man who wants to fuck me up the arse without feeling guilty. I don't know what you've been playing at all these years Nigel, but I can tell you that if you can't spot a fake orgasm by now, you ought to give up.

Don't forget to give the rabbit her water.

Regards, "

Places note on coffee table. (autocue?)

This letter is very confusing. To begin with, I live in Marrickville, and I've never had Christmas with my parents ... not that I recall. I do, however have a long-term partner, but we've never lived together, and there is certainly no real estate to dispute: my partner and I occupy the supply-and-demand ends of the contemporary performance sector. Unlikely to ever own our own home - let alone a "shack" in Whale Beach. And cooking has never been an issue. Indeed, I'd been planning a meal on the way home the very night I found the note - Rigatoni Sorrentino and Peppers Siciliano from Patsy's in New York, the infamous hang-out of Sinatra and the Rat-Pack. And then there was the question of the rabbit. A dog, yes! a cat, possibly, a guinea pig might even be on the cards, but a rabbit? The man called his partner. Of course, he thought. It is all an elaborate joke. The telephone rang and rang, and eventually a recorded message kicked in. He heard his partners voice: "Nigel, I have gone to America to find myself." He rushed over to his partner's house. And there he found it ... a map of Wyoming and Nebraska open on the bed ...with a red circle around a tiny speck ...clear as day ...South Pass City.

A BREAK (DEAN MARTIN RECORDING - "MY LADY LOVES TO DANCE")

*NK re-sets the stage - shifts the papers around a bit.
Calls for music to stop.*

SCENE 6

Let's move to tomorrow at 10 am. And where were you on the *(tomorrow's date)* at 10am Ms... *(picking a woman's name from the audience list)* Blanchet? *(moving to chair, upstage prompt)*

I was here, waiting for you. I was waiting. It's all because of the clocks you know. This myth of synchronisation. *(sits)*

10.45 am. *(to musicians)* How long does she expect me to wait, do you reckon? No announcement. Nothing. Extraordinary!

Well, anyway I expected this. This is what one spends most of one's time doing of course, waiting. Inadvertently it disempowers you. We'd arranged to meet. So, I waited. But she never came. I sat here and I waited for something that never came. This waiting was perfection! So the next day I waited again, knowing that she would never come. I was in some sort of trance, some half sleep. Where everything remains possible and nothing occurs. It's seductive - this half life - one eye on the clock waiting for something that never ...

Turning to contemplate the white tarquette square, upstage. Solo piano - a Kurt Weill song in the style of a Spanish Habanera. Text, sprechstimme style, with music:

The same image. The same music. Back and forth, back and forth. His hand moving across Her hand across his... And me framing them both ... Detached. Ah! Perfection! And I sought the same excitement again ... again ... again. The outside framing the inside. A man at the edge of himself savouring the unthinkable. Silent, unmoved. And more alive than ever before.

(Standing on chair to release a shower of blank pages from the rig)

11.15. He looked down. His penis had been cut off. This was no metaphor, She had removed it. *(pause)* She was last seen at the supermarket. *(pause)* Strangely, I feel no pain. This is the image that will become me. I remind people of their incompleteness.

That death is ever present. That all these little stories we are telling ourselves ... are precisely ... nothing.

(Climbing down of the chair and making his way to table)

I left. Outside it was business as usual. Everything horrifyingly normal. It was I who had changed. Something was wrong with me. Very wrong. I was wrong.

... Variation number 10.

(conduct it in, and following the music in his score)

SCENE 7

VARIATION 10 - Section A

RECITATIVE (in 8 sections) *(reading from the score)*

Feeling lost? Like you've been here before? Don't worry. Soon enough we'll be moving on ... going nowhere

- 1 Each variation is an individual artefact. There are no climaxes, no outcomes, no closure
- 2 Eventually we'll be back where we began ... at the aria ... the sarabande There's stability here ... if nowhere else ... absolute safety
- 3 The theme is not terminal but radial. According to Glenn Gould, like memory "Resting lightly on the wings of the unchecked wind" ... for Beaudelaire.
- 4 How about you?

(reads audience names from the clipboard left by the 'cellist on the table) Or, ... (reads another name). Each to his own.

6. O O ... Oh! ... Yes! ... Oh, yes I am talking to Bach. He's talking to me. I must reply

Extended, voluptuous music section, on Variation No 28

- 1 In my Variations I wander anywhere.
- 2 Chausson ... Brubeck ... Kurt Weill ... Lully ... You can try to follow if you like. But you won't catch me There's JSB and me! Sorry, you're on your own.

VARIATION 10 - Section B

NK reads the audience list to himself

O fuck! Who invited you? Buff ... Jock ... Performance purist ... Queer eye ... Oh piss off!

Nods off to sleep. Light snaps up on tarquette. NK suddenly awakens with a start

Why can't I sleep? 8 hours a night. 16 if you're a cat. The bigger you are the less you need. Elephants? - 4 hours I think.

'Cellist plays repeated octave pizzicato Bs (intro of Variation 18)

Shh! ... Variation number 18. *(NK creeps to tarquette)* From here I can watch without being seen, even though I suspect they know perhaps their 12 year old boy is here, watching, all the while. The gramophone opens and a record drops into place.

(Variation 18 begins)

Ah! Shoes. Elegant heels. Slim ankles. Bare legs. Sliding back and forth ... back and forth. Circling the space.

A heel leaves the ground and disappears from view. Tension in this pause relief as it gently touches down and they turn on one another once again.

Hypnotised - staring into the middle distance. The flesh and the blackness whirl past. Gentle shuffling sounds as they turn and glide.

This is a beautiful moment. A classic little Psycho-drama Seeing without watching, hearing without listening. Far away and yet ... totally present. A 12 year old boy lost in the music ... becoming one with the dancers. More than that - becoming the dance.

music finishes - piano continues to repeat the top D

Imagining ...Holding her close.

Her neck, her hair, her face, her lips.
Holding her close. Trying to kiss her.

And then stillness ... quiet ... before ... Variation number 16

VARIATION 16 FRENCH OVERTURE

Pushing the woman aside. Turning to face the other man. Grabbing him. Struggling. Pushing, pulling one another. (*pause bar*) The woman turns. Walking to the men who are fighting, grabbing the hair of the boy who has tried to kiss her.

(*final piano note*): "Get out of my fucking life!!"

Light snaps to table. NK slowly walks back to table

(*folding paper plane*) ... That light, on the water. Her legs moving back and forth, back and forth in perfect time with the music.

Of course, none of this actually happened, according to the psychiatrist.

OK! I made it all up. Blame Glenn Gould. Of course, sometimes I just...

(*High speed performance with Gould recording VARIATION 20*)

Squares, symmetry, you know... everything equal
Small parcels of time all jumbled... It's the greeks, you know .. all over the shop again... A certain inbred ... inborn virtuosity... Skilled? Yes!

So I had some opportunities ... but it was more than that... I was more than that... I was sexy ... yes ... quite sexy, I'm told... It's the way I make connections ... like the Greeks ... connections ... ie. music.

And what is music? ... no really, what is music? Think about it - listening - being able to distinguish nuances of sound, The choreography of the human body, the instrument, breath, mentality, language ... Movement.

There's a neurological basis for it all of course. JSB and me ... and GG He married his mother you know, And if the Christians hadn't recaptured Spain in the 11th century we probably wouldn't have known or cared....

(*music finishes*)

And of course, sometimes ... well ... talent

(*pianist picks out a short staccato rhythmic continuum from Variation 20*)

I was born talented you know ... but a bit out of sync., so to speak ... a bit out of... not fully in step, in tune, in place, outside of... *(pause)*

But my ability to hypothesise and predict, however precariously, Deriving from an inherent, fundamental facility that organises fast movements ... ie. it's all inter-related - language, virtuosity, music, dance, the tongue, the hand, the

ear... logic..... mem..mamm..mim ... *(pause)*

8 metres, that's all, I'm told ... all interconnected you see ... *(pause)*

~~The ability to identify of grammatical systems, of course~~
The ability to remember. Exceptional - they said - and sexy ... There's a neurological basis for it all, of course: ... dance ... music ...

(throws paper plane at someone in audience -piano stops)

Hoy, you! Listen up!! Do you know how fiendishly difficult all this is? Eh?

The rest of you ... Just relax Enjoy how easy they make it seem *(gesturing to the musicians)* For you Ready? Ready or not Jump! Now! Dive

*Pianist plays solo **VARIATION 19.***

In Go down. Go deep Chasms open and close around you Let them Don't think about the oven, (Clare)! ... You've definitely left it on! You're in the city of shadows ... Get lost.

He listens to the pianist,, putting his shoes and socks on, and then slowly moves to stool. Sits cross-legged, back to audience, reading a newspaper - a serious newspaper - The Times of London or The New York Times.

SCENE 8

NK folds the paper, places it on the coffee table, takes a page and swings around to the audience.

And so I said to the psychiatrist:

(autocue - with words missing - some words different)

Have you noticed how normal television stops when there is a catastrophe? Advertising is suspended. Comedy is out. Disaster movies disappear from the schedule. And suddenly documentaries are all the go. History is in. Eventually, though, things must return to normal. Consumption must resume.

And that is my job. That is the job of a media personality. I visit the scene of the disaster, as a guest of a Children's Charity. Then I front a fund-raiser - a telethon is perfect. I can tell a few jokes - family jokes, like, "I just made a killing on Wall Street. I shot my broker!", or, "I've got a great doctor. If you can't afford the operation, he touches up your X-rays" - the kind of material you can dig up on the internet. I do my bit to ease the viewer back in.

That is my job: to soothe, to entertain, to elide. I am here to help you forget - not all of the bad bits - oh no. Just the really awful bad bits. The bits that sneak in on CNN in the early broadcasts, the bits some Bolshi Independent manages to film before the networks get there. The body bits, the baby bits, when the bodies and the blood are still moving in the frame. Nobody needs to remember that. We remove that bit, quickly digital technology - and then we add other bits. Nice bits. Bits about the brave families. Recovering victims. Regrowth, rebuilding. We mesh forgetting with remembering. That is what we do.

Dean Martin Song - "I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE, BABY" NK wanders the stage, absent-mindedly

Cross fade of Dean Martin song with slow piano vamp - Scene 9

SCENE 9

(wandering upstage - sorting through paper scattered on floor)

So is this me? ... Am I the one? ...
Or someone ... rather like me? ...
Someone you might rather like ...

Someone ... Someone ... new perhaps ... younger, fresher, full of promise.
HmMMM Who knows? Might you?

And anyway ... Under such
circumstances ... Why couldn't I ...
Why shouldn't I ... be that person ...
standing on the beach?

(moving into Variation 28)

NK wandering down-stage once again like the man on the beach, to the table.

*(D/F# trills dying away)
'Cello playing D - Bb and holding it
Short soft piano fragments:*

I am this man ... oh yes ... the man on the beach
That man waiting for someone who never comes
The man who never sleeps The voice in your ear
The man at the edge of himself

That man on the billboard The man
who remembers the rules The man
who talks to Bach

So, why dont I ever talk about myself? Go ahead, talk
about yourself, said the psychiatrist.

I am a man written by women Torn apart To be
refashioned (PICKS UP AUDIENCE LIST) By a
Mob (THROWS DOWN THE LIST)

Now were getting somewhere, said the psychiatrist

I am that man of the theatre And I
will make anything -Anything! Work!
Even this torn, twisted

Scrawled, scribbled Life If it
kills me. And it damned
nearly has.

(WITH BRAVURA)

So, welcome to the Nigel Kellaway Hour A state of non-
existing. A flat world - everything equivalent. Reducible.
Pliable. Possible. Sayable. Playable. Everything memorable
... guaranteed forgettable!

*'Cello and piano continue with fragments of Variation 25,
ending in a jazzy "Kurt Weill" payout*

The pianist and violinist leave the stage - NK follows them upstage:

NK: Excuse me. Are you finished?

Pianist: Yes (*exits*)

*taking out an Urtext Edition of the Goldberg Variations. He
drops up to sleep NK moves to, and sits at the piano,*

He wakes

*NK plays Bach's **Aria**, reading from the music. The 'cellist stands and
makes to quietly exit.as NK begins to play*

NK completes the Aria,

*He then turns the page to the 1st Goldberg Variation. Lights
fade slowly to blackout as he prepares to play*

END

Artistic Acquittal to Theatre Board of the Australia Council

SLEEPERS WAKE! Wachet Auf!

Writers: Virginia Baxter
Jai McHenry
Amanda Stewart
Josephine Wilson
Composer/Director: Nigel Kellaway
Performers: Nigel Kellaway
Michael Bell (piano)
Margaret Howard (violin)
Catherine Tabrett ('cello)

Lighting design/operation/
Production management: Simon Wise
Sound operation/
Stage management: Michelle Outram

Co-producers: Performance Space Ltd. and The opera Project Inc. Publicity: Rosie Dennis (Performance Space) Project Manager: Lily Shearer (Performance Space)
Photography: Heidrun Löhrr

Development period: January - May 2007 Performance season: 7 - 16 June 2007
PERFORMANCE SPACE @ CARRIAGEWORKS

ACQUITTAL BY NIGEL KELLAWAY

I feel a little awkward about acquitting this grant on behalf of all the creators of ***Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf!*** I can speak from my own experience as a co-creator, actor, composer, director and producer. But *Sleepers Wake!* was the work of five writers, responding to the challenge of composing a theatre work for Nigel Kellaway to perform on stage. And there were also several other artists involved in its realization.

The format suggested in the formal Acquittal Form doesn't perfectly suit my relationship with either the process or the product. And so I'll scatter my own observations through what I believe is a logical artistic assessment of the project.

BACKGROUND:

The work was initiated by me as one of a number of projects comprising my Australia Council Theatre Board Fellowship 2004-06. I approached the four writers in 2003, all of who had worked with me on projects over the past 15 years, and had familiarity with each other's work. Concrete concepts were discussed in mid 2004, and over the ensuing 18 months the four writers (and myself as composer) wrote in isolation, though sharing our emerging drafts with each other.

The project had already benefited from its inclusion in Performance Space's "artists-in-residence" program over four weeks in March 2006, in which many hours of rich material were assembled and fiercely edited, leading up to two informal showings of the work's first 90 minute draft.

FINAL WRITING:

After the initial development work and showing in 2006, the work seemed already 80% complete. There were some writing tasks for the final development leading to rehearsal and production:

- some restructuring of some of the extant material, particularly the first 20 minutes and the final scenes.

- some careful text and music re-jigging to ensure a better marriage, involving a finessing of the text.

- a few new short sections of text, and a new final scene to be written in collaboration with a new music variation, in which the musical structure and tonality fall apart reflecting the mounting chaos of the actor's mind.

From the outset, this work was never to be four discrete pieces from the writers. The task has been to ensure that each of the disparate texts is embodied in a single "coherent" voice and body. So clearly the writers' disparate themes and concerns had to find some common ground. The idea of Amnesia proved a most useful device in creating the persona of a forgetful (perhaps even damaged) man who can (re)invent himself as anything at any time. Amnesia also emerged as a metaphor for both the personal and the political - positing that we are defined both as individuals and as a nation by what we remember, but also by what we choose to forget.

The writers collectively imagined a very interesting man, building on some perceived attributes of the real Nigel Kellaway to create a new and fascinating subject.

The work was quietly reflective, despite some explosions of energy and humorous interludes. There was reverie and poignant anecdote. A movement, to and fro, between the 1st and 3rd persons emerged quite naturally in the writing - the audience assessing for themselves whether everything this man talks about pertains intimately to him. He is clearly unsure himself. Consequently, the work purposefully eschewed any pretension of a man's linear "journey" toward self-knowledge.

PROGRAM NOTES by the writers:

Nigel invited us to rewrite him ...

Experiencing opera Project works over a number of years, I've been intrigued by the shift in Nigel Kellaway's performance as he moves to the piano, or when he's attending to the music. There's a serenity that contrasts with more overt operatic gestures in the work. Sometimes it seems as if he's slipping into a very private world. I wanted to expose something of this aspect of Nigel's stage persona and so I cast him as a musical interpreter in a glass booth (like the ones at the UN) speaking into the ears of an audience of intimates whose names are announced as they arrive in the theatre. For logistical reasons, we've omitted the glass booth (and the 150 sets of earphones), but the narcoleptic translator who loses himself in his own sonorous commentary takes his place alongside the three other variations on this man of the theatre. The collaboration

with Nigel and the other writers on this project has been a real pleasure. The text we've created together is an elusive and intriguing thing that, like memory and music, threatens at every turn to slip from our grasp.

Virginia Baxter

Nigel and I have been making performance works together since 1990, and have generally approached our work as fellow performers, often with Nigel also working as director. This has been an entirely different process. As a writer I have been free to put aside my own performative needs and methods, to reflect upon all I have come to understand of Nigel as a performer, and his very particular theatrical vision. In *Sleepers Wake!* this performative Nigel reflects upon his possible pasts in order to make sense of his potential identities, to explain his talents and justify his fears. He seeks a match, a good fit, a costume and a role to play. Whether the role is his or another's is not his concern. He is a body - both real and imagined, created here fleetingly in a dance hall, theatre, recital hall. He teases his audience with his ever-recognizable presence whilst always proposing a potentially new fictional invention. Nigel asked that we all challenge him, push him. He wanted to be jolted out of some of his thirty-five years of habitual practices. I believe we have done that, and yet *Sleepers Wake!* marks a quite logical development in the ever evolving, still many and varied ways, we might yet imagine Nigel Kellaway on stage.

Jai McHenry

Initially, I was somewhat daunted by the prospect of co-writing a one-man show for Nigel Kellaway. Nigel is a unique, multi talented performer/director who has developed a specific practice and creative vision over a career spanning more than 30 years. *Sleepers Wake!* was to also incorporate aspects of J.S. Bach's Goldberg Variations which is, perhaps, one of the most sublime pre-nineteenth century compositions ever written. In the end, I seem to have come up with two different modes of text. The first involves comic, high-speed diatribes which conflate references to Greek thought, eighteenth century ideas and contemporary allusions. My other texts are more whimsical, prosaic reflections on memory loss as a personal tragedy, a national problem and as a metaphor for certain historical processes. As a writer, I work primarily as a poet so this was a perfect opportunity to challenge Nigel with some difficult, poetic texts and to also challenge myself to develop other forms of writing that I rarely have the opportunity to explore. In a sense, we were all rewriting Nigel, or writing on him, creating this strange, new collaborative text of merged and forgotten identities.

Amanda Stewart

In Nigel's work I have always been attracted to the performative excesses (in the best possible sense) of "Nigel". I am intrigued by the ways that the character of "Nigel" has been mobilized, only for the autobiographical to be firmly disavowed or allayed. Nigel's work is often in intense dialogue with European traditions of opera, theatre and music. I am interested in exploring a model of performance that eschews the "high" in favour of the "low". Nigel and I were television kids. We watched Dean Martin and Dave Allen. So here we have Nigel in a black suit, white shirt with collar undone, perhaps a scotch in one hand, and a piano at the other: a scene of televisual intimacy. In his performance work, Nigel toys with the audience; there is a constant "pulling the rug out". Here we have performance as an elastic space for story, anecdote and rumination. Here we have the concert pianist as entertainer. A straight role? Hmm.

Josephine Wilson

MUSIC:

"1955. Glenn Gould playing Johann Sebastian Bach's Goldberg Variations ... He recorded this music at the age of 20 something, just a few months before I myself was born ... November 1955. Ah! Now that comes out of the blue! Let's be exact here! The 9th of November 1955. Hey! That's what birthdays are for ... a confirmation: I became ... I am ... still ... I think."

This is a man with one particular memory. He remembers a piece of music. This is his link to the present world. Everything else is a bit of a blur. This singular musical shape enables him to conjure a myriad other memories. Of course there are gaps. But he tries to meticulously explain the links in his perverse journey into memory and meaning. Oddly, many in the audience seemed disinterested – the mechanisms of music perhaps don't translate that well into a "universal" human experience. They do to me!

A theme ... with variations by Nigel Kellaway ... upon variations ...

**Violin: Margaret Howard 'Cello:
Catherine Tabrett Piano: Michael Bell**

1. **Aria** from Goldberg-Variationen BWV 988 by Johann Sebastian Bach

... and then exploring Bach's variations:

2. **Variation 13** with reference to Ernest Chausson
3. **Variation 5** with reference to Dave Brubeck
4. **Variation 15** Canone alla Quinta
5. **Habanera** quoting Kurt Weill and J.S.Bach's Variation 25
6. **Variation 10** Fughetta **Variation 30** Quodlibet in the style of a recitative **Variation 28** with reference to Maurice Ravel

7. **Variation 18** Canone all Sesta with references to Leo Delibes, Roy Orbison and late 18th century music boxes
8. **Variation 16** in the style of a French Baroque Overture
9. **Variation 20** in perpetual motion, with pause for thought
10. **Variation 19** by J.S. Bach
11. **Variation 15** Canone all Quinta quoting Kurt Weill **Variation 28** with references to Igor Stravinsky, Luciano Berio, et al **Variation 25** Adagio for solo 'cello

12. **Aria** (da capo) from Goldberg-Variationen BWV 988 by Johann Sebastian Bach

with thanks to Dean Martin and Glenn Gould for the memories

I have always had a serious concern about how music is "remembered". The processes of listening to popular contemporary music are different to the way we approach music from another historical period. We inadvertently create different rules

and means of association across genres and time. But what occurs if we suddenly forget the rules? When we can't place what we are listening to within a value system? And what other memories might this music conjure?

My variations on the *Goldberg Variations* are a strange decontextualising of Bach's original sounds and ideas - finding new popular forms in which to express the same seriousness and commitment that Bach brought to his own inventions and 18th century popular concerns. My variations reflect forms and sounds from quite disparate periods - early 20th century French Romanticism, classical music boxes, John Cage's sparse textures, Dankworth's dense blue's chords and funky rhythms etc. They conjure a slightly disorientating experience for the listener: there are certainly the remnants of the Bach original, which anyone can recognize, but in all the wrong context. They reflect on mathematics ... structure ... experience ... recollection.

I had not "composed" music for others to perform in nearly thirty years. The expertise and understanding that Michael Bell (piano), Margaret Howard (violin) and Catherine Tabrett ('cello") brought to the work was integral to its creation.

from the program:

(In) 2005, I found myself in a chilly autumnal Berlin for a couple of weeks' holiday between gigs in France and Nuremberg. In the first week I immersed myself in the architectural splendours of the late German Baroque and Rococo - Schinkel and Knobelsdorff's palaces, gardens and museums for Frederic the Great. And then onto the extraordinary rebuilding of "post-wall" Berlin - Frank Gehry, IM Pei, Renzo Piano, Norman Foster et al. I saw three great opera productions, contemplated histories and technologies and spoke to not a soul for those two weeks.

I was camping in a quite affordable though very hip hotel facing the east side of a few remnants of "the wall". Day and night the cafe/bar played an alarmingly eclectic mix of music - Verdi segueing to reggae, Frank Sinatra, Hip Hop, old Eagles and Stones standards, Broadway musicals (the good and the bad!), Roy Orbison, Richard Strauss, Bessie Smith, heavy metal, Barbra Streisand, German electro-funk, Gregorian chant, The Clash, Bob Dylan and Marlene Dietrich, Salsa, Schubert string quartets

Over breakfast and then late every night I sat alone in that bar with a book of blank manuscript, an Urtext keyboard score of J.S.Bach's *Goldberg Variations* open on the table, and every detail of Glenn Gould's 1955 tempi and phrasings clearly etched into my memory. The bar was always noisy - a cacophony of young Berliners socializing and much older music that I recognized all too well. This was a great environment in which to contemplate memory and knowledge, and to sketch the variations you hear this evening. They reflect my own early studies in a particularly French school of pianism and sound. And I decided immediately that I would write for that late 18th century Germanic (almost "Frederician") invention - the piano trio.

These variations refer to an early 20th century French neo-classicism, as explored by composers like Ravel and Stravinsky and then, later, by exploratory and jazz luminaries like John Cage and Dave Brubeck.

My inventions are still redolently "Bach", but distracted by other histories - as though remembered in a state of "half sleep ... half wake".

In this process I set myself the task of restructuring many of the text sections in relationship to the music, creating extended passages in a “recitativo” style, with tightly structured instrumental accompaniment. This, by choice, heightened the performance of these passages in an almost operatic sense.

Sleepers Wake! could not have been realized without the huge input of the three musicians. It was difficult music, and the new acoustic space of Carriageworks presented all kinds of challenges. It is a very scary proposition to hand over untried compositions to such professional musicians. They were enormously gracious and cherished the freedom I gave them to radically interpret various sections of the score, inventing their own bowing and phrasing solutions. I sincerely thank them for their generosity and unfaltering energy throughout the season.

DESIGN:

Simon Wise and I have collaborated on many many productions in the twenty-one years since 1987 (seven years with The Sydney Front, ten years with The opera Project, and many other productions between). This was a “back-to-basics” production – no tricks – just a sparsely furnished space and lights. The “costuming” was un-noticeable – an off-the-rack black suit and just a brief moment in a pair of silver stilettos as “baroque” ornamentation. It was a joy to work together again in a brand-new space – a new floor to light – and acres of room. We co-designed the two pieces of functional furniture. My long collaboration with Simon is truly one of the distinguishing marks on my recent couple of decades in the theatre.

REHEARSAL PROCESS:

I have managed to maintain a very healthy relationship with the Centre of Performance Studies at Sydney University over a number of years, and once again managed to secure the Rex Cramphorn Studio for the three-week full-time rehearsal period.

With this came the responsibility of welcoming an honours student into the rehearsal room, as he documented my rather lonely process and prepared a casebook - Travis Hodgson. I can be a bit brutal in these situations, but student observers are what you inherit in return for free rehearsal space. I met him in a King Street café the week before rehearsal, and he seemed pleasant and intelligent enough.

And Travis dutifully “dug in” on the process – for the first few days just glancing up from his feverish notations (what, in God’s name, was so interesting about me trying to remember lines?!) Then I happened to ask him if he thought a particular moment worked or not. From that moment he proved an insightful, critical and inquiring “outside eye” and ever patient audience – much more than the merely decorative observer. For the solo creator in an otherwise very lonely studio he was a terrific foil to my invention – I basically had an audience to prepare with – the energy a performer needs each day in the studio. Thank you, Travis.

Although I have years of experience in directing myself on stage, I approached Jenny Kemp in 2005 about the possibility of her directing the production. At first she was very keen, but then on reflection she suggested that I was the best qualified to take the work

to fruition. I was disappointed, but I took her advice as a fellow auteur – one that I have enormous respect for.

Both Virginia Baxter and Amanda Stewart joined me for occasional sessions in the rehearsal studio in the weeks leading to production - an arrangement that had worked well in the 2006 development process. The out of town writers, McHenry (France) and Wilson (WA) were both very confident that their work would once again be well represented and honed in that process. Virginia and Amanda in this final process were extraordinarily generous, providing an experienced dramaturgical eye to the shaping of the work. Twelve months before (leading to the 2006 development) they seemed to challenge my very right to exist on stage. In this year's process they understood, as performers and producers themselves, the pressures I was under. They pushed me, demanded of me, questioned me, niggled, worried, doubted ... and then left me to my own devices, I assume trusting that I could take my roles as actor, director and producer to the cumulative limits of my knowledge and abilities. I did my damndest, and I believe they also thought I did. All the writers had invested a great deal in this work, and my task was to serve them and further invent around what they written, in my role as an actor and composer.

AUDIENCE RESPONSE:

With such small audience numbers, the foyer bar was generally closed by the time I left my dressing room each night of the season and I emerged to an empty foyer every night, and so I can't really report on audience response.

But on the opening night, with free drinks on tap, I spoke to a few people – mostly strangers. Most seemed a bit bemused by it all, thinking they had missed something. Was I keeping some secret? Was there information about this music and what it meant to me that I was withholding? Were the audience held intentionally at arm's length from the "grunt" of the work? NO, not "intentionally". My job as an artist (as is any artist's) is to assume the role of a "keeper of special knowledge". I then I must authoritatively impart that knowledge in a manner that my audience might glimpse a sense of themselves – even if they don't precisely identify with what is occurring at that very moment.

Indeed, a line from the show, referring to the music: "Cerebral or Divine? Whichever you choose. I'm merely your interpreter ... your interlocutor, if you like ... interrupter ... your irritant. Go with it. I'm here for you!"

Audiences carry a lot of baggage into the theatre. What this theatre? What this acting? What is coherence? What do I find satisfying? How does this sit with my expectations / former experience / frustrations / desires for this particular artist's work?

I have had very little peer-group response to the work – surprisingly few actually saw the work. Comment which has been forthcoming has been akin to "the floor looked beautiful – great new space – you used it really well". Not very useful feedback, when you consider all the components of the work. A theatre composer colleague's appraisal was that I "played the Bach at the end really beautifully". Well, of course I played it beautifully! – it's music I know very well, and I'm a very good pianist and baroque interpreter. Was there nothing she could say about the rest of the 90 minutes of my work as a theatre deviser, composer, director, designer, actor? Apparently not.

I decided a number of years back that there were certain things I never again wanted to do in the theatre. Now I want to challenge my audience's concentration and inventiveness. I played the game honestly – God! the toughest challenge every night for me was my own concentration on such an unwieldy text, music and structure. Yes, it was hard work for us all. Is that a bad thing?

I'm fairly philosophical about all this. I've spent too many years hearing people say that my work is too abstract. And then, perhaps 10 years after the event ... lo and behold! they think it was fabulous! Mmm ... they obviously forget how bored they were at the time. Shame the work so rarely gets a second much later season. Have I lost the plot / passed my prime? Perhaps. In which case *Sleepers Wake!* is a good work to bow out on after 38 years – an elegant exit strategy - and a quiet one.

Still, despite not much positive response, I have been spared much comment from those that seriously disliked the work. Most feedback I have received 2nd or 3rd hand.

Performance space @ Carriageworks

Sleepers Wake! was Performance Space's first co-production at Carriageworks. (All previous productions this year have been either commissioned and fully produced or bought in entirety).

Whilst The opera Project paid all artist and crew fees and production costs, Performance Space provided the venue and associated costs and shared in some of the advertising costs (including the work of Rosie Dennis as publicist), in return for a 40% box-office cut. There were some teething problems in this arrangement, most amicably resolved.

However, I have learnt never again to allow anyone to do my invitation mail-out for me. I discovered, all too late, that many people were inexplicably deleted from my carefully and exhaustively prepared list. And I have no way of knowing exactly who they were. I fear that I have inadvertently offended a number of people, and that certain word-of-mouth potential was compromised in the "stuff-up".

I thank Performance Space for the huge support they lent to the project (and, indeed, to much of my work over many years). Without this support *Sleepers Wake!* would certainly never have had a season at Carriageworks.

AUDIENCE AND BOX OFFICE:

Audience attendance was very poor. Over 8 performances the total pax was 249, of which only 90 paid. For the 7 performances after opening night we averaged an audience of 18 per night, which looked a bit sad in a 160 seater.

There are not the mechanisms in place to precisely analyze the reasons for this. One can guess at the small publicity coverage, poor word of mouth, a cool review from Peter McCallum, the best rain in decades (every night – you'd have to be brave to come out in that!), a evening in the theatre of complex text, "classical" music and a pulled-back performance style on an empty stage. Not a crowd puller, clearly.

The substantial box office shortfall was balanced by considerable cuts in production costs, resulting in a meagre \$90 deficit – comfortable to manage.

Despite our efforts, no producers were interested in seeing the work (and interestingly, apart from an old performing peer, I am unaware of funding body staff or members coming to the show), so the future life of the work looks a bit grim.

However, Peter Oldham made a fine video document of the work. The challenge now is to find some useful people who might be interested in watching it.

IN CONCLUSION:

The project provided the collaborators with challenges and substantial rewards. The initial proposal for the work was a provocative one: four mature women invited to write upon a middle-aged man. For me it was a hugely liberating experience to be "written upon" by four such various women. This was difficult and dense text. The rapid acrobatic leaps demanded by conflicting voices were a terrific challenge, pushing me into a more relaxed, reflective though vocally demanding mode of performance.

In the 2006 development showing I read the entire text from the page on stage. The effect was very clearly that of a man "written upon" – these were clearly not my words. In the process of memorizing the text for performance, I became aware of how the emphasis was shifting – that I was taking ownership of the text and the "character". This was a huge dramaturgical shift. The material was moving into the "first person". This lent me much freedom and scope as an actor.

And what is acting? *Sleepers Wake!* challenged all those ideas about the performer's commitment to the text because it proposed a partly ambivalent attitude to it. That, on the surface, was an unusual position for me to take. Where was the camp? The punching articulation? The extreme? The heightened theatrical gesture? The "baroque" play with expectations? Essentially, Bach doesn't lend himself to all that. He was a serious man. And this work contemplates his particular profundity – and lets it stand alone. Also, I'm now a contentedly middle-aged man, confident to contemplate that more serious territory, without all the expected tricks. It's a complex world, and perhaps that confuses some of the punters.

Still, despite the apparent failure of the actual season, I will remember *Sleepers Wake!* with enormous affection. It was a joy to work with such a wonderful group of collaborators. Indeed, the whole process of creating, rehearsing and performing this new work has been one of the most pleasurable and rewarding experiences I can remember.

I thank the Theatre Board of the Australia Council for their support of the project over three years.

That's a wrap! Nigel Kellaway Artistic Director 24th August 2007

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THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

June 9th, 2007 by
Peter McCallum

Not so much bounding out of bed as hitting the snooze button

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a very strange kind of time

bryoni trezise moved by *sleepers wake! wachet auf!*

OUR NAMES ARE SPOKEN ALOUD INTO A DIMMED SPACE AS WE ENTER. THE CHARACTER 'NIGEL', THE VERY LAST TO ARRIVE, HOLDS OUR COLLECTIVE PRESENCE AND SUGGESTS THAT TOGETHER WE "DECIDE WHEN THIS PERFORMANCE BEGINS." WE WAIT. FOR A TIME. OUR EYES FOLLOW HIS EYES, DIRECTED OUTWARDS. THERE IS A PIANO, CENTRE. A VIDEO MONITOR. POOLS OF LIGHT DELICATELY SPLOSHED ACROSS A DISTANT SQUARE OF TARQUETTE. A MEMORY OF AN ACTION, PERHAPS. A FLEETING GLIMPSE OF PERFORMANCE? OF MOVEMENT? A TRACE OF WHAT HAPPENED, OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN BEGINNING FINALLY BEGINS?

Nigel Kellaway's solo performance *Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf!* is concerned with memory and forgetting. The title, taken from a cantata written by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1731, implies the opposite to lullaby, and yet, *Sleepers Wake!* mirrors Bach's own entry into the riff of dreamscape. We exist with Nigel in a zone that slips, like sleep, between loss and longing, caress and fantasy, pain and forgetting. Our journey is heavily somnambulant. We are half-teased into waking by the trickery of words or the sensuous strain of melody. We are all made witness to a very strange kind of time.

Is Nigel in mourning? Is he traumatised? Amnesiac? He has certainly forgotten something. We watch him chase memories—remnants of narratives, half-told stories, the shadowy footsteps of a dance. These are the compelling traces that he longs to unravel, but they only ever return in the fickle shape of "bluff." Nigel's memories are fake, a mocking ruse. He merely "appears to have a past." Instead, his reminiscence is the junky bric-a-brac of other people's stories: dim and fading musical motifs, punchlines and 'wound culture' television grabs, repeatedly leading both us and Nigel to the wrong scene at the centre of the wrong crime.

French novelist Marcel Proust was enamoured of memory and its tendencies for loss and longing. *Sleepers Wake!* was conceived as a collaboration between four distinguished performance writers. Amanda Stewart, Josephine Wilson, Virginia Baxter and Jai McHenry were each invited to respond to Kellaway's identity as performer through notions of memory. The collaborative writing effort creates a sense of a man who stands amidst broken narrative—a postmodern Proust gone awry. And yet, these narrative breakages speak less of collaboration and more of a certain kind of experience. Their fractures paint Nigel as a man who is balancing tenuously on the cusp of himself.

At the centre of the space are three musicians (Michael Bell, Margaret Howard and Catherine Tabrett) who sensitively sustain Nigel's melancholia in compositions that Kellaway has adapted from Bach's original *Goldberg Variations*. What we hear are "variations upon variations"—music that is 'quoted', recollected, eclectic. It lullabies on recurring motifs that return, each time with a slightly different twist, engineered to sink us into the sense that we are looking at the same problem from perhaps a different angle. Kellaway's reference to Roy Orbison and eighteenth century music boxes

sounds out a tinny, kitsch nostalgia above the depth of Bach. Another version using Kurt Weill has dramatic spunk in its pace.

These incongruous musical themes elide dream with recollection. They make Nigel dance before us, stand before us and, interestingly, resist the memory of Kellaway's own musical skill. Kellaway, the performer, does not play (until the very end), although we get the sense that Nigel, the character, has a lurching itch to do so. The different textual variations cleverly merge to produce writing that is in different degrees elegant, potent, smug, syncopated and raw. In one narrative, Nigel confesses to a psychiatrist, only to end with a gag and the punctuating resonance of canned laughter. In another, he has received a letter from a lover who has apparently left him, but has got all the facts wrong. For a start, Nigel never had a pet rabbit, nor did the lover own a holiday house.

This delicate stepping between worlds both in space, music and text makes ***Sleepers Wake!*** a complex take on the oftentimes symbiotic relationships between memory, performance and self. In this rendition, a postmodern Proust gives way to a cynically philosophical Hamlet. "To B or not to B?", Nigel coyly asks when tinkering at the keyboard. And yet this reference to bigger questions is not to be taken lightly. I was moved by ***Sleepers Wake!***. There was a sense of inevitability about it all, the pathos in Nigel's not knowing but continued attempts at being. The writers cleverly use memory to ask bigger questions around what all of this "presence"—this "Nigel Kellaway Hour"—is really about.

The skill in Kellaway's performance is in his exquisite command not only of text, timing and audience, but in his obvious joy in knowing exactly what we do not. Kellaway understands the fickle nature of memory, which is why he disappears before our eyes a little too quickly. We are left with a trace of a gesture, the afterglow of human sentiment, an energy that lingers alongside what has already become just a distant memory of music. There's the rub.

Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf! composer, director, performer Nigel Kellaway, writers Amanda Stewart, Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Josephine Wilson, musicians Michael Bell, Margaret Howard, Catherine Tabrett, lighting designer Simon Wise, Performance Space, CarriageWorks, Sydney, June 7-16

Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf!

Written by Tessa Needham **SYDNEY STAGE ONLINE**

Friday 8th June 2007

Two women take our names as we enter the space. One is holding a microphone, and she repeats the name into the microphone, so everyone in the theatre can hear. The other holds a clipboard, making a private jotting for each person. I am quietly pleased that I chose to enter the space early, so not many people are subject to my embarrassment. An embarrassment that, predictably enough, becomes most entertaining to watch as a spectator. Having just sat down and settled in, I can watch and listen with glee as others are subjected to the same fate. Soon enough, someone gives a fake, celebrity name, so the next few people follow suit. Somewhere near the end I hear the name "Nigel Kellaway" read out, and indeed, there he is, walking in like any other patron. He takes a seat at the front.

Sleepers Wake! Wachet Auf! is the new performance piece from Nigel Kellaway. It defies easy description, except to say that it is based around the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Kellaway clearly adores the music, and nearly every time it plays his body takes over in a full-body conducting dance. A piano trio (piano - Michael Bell, violin -Margaret Howard and cello - Catherine Tabrett) occupy centre stage, and Kellaway often interacts with them: calling them by their first names, vaguely conducting them, asking them about the sheet music in front of them. I wait for the moment when the aforementioned list of names, innocuously placed on stage, will be called upon for another moment of humiliation. Surprisingly, he uses the list sparingly, mentioning only a few people's names throughout the piece.

There is no narrative to be seen - rather, Kellaway stitches together a collection of moments and stories - leading him to flippantly refer to it as "The Nigel Kellaway Hour." Such metatheatrical statements abound in the piece, from the beginning discussion of the two 'worlds' of stage and audience, to the declaration: "This is my performance." Many of the 'variations' are based around remembering and forgetting. He flits around the space from desk to chair to stool to musicians, seemingly drawn to each place to recount a story, talk about his psychiatrist or withstand a shower of loose pages. The music of Bach (and variations) weaves in and out of the piece, along with recorded music and even canned laughter. Kellaway is an engaging performer, the text is eloquent (by Virginia Baxter, Jai McHenry, Amanda Stewart and Josephine Wilson) and the music beautiful, but I found the piece rather dry. The tone and mood of the piece was subdued and monotonous, and the significance placed on verbosity was, at times, tiring. There were some amusing moments, where a line from the text or a gesture of Kellaway's body gave way to slight laughter in the audience. But for a piece that is self-declared as based around 'variations,' I felt variation was precisely the thing lacking.

gaylourdes blog

June 27, 2007

I recently got excited again about JS Bach, which is why I took myself off yesterday to Da Capo to purchase book II of his 48 Preludes and Fugues. Quite a few of his Goldberg variations appeared in Nigel Kellaway's *Sleepers Wake! Wacht Auf!* which I saw at the carriageworks a little while ago. (oh I've seen some wonderful stuff there this year! It's all really exciting. I wish more of my friends would take a leap of faith and come with me. I want all my favourite performers to play to full houses every night. If only for the karma! Sometimes I think nobody's interested in art/ performance any more. I've become quite used to going to odd performance type things on my own, and I've been pretty lucky, I generally know someone there, and it's always a joy to catch up with other odd types. However small audiences always make me wish I'd badgered my friends a little harder about coming to see this or that.)

Yes! I finally get to see Nigel perform in the flesh! Oh joy, oh rapture, oh blissful piano trio playing Bach and Nigel's jazzy variations on it. Oh goody, baroque variations, my favourite, I'm listening out for the twiddles and embellishments, to see if they play their trills correctly, trills and ornaments and appoggiaturas. At uni, Winsome Evans taught us to be discerning. You can see her in action [here](#).

Nigel is doing the very performance that I want to be doing. Exploring fascinating themes like -in this instance- memory and loss, and how they relate to life, artistic practice & performance, combining them with beautiful music, beautiful imagery, grand elegant elegaic camp gestures and a somewhat fraught performer/ audience relationship. He rouses on us more than once. Quite rightly so; I came here tonight expecting to love every minute of it and I'm taken aback when he attacks us with "Don't you know how difficult it is to do this?" Of course I bloody know, if it were easier I'd have been doing it long ago. But then he's charming again, and I follow, nose first til I nearly fall off the seat.

SLEEPERS WAKE! Wacht Auf! Production Budget - 2007

Expenditure:

Fees: Nigel Kellaway	2000.00		
(director/administrator)	2000.00		
(composer) Writers x 3 x	2100.00		
\$700.00 Writers' assistance	600.00		
in rehearsal (2 x \$300)			
Performers /	4 wks x	200	
crew: Nigel	\$500.0	0.00	
Kellaway (actor) 3	0 3 wks	420	
x Musicians x 14	x	0.00	
calls x \$100	\$750.0	225	
Simon Wise	0 2 wks	0.00	
(Production/LX)	x	130	
Sound operator	\$650.0	0.00	
Bumpin/out crew	0	887.	
Oncosts	35.5hrs	50	178
	x	488.	25.5
	\$25.00	00	0
Production: Sets		153	
/ Props /		9.48	
Costumes Video /		192.	
Lights / Sound		81	
hirePiano hire /		120	293
cartage / tuning		0.00	2.29
Administration			
etc:		538.	
GeneralTicketing		26	
costsDocumentati		109.	
on:		67	
VideoPhotography		815.	
Opening night		00	
wine		300.	
		00	
		150.	191
		00	2.93
Publicity:			
Advertising/design/printing/d			457
istribution/costs/etc.			5.46
Performance Space 40%			770.
take on Box Office:			80
			280
			16.9
TOTAL EXPENDITURE:			8

PROFIT / (LOSS) (89.98)

Income:

BOX OFFICE takings **192**

- 82

!Metro Arts

Metro Arts Creative Development Festival Masterclass, Brisbane June 2007

Presenters *Thierry Fontaine and Robb Kelly* / ***Nigel Kellaway***

What were the main challenges of presenting the masterclass?

Despite having prior access to most of the participants' biogs, I could never be sure who exactly I would be working with for the week. Would they be communicative, open to suggestion, inquiring, friendly, demanding, selfish, obstructive, bright, imaginative, technically skilled?

So I came to the workshops intentionally unprepared. My task in running such a masterclass is not to prescribe one particular process or personal aesthetic. The participants made up an extremely diverse group, each bringing their own concerns, interests, skills and histories to the process.

So I brought 3 Cds - about 3 hours of music in a variety of styles: Bach cantatas and concerti, Beethoven piano sonatas, French Baroque instrumental music, numerous Italian Baroque arias, operatic scenes by Mozart, Puccini and Richard Strauss, Japanese pop music, Dean Martin standards, Tom Waits songs, Michael Nyman film scores, military band music, etc - all choices that the participants were unlikely to anticipate. I didn't necessarily intend to use this material. Indeed I never intended that this week would focus so strongly on music. But they all seemed to respond to it, and so I led them down that track. They listened to music, by-and-large foreign to them, in ways they hadn't considered before - structure, form, intention, historical precedent, ornamentation, the basic performative building blocks of loud/soft/fast/slow - and then built around all this with their own material.

I also brought copies of short texts chosen from 10 or so of my works over the past couple of decades - everything from Heiner Muller, Peter Weiss, Fassbinder, Paul Auster, Rilke and Edward Albee to the work of Australians who have more recently written specifically for my work. These remained mere tools that the participants could choose from at whim, to engender material, to edit and demolish or discard as they wished.

The first day was very much a "meet and greet" - finding out a little about each other. They took me sight-seeing around a small city block, filling me in on local anecdotes (which I suspect were largely bullshit!).

And then I proceeded with some quiet proposals, insinuations - quietly manipulative / provocative - some leading questions. Then I slowly pulled back over the week, waiting for them all to yawn, and then take the initiative themselves. Perhaps it was telling that the Friday "presentation" ended with me wandering off quietly for a piss - it was the participants' gig, and so I left them with their audience.

What were the successes of your masterclass?

The workshop was not product-oriented - it was about ways of thinking about form and structure. And so, though never planned, I was delighted when the participants responded so positively to my suggestion on Thursday morning that we should assemble a kind of presentation for a small invited "audience" in the last hour of Friday's session. It was to have no prior explanation or formal feedback.

Over the week we had devised a few "exercises" exploring words and sound, and a few staging structures - all pretty thin, but structures that seemed to suggest "promise". I knew that spending a couple of days devising a structure around this slim material would be an interesting exercise in developing work from very rudimentary building blocks, and exploring reasons and methods for decision making.

I was also keen to draw attention to the perhaps single common thread that runs through all my work - the relationships between audience, artist and material - where the "audience/guests" have almost as much presence as we "performers". I enjoy those moments in the theatre when we are unsure as to who is watching whom. The artists became kind of tour guides through the material. The ephemeral nature of this material was the absolute focus. There is no tangible product or outcome in this kind of process. But, alternatively, the "showing" was an artefact in itself. Invented in the moment on a set of flexible structures. It was an adventure for us all. Not starting from any dogmatic position - just what naturally and intelligently evolved in response to the material and the audience's reception of it.

Constructing the "showing" was mildly hilarious. Friday morning's rehearsal (for want of a better word) was very silly, and not particularly critical. But it permitted some attention to some visions, even though we all knew they could never be realised in a few hours. I, personally, was quite relaxed about it all. I was with a group of artists that were keen to "leap into the footlights" and not give a fuck - confident that they could continue their explorations with the assistance of some observers. People were making serious structural decisions on how some scant material could be presented. Directional decisions were made so quickly! And everyone seemed to grasp the suddenly evolving structures very quickly.

By 3.00pm on Friday we had all agreed that the format of the hour we had quickly assembled from improvisations and ideas over the week was a "dog's breakfast". But that was okay. We would serve that mess diligently in our "performance". The odd moment might shine. And we all might remember and reflect on that much later.

Eventually it was about surviving, inventing, faith in the decided structure. The strength of the music, and our shared knowledge of it, provided a bedrock on which we could afford to be a tad reckless. This was a security that enabled playfulness. What a relaxed and informative afternoon it was!

It all appeared haphazard, but it was not. If the structure is profound (ie, in this the case, the musical arias), then the embroidery around it can be apparently chaotic.

Were you satisfied with the participants' level of experience? Please explain.

As I've already said, it was a diverse bunch - some a good deal more experienced than others. But that was a "positive". It meant that we all had to carefully explain our thoughts as they developed over the week - there could be no assumed common language for us to retreat into. Friday's "outcome" was primarily a place for reflection by the participants. They now all move on in whatever direction they might be going. The week's work was intended merely as a detour. And I enjoyed my week with every one of the participants. They provoked me, and we laughed a lot. They dared to insist I explain myself. There were some mysterious notions we were trying to articulate, and we all got better at that as the week progressed.

How did you find working with Metro Arts?

An enormous pleasure! Excellent accommodation, attentive management, friendly studios, strong planning. And some warm friendships made.

Would you present another masterclass at Metro Arts?

Most definitely.

The evening work-in-progress showings.

The three evenings of works-in-progress that I attended were variously enjoyable. By sheer good fortune, the work I identified with and responded to most positively was that co-devised by one of my workshop participants, Kieran Swann. In other works I was appreciative of what they were endeavouring to achieve (often in very early stages of development). Some I was better qualified to offer feedback, than to others. I strongly commend the opportunities and resources that Metro Arts is providing to such a range of embryonic work.

In conclusion:

I look forward to any further opportunity to work at Metro Arts that might come my way - a chance to build on a relationship with the management, and with the artists associated with the organisation.

**Nigel Kellaway
15th July 2007**