The University of Adelaide
Faculty of Arts, Business, Law and Economics
Elder Conservatorium of Music

The Migration of Souls:
towards the creation of an immersive, music-based, socio-politically themed production

a dissertation with accompanying archival footage and notes
in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, University of Adelaide, takes the form of an exegesis accompanied by supporting creative material relating to a workshop showing of *The Migration of Souls,* an immersive, music-based, multi-art form work based on the journeys of displaced people.

The exegesis first situates the creative development of *The Migration of Souls* in the context of the exploration of new presentational forms for classical vocal concert performance, the management of working relationships within multi-art form work, and the socio-political background to the current Australian government approach to asylum seekers. The creative process for *The Migration of Souls* is then interrogated through a discussion of the complexities of creating socio-politically based work when representing the stories of others.

There have been significant developments in experimental approaches to theatre-making and presentation over the past century, and the performance of classical concert music is now beginning to emerge from the confines of the concert hall. *The Migration of Souls* creatively places the performance of classical vocal concert music within an immersive, multi-art form context, in the service of the over-arching socio-political theme.

A range of artistic responses to the refugee crisis is reviewed, along with academic and artist-led commentary on intentions and outcomes for refugee-inspired work. This research informs creative and ethical decisions which support both the authenticity and the aesthetics of *The Migration of Souls*. The dissertation concludes with commentary on managing audience compassion and empathy with a view to positive social outcomes.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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I acknowledge the courage and fortitude of all those who have been displaced from their homes, who seek asylum and have yet to find a place of safety.

The Migration of Souls – an outline

Scene One:
Audience members are welcomed into a cabaret-style performance space. A singer and guitarist perform a set of songs with themes of exile and displacement. After a few songs, there is an unexpected evacuation of the venue.

Transition One:
The audience, with performers amongst them, is led through a hazy, rubble-strewn space in semi-darkness to wait at an entry point. Others are waiting with them, some sleeping, or on their 'phones, or quietly playing instruments. All are asked to remove their shoes and given a number on a tag in exchange.

Scene Two:
The audience and performers enter the 'arc' — an enclosed space with a semi-circular roof covering and benches along the long sides — and are seated on both sides, facing each other. A series of scenes unfolds, involving music, dance and rear-projection onto the walls and roof of the arc.

Transition Two:
Prompted by shouted instructions in unfamiliar languages, the audience leaves the arc to wait in line in an enclosed area, with gravel on the ground and industrial fans circulating the air. As they are processed through this space, retrieving their shoes on the way, they are greeted by representatives of support agencies.

Scene Three:
The final space is one of warmth and hospitality, offering refreshments and music. There are opportunities for conversation and further debriefing, and the chance to take direct action alongside the support agencies in response to the issues and emotions raised.

INTRODUCTION

The Migration of Souls reflects two of the most personally significant aspects of my creative practice. Firstly, this production is an extension of my previous creative practice in extending the genre of Western classical vocal concert presentation, expanding the performance genre through the inclusion of other art forms and through modulating the performer/audience relationship. In addition, *The Migration of Souls* reflects my keen sense of social justice, offering an opportunity to explore the ways in which a work of art might engage its audience in real terms with one of the most compelling socio-political concerns of our time. It is my intention that the performance experience might enable an empowering of the audience to engage in real-world action towards positive social change.

The following exegesis begins with discussions of performance presentation style and aspects of working relationships, and background research into the theme of the work, before investigating some of the significant factors to consider when representing the stories of others. The creative process of *The Migration of Souls* is then interrogated in the light of this discussion.

The Migration of Souls – the creative genesis

The Migration of Souls began with both a creative and a socio-political provocation. The creative trigger was a work I came across in DVD form in a bookshop in Amsterdam. Part song recital, part intense personal drama, *Conversations at Rechlin* by François Dupeyron[1] is based on a true story and presents lieder (German classical art song) within a theatrical setting.

Set in a World War Two prison camp, *Conversations at Rechlin* portrays a singer and her accompanist as they perform a German lied at five o'clock each evening for the officer in command of the labour camp in which they are held. Through this daily ritual we observe the conflicts, the power imbalances and the evolving relationships between these three individuals, as Germany collapses outside the walls of the camp. The songs are given an unexpectedly passionate and profoundly emotional context, while the inner lives of those on both sides of the terrible events in Germany during World War Two are seen through a fresh

[1] "Francois Dupeyron," cineartistes.com, accessed January 31, 2023, http://www.cineartistes.com/fiche-Fran%E7ois+Dupeyron.html

and intimate perspective. Within the horror of the labour camp, the songs are the only moments in which the protagonists feel truly alive.

I found this theatricalisation of the concert performance intriguing. The subject matter spoke strongly to my own social conscience, and the performance of the lieder was emotionally powerful and resonant in a way that I had not previously experienced. The musical performances were deepened and enhanced by the theatrical context.

With the permission of François Dupeyron, I began exploring the possibility of recreating this work for an Australian audience. As I entered more deeply into the content of this work, beginning with creating a new English translation of the script, I was also increasingly aware of what would become the second provocation for creating *The Migration of Souls* — news coverage of hardships faced by those seeking asylum within Australia's borders. I began to consider the idea of extending the reach of *Conversations at Rechlin* to encompass the current refugee crisis and the response to asylum seekers within Australia. After much consideration, I decided that instead of producing an English-language version of *Conversations at Rechlin,* I would develop an original work.

I envisaged this new work as a music-based, multi-art form work, an extension of my previous creative practice in extending the genre of classical vocal music performance and inspired in part by my impression of the visceral nature of the performances of lieder in *Conversations at Rechlin*. In drawing awareness to the refugee crisis, I could also explore ways in which a work of art might engage its audience in real terms with one of our most critical contemporary issues.

At this early stage I envisaged that the new work would focus on successive waves of displacement, following the post-war diaspora through generations and across continents. The initial intention was that *The Migration of Souls* would make the journey from Second World War Germany through the establishment of Israel and political and social upheaval in the Middle East to present day Australia and our own recent arrivals.

The version of *The Migration of Souls* which eventually reached the workshop performance stage did not in the end reflect this early vision of a three-part odyssey of displacement. The creative process yielded many twists and turns, much was learnt during the process, and many creative decisions were edited, removed and added.

The title *The Migration of Souls* references the concept of the transmigration of souls, the belief held by many cultures that the soul passes from one body to another, or to a soul state, on death – in this case with a temporal connection to the displacement of a life from one country to another. The title also makes the obvious reference to migration; and with its reference to the soul, it seeks to undercut the dehumanisation of the other which has been so prevalent amongst government and media rhetoric surrounding the refugee crisis.[2]

The creative research process

My initial concept for *The Migration of Souls* presented me with an opportunity to 'dive in', as Queensland academic Brad Haseman describes it, to a rich exploration of creative and research possibilities. In his seminal 2006 paper "A Manifesto for Performative Research", Haseman suggests that 'many practice-led researchers do not commence a research project with a sense of "a problem". Indeed, they may be led by what is best described as "an enthusiasm of practice" […] They tend to "dive in", to commence practising to see what emerges.'[3] As I experienced during my own process, the questions emerge from the development of practice.

Adrian Palka, in discussing his approach to his own research and performance with the steel cello and bow chime, underlines the importance of using a combination of research methods. 'I have found that practical, historical and theoretical research have been mutually informing, and the awareness of provenance has allowed me to consciously direct and hone my performance through reflective practice.'[4] Palka also describes his artistic creation as an initially unstructured task, which begins with the act of open creative enquiry and requires the artist to gradually self-impose structures on the eventual output.

Similarly to Palka, my own experience is that creative practice rarely begins with a specific problem to be solved, and seldom ends up exactly where the practitioner envisaged. Rather, it is through the process of engaging with an initial idea and exploring connections, through

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[2] There is no intended reference to the John Adams work *On The Transmigration of Souls*, commissioned in response to the attacks on the United States of America in September 2001.

[3] Brad Haseman, "A Manifesto for Performative Research", *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy* 118 (2006):100, accessed February 2, 2023, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/1329878X0611800113

[4] Adrian Palka, "Improvisations towards an origin: the Steel Cello and the Bow Chime," in *Artistic Practice As Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice* [eds.] Mine Dogantan-Dack, M. & Graham Welch *(*Farnham, Surrey: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 234.

doing and experiencing, that an artist forges a pathway to creation and new knowledge. Keats described the ideal state of being for the creative act as Negative Capability – 'that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without an irritable reaching after fact and reason.'[5] The creative process is a pathway towards the unexpected, the unintended, the new.

Theatre academic and dramaturg Peter Eckersall describes this as a 'process-orientated method of working; the meaning, the intentions, the form and the substance… arise during the working process'[6]. Eckersall goes on to define 'experimental work as an unrestricted mode of research and development'.[7] It follows that, as Haseman suggests, specific initial research questions such as those used within qualitative and quantitative research often have minimal relevance within performance-based research. Haseman describes practice-led research as 'intrinsically experiential': it 'comes to the fore when the researcher creates new artistic forms for performance and exhibition.'[8] For me, the open creative genesis of *The Migration of Souls* meant that the creative development was situated initially within a thematic and artistic context, with questions to explore and concepts regarding structure and content emerging gradually during the explorative process.

As I 'dived in'[9] to the creative enquiry initiated by my concept for *The Migration of Souls*, a multitude of questions did indeed begin to arise – some immediately, others over time as the process deepened. Initially, I spent time undertaking research into the history and the present-day circumstances of the international refugee crisis, and into the Australian government response. I also sought to deepen my knowledge of responses by other artists to the current refugee situation. Haseman calls this process the 'artistic audit'. He describes this as 'essential for the practice-led researcher […] As researchers 'practise' and make […] work, it is essential they reach beyond their own labours to connect with both earlier and contemporaneous productions which contribute to the overall research context for their work'.[10] It was important to contextualize my own artistic practice within the wider landscape of similar artistic practice by other artists, as well as in reference to the trajectory of my own

[5] H E Rollins, *The Letters of John Keats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 193–4.
[6] Peter Eckersall, "Towards an Expanded Dramaturgical Practice: A Report on 'The Dramaturgy and Cultural Intervention Project' ", *Theatre Research International,* 31 no.3 (2006): 288, accessed February 1, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307883306002240
[7] Peter Eckersall, (2006), 293.
[8] Brad Haseman, (2006), 100.
[9] Brad Haseman, (2006), 100.
[10] Brad Haseman, (2006), 105.

previous work. In doing so, I considered methods of performance presentation from physical and immersive theatre practice as well as music-based performance.

I began the creative journey towards *The Migration of Souls* with a socio-political conscience and an artistic imperative, and a desire to combine the two to create an aesthetic and inspiring work. Along the way I found that, in order to extend my art form with an aesthetic vision and to achieve my intended audience outcome, while remaining cognisant of the ethical considerations surrounding the socio-political theme, three specific issues became paramount.

Firstly, I was keenly aware that as an artist with no personal experience of displacement or of seeking asylum I was seeking to explore an experience which belonged to others, not to me. How was I to balance the complexities of maintaining respect for and acknowledgement of the lived experiences and the intentions of others, while also creating a cohesive and compelling artistic whole which expressed my own directorial and socio-political intentions? Secondly, I was working with a group of diverse stakeholders, both artistic and from non-arts community support organisations. How was I to build harmonious and productive relationships which honoured the diversity of their contributions, while also retaining a unified artistic vision? And thirdly, how could I engage the audience with these challenging themes and arouse them to compassion and action, without being too didactic in my intentions or overwhelming the audience with the task?

As Haseman describes, these questions arose through the creative process, being brought into focus as the research and creative practice deepened. And as Palka experienced, the historical research, the artistic research and the practical creative practice have informed each other, and in combination have become much more than their single parts.

The Migration of Souls seeks to create a universal journey, one taken by the performers and audience together, informed by lived experiences and heightened by a multi-strand artistic aesthetic. The artistic team includes musicians, film and sound designers, set and lighting designers, actors and dancers, with additional stakeholders including individuals and support services in the migrant and refugee community. During the creative development of this work, and the writing of the following exegesis, I sought to find some answers to the three questions above.

The exegesis – an overview

The first chapter of the exegesis considers the development of my own creative practice in the extending the presentation of classical vocal music against a background of my opera and concert performance experience, and my work with physical and immersive theatre practitioners. The theatrical and presentational aspects of this work are situated within the historical context of an overview of developments in theatre performance from the beginning of the twentieth century, including mention of the work of Copeau, Grotowski and Artaud, and of the evolution of physical and immersive theatre.

The second chapter investigates approaches to managing working relationships within the growing practice of more collaborative and less hierarchical structures of creative process. The discussion examines recent research by practitioners including Alan Taylor, Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor, Adam Hyde and Luke Styles, and looks at a number of proposed working models for collaborative artistic relationships. Suggested approaches to aspects of artistic relationships such as communication, intention and decision-making are discussed, as well as the relative importance of creative process and performance outcome. Examples from my own early devised multi-art form productions illustrate this discussion.

From here, the discussion moves to socio-political and ethical considerations, along with the challenges of their application in the creation of artistic work. Chapter Three provides a brief overview of recent responses to the issue of refugees by the Australian Government, and of reactions to these decisions by non-government agencies. The chapter concludes with an outline of Australian artistic responses to this situation, laying the ground for a deeper discussion in the following chapter of the varying ways in which artists have chosen to react to these issues.

Chapter Four discusses of some of the complexities of creating socio-political work when representing the stories of others. Bandura's model of moral disengagement provides a lens through which to view the intention of artists to humanise refugees and asylum seekers through their art. The ethics of telling someone else's story, concerns regarding the reduction of an individual to a single experience and the risks of compassion fatigue are discussed, with reference to the work of Canadian practitioner Julie Salverson, as well as to commentary by Susan Sontag, Rea Dennis, Alison Jeffers and Paul Bloom. A discussion of the effects of

empathy raises significant questions as to the most effective ways in which to engage an audience with challenging material. Specific examples of artistic work are discussed.

Chapter Five then examines the creative process of *The Migration of Souls* in some detail, with reference to the preceding commentary. The chapter includes a description of the content of the main artistic strands of the production and the reasons for those creative choices, and concludes with a discussion of empathy and compassion and their impact on real-world actions.

The creative artefacts attached to the dissertation consist of archival footage of the workshop showing of *The Migration of Souls* accompanied by performance information and notes for the viewer.

CHAPTER ONE:
Towards a new style of presentation for classical vocal concert music

1.1 Introduction

The auditorium darkens. There is a rustling all around us, of expectation, of the last-minute silencing of mobile 'phones and whispered conversation, of anticipation. Then the lights shift, and we are transported into another world. We listen, we watch, we feel, we think, we seek to leave our daily lives for a moment and lose ourselves inside the music.

At interval, we buy a glass of wine from the bar, we chat with our fellow audience members — we might join the long queue for the ladies' toilets. Sometimes we talk about what we have heard in the concert hall – sometimes we chat about our day, our work, our children, where we will go for dinner. Then the interval bell rings, and we re-enter the auditorium to take up our place at the 'fourth wall', hoping to be re-immersed in the music on the stage and forget our personal concerns for a while.

Concert halls throughout the Western world attest to the history and the comfortable familiarity of this concert-going experience within our society. But alongside this traditional approach to concert making, other pathways to creating musical experience are emerging. The discussion in this chapter will consider a number of twentieth century innovations in theatre presentation, in particular those currently described as immersive theatre, alongside my own development of the presentation of Western classical vocal concert music to include aspects of these theatrical approaches.

1.2 Theatre – experimenting with alternative approaches

In the early twentieth century, in the wake of world war and revolution, of sweeping social and economic change and of increasing awareness of other cultures, alternative approaches to Western theatre making, as indeed to many art forms, began to emerge. Artists of all practices questioned the capacity of the art forms of preceding times to adequately express the intensity of the contemporary experience, and they began to experiment with alternative styles of expression. Visual artists launched into experimentation with impressionism, pointillism, cubism and surrealism; composers abandoned sonata form and traditional harmonic rules to explore atonality and serialism; and theatre makers began to question the tradition of narrative realism presented in proscenium arch theatres.

In the early 1900s, Jacques Copeau abandoned the traditional theatres of Paris to design his own theatre without a proscenium arch. He trained an ensemble of skilled actors to work collaboratively, developing a simpler, more naturalistic style of acting that did not rely on elaborate costumes and stage settings.[11] Copeau aimed to create ensemble co-operation amongst his actors, and he trained them to a high level in a range of skills to enable them to express the meaning of the plays with fluidity and integrity.[12] Instead of adulation of individual actors, the emphasis was firmly on the ensembles' skilled ability to fully express the subject matter of the play.

Largely through the work of his nephew Michel Saint-Denis, Copeau's influence has spread far beyond the village in Burgundy where his first ensembles of actors learnt and practiced their art. Saint-Denis took part in some of Copeau's early ensemble training and went on to become Copeau's company manager. He then created his own actors' ensemble, later moving to London where he set up the London Theatre Studio and directed the Old Vic. This work in turn influenced the creation of similar models at the National Theatre School of Canada and the Juillard School in New York. Towards the end of his career, Saint-Denis joined Peter Brook and Peter Hall as founding directors of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), setting up an ensemble training program that today continues its legacy in The Other Space at the RSC.[13]

As Mark Evans expresses in his discussion of French theatre ensemble tradition: 'Copeau's and Saint-Denis' legacies are profound and extensive, so much so that their influence, their practices and their pedagogies have become an almost invisible part of the fabric of our contemporary theatre scene. […] So much of what is now taken for granted – devised performances, theatre and mime – had its origins in their experiments and working methods.'[14]

[11] Mark Evans, "The French Ensemble Tradition: Jacques Copeau, Michel Saint-Denis and Jacques Lecoq", in *Encountering ensemble,* ed. John Britton (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 111-125.
[12] Mildred Allen Butler, "Jacques Copeau as a theatrical innovator", *Western Speech* 17 no. 4 (1953), 231-239, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10570315309373614
[13] Mark Evans, (2013), 111-125.
[14] Mark Evans ibid, (2013), 119.

Key amongst accepted antecedents of contemporary theatre are the seminal figures of Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski.[15] For Artaud, words were not enough – he sought a complete sensory experience that might engender the full emotional response he yearned for in a theatrical performance, to match what Robert Leach describes as 'the intense truths of his life.'[16] Artaud saw the involvement of all of the senses as crucial to the theatrical experience, rather than merely the intellectual and emotional response to language. He advocated for theatre to embrace the meaning of every element it used, including music, dance, physical action, lighting, set and props.[17]

Where Artaud's ideas regarding the language of theatre were based mainly in theory, philosophy and personal experience, Polish director Jerzy Grotowski's theories found expression in a series of theatrical productions that challenged traditional concepts. Grotowski's 1967 manifesto 'Towards the Poor Theatre' describes a method which invites the audience and actor to join together in the work of self-examination. Grotowski experimented with staging his works in a variety of environments, continually working towards a more intimate relationship between performers and audience:

> 'By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion.'[18]

Contemporary twenty-first century theatre practice now sees artists from multiple disciplines working together, creating hybrid performances in non-traditional spaces — in disused warehouses, in outdoor spaces, in shopping centres and galleries — anywhere, in fact, that can act as a source of inspiration for artists and audience. And the subject matter of these performances is often also contemporary, providing a commentary on socio-political issues of the current time and place.

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[15] For an example, see Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013*),* 30.
[16] Robert Leach, *Makers of Modern Theatre: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004), accessed February 1, 2023, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/adelaide/detail.action?docID=200349.
[17] Pierre Marie Georges, "Dramatic space: Jerzy Grotowski and the recovery of the ritual function of theatre" (Masters thesis, McGill University at Montreal, 2002), 2, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.proquest.com/docview/305461215?pq-origsite=primo&accountid=8203
[18] Jerzy Grotowski, T. K. Wiewiorowski and Kelly Morris, "Towards the Poor Theatre", *The Tulane Drama Review* 11 no. 3 (1967): 62, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1125118

My own early musical and performance training was firmly ensconced within the traditions of proscenium arch opera and concert recital performance. As a newly minted mezzo-soprano passionate about the potential for emotional communication and catharsis contained within the operatic form, I stood entranced in the wings of Her Majesty's Theatre in Adelaide, observing and learning from my more senior colleagues. I trod the boards with excitement and awe as the emotional enormity of the stories I was a part of telling was carried to the audience in wave upon wave of glorious music, supported by evocative set and lighting designs and carefully crafted costumes, and channeled by dozens of singers and orchestral musicians.

When I moved to England and graduated to larger principal roles, I had the opportunity to perform sometimes in venues that had not been designed for opera performance. In touring venues such as the stately homes, art galleries, churches and museums of England for example, there were no lighting rigs, no orchestras and minimal set designs – sometimes there wasn't even a stage. Often we performed in very close proximity to the audience, with only a small musical ensemble or a piano to accompany us. I realised that as a performer, there were many skills to learn from this intimate performance style — and I also realised that there were many benefits to this kind of personal, 'cut down' performance. There were budgetary gains — clearly this style of performance was a great deal less expensive to mount. We singers needed to be much more aware of the authenticity of our performances, of staying 'in the moment', of responding to each other and to the audience in a more meaningful and natural way. No place here for operatic over-acting! Without the additional support of stage lighting, elaborate costumes and props, or a chorus and orchestra, we needed to rely on our own abilities to communicate our character's story and emotions with sincerity and truthfulness. In turn, our audiences often told us that their experience and understanding of the story and the characters had been deeper and richer. Almost unfailingly, they mentioned the excitement of their proximity to the vibrations of the classical voice in full flight. In these small touring productions, we appreciated the more personal, intimate connection we experienced with our audiences.

I was given further insight into the possibilities of experimenting with vocal music performance presentation styles during my time as a member of the award-winning UK vocal

group The Shout[19]. The Shout was a choir of singers from a variety of genres, including gospel, jazz, blues, contemporary classical, opera and early music, with several accomplished improvisers including a classical Tamil singer. With The Shout, as well as performances in concert halls and galleries, I performed in a variety of decidedly non-traditional venues, including an abandoned Cornish tin mine, on scaffolding in the centre of a busy roundabout in Bath, and on the rooftop spaces of the Southbank Centre in London. I was fascinated by the immediacy and heightened resonance of these performances, and the enthusiastic reception they engendered in the audiences.

As I began to expand my performing experience, working with a new generation of theatre maker-presenters in England, I began to learn about theatrical approaches which sought to interrogate traditional forms of presentation. My early forays into non-traditional performance included several productions with Stans Cafe[20], a Birmingham-based theatre company strongly influenced by organisations such as London's Théâtre de Complicité[21] and the Sheffield-based experimental theatre company Forced Entertainment.[22] Simon McBurney, Complicité's founder, is an alumnus of L'Ecole Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris. In turn, Jacques Lecoq had worked closely with Copeau's son-in-law, actor and director Jean Dasté, taking on Copeau's ideas to the point of identifying himself as his 'indirect heir.'[23] Through performing with Stans Café, I therefore found myself in a direct line to the theatre innovations and experimentation of Jacques Copeau almost a century earlier.

The theatre-makers I was working with sought to remove the divide between actor and audience, and to create a more personal, intimate performing style. Rather than the traditional theatre hierarchy, they embraced a more collaborative working environment. They questioned the presentational norm of using the audience as the 'fourth wall' beyond the actors' playing space, they experimented with minimal set and costuming, they presented in non-traditional performing spaces, and they often devised their own work as an artistic team.

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[19] "The Shout", accessed February 1, 2023, https://theshout.org/about/
[20] "Stans Cafe", accessed February 1, 2023, http://stanscafe.co.uk
The Stans Cafe production 'Of All The People In All The World' is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.
[21] "Complicité", accessed February 1, 2023, http://www.complicite.org/company.php
[22] "Forced Entertainment", accessed February 1, 2023, http://forcedentertainment.com
[23] "L'Ecole Jacques Lecoq", accessed November 23, 2022, http://www.ecole-jacqueslecoq.com

I was intrigued by the possibility of classical vocal music performances also exploring new modes of presentation — ways of deepening the connection, heightening the immediacy, between audience and performers. I saw in these approaches the possibility of working to elicit the audience response to an artistic experience described by Australian writer Charlotte Wood: 'the blow to the nervous system, the sensation freed from its mechanical conveyance.'[24]

1.3 'Physical' and 'immersive' theatre

At the time, the actors I was working with in England tended to describe their work as 'physical theatre', a term which, like the more currently in vogue 'immersive theatre', proves surprisingly difficult to define with any sense of specificity. Physical theatre tends to describe performance that is removed from the reliance on text-based narrative and requires its actors to express themselves primarily through physical action. The aim of physical theatre, in the words of South African arts academics Coetzee and Munro, is 'to challenge the dominance of a literary and verbally driven theatre'.[25]

Physical theatre is often characterised by the combination of interdisciplinary art forms — that may include mime, mask, commedia dell'arte, contemporary dance and clowning — along with performance presentation styles that challenge the proscenium arch tradition. Actors often work in groups to create their own material — Helena Baard notes that physical theatre 'places great emphasis on collaborative practice and makes use of a process similar to devised theatre'[26], while Claire Canavan, in discussing the work of The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre in California, describes the schools 'central emphasis on the actor-creator and on collective creation'. [27]

Canavan also takes care to describe the origins of the work of the Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre as firmly based on the work of Copeau and Lecoq amongst others, citing the school's 'adherence to principles of ensemble and stylistic eclecticism' as well as 'the pride

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[24] Charlotte Wood, *The Luminous Solution*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2021), 131.
[25] Marié-Heleen Coetzee & Marth Munro, "Embodied knowledges: Physical theatre and the physicality of theatre", *South African Theatre Journal* 24 no. 1 (2010): 11, accessed November 21, 2022.
[26] Helena Baard, "Verbatim-physical theatre as feminist protest theatre in South Africa", *South African Theatre Journal* 34 no. 3 (2021): 180, accessed November 21, 2022.
[27] Claire Canavan, "Created by the Ensemble: Generative Creativity and Collective Creation at the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre", *Theatre Topics* 22 no. 1 (2012): 50, accessed November 21, 2022.

of place accorded to acrobatics, mask, commedia, clown, and storytelling'.[28] Canavan describes the actor training as being 'based on several key assumptions: that movement is the basis of theatre, the actor is a creative source of material, and the actor's creativity can be engaged through explorations of different styles, or dramatic territories'[29] — approaches which also resonate with the influence of the theatrical methods disseminated through Copeau and Lecoq.

Work described as 'immersive theatre' can also often be seen to incorporate many of these performance aspects, in particular the challenge to traditional proscenium arch performance presentations. If I were to attempt to draw a distinction between the terms, I would suggest that while 'physical theatre' most consistently refers to the performance practices of the actors, the term 'immersive theatre' tends to refer more directly to the audience experience, suggesting a style of performance in which not only is there no 'fourth wall', but the audience is contained within the performance space and is often actively involved.

Academic discussion of immersive theatre, scarcely more than a decade old, tends to frame immersive theatre in terms of audience experience and mobility. Josephine Machon, English researcher and practitioner in contemporary performance, proposes three central features for immersive theatre — 'the involvement of the audience', 'a prioritisation of the sensual world' and 'the significance of space and place'.[30] London theatre lecturer Adam Alston frames immersive theatre as 'an experience-centred style of theatre'[31], saying: 'Although immersive theatre is notoriously hard to define, I see it as a practice premised on the production of experiences, where participating audiences are frequently invited to interact and move within installation-like environments.'[32]

Over the past decade or so the term 'immersive theatre' seems to have become a popular descriptor for any theatrical production that works outside the traditional proscenium arch paradigm. As Rachael Blyth says: 'Although it is also referred to as site-specific, site-responsive, promenade, interactive, or environmental theatre, none of these terms holds the

[28] Canavan, (2012), 50.
[29] Canavan, (2012), 50.
[30] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013*),* 70.
[31] Adam Alston, "The Promise of Experience: Immersive Theatre in the Experience Economy", in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance* [ed.] James Frieze (Liverpool: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 248.
[32] Alston, (2016), 245.

particular cultural connotations—the 'so hot right now'—of the 'immersive'.[33] Gareth White, lecturer and director at the London Central School of Speech and Drama, describes immersive theatre as 'a widely adopted term to designate a trend for performances which use installations and expansive environments, which have mobile audiences, and which invite audience participation.'[34] I would suggest that 'immersive theatre' often also contains characteristics of the 'physical theatre' approach, in particular the use of multiple performance media instead of or alongside spoken text.

'Immersive theatre' can also sometimes be site-specific – although the term is often used rather loosely to describe a performance in a space that is not a traditional performance space, rather than a work created specifically for the space in which it is performed, which is my own interpretation of this term. Two personal examples illustrate my use of the term. Firstly, I sang in a performance by The Shout that took place on the rooftops of the South Bank Centre in London. The multiple performing spaces on offer and the different perspectives therefore available to the audience suited the content of the work well, but as the work was not created with these spaces in mind, I would not describe the work as site-specific. Conversely, I was a lead creative for a multi-art form work (song, video, visual art, spoken text) which the audience experienced as a promenade through a number of spaces within the Victorian prison inside Lincoln Castle. I would describe this as a site-specific work — not only did the subject matter connect specifically with the history of the prison, but each element of the work was created for a specific space within the building. This work, which I described at the time as a 'site-specific promenade', would no doubt today be described as 'immersive'.

Less significant to me than the dissection of the terms currently in use to describe these new approaches to theatre performance, is the intention and effect of these approaches. I would agree with Geraldine Harris that 'both immersive theatre and relational and socially engaged practice can be seen as symptomatic of the drive towards a fundamental blurring of boundaries between artistic fields occurring throughout the twentieth and twenty-first

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[33] Rachael Blyth, "The Fourth Wall and Other Ruins: Immersive Theatre as a Brand", in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance* [ed.] James Frieze (Liverpool: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 194.

[34] Gareth White, "On Immersive Theatre", *Theatre Research International 37 no.3 (2012)*: 221, accessed November 21, 2022, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/theatre-research-international/article/on-immersive-theatre/9B7E65D36308389C77542D00E6C8845F.

centuries.'[35] A key intention of creators of twentieth and twenty-first century experimental theatre, whether it be described as immersive, physical, site-specific or other, is the removal of any perceived barriers of performance practice that stand between audience and performers. Through the employment of a number of artistic and sensory pathways, practitioners hope to affect audiences more powerfully, creating a production that 'addresses multiple senses simultaneously, rather than addressing itself primarily to conscious thought'[36]. As James Frieze, Liverpool-based lecturer in drama and theatre studies, describes it:

> 'The gift and the challenge of participatory performance are that it entreats us to appreciate the value of thinking of experiential, expressive, and critical faculties as inseparable, calling on us to experience from first- and third-person, insider and outsider perspectives, often in the same instant.'[37]

1.4 A multi-genre approach

While the presentation modes of Western classical concert performance have been slower to adopt change than has the practice of theatre, there are increasing signs of a shift in approach. In recent times, some concert presentations of classical music have begun to include video footage within performances. An example is *The Galileo Project* created by the Toronto-based baroque orchestra Tafelmusik,[38] celebrating Galileo's first demonstration of his telescope through music from his time played before a backdrop of present-day footage of galaxies and star clusters. Another example is the recent presentation by Musica Viva of Schubert's *Winterreise*, setting performers Allan Clayton and Kate Golla inside a half-rectangle of screens on which the paintings of Fred Williams ebbed and flowed.[39] The juxtaposition of music from different genres and cultures is also becoming more prevalent, as in Nigel Westlake and Lior's *Compassion*.[40]

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[35] Geraldine Harris, "Differences in Degree or Kind? Ockham's Razor's *Not Until We Are Lost* and Punchdrunk's *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable",* in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance* [ed.] James Frieze (Liverpool: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 273.
[36] White, (2012), 228.
[37] Frieze, (2016), 4.
[38] "Tafelmusik.com", accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tafelmusik.org/shop/recordings/galileo-project-cd-dvd
[39] "A Winter's Journey", Musicaviva.com.au, accessed November 26, 2022, https://www.musicaviva.com.au/concert-season/past-seasons/concerts-2022/a-winter-s-journey/
[40] Australian Music Centre, "Compassion", accessed January 31, 2023, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/work/westlake-nigel-compassion

As I have continued to develop my creative practice, my work has become increasingly focused on breaking down traditional classical vocal concert music presentation models, expanding the performance genre through the inclusion of other art forms and through modulating the performer/audience relationship. I have sought to use non-traditional venues, such as the Treasury Tunnels beneath the city centre of Adelaide for *Orpheus Underground.* I have intertwined spoken poetry with the music, included video projection and written scripts which situate the music within a contemporary context, for example in *Lifelines,* a work considering the experience of exploring Antartica created for the contemporary performance space within The Lab with its fifty square metres of LED screens. Wherever possible I have sought to use these additional artistic strands to link the historic material to contemporary lived experience. I rarely schedule an interval, so as to allow the audience to experience the atmosphere uninterrupted by external concerns. I have also begun to gravitate towards a more intimate style of performance, such as the one created for the coffee lounge in the basement of the Freemason's Hall for *Household Names* [41]. I appreciate the immediacy and versatility of chamber music performance, which in bringing the audience and performers into closer proximity to each other can offer an experience that feels more personally connected.

I have also sought more often to base my work on themes of social justice, connecting traditional and historic musical material with contemporary socio-political issues. I have found that removing the physical barriers between audience and performers becomes an important step in fostering a sense of shared experience and shared humanity, providing a common vantage point from which to consider potentially challenging subject matter. Working with artists across varied art forms offers a multiplicity of sensory strands and experiential pathways through which the audience can access the material, and non-theatrical venues or settings often provide a rich and heightened additional layer of experience.

In working with sensitive and potentially challenging material, I have needed to be more aware of the potential audience experience of the immersive and physical theatre methods I might choose. The employment of immersive theatre practices does not inevitably lead to increased engagement and connection for the audience, or to a more enriching experience. As English researcher and theatre practitioner Rose Biggin suggests, 'Immersive experience is not guaranteed by certain performance types or atmospheres and an audience member is not

[41] Details of these examples of my work can be found at https://www.variouspeople.com.au/productions

automatically active and empowered as soon as they step into an immersive space.'[42] Gareth White warns that 'The implication of the term 'immersive theatre' is that it has a special capacity to create this kind of deep involvement,'[43] while in fact 'immersive theatre can only achieve what other forms of performance can achieve: a relation in which the event of a work of art occurs between its material being and the person who encounters it.'[44]

As the discussions in Chapters Four and Five explore further, the issue of how to engage and connect with audiences when working with socio-political themes in an immersive environment is complex. There can be a fine line between profound engagement with, or alienation from, the issues being addressed. The central audience experience can often be focussed on the 'procedures and processes'[45] of their involvement, rather than their personal connection to the content. Conversely, if the personal involvement is too unsettling, an audience member may be completely bound up in their own emotional and physical experience rather than more deeply connected to the situation of those represented in the work. And as Chapter Four discusses in more detail, there are important issues at stake regarding the representation of the stories of others when dealing with sensitive socio-political themes.

In creating *The Migration of Souls*, my aim has been to include aspects of an immersive theatre approach that might engender an audience experience such as this described by Josephine Machon:

> 'By exploiting the imaginative and experiential possibilities that exist in live performance, immersive theatres can trigger intense responses to the emotional and philosophical content of the work, the narratives that texture it and themes that underpin it.'[46]

In working towards the creation of this experience, an important consideration is to ensure that the primary elements — in the case of *The Migration of Souls*, the music and the socio-political message at the heart of the work — are not diluted or overwhelmed by the layering of artistic art forms and by audience interaction.

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[42] Rose Biggin, *Immersive Theatre and Audience Experience: Space, Game and Story in the work of Punchdrunk,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 20-21.
[43] White, (2012), 225.
[44] White, (2012), 233.
[45] White, (2012), 233.
[46] Josephine Machon, "On Being Immersed: The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding*",* in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance* [ed.] James Frieze (Liverpool: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 32.

The Migration of Souls begins in traditional cabaret performance setting, and moves into a promenade/immersive experience. As in chamber music performance practice, the environment is intimate, and at times the music is at the centre of the experience. The music represents additional genres and cultures to those within the traditional Western classical canon. Elements of physical theatre are present — there is minimal separation between performers and audience, and the music is enhanced by film, soundscape and contemporary dance. I would describe *The Migration of Souls* as existing between and across genres — music-based, immersive, physical theatre. The discussion in Chapter Two will now turn to examine aspects of the working practices involved in leading the creative team, a group of artists from a variety of artistic practices and performance approaches, in the creation of *The Migration of Souls*.

CHAPTER TWO:
Working practices within collaborative artistic models

My initial leadership approach to the creation of *The Migration of Souls* was an idealistic one — to develop a collegial working environment in which each artist felt enabled to contribute creatively and the project moved forward as a collaborative communal act. I envisaged that this style of working would echo the creative intention of *The Migration of Souls*, with a group of disparate individuals coming together to create a new community, much as author and artist Paul Carter describes: 'To work collaboratively, passing the shuttle of creative vision back and forth, in a way that advances or changes the pattern, is to imagine community.'[47]

Inevitably, my idealised version of the creative working process needed to adapt to the real-world environment of the rehearsal and development studio and the disparate individuals involved, as well as to the imperative of my creative vision for the project. I found I needed to adjust my modes of working relationships consciously and continually as I engaged with a variety of artists and as the project progressed through different stages. The development of *The Migration of Souls* involved working creatively over a long period of time with artists from different disciplines, and the process heightened my awareness of the need for conscious leadership practices that took into account the differing natures of each artistic relationship and the role of creative decision-making as the process unfolded.

2.1 What is collaboration?

In the traditional opera paradigm of my early performing experience, as in traditional theatre, there are clearly defined roles within a hierarchy of decision-making leading to the director. Designers of sets, costumes and props work within specific departments, supervising teams of technicians who work to fulfil the design briefs. Lighting and soundscape designers and any other creative artists involved will contribute within their own skill set, with minimal crossover or creative discussion amongst artists in different fields.

In an artistic team brought together as an ensemble, the decision-making structure is much flatter than in the traditional pyramid. Often, as with *The Migration of Souls*, while there is a

[47] Paul Carter, *Material thinking: the theory and practice of creative research* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Publishing, (2004), 5.

single creative authorial voice making the final decisions, the entire team, regardless of their creative area of expertise, will engage in creative discussion, and individual artists are often invited to offer ideas across any of the creative disciplines within the team.

As discussed in Chapter One, artists working in an immersive or physical theatre environment often tend to work within this ensemble style of approach. The word 'collaboration' has become a frequent descriptor for this style of artistic endeavour, particularly when the work involves artists across varied art form practices. London-based composer Alan Taylor[48] suggests that:

> 'the term "collaboration" is often used indiscriminately to describe a great variety of different working relationships, and that this wide usage can act as an impediment to the better understanding of the nature of the relationships which […] develop.'[49]

The concept of creative collaboration, of the forms it can take and the types of working relationships the term describes, proves to be complex, and commentators have offered a number of alternative terms to define some of the specific forms of collaboration they describe.

Collaboration is described by American academics Kathleen Yancey and Michael Spooner as implying 'a conscious mutuality by which individuals of somewhat equal standing work in conjunction with one another toward a unified purpose.'[50] They go on to make a distinction between what they describe as 'collaborators' and 'cooperators', defining the terms by the degree of integration between artists. For Yancey and Spooner, 'collaborators achieve a critical level of congruence in understanding, in purpose, and in other intellectual dimensions of a project'[51]. In contrast, 'cooperators organize themselves differently: clear structure, division of roles, division of knowledge, efficiency — "hierarchy" in its neutral or positive dimension'.[52]

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[48] Alan Taylor, "'Collaboration' in Contemporary Music: A Theoretical View", *Contemporary Music Review* 35 no.6 (2017): 562-578, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07494467.2016.1288316

[49] Alan Taylor, (2017), 564.

[50] Katherine Blake Yancey and Michael Spooner, "A Single Good Mind: Collaboration, Cooperation, and the Writing Self", *College Composition and Communication* 49 no.1 (1998): 46, accessed February 1, 2023. http://www.jstor.org/stable/358559

[51] Yancey & Spooner, (1998), 52.

[52] Yancey & Spooner, (1998), 52.

I would suggest that, in a production such as *The Migration of Souls* where the art forms are often intertwined, a mix of both of Yancey and Spooner's approaches is useful. Artists might be understood to be working as co-operators when in the individual stage of their process, each creating within their own practice according to the creative brief. Yancey and Spooner's definition of collaboration would come into play when the artists came together to share their contributions and to discuss together how they might interweave each element into an artistic whole.

English composer Sam Hayden and academic Luke Windsor explore a series of case studies of Hayden's collaborative work in music composition, offering their own descriptors for different modes of collaboration they identify between the composer and the performers. [53] They name these relationships as 'directive', 'interactive' and 'collaborative' [54], and they describe their three modes of musical collaboration thus:

'directive': the composer aims to completely determine the performance through the score, and shared ideas are limited to issues such as instrumental realization.

'interactive': the composer and performers engage in creative discussion and negotiation. The process is more interactive, discursive and reflective, but the composer makes the final decisions.

'collaborative': the development of the music is achieved by a group through a collective decision-making process. There is no singular author or hierarchy of roles.

I recently performed in a workshop series and concert performance of new music by several South Australian composers, within which were examples of each of the three types of musical collaboration outlined by Hayden and Windsor. The initiative was led by an established and experienced composer, who created a new arrangement of one of her earlier works, re-arranged for the three performers involved. The minimal discussion about the score mainly involved the performers asking clarifying questions, and it was clear that the composer had made strong creative decisions that were ready to be carried out by the performers — in Hayden and Windsor's terminology, a directive approach. In a more

[53] Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor, "Collaboration and the Composer: Case Studies from the end of the 20th Century", *Tempo* 61 no. 240, (2007): 28-39, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4500495
[54] Hayden & Windsor, (2007), 33.

interactive approach, an emerging composer brought partly finished scores to the early workshops, requesting commentary and advice from the performers regarding compositional decisions such as tempi, range and approaches to arrangement for the particular combination of instruments. This composer then completed and altered their score in response to the performers' suggestions. A third composer wished the performers to be involved creatively from the beginning, providing a theme and framework but asking the performers to contribute musical material and structural suggestions, and then providing a graphic score for a part-improvised performance. This approach most closely reflects Hayden and Windsor's definition of collaboration, although the composer did make most of the final decisions.

The process of creating *The Migration of Souls* involved different parts of the model suggested by Hayden and Windsor at different stages of the process. The creative framework was provided by me as the artistic director. Individual artists then engaged in their own artistic practice — creating film clips for specific pieces of music, building soundscapes, choreographing the dance piece, refining the set design – before bringing these back to me for creative discussion, in what might be termed by Hayden and Windsor as the more 'interactive' part of the process. However, this process did not necessarily happen in a neat linear fashion. *The Migration of Souls* has been created over time. Intense bursts of creative activity have been followed by periods of reflection and revision, and often I have worked in isolation, or with just one or two other artists at a time.

British music academic Alan Taylor outlines two fundamental aspects of artistic working relationships: the imaginative generation of creative material, and the editing or decision-making process of crafting the material into a finished form. He suggests that the majority of working relationships share just one or other of these tasks, rather than both. Taylor offers the terms 'co-operative' and 'consultative' as more appropriate to describe these relationships, rather than collaborative.[55] For Taylor, in consultative relationships only the process of making creative suggestions is shared, while in co-operative relationships the decision-making about the creative material is shared. He suggests that the term collaboration should only be used when both imaginative/creative tasks and decision making are shared.

[55] Alan Taylor, (2017), 566.

Drawing on Taylor's terminology, the journey of *The Migration of Souls* has been largely a consultative process. Within the framework I provided, I sought creative suggestions from the team of artists, who then created material in response to my brief. The first drafts of creative material were generally created in isolation and then brought back to me, and sometimes to a group of other creatives, for comment and adjustment. My artistic decisions were made in consultation with the artists, and within technical parameters — but they were my decisions. However, aspects of the process might be described by Taylor as truly collaborative. For example, the set design was entirely the idea of the designer. We worked together to finesse some of the detail, but the concept and execution were hers, and my artistic decisions going forward were nuanced by the desired effect of the interwoven artistic material within the set design.

Taylor acknowledges that 'there will certainly be cases where the participants move between the different types of working relationship as they carry out different phases of the project on which they are working'.[56] He has this in common with Hayden and Windsor, who suggest that more than one of their three categories may exist within a project at different stages of the working relationship. As I found with *The Migration of Souls*, different stages of the creative process require differing balances between creative generation and artistic decision-making. The pathway towards my hoped for artistic and intentional community proved to be varied and at times challenging.

The following section considers three aspects of artistic working relationships in more detail, looking at how these factors have played out in my own working practice: expectations about working practices, transparency of intentions and nuanced decision-making.

2.2 Expectations regarding working practices

Artists within a collaborative working ensemble frequently need to combine two seemingly contradictory elements of their artistic persona: strong individual artistic creativity, alongside an ability to work as part of a creative whole. In order to facilitate a positive working experience, the director of an ensemble creative process needs to ensure that individual artists are willing to be involved in a robust creative conversation rather than to work only individually in their own area of expertise. As Saint-Denis makes clear, this style of working

[56] Alan Taylor, (2017), 568.

practice is viable not only when an individual artist is willing to take on creative initiative and responsibility, but also 'as long as he or she [is] ready and able to merge his personal qualities into the ensemble.'[57]

Composer Luke Styles describes his approach to the creative process for his projects as a series of stages[58], reminiscent of those I undertook with *The Migration of Souls*. First, he brings his key ideas to initial meetings for discussion and exchange. Individual artists then respond by creating within their own fields, before regrouping in order to use the individual work as the starting point for the joint creative work. Styles says that deciding at what stage in the process he brings in particular artists is key to the depth of collaborative relationship he wishes to engender. The later in the process he invites an artist to contribute, the less collaborative and more directive he perceives the relationship. In reference to the creation of his work *Handspun,* Styles says:

> When a performer in particular has underestimated the level of creative involvement they expect to have or when I have expected more creative input from a performer than I have received, then this is where difficulties in my working relationships have sometimes emerged.[59]

I encountered a situation similar to the one Styles describes when I assembled a group of highly experienced artists to co-create a work I called *The Red Pinafore*, based on research I had undertaken with the daughters of 1970s cross-cultural marriages between white Australian women and Chinese men. Through my work with the physical theatre practitioners in the UK, I was accustomed to devising work as an artistic team, and I invited the artists to enter into creative discussions and to offer ideas for creative material. However, a couple of the team members were highly experienced traditional theatre professionals who proved to be uncomfortable with my approach. The creative process was therefore made challenging by the divide in working practices, which I had not foreseen, between artists who were accustomed to working in hierarchical theatrical environments and those accustomed to cross-disciplinary creative discussion. Although the creative outcome was positive, the process was at times uneasy, and I was disappointed by the diminished role that joint creative

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[57] Mark Evans, (2013), 1.
[58] Luke Styles, "Handspun, The Role of Collaboration and Embodiment as Compositional Process—A Transdisciplinary Perspective", *Contemporary Music Review* 35 no. 6 (2016): 616, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07494467.2016.1282598
[59] Luke Styles, (2016), 617.

discussion took within the shaping of the work.

To foster positive and unified team relationships, it is useful to define and agree on work practices and expectations at the outset, and to continue to foster dialogue and exchange throughout the course of the project. Approaches often need to be adjusted according to the differing personalities and habitual working styles of the artists involved, and conversations about role delineations and responsibilities can be just as critical as those about artistic content and form. However, while open communication is an important part of the process, it does not inevitably lead to seamless working relationships. Each artist enters the collaboration with their own set of expectations, gleaned from their previous working experience, and this needs to be respected and considered when leading the artistic team.

As I found during *The Red Pinafore*, challenges can arise when artists brought together within the same creative team expect different working styles, in this case the structure of the traditional theatre world versus open creative dialogue across disciplines. This can make it difficult for creative dialogue to take place in the way that the project leader envisages, resulting in a challenging process. Hayden and Windsor also underline the importance of shared expectations about working styles between collaborating artists[60], and the difficulties which can arise when artists are reluctant to move beyond their habitual styles of working:

> 'The roles of participants are often predetermined by their "separate" artistic disciplines and can be a real hindrance to the success of the collaborative artistic situation. The fashionable rhetoric of the "innovative", "boundary-breaking" and "cross-disciplinary" may well be contradicted in practice when pre-existing roles are reified and inflexible.'[61]

I experienced elements of this particular challenge during the process of creating *The Migration of Souls*. The film maker, a talented and experienced practitioner, was accustomed to working as sole independent artist, and unused to adapting his ideas for a multi-art form work. He was keen to see his films presented exactly as he had envisaged, and unwilling to compromise his ideas. Conversely, the soundscape artist, who joined the team late in the process, was very familiar with working in an interdisciplinary ensemble model. He created

[60] Hayden & Windsor, (2007), 37.
[61] Hayden and Windsor, (2007), 39.

drafts of the soundscapes in response to my creative brief, and worked with me on refining the results, open to adjusting and adapting to optimise the soundscape's contribution to the artistic whole. Each of these working relationships needed to be negotiated on its own terms, according to the artist's expectations, the stage of the creative process, and my own vision of the creative outcome.

2.3 Transparency of intentions

An act of artistic collaboration is often entered into in the hope of yielding creative riches beyond that which a single artist might achieve alone. Paul Carter, analysing a series of collaborations between two artists of different practices, observes that such collaborations 'required the artists to believe that images and texts could combine to create a third apprehension of reality different from what either could achieve on its own.'[62] For Carter, as for many artists, 'creative collaborations… make possible a new conversation. This occurs in the second cross-weave of thought precipitated by reflection on their relation with one another.'[63]

The prospect of rich creative immersion with other artists in the hope of discovering deeper meaning through the creative cross-weave can be very appealing for an artist. However, the act of joining together to work as a group also involves negotiation and potential conflict, both within and between individuals. As discussed earlier, an individual artist needs to moderate their personal balance between the sovereignty of their own artistic practice and the need for a cohesive artistic approach. In addition, a collaborative approach to creative work can involve dialogue with a number of different arts practitioners, each of whom may bring with them a different habitual working style as well as a different set of beliefs about how the form and content of the creative work should best progress.

Conflict and disagreement can be a healthy part of a robust artistic process, and if the airing of opposing viewpoints is handled with respect and curiosity, the creative potential can often increase. However, when working with socio-political themes, additional sensitivity is required. Socio-political material can have highly charged and sometimes personal meanings for participants. Just as it is important to discuss assumptions and intentions regarding artistic

[62] Paul Carter, (2004), 12.
[63] Paul Carter, (2004), 5.

roles and processes, so is it important to engage in open conversations about intentions regarding the presentation of the subject matter of the work — particularly when dealing with sensitive socio-political themes.

The issues surrounding refugees and asylum seekers that are at the heart of *The Migration of Souls* were felt very deeply by many of the artists involved. Some of the artists had personal experience of displacement, or had family members who had experienced dislocation from their homes due to political and social turmoil. Others held strong political views on the subject. During the creative development I devoted extended periods of time to discussion amongst the creative team about some of the complex issues involved. Although in some ways at the time this felt counterproductive — we had a limited amount of workshop time and a great deal of artistic work to cover — I felt that it would not have been possible to proceed productively with the creative work while strong personal feelings about the issues continued to simmer away unacknowledged. The shared discussions also provided a thematic context in which I could situate my decisions regarding the artistic material. These extended periods of conversation allowed the team to feel heard in airing their own views, and also provided a forum for my own perspective and for the reasons for my artistic choices to be explained and contextualised.

I found that the provision of space for an airing of opinions so that all felt heard and acknowledged did seem to result in a more cohesive team approach. Each individual knew that their own views or experience were understood. They also had a more nuanced understanding of my own over-arching approach and my desired effect for the production. It is quite likely that this task was eased by the fact that I had selected a team based not only on their specific artistic skills but also on similar personal values.

Unanticipated differences in intention can sometimes cause significant unease and conflict within an artistic team. Alan Hyde writes of the unintended and sometimes unwanted results which can flow from collaborative actions, reminding us that: 'As collaborative action can have more than one intent, it can also have more than one repercussion.'[64] In joint projects between groups where there have been historical difficulties resulting in a lack of trust, there

[64] Hyde, Adam. et al., "What is collaboration anyway?", in *The Social Media Reader,* [ed.] Michael Mandiberg, (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 58. Accessed January 19, 2022, https://hdl-handle-net.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/2027/heb.31970

can be widely differing notions of what a positive outcome from the collaboration might look like, and what the process should entail.

In an example offered by Hyde et al. of an Israeli/Palestinian collaboration titled 'Liminal Spaces', it was the word 'collaboration' itself which was a source of contention. For the Israeli and Palestinian groups involved, who had experienced historic conflict with each other, the term 'collaborator' carried a significantly negative bias, with unhappy associations to their own conflict as well as historical references to the Second World War. The word 'collaboration', when used at the outset of the process, introduced contention and a sense of unease amongst the participants, producing the opposite result from that to which the project aspired.[65]

While producing a performance of the cantata *Stari Most* for the Come Out Festival[66] in Adelaide, I experienced for myself a situation in which my own unrecognised assumptions about intentions reduced the effect of my intended outcome. *Stari Most* tells the story of the destruction of the Mostar Bridge during the civil war in the 1990s in former Yugoslavia. I was liaising with a Bosnian woman who was acting as cultural consultant for the work and as a connection between the production and the Adelaide Bosnian community. This intelligent, funny and passionate woman spent a meeting one day regaling me with stories of her life in Sarajevo during the siege, sharing personal anecdotes about everyday things such as nappies and vegetable gardens which brought to vivid life my imagination of what it might have been like to live through that terrible time. I invited her to visit a music rehearsal, to share some of her stories with the choir and orchestra so they too could gain a deepened personal understanding of the experiences behind the work they were performing.

At the rehearsal in question, instead of using her platform to share the stories I had heard, and had thought would be so beneficial for the artist participants to hear, the cultural consultant gave an impassioned political explanation of the conflict, naming those she held responsible for the atrocities she had witnessed and calling for them to be brought to justice. My personal intention for the musicians had been for them to gain a greater connection and empathy with

[65] Adam Hyde et al, (2012), 58.
[66] *Stari Most*, Come Out Festival, Her Majesty's Theatre 2011.The festival, for children and young people, is now titled 'Dream Big'. *Stari Most* was composed by Richard Chew, with a libretto by Peter Cann. See "Various People Inc", accessed February 1, 2023, http://www.variouspeople.com.au

the subject matter of the production through hearing of the daily experiences endured by so many in the former Yugoslavia. I had not given enough thought to the fact that the Bosnian woman's intention would quite rightly be informed by her own traumatic experiences and cultural knowledge. Consequently, those in the rehearsal room did not share in the touching personal anecdotes I had heard, instead being slightly distanced by the excess of unfamiliar political rhetoric. In retrospect, it would have been beneficial had I explained to the cultural consultant my hopes for increased personal connection with the issue for the performers, and what my intention was in asking her to speak – and then had asked whether she would be willing to share her stories in that context. As will be discussed further in Chapter Four, it is all too easy to assume a shared intention, and to unwittingly employ the experiences of another in the service of one's own intentions.

2.4 Nuanced decision-making

In an ensemble creative process lead by an artistic director— that is, where creative generation is shared but decision making is not — a significant aspect of the leadership role lies in maintaining a balance between individual creative sovereignty and decision-making for the artwork as a whole. The task of the artistic director in this context is to outline the artistic and ideological parameters for the work, to oversee the multiple artistic strands as they develop, and to make final creative decisions in response to both the creative content generated and the over-arching imperatives of the work. The creative tension between respecting individual artistic contributions and optimising the final creative result remains key to the decision-making process, and to the role of artistic director in multi-art form work.

Peter Eckersall defines theatrical dramaturgy as 'a confluence of literary, spatial, kinaesthetic and technical practices, worked and woven in the matrix of aesthetic and ideological forces.'[67] For an artistic director leading the creative process of devising a multi-art form work, one might add additional artistic strands such as music, dance and film. The skill set required is again described aptly by Eckersall: 'This has created the need for creative specialists who keep track of the complicated flow of ideas, technologies and forms

[67] Eckersall, Peter, "Towards an Expanded Dramaturgical Practice: A Report on 'The Dramaturgy and Cultural Intervention Project'", *Theatre Research International* 31 no. 3 (2006):283. Accessed 28 December 2021. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307883306002240.

associated with such work.'[68]

Australian dancer and choreographer Lloyd Newson, founder of London-based contemporary dance company DV8, has spoken about this balance within his own working practices. He welcomes the dancers' openness to improvising and to sharing artistic responsibility for the creation of material, and also affirms his own authorial role as director: 'ultimately I do make the decisions, set exercises and edit the material.'[69] It is through Newson that the multiple voices are focused.

In the process of making strong artistic decisions for the work as an integrated whole, it is important for the artistic director to be seen to respect the individual contributions of the artists involved. As Canadian director Julie Salverson says: 'In the context of collective creation… the suggestion that our egos can simply be forgotten is at best naïve.'[70] It is easy to unthinkingly undermine the worth of an artist's work when caught up with the vision for the work in its entirety. I still remember, many years ago, spending all night in a recording studio in London and driving up the motorway in the early morning to the rehearsal studios in Birmingham with the song recording triumphantly in my hand, only to be told unceremoniously that it had been decided that an instrumental version was a better option and the song was no longer required. This may indeed have been the best decision for the creative work, but there may also have been a more validating method of conveying the decision to the artist. As Paul Carter suggests: 'it is important that the handing over happens in the right way. There is an ethics of scattering and recombination.'[71]

There is a sensitive balance to find between respecting individual creative sovereignty and making strong decisions for the artwork as a whole. Paradoxically, the art of creative decision-making also involves being open to the discomfort of indecision, and to allowing the process to follow a course of action and reaction which continually reveals new relations between creative elements. One of the skills of the artistic director is allowing enough time in

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[68] Peter Eckersall, (2006), 287.
[69] Janet Lansdale, "Ancestral and Authorial Voices in Lloyd Newson and DV8's 'Strange Fish"', *New Theatre Quarterly* 20 no. 2 (2014): 121, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-theatre-quarterly/article/abs/ancestral-and-authorial-voices-in-lloyd-newson-and-dv8s-strange-fish/89B8F460BEACE8A431E8F79B5C8BEF1B
[70] Julie Salverson, "Performing Testimony: Ethics, Pedagogy, and a Theatre beyond Injury", (Doctoral Diss., University of Toronto, 2001): 15, accessed February 1, 2023, https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/15898/1/NQ58602.pdf
[71] Paul Carter, (2004), 183.

the process for meanings to emerge before beginning to impose final decision-making. A mark of an open and rigorous creative process is the freedom of a project to grow and to shift focus as new information — new creative approaches, emphases, juxtapositions — becomes available.

The artists I invited to work with me on the project are people whose work I respect, and whose values I feel are in alignment with the socio-political intentions of the work. I valued their creative input, and I wished to allow enough time for the uncertainties of the creative process to yield potentially unexpected creative possibilities, as different ideas emerged and collided within the creative discussion. In this I followed what Eckersall describes as a 'process-orientated method of working'[72]. Having initiated an artistic brief, I wished to allow time for the substance of the work to develop from within the creative process itself.

It is not easy to find the balance between allowing the creative process time to flourish, and deciding when to step in and make directorial decisions as to how the material will be used, in what juxtapositions, and where in the intentional arc of the journey each individual artefact might belong. I recently worked as associate director alongside a well-known and highly experienced director during the creation of a new work. To me, this director seemed to allow the flow of the creative process an enormous amount of time and space, listening to discussion between the creative team, waiting to hear artistic contributions, and giving very little direction as time passed and the short rehearsal time began to disappear. However, when he finally began to make decisions, they were strong and absolute, the work took shape remarkably quickly, and the performances were a resounding success. There are no guaranteed formulae for this type of artistic practice, and there are as many ways to approach the development of new artistic works as there are artists to lead them. My intention for my own work is to seek to address any conflicting intentions as they arise, and to craft the artistic elements into a whole which is respectful of each artist's individual perspective and contribution, while unifying the individual contributions into a cohesive work which expresses my own overarching intention.

[72] Peter Eckersall, (2006), 288.

2.5 Process versus outcome

Process and outcome are often discussed as separate parts of a collaborative project. As Joseph Harris, Yancey and Spooner's editor, asks of their discussion of literary collaboration, "What is it that people really value about collaboration: the process? or the sort of discourse it produces?"[73] Clearly, the artists involved in a collaborative process all desire a successful artistic outcome. Emily Kilpatrick, discussing Ravel's approach to collaboration in the context of composing his operas, observes that 'the definitive test of a successful collaboration must be the strength of the work itself, not how sweet and amicable the working relationships between its creators prove to be'[74]. However, my experience of *The Migration of Souls* leads me to agree with Paul Carter that, for many artistic collaborators, 'the process of making the work becomes inseparable from what is produced.'[75] For a work based on socio-political themes which can trigger heightened personal responses, an uncomfortable process will not lead to an outcome that feels successful for all stakeholders, regardless of the artistic quality.

The process of collaboration can often provide artists with opportunities they cannot access when working alone: a shared creative discourse, exposure to differing perspectives, art forms and approaches which can trigger new creative responses, and increased professional exposure for each individual artist's work. This process can be immensely rewarding when an interactive crossing of artistic boundaries occurs, and the process results, as Luke Styles puts it, in 'the blending together of art forms and the disappearance of barriers between them'.[76]

However, a rewarding collaborative process does not necessarily lead to a positive artistic outcome. Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor evaluated the outcomes of several of Hayden's composition projects on the basis of both process — whether the collaboration was perceived to be successful in terms of the interpersonal relationships – and outcome — whether the final product was judged to be aesthetically successful.[77] Interestingly, they found that a positive collaboration was not a determiner of a successful artistic outcome, and conversely

[73] Yancey and Spooner, (1998), 53.
[74] Emily Kilpatrick, *The operas of Maurice Ravel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 31. Accessed February 1, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316339237
[75] Paul Carter, (2004) 11.
[76] Luke Styles, (2016), 25.
[77] Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor, (2007), 38.

that an unsatisfying collaborative process could still lead to a successful artistic outcome.

My experience with *The Migration of Souls*, which included in its team individuals who had personally encountered the issues we were addressing, was that a successful outcome would not have been possible without a successful process — by which I mean a process that was inclusive, validating and enriching for the team members. The sensitivity of the themes required that I maintain respect for the lived experience of those whose stories were being shared. For me, the process demanded continual awareness of and respect for the perspectives and experiences of all stakeholders, and acknowledgement of their intentions and contributions whether or not they went on to be included within the final work.

Peter Copeman and Rebecca Scollen write reflectively on their experience of staging an adaptation of Brian Castro's *After China*.[78] A post-production cast debrief discussion revealed that there had been some small but significant gaps in the creative process which inhibited the quality of the outcome. In assembling a cast of Australian performers with both Chinese and European cultural backgrounds, it appears that the creative team had assumed that the actors with Chinese backgrounds could act as authorities on the Chinese culture, when in fact 'all cast and creatives [had] lived in Australia for most or all of their lives and have the national culture more or less in common.'[79] As one of the cast members pointed out in the post-show discussion: 'It isn't the job of the Chinese performers in the cast to act as the dramaturgical resource on Chinese culture'.[80]

Copeman and Scollen explain that these assumptions meant that the use of Chinese cultural artefacts within the set design was not properly authenticated, and the use of accents within the play was inconsistent and not always culturally appropriate. This resulted in some cast members feeling uncomfortable that they might be associated by the audience with accidental misrepresentation of culture, and with cultural stereotyping and appropriation.

The *After China* debrief discussion resulted in a heightened awareness amongst the creative team of the importance of consultation and communication, particularly when dealing with

[78] Peter Copeman & Rebecca Scollen, "Of training, tokenism and productive misinterpretation: Reflections on the After China project", *Journal of Australian Studies* 24 no.65 (2000), accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14443050009387583
[79] Copeman & Scollen, (2000), 40.
[80] Copeman & Scollen, (2000), 40.

cross-cultural issues.

> 'In the case of *After China,* the main areas of cast concern seem to have arisen where the processes of collaborative communication and negotiation either broke down or, in the case of the design elements, were not fully entered into in the first place, mainly for lack of time.'[81]

It is indeed the case that many arts organisations are poorly resourced and therefore short on rehearsal time. It can be difficult to decide which corners to cut. The experience of the *After China* cast, and my own experience of the time spent in deep discussion with the creative team for *The Migration of Souls*, underline the importance of process when dealing with sensitive socio-cultural themes.

The Migration of Souls has been a complex project that has often asked arts practitioners to extend beyond their usual practice. My working relationships with individual artists have needed to be adaptive, depending on the nature of the art form involved, the creative stage of development within the project, and the accustomed working style and underlying intentions of each artist. Paul Carter eloquently describes the nature of collaborative artistic work in the context of migration and the creation of community:

> 'It is a technique for making sense of gaps, interruptions and unpredictable crossovers. And the refinement of such techniques has a political unity: it gives the other voices and stories of migration a creative role in the weaving, and reweaving, of the federal text […] The archetypal migrant, eternally wandering in single file from one place to another, is replaced by a group, a multiplicity of individuals, whose back-and-forth discourse at that place redefines who they and their environment are.' [82]

It is inspiring to imagine the creative work of *The Migration of Souls* in this context – to see the coming together of artists and of the community of individuals and organisations gathered around the creative process as a metaphor for the social aspiration of removing cultural, social and national boundaries and hierarchies. The thematic material of the journeys of asylum seekers resonates strongly with Carter's image of the individual artist as a migrant in a new artistic world, in which the scaffolding is co-created and a new community is built.

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[81] Copeman & Scollen, (2000), 42.
[82] Paul Carter, (2004), 5.

For the work together to be harmonious, an awareness of individual experiences and intentions, an acknowledgement of each individual's contribution, and the implementation of sensitive, nuanced decision-making, are a good place to start.

CHAPTER THREE:
Australian Government asylum seeker policy — an overview

The Migration of Souls takes as its central theme the experience of refugees, seeking to illuminate the personal journey of those forced to leave their homes and to make often perilous journeys in search of safety and asylum in foreign countries. As Australian academics Michael Balfour and Nina Woodrow describe, Australian refugee-related performance is 'often an attempt to direct itself to the broader socio-political context, to seek affirmation, understanding and acceptance and/or to protest.'[83] This chapter provides a brief background to the refugee crisis and Australian Government policy responses to the arrival of asylum seekers at Australian borders, before considering aspects of responses by Australian artists, preparing the ground for a more detailed examination of artistic approaches to this issue in Chapter Four.

3.1 International obligations

Australia is a signatory to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as to the UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention and the subsequent 1967 Protocol, meaning that Australia has undertaken to adhere to international standards in the protection of asylum seekers and refugees. Adopted by the United Nations in 1948, the Declaration of Human Rights was an international response to the horrors of the Second World War, created in the communal desire to prevent such wartime atrocities being repeated. [84]

The 1948 Declaration requires that all individuals seeking asylum in another country are given the opportunity to have their cases considered. When Australia, in contravention of its obligations as a signatory to the UN Declaration, exercises its border controls to deny entry to individuals, it also denies those individuals the opportunity to have their request for protection considered. In departing from its obligations under the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Australia is underlining the validity of the concerns expressed by Hannah Arendt that the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the subsequent UNHCR Refugee Convention and Protocol would prove largely ineffective in their aims to protect the rights of displaced people.

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[83] Michael Balfour and Nina Woodrow, "On Stitches", in *Refugee performance: practical encounters*, Michael Balfour [ed.], (Bristol: NBN International, 2012), 19.
[84] "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", United Nations, accessed December 27, 2021, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

Hannah Arendt's influential critique of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[85] draws attention to a contradiction she saw as inherent in the document. Arendt claims that the Declaration presupposes a human being to be a member of a nation state, and therefore a citizen to whom the rights of that state are available. If an individual is removed from a political context, there is no longer a higher authority in a position to guarantee that individual their human rights. An individual denied entry by a nation state remains in a limbo in which, deprived of citizenship, they exist beyond any guarantee that their human rights will be upheld.

Arendt herself had experienced statelessness in Europe during the Second World War, fleeing from country to country in the face of anti-Semitic persecution. Although the Declaration implies that human rights are independent of any other authority, the experiences of the many stateless people and refugees following the First and Second World Wars and later conflicts attest to the denial of human rights protection faced by those who are excluded from citizenship. There can be no guarantee for human rights outside a political state.

Arendt denies the comfort of the assumption that 'the right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself'.[86] As Arendt reminds us, the mere fact of humanity is not a sufficient appeal for respect and protection. The experiences of the Second World War revealed that:

> 'The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human.'[87]

At the heart of the 1951 Refugee Convention is the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of a refugee to a country where their life or their freedoms are threatened. Amongst the terrible events during the Second World War which prompted the creation of the 1951 Refugee Protocol, with its intended protections against refoulement, is the voyage of

[85] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (1973).
[86] Hannah Arendt, (1973), 298.
[87] Hannah Arendt, 1973), 299.

the SS St Louis.[88] In May 1939, nine hundred and thirty-seven predominantly Jewish passengers departed Germany on the SS St Louis, holding visas for Cuba which supposedly guaranteed them safe passage and a new life. While they were at sea, the Cuban visa regulations were changed, and by the time they arrived on the other side of the Atlantic, Cuba would not allow them to disembark. The US authorities also refused them entry, and after a futile journey up the East Coast of the United States of America, the SS St Louis returned to Europe. Many of the passengers later perished in concentration camps.

The experiences of the passengers on the SS St Louis demonstrated that refusal of entry to those seeking refuge is tantamount to refoulement. Without an offer of asylum, displaced people have few options but to return to a place of danger. As Arendt feared, and as recent Australian Government policy has demonstrated, the UN protocols have failed to guarantee rights and protections to those who are denied national citizenship.

3.2 Australian Government asylum seeker policy – an overview

Since the early 1990s, Australian Federal Governments have developed increasingly harsh policies in response to the arrival by boat of asylum seekers in Australian territorial waters. Successive governments have not only created barriers to applying for Australian citizenship, but have also introduced indefinite detention as an alternative to returning to countries where people fear they are in danger.

In 1992, in a response to an increase in refugee boats arriving from Cambodia, the Keating Labor Government introduced the Migration Reform Act, stipulating mandatory detention for any individual trying to enter Australia without a valid visa. Detention centres were operated in a similar manner to prison systems, and were regularly sited in remote and isolated locations, such as the Woomera and Baxter detention centres in South Australia. Detainees had minimal privacy and were routinely denied access to telephones and other forms of communication. In 1997 the management of Australia's detention centres was contracted out to Australian Correctional Services, a decision which elicited accusations of secrecy and lack

[88] Robin Mullins, "The SS St. Louis and the importance of reconciliation", *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 19 no. 4 (2013), accessed February 1 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263916181_The_SS_St_Louis_and_the_importance_of_reconciliation The story of the SS St Louis has been widely represented by artists, including in the 1976 movie 'The Voyage of the Damned' (https://www.britannica.com/topic/Voyage-of-the-Damned) and more recently in the novel 'The German Girl' by Armanda Lucas Correa (https://www.armandolucascorrea.com).

of transparency, and concerns regarding the consequent risk of harsh and inhumane treatment going undetected and unreported.

The Howard Liberal government introduced the Border Protection Legislation Amendment Act in 1999. The powers to detain those arriving in Australian territory by boat were extended, in addition allowing immigration officials to board and control suspected IMAs[89] even before they had entered Australian waters.

In 2001 some disturbing events involving asylum seekers attempting to enter Australia by boat precipitated even tougher legislative change. In the first of these, a boat was witnessed in distress en route to Christmas Island.[90] Left to endure a life-threatening storm overnight, the boat was intercepted the following day by a Norwegian vessel, the *Tampa.* In accordance with the internationally accepted mariners' humanitarian code[91], the captain of the *Tampa* ordered that the several hundred mostly Afghan refugees be rescued from their troubled vessel and taken aboard. There ensued a stand-off between the Norwegian ship's captain and the Australian authorities, as the Australian Government ignored requests from the *Tampa* to enter Australian waters and bring the asylum seekers to safety. When the *Tampa* did in fact enter Australian waters, citing ill-health of the refugees, the ship was boarded by Australian SAS troops and prevented from proceeding to Christmas Island. After several tense days, the Australian authorities transported the asylum seekers from the *Tampa* to the Nauru detention centre for processing, from where some were taken in by New Zealand, while others remained indefinitely in offshore detention.

A few weeks later, during the lead up to the 2001 federal election, then Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock claimed that asylum seekers on a boat designated as SIEV 4[92] had threatened to throw their children overboard as a ploy to secure their rescue. The claim was repeated by Defence Minister Peter Reith and Prime Minister John Howard. A later Senate Inquiry found that there was no evidence that any children were at risk of being thrown overboard, and that the government's own orders to the Australian Navy had contributed significantly to the danger in which the asylum seekers found themselves. [93] Former Australian diplomat and

[89] IMA is a Government acronym for Irregular Maritime Arrivals
[90] Tony Kevin, *Reluctant Rescuers*, (Canberra: Union Offset, 2012) 52.
[91] Australia is a party to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) 1974.
[92] SIEV is a Government acronym for Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel
[93] Tony Kevin, (2012), 97-8.

government adviser Tony Kevin gave evidence to the Senate Inquiry, and also wrote about the incident in his self-published book *A Certain Maritime Incident: The Sinking of SIEV X*. According to Kevin, the SIEV 4 had, on orders from Canberra, been towed in circles for twenty-two hours with the increasingly desperate asylum seekers on board. The Navy photographs described as depicting children who had been thrown overboard by their parents were actually women and children being rescued from the sea after the unseaworthy boat had started to sink during the Australian Navy's lengthy period of towing.[94]

Then in October 2001 an asylum seeker boat bound for Christmas Island, later designated by Tony Kevin as SIEV X, foundered and sank with the loss of 353 lives. Scrupulous investigation by Kevin and others posed serious questions about the absence of Australian rescue attempts for the passengers, and raised the possibility of government misconduct in the deterrence of asylum seeker sea voyages.

These incidents at sea were used by the Howard Government to reinforce their public information strategy, designed to persuade the Australian public that Australia's national sovereignty was under threat from increasing numbers of people attempting to enter via boat, and that people smuggling was a dangerous and growing international business[95]. Re-elected on their message of taking strong action in the face of border security threats, the new 2001 Howard Liberal Coalition Government immediately set about introducing a series of laws that became known as the Pacific Solution, providing a new framework for dealing with asylum seekers. One of the most significant changes was the excision of islands including Christmas Island, Ashmore Island and the Cocos Islands from the Australian migration zone (Migration Amendment [Excision from Migration Zone] Act 2001)[96]. The islands excised were the most common destinations for boats carrying asylum seekers, and the new government legislation meant that any arrivals to these islands were now seen by the Australian Government as excluded from their rights under international law, therefore having no right to apply to Australia for asylum.

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[94] Tony Kevin, *A Certain Maritime Incident: The Sinking of SIEV X,* (Victoria: Scribe, 2004), 115.
[95] Tony Kevin, (2004), 21-22.
[96] Parliament of Australia, "Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Bill 2001", accessed 31 January 31, 2023,
https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bId=r1413

In 2012 the Gillard Labor government declared that any person arriving in Australia by boat without a valid visa would be taken to the Pacific island of Nauru or to Manus Island, Papua New Guinea for processing, even if they had arrived in Australia and immediately applied for asylum. In an ironic repeat of the circumstances of the SS St Louis more than seventy years previously, asylum seekers arrived at Christmas Island that winter to discover that the laws had been changed while they were at sea. Australia now refused entry to anyone arriving by boat, and the asylum seekers were forcibly taken to offshore detention centres on Nauru or Manus Island. The following year, Kevin Rudd hardened this offshore processing approach by announcing on the 20th July that 'As of today, asylum seekers who come here by boat without a visa will never be settled in Australia.'[97] Instead, they would be sent to Papua New Guinea for processing, and be settled there if found to be genuine refugees — this despite evidence that Papua New Guinea harboured 'serious and ongoing daily human rights abuse''[98].

Once elected in 2013, the Abbott Liberal Coalition Government introduced their Sovereign Borders policy, 'characterised by a new language of warfare and a new policy of secrecy'.[99] Operation Sovereign Borders was designed by the Australian Government to be a military-led border security operation committed to combatting people smuggling and protecting Australian borders. In accordance with this policy, boats are turned back in direct contravention of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and those in offshore detention are denied resettlement in Australia even if they are found to be genuine refugees.

3.3 Reactions to Australian Government policy

The human rights committee of the United Nations has found that Australia's indefinite detention of individuals known to be refugees is unlawful,[100] being incompatible with Australia's international treaty obligations. Non-government organisations such as Amnesty

[97]"Rudd slams door on refugees", Sydney Morning Herald, July 20, 2013, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.smh.com.au/national/rudd-slams-door-on-refugees-20130719-2qa5b.html
[98] Refugee lawyer David Manne quoted in "Rudd slams door on refugees", Sydney Morning Herald, July 20, 2013.
[99] Jennifer Rutherford, "Washed Clean", in *Migration by Boat: discourse of trauma, exclusion and survival*, ed Mannick, Lynda, (Berghahn Books, 2016), 105.
[100] "United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights April 18 2016", accessed February 1, 2023, https://uploads.guim.co.uk/2016/05/17/CCPR-C-116-D-2233-2013-English-cln-auv_(1).pdf

International[101], GetUp![102] and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre[103] regularly disseminate statistics and reports about conditions in the detention centres and lobby for changes in government policy, supported by prominent public figures such as human rights lawyer Julian Burnside[104]. Detailed reports describing the abuse of refugees and the shocking conditions on Manus and Nauru have been released to the public.[105] In February 2020 the International Criminal Court found that Australia is in breach of Article 7(1)(e) of the Rome Statute, because the conditions on Nauru and Manus Island constitute cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. This has been met with renewed calls by Australian NGOs for the Australian Government to agree to resettlement offers from countries such as New Zealand and the United States for the individuals who remain in offshore detention.[106] Investigative journalist James Button reports that between 1992 and 2011, the federal government's 'network of detention centres was subject to 74 inquiries from parliamentary committees and bodies such as the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the United Nations.'[107]

The policies of exclusion enacted by Australian Governments over the past two decades have been supported by a powerful media strategy, with journalists increasingly denied access to detention centres, and detention centre staff forbidden from speaking about the conditions they witness. Refugees and asylum seekers are routinely styled as potential terrorists or greedy economic migrants, posing threats to Australian national security and threatening jobs and lifestyles. Fear of uncontrolled arrivals is encouraged, and the prejudice in some quarters of the Australian population against Middle Eastern Muslims is leveraged[108]. James Button summarises the rhetoric of the then Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton:

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[101] "Amnesty" accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.amnesty.org.au
[102] "Get Up", accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.getup.org.au
[103] Since opening in June 2001, the ASRC has become one of Australia's leading non-government organisations providing aid, advocacy and health services for asylum seekers in Australia. "Asylum Seeker Resource Centre", accessed February 1, 2023, http://www.asrc.org.au
[104] "Julian Burnside", accessed February 1, 2023, http://www.julianburnside.com.au
[105] "Human Rights Law Centre – Four Years Too Many", accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.hrlc.org.au/reports/2017/7/31/report-four-years-too-many-offshore-processing-on-manus-island-and-nauru
[106] "ICC ruling should prompt Australian Government to accept New Zealand resettlement option", accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/icc-ruling-should-prompt-australian-government-to-accept-new-zealand-resettlement-option/
[107] James Button, "Dutton's Dark Victory", *The Monthly* (February 2018): 1-30, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2018/february/1517403600/james-button/dutton-s-dark-victory#mtr
[108] Tony Kevin, (2004), 22.

> ‘Dutton has also spoken of “unprecedented security threats from terrorists, extremists and criminals who seek to exploit migration pathways to citizenship for their own ends”. He has said it was a mistake to let Lebanese Muslims into the country in the 1970s. He accused refugees of both languishing on the dole and taking Australian jobs.’[109]

Arguments raised by Australian critics against the asylum seeker detention system include that the harsh conditions in detention centres are re-traumatising an already desperate population, that this treatment violates international treaties to which Australia is a signatory, that the punitive policies diminish Australia’s standing in the international community, and that the system is an unnecessary cost to the Australian Government. [110] There has been considerable grassroots community action taken in support of detainees, including visits to detention centres, demonstrations and petitions to government. For example, a recent and prolonged community campaign has finally seen a Sri Lankan refugee family return to their Queensland town community.

A brief summary of this individual case serves as an eloquent illustration of the inhumanity and expense of Australian Government asylum seeker policy. Nades and Priya Muruguppan met in Australia, both having arrived via boat from Sri Lanka, seeking asylum. They settled in the central Queensland town of Biloela, where over several years they had two children and became integrated into the local community. Without warning, the family was taken into custody by the Australian Border Force during a 5am raid on their home in March 2018 and kept in a detention centre in Melbourne until June of that year, when they were found ineligible to stay in Australia. They were mid-flight to Sri Lanka when an injunction against their removal was granted and they were diverted to Christmas Island. Here the family was again held in detention, this time as the only residents of the detention centre, which was reportedly opened and staffed at a cost of approximately $30 million for this sole purpose. During their detention in Christmas Island, two of the family members were flown in chartered planes to Perth hospitals, suffering illnesses their supporters report were caused by the harsh detention conditions. The family was then transferred to community detention in Perth, before being granted temporary visas, bridging visas, and finally, with the 2022 change

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[109] James Button, (2018), 23.
[110] See, for example: “Julian Burnside”, accessed February 1, 2023, http://www.julianburnside.com.au; “Amnesty” accessed December 6, 2021, https://www.amnesty.org.au; Tony Kevin (2012).

of Federal Government, permanent visas. During the four years of their detention, the Biloela community campaigned vigorously for the family's return to the town, demonstrating through the strength of their campaign the strong bonds made by the Muruguppan family in their new home. Without this campaign it is likely that the family would have been deported.

The Muruguppan family are four individuals amongst many who have suffered at the hands of Australian Government asylum seeker policy. In 2016 more than 2,000 incident reports from the detention centre on Nauru were leaked, and were published by the Guardian[111]. The reports contain distressing accounts of physical privation, physical and sexual assault, and self-harm. In late 2022, more than a thousand asylum seekers remain in detention in Australia[112], over one hundred of them offshore on Nauru, testament to the statement by Oxford academic Patricia Owens that 'Refugees reveal the limits of any assumed continuity between "man" and "citizen" in the system of nation-states and in the related concept of human rights.'[113]

3.4 Responses by Australian artists

Australian researcher Tom Burvill points to one of the results of excessive government secrecy surrounding the offshore processing system: 'those in detention were effectively rendered faceless and voiceless to the majority of the Australian population, their actual faces and voices as well as images of them systematically hidden from us by Government edict even as they were slandered continually by Government ministers.'[114] Along with non-government organisations and community groups, many Australian artists have been amongst those who seek to draw attention to this injustice, creating work which critiques government policies, draws attention to the plight and to the inherent humanity of the asylum seekers, and highlights the benefits to Australia of welcoming asylum seekers into the community. Arts researcher Dr Caroline Lenette explains:

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[111] "The Nauru Files", The Guardian online, August 10, 2016, accessed February 1, 2023 https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/aug/10/the-nauru-files-2000-leaked-reports-reveal-scale-of-abuse-of-children-in-australian-offshore-detention

[112] The Refugee Council of Australia, accessed February 1, 20223, https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/detention-australia-statistics/

[113] Patricia Owens, "Reclaiming 'Bare Life'?: Against Agamben on Refugees," *International Relations* 23 no. 4 (2009): 578, accessed February 1, 2023, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0047117809350545

[114] Tom Burvill, "Politics begins as Ethics", in *Refugee performance: practical encounters* [ed.] Michael Balfour, (Bristol: NBN International, 2012), 203.

> Researchers have an added responsibility to make sure we do research well at a social level – being able to present some counter-narratives to what's being disseminated in the media and in any political discourse. The debates around people from refugee backgrounds are pretty terrible, and arts-based research is contributing to changing the nature of this.[115]

Much of the refugee-related work created by Australian theatre makers seeks to confront government silence and misinformation regarding asylum seekers and detention centres, to fill some of the perceived gaps in public knowledge and to humanise refugees and their experience. In an attempt to address publicly the gap between their own ethical values and the actions of their government, artists employ 'the act of creating theatre itself […] as a manifestation of the possibilities of generous action, of acting ethically with refugees and people seeking asylum.'[116]

Many Australians feel a strong sense of shame at their government's refugee and asylum seeker policies. As Emma Cox says: 'ultimately, asylum legislation reveals more about Australia and Australians than it does about asylum seekers.'[117] Refugee-related works of art can offer a number of functions for a community that feels unrepresented by government actions perceived as unjust and illogical. Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo outline a 'growing corpus of theatre about asylum'[118] by Australian theatre makers and argue that 'ideological persuasion is not the most important cultural work being achieved in these performances. Their significance resides, rather, in their potential to elicit shame and outrage as a prelude to ethical community.'[119]

Tom Burvill also sees productions on the theme of refugees and asylum seekers as partially an expression of the need for this sector of the Australian community to come together in acknowledgement of their shame and anger, as well as in a desire to effect change.

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[115] Diane Nazaroff, "Arts-based story-telling reveals refugees lived experiences", UNSW Newsroom, accessed February 1, 2023, https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/general/arts-based-storytelling-reveals-refugees%E2%80%99-lived-experiences?utm_source=artssocialsciences&utm_medium=social-team
[116] Alison Jeffers, *Refugees, Theatre and Crisis: Performing Global Identities,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 15.
[117] Emma Cox, *Staging Asylum: Contemporary Australian Plays about Refugees,* Strawberry Hills, Australia: Currency Press, 2013: x.
[118] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, *Performance and Cosmopolitics: Cross-Cultural Transactions in Australia* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 205.
[119] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 203.

Discussing a series of productions that took place between 2001 and 2004, he says:

> 'I see the majority of the Australian shows on the topic of asylum as interventions impelled by ethical outrage at what was being done "in our name" by the Howard Government. They are attempts to assume the "responsibility for the other" denied by the Government's cynical policies and to provoke that assumption of responsibility in their audiences.'[120]

These productions can provide a space within which an audience that feels unrepresented by current Government policy can come together in their emotions of frustration, outrage and shame. As Burvill describes, these audiences are publicly demonstrating humanitarian sensibilities in place of a government that has refused to enact these values towards those seeking asylum. Gilbert and Lo suggest that:

> 'Australian audiences attend such performances less to affirm their support for detainees (though this is part of the equation) than to publicly enact their shame (the shame their government has thus far denied) as a civic action performed in and to and on behalf of their communities.'[121]

The wounds addressed by these productions are as much the wounds of the Australian community's shame as they are of the asylum seekers themselves.

Applied and contemporary theatre academic Alison Jeffers positions audience responses rather in the context of community and responsibility than in simple information-dissemination:

> 'Many questions asked of audience members allude to possible changes in outlook towards refugees and asylum seekers, based on the idea that seeing the theatre piece will have produced a deeper understanding of refugees' experience and therefore a greater sense of empathy. The transactions at a refugee theatre event are much more complex than this and go to the heart of questions about responsibility and even citizenship.'[122]

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[120] Tom Burvill, "'Politics begins as ethics': Levinasian ethics and Australian performance concerning refugees", *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 13 no. 2, (2012): 201, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569780802054935

[121] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 204.

[122] Alison Jeffers, "Hospitable Stages and Civil Listening: being an Audience for Participatory Refugee Theatre", in *Refugee performance: practical encounters* [ed.] Michael Balfour, (Bristol: NBN International, 2012), 301.

Jeffers also alludes to the inherent tension between two common perceptions of the composition of audiences for refugee-related work, observing that:

> '[…] it has been presumed to fall into two broad camps: one, an audience that is ignorant about refugees and needs to be educated, and the other, an audience that is knowledgeable about "refugee issues" and is therefore said to be "converted."'[123]

Neither of these descriptions adequately addresses the rich potential for audiences of disparate individuals to engage with material that amplifies their own ethical concerns, and that provides them with a sense of community and purpose – as Jeffers writes, a reminder of our 'civil responsibility to provide an echo chamber for those refugee voices that reach us from the stage, to make them reverberate, and to amplify what we hear.'[124] The shared audience experience in refugee-related artistic work has the capacity to increase the sense of shared purpose and commitment amongst supporters, and in that way to support resilience in continuing to speak up and to advocate on behalf of asylum seekers.

However, as a body of work, Australian productions created in response to the asylum seeker crisis remain 'a small cluster of voices'[125] in the face of intransigent government policy. Following the election of the Albanese Labor Government in 2022, there have been signs of a shift towards a less punitive policy approach, including the release of the Murugguppan family back into the Biloela community. However, the recent awarding of a Nauru security contract to an American for-profit prison organisation has been met with dismay in refugee advocacy quarters.[126]

The content of refugee-related work created by Australian artists is almost invariably generated from the experiences of refugees, who are often also involved in the production as performers, consultants or intended audience members. A socio-political injustice felt very deeply by an Australian citizen is a very different thing for an individual who has lived the experience first-hand. Niz Jabour, writing about a return visit to Iraq after years in exile, writes:

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[123] Jeffers, (2012), 299.
[124] Jeffers, (2012), 308.
[125] Emma Cox, *Staging Asylum: Contemporary Australian Plays about Refugees,* (Strawberry Hills, Australia: Currency Press, 2013), x.
[126] "Asylum Seeker Resource Centre", https://asrc.org.au/2022/09/21/nauru-mtc/ , accessed December 14, 2022.

> ‘There are daily confrontations between people and government officials about meeting their daily requirements for water and food. Sometimes these confrontations lead to fearless or desperate acts and end in death, in prison or in a garbage bin. Life here is not a joke or a drama research project. Not even an objective academic study.’[127]

The use of the experiences of others to fuel an artist’s own desire to express a socio-political viewpoint is fraught with ethical complexities. An individual who is seeking asylum in a new and sometimes hostile country has a lot at risk, not only in respect of their own application for asylum but in the prospect of unforeseen repercussions for family and friends still in their home country. There is also a psychological toll from the continual retelling of a traumatic experience for the sake of others. As we have discussed above, there are potential gains for an audience of Australian citizens in creating or attending refugee-related work. However, it is instructive to ask ourselves what we have to give in return. Alison Jeffers offers this observation on the relative commitments of citizen and asylum seeker in refugee-related work:

> ‘The presence of the audience in the act of listening to refugee stories constitutes a form of commitment through an act of trust and generosity on its part as listeners. Of course, an even greater level of trust and generosity is needed on the part of those refugee speakers brave enough to share their thoughts, opinions and experiences with an audience.’[128]

The following chapter will discuss, to borrow Michael Balfour’s phrase, ‘some of the paradoxes associated with refugee performance,’[129] drawing on ethical and artistic approaches and on specific artistic examples.

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[127] Niz Jabour, “Iraqi Memories”, in *Refugee performance: practical encounters* [ed.] Michael Balfour, (Bristol: NBN International, 2012), 6.
[128] Jeffers, (2012), 307.
[129] Michael Balfour, “Refugee Performance: Encounters with Alterity”, in *Refugee performance: practical encounters* [ed.] Michael Balfour, (Bristol: NBN International, 2012), 219.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Issues in representing the stories of others

As discussed in the previous chapter, the motivation of Australian artists working in the field of refugee-related work is often to question Government policies, to draw attention to the plight of asylum seekers and to highlight the benefits of welcoming asylum seekers into the community. In doing so, these artists are seeking to create a counter-narrative to the prevailing governmental policy and messaging; to expose and circumvent some of the Government strategies that have been designed to influence negative attitudes and behaviours towards asylum seekers within the community.

4.1 Moral disengagement and humanisation

Turkish-British writer and academic Elif Shafak, discussing strategies by which authorities attempt to influence the ways in which their communities perceive outsiders and minority groups, suggests that, in times of change, people tend to crave simplicity. She describes leaders she terms 'demagogues' as seeking to manipulate the social collective's desire for simplicity in times of uncertainty or upheaval, encouraging communities to fear plurality and multiplicity.[130] To assert control, Shafak tells us, such demagogues convey the message that safety and security is to be found in similarity and conformity, and that any behaviours or beliefs which stray outside an accepted norm are to be feared, and are best eradicated for the common good.

Canadian social psychologist Albert Bandura[131] puts forward a detailed theory of moral disengagement which outlines the methods leaders use to persuade individuals to condone, or to carry out, behaviours which isolate and inflict suffering on specific social or cultural groups. Bandura offers an outline of the strategies of intentional moral disengagement which

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[130] Elif Shafak, "The Revolutionary Power of Diverse Thought", accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.ted.com/talks/elif_shafak_the_revolutionary_power_of_diverse_thought?rid=HDo1T5Rw9DCx&utm_source=recommendation&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=explore&utm_term=watchNow#t-317228

[131] A 2002 review for the *Review of General Psychology* ranked Bandura as the fourth most eminent psychologist of the 20th century, following B. F. Skinner, Jean Piaget and Sigmund Freud. *Review of General Psychology* 6 no.2, 139-152, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228079436_The_100_Most_Eminent_Psychologists_of_the_20th_Century

he says are employed by governments and regimes to encourage negative behaviour against specific groups of people. [132]

For example, Bandura describes 'moral justification' as allowing a perpetrator of harm to perceive their actions as socially worthy and undertaken in support of a greater communal good. 'Euphemistic labelling and language' can be used both to diminish the perceived worth of the other, and to sanitise unpleasant behaviours and harmful acts by framing them in a more positive light. 'Displacement of responsibility' allows an individual to minimize their personal responsibility for their actions by claiming that they act on the direction of a more powerful authority. Responsibility can also be 'diffused', so that an individual only takes part in a small aspect of a program of abuse, disempowerment or coercion, thereby limiting their sense of personal responsibility for the whole. These disengagement strategies are then followed up by disregarding and minimising the consequences to the individuals who have been targeted, and by a program of deliberate dehumanisation of these individuals. Bandura describes these as a series of frequently used practices which create generally accepted moral parameters in which inhumane acts can take place.

In 2015, Elizabeth Greenhalgh and her colleagues at the University of New England investigated Bandura's mechanisms of moral disengagement in the context of the Australian Government's asylum seeker policies. They found evidence that these mechanisms were indeed fostering the rationalisation of harmful attitudes and behaviours towards asylum seekers within the Australian public.[133] For example, the researchers found elements of diffusion and displacement of responsibility in the government's shift of focus away from asylum seekers and instead onto people smugglers as morally justifiable opponents. The researchers cited frequently used expressions such as 'boat people' and 'illegals' as examples of euphemistic labelling designed to demean and diminish the individuals referred to, and, in the case of phrases like 'turn the boats around', to diminish the perception of the individual human cost of these actions by referring to physical actions and objects rather than to actual people. Greenhalgh et al. also found dehumanisation occurring in several examples of denials

[132] Albert Bandura, "A Selective Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency", *Journal of Moral Education* 31 no. 2, (2002): 101-119, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0305724022014322

[133] Elizabeth Greenhalgh et al, "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Endorsement of Asylum Seeker Policies in Australia", *Ethics & Behavior* 25 no. 6, (2015): 482-499, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10508422.2014.951720

that asylum seekers possess 'moral sensibilities or prosocial values'.[134] The false government claim of asylum seekers throwing their children overboard described in the previous chapter can be seen as an example of this type of dehumanizing rhetoric.

In their description of the Australian Federal Government's response to asylum seekers, Gilbert and Lo echo these concerns about Government manipulation of the populace's sense of responsibility towards the outsider, going so far as to describe Government dissemination of the message of moral disengagement as a 'performance':

> '[…] such performances, by troping asylum seekers as physical and moral threats, empty the state's responsibilities to the stranger/outsider of their humanitarian underpinnings so that rejecting the request for refuge becomes ethically acceptable.'[135]

Describing another of the tactics within negative government messaging about asylum seekers, Alison Jeffers alludes to the practice of sowing doubt about the validity of the expressed need for asylum, and of suggesting that refugees may instead threaten our own economic security: 'It is in the interests of Western governments to blur the distinction between refugees and economic migrants in order to obscure their increasingly draconian measures to deter them.'[136]

Canadian psychologist Paul Bloom, discussing the ways in which our individual innate biases can distort our moral judgements, finds that:

> '[…] you feel more empathy for someone who treats you fairly than for someone who has cheated you. And you feel more empathy for someone who is cooperating with you than for someone you are in competition with. It's your moral evaluation of the person that determines whether or not you feel empathy.'[137]

Government messaging that asylum seekers are 'queue jumpers' who are trying to steal the jobs of Australians places asylum seekers in direct competition with the Australian community, while commentary to the effect that asylum seekers care little for their own

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[134] Elizabeth Greenhalgh et al, (2015), 483. See, for example, the 'children overboard' affair mentioned in Chapter Three.
[135] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 189.
[136] Alison Jeffers, (2012), 6.
[137] Paul Bloom, *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*, (London: Random House, 2016), 70.

family members (for example the 'children overboard' saga, or the demonisation of young men escaping alone and leaving their families behind in danger) invites us to consider them as morally inferior to us. Those who are in competition with us and who do not exhibit similar caring qualities for their loved ones are much easier to exclude from our empathic responses and therefore to dehumanise.

In opposition to this range of dehumanizing tactics, Bandura argues strongly for the power of humanisation, suggesting that 'the affirmation of common humanity can bring out the best in others.'[138] Bandura asserts: 'The joys and suffering of those with whom one identifies are more vicariously arousing than are those of strangers or those divested of human qualities. It is difficult to mistreat humanised people without risking personal distress and self-condemnation.'[139] If we perceive those being mistreated as people just like us, we threaten our own values and self-image if we continue to condone harmful practices against them. Paul Bloom tells us that 'empathy guides us to treat others as we treat ourselves and hence expands our selfish concerns to encompass other people.'[140] Once we empathise with others as individual human beings, it is difficult for us to countenance their continued suffering.

This desire to humanise the refugee experience, and to bring attention to the plight of the individual, is a strong focus of much of the artistic work created in response to Australian Government asylum seeker policy. Artists create such work with the intention that, as Bandura suggests, humanisation of the other and deeper knowledge of their situation can lead to personal identification, empathy and compassion, along with a potential sense of social and personal obligation in the face of injustice. However, as Rea Dennis points out**, '**mere goodwill and enthusiasm are not adequate elements for transforming the story to stage.'[141] A strong personal agenda of social justice is only the beginning — refugee-related artistic work involves a number of ethical and operational complexities. As Paul Bloom reminds us: 'doing actual good, instead of what feels good, requires dealing with complex issues.'[142] Some of these issues and complexities will be discussed in this chapter.

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[138] Albert Bandura, (2002), 110.
[139] Albert Bandura, (2002), 108-9.
[140] Paul Bloom, (2016), 21
[141] Rea Dennis, "Refugee Performance: aesthetic representation and accountability in playback theatre", *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 13 no. 2, (2008): 211, accessed February 1, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569780802054901
[142] Paul Bloom, (2016), 101.

4.2 Authenticity and aesthetics

In a desire to be authentic to the refugee experience, and to disseminate information about the refugee experience that is not widely available, creators of refugee and asylum seeker productions often use verbatim texts, collected firsthand from those who have experienced the events. These testimonials are often employed as a simple storytelling and information-sharing exercise in which the authenticity of the telling of the experience is paramount. They can also become a basis for a more aesthetically complex performance presentation.

An example of purely verbatim performance with an overt socio-political intention is the Fitzroy Learning Network performance of *Kan Yama Kan*. The Fitzroy Learning Network is a Melbourne-based migrant and community resource centre[143], and *Kan Yama Kan* was created by the centre specifically to focus attention on the difficulties experienced by asylum seekers released into the community on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs).[144] A team of writers worked with a group of asylum seekers recruited from English language classes at the community centre, and the asylum seekers told their stories on stage themselves, supported by a small group of professional actors. Rand Hazou describes the performance as unfolding in a simple series of stories, with the hesitancy and language difficulties of the refugee actors intended to underline the veracity of the experience for the audience.[145] *Kan Yama Kan* was included in the touring campaign 'Refugees Say Thank You Australia', which included a performance in the Parliament House Theatrette in Canberra. This enabled some of the asylum seekers to meet with Government Ministers to inform them in person of the problems within the TPV process.[146]

A potentially unforeseen result of the *Kan Yama Kan* project was the concern expressed by the asylum-seeking participants that their involvement in the production might jeopardise their chances of success when they reapplied for their TPVs[147]. While works such as this are created with the best of intentions, verbatim theatre made expressly as a didactic tool often

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[143] "Fitzroy Learning Network", accessed December 14, 2022, https://www.fln.org.au
[144] Rand Hazou, "Refugee Advocacy and the Theatre of Inclusion", *About Performance* no. 9, (2009) 67-85, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.proquest.com/docview/274590595?accountid=8203&parentSessionId=KJz5OYysmILP5Y3CdY3GqAEbe0j5ID0qQYRkvzB%2FRFI%3D&pq-origsite=primo
[145] Rand Hazou, (2009), 73.
[146] Rand Hazou, (2009), 75.
[147] Holders of Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) were required to reapply for protection every 3 years.

sees the shared stories overlayered with the socio-political intentions of the producers and theatre makers. The more complex personal situations of refugees whose stories are being shared mean that, for them, considerable personal risk may be involved. The creators of *Kan Yama Kan*, in their desire to advocate for the asylum seekers and share their stories more widely, may also have inadvertently compromised the future security of the participants.

In *Kan Yama Kan*, the stories were told by the refugees themselves. This approach can be highly effective in engaging audiences personally with the stories being shared. In describing the work *Refugitive*, written and performed by Iranian refugee playwright Shahin Shafei, Tom Burvill suggests that 'The eloquent presence of the actual body of the former detainee grounds the performance strongly not only in personal testimony but also in the corporeal face-to-face encounter.'[148] An alternative approach is to have the stories recounted by actors in the place of individuals who are unable to voice their own stories. For example, *Aleppo*[149], presented in the 2020 Adelaide Festival of Arts, employed local South Australian actors to recount stories created from interviews undertaken with civilians in war-torn Syria. Creators of productions such as *Aleppo* often express an intention to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves, as well as to share examples of personal realities which run counter to the prevailing government narrative.

The immediacy of hearing personal stories told in close quarters can be inspiring and affecting, arousing a sense of communal sharing of shame and compassion which may indeed create within the audience Gilbert and Lo's 'ethical community'[150]. But there is a distinct difference between socio-politically driven story-sharing, such as that in purely verbatim text-based performance, and the aesthetics of a work of art. Emma Cox warns that 'a challenge for any playwright impelled by express political or ideological purposes is to avoid didacticism'.[151] In prioritising the notion of authenticity, the creators of a socio-politically inspired work can at times be in danger of undermining another fundamental aspect of a work of art — the importance and function of aesthetics. Michael Balfour offers this description of the impact of an aesthetic approach:

'A rich aesthetic is one that, perhaps, plays with levels of meaning and interpretation,

[148] Tom Burvill, (2012) 206.
[149] "Aleppo", Adelaide Festival of Arts, accessed February 1, 2023, https://2020.adelaidefestival.com.au/events/aleppo/
[150] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 203.
[151] Emma Cox, (2013), 116.

> and can redefine an encounter with the other in new and transforming ways, rather than reinforcing preconceived values.'[152]

When a socio-political commitment to the authentic retelling and public sharing of a lived experience can sit alongside aesthetic and artistic considerations, additional pathways to connection may be found. As American writer and critic Susan Sontag reminds us: 'Transforming is what art does. […] something may be beautiful — or terrifying, or unbearable, or quite bearable — as it is not in real life.'[153] The role of a work of art is to elevate, to inspire, to universalise — to reflect us back to ourselves and ask us to consider what we see and think in a new light. The addition of an artistic aesthetic can lead to deeper and richer experiences than spoken text alone can provide, as Adam Alston describes:

> 'Aesthetic experiences in immersive theatre tend to promote introspection, because in the heady heights of immersion and participation it is not art objects that take precedence so much as the affective consequences of an audience's own engagement in seeking, finding, unearthing, touching, liaising, communicating, exchanging, stumbling, meandering and so on, each geared toward the promotion of peculiarly intense or profound experiences that arise from the audience's investment of energy.'[154]

In a step towards this aesthetic, the Sydney production of *Asylum* by Urban Theatre Projects created a theatrical construct which framed and contextualized the verbatim sharing of information by subverting the power relationship between the actors and audience.[155] Two actors took on the role of border guards, speaking in Kurdish and Farsi to the audience as they arrived, asking them questions they could not understand, and arbitrarily allowing some audience members to enter the performance space immediately while others were sent to the back of the queue. This theatrical construct was an aesthetic framing for the verbatim material of the script, providing the audience with an experience which offered them the opportunity to imagine for a moment something of the uncertainty and powerlessness of the refugee experience. The remainder of the production continued as a straightforward recounting of verbatim stories by refugees, but the production design enclosed the audience

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[152] Michael Balfour, (2012), 19.
[153] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others,* (London: Penguin, 2003), 68.
[154] Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre*, (Guildford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7-8.
[155] Rand Hazou, (2009), 68.

behind wire fencing, providing an additional aesthetic through which the audience could filter the recounting of the refugees' experiences.

When creating artistic work based on lived refugee experience, it becomes equally important to ensure that the balance does not tip into over-aestheticism of the subject matter. Such an approach can diminish the import of the subject, instead accentuating the emotional response of the audience. Alison Moore highlights this challenge in her discussion of the reception of Górecki's third symphony, which sets texts for a soprano soloist written by Polish victims of the Second World War.[156] Examining the reception to this symphony, and in particular the marketing of specific performances, Moore describes 'aestheticised and highly gendered views of suffering and compassion'[157] which 'tend to focus on the soprano soloist as a figure of tragic, pious and graciously suffering feminine beauty'[158]. In responding sympathetically to these images and themes, Moore suggests we are in danger of submitting to 'the beauty both of suffering itself and of our compassionate responses to it'[159]. If we are thus encouraged to feel good about our emotional and intellectual responses to the subject matter, we are both diminishing the reality of the experiences reflected in the artwork and removing ourselves from any further obligation concerning the suffering of others.

A theatrical work that uses heightened aesthetics to create a simulation of real-life events for audiences to experience can be in danger of overstepping an ethical boundary in terms of ownership of the story. It can also create in an audience a misguided impression that the artistic experience leads to equivalent personal understanding of the real-life experiences. Adam Alston, writing in reaction to the production *66 Days in Damascus*, (created by writer and director Lucien Bourjeily as a recreation of a Syrian hostage event), speaks of the dangers of 'attempts to merge a given audience member's own personal experience, specifically as it is experienced through sensation, with the personal experience of an unknown, abstract other.'[160] Alston argues that an hour-long theatrical simulation of a

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[156] Alison Moore, "Is the Unspeakable Singable? The Ethics of Holocaust Representation and the Reception of Górecki's Symphony No.3", *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 8 no.1 (2011), accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273359348_Is_the_Unspeakable_Singable_The_Ethics_of_Holocaust_Representation_and_the_Reception_of_Gorecki%27s_Symphony_no3

[157] Alison Moore, (2011), 15.

[158] Alison Moore, (2011), 6.

[159] Alison Moore, (2011), 7.

[160] Adam Alston, *The Promise of Experience: Immersive Theatre in the Experience Economy*, in "Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance", (Liverpool: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 260.

hostage-taking event, however challenging and confronting, 'can prompt extremely misleading forms of understanding'[161]. If the gap between the audience experience and the real-life events is not acknowledged, 'two very different forms of experience-based knowledge are mistakenly framed as being synonymous with one another'[162]. Just as in the experience of listening to Górecki's third symphony described by Alison Moore, the audience might respond by submitting to and prioritising their own emotional responses instead of considering those whose story is being told. Alston warns that: 'When the ethical stakes are raised and when distinct forms of experience are conflated in participatory invitations, the consequences can be profoundly concerning.'[163] This sentiment is echoed by Geraldine Harris, who also sounds a warning against artists mistaking their own socio-political works of art for real-life intervention. She cautions: 'Theatre, or art, whether pleasurable or uncomfortable, participatory or otherwise, might *support* a political project but is not equivalent to nor can it be treated as a substitute for politics.'[164]

Playwright and academic Silvija Jestrovic's discussion of *Foreigners Out!,* created by Austrian director Christoph Schlingensief, describes a project outcome in which the work of art did actually usurp the place of the real-life situation. *Foreigners Out! '*incarcerated' real asylum seekers in pseudo detention in a cargo container in a Viennese town square. Jestrovic notes that the performance itself attracted a strong public reaction with demonstrations, protests and a good deal of public commentary, 'while there was an actual detention facility just a few kilometres away on the outskirts of Vienna, where no one had ever ventured either to free asylum seekers or to demand their deportation'. Jestrovic goes on to ask: 'What is it that makes the performance of asylum more powerful than the reality of its subjects?'[165]

4.3 The Shouting Fence - a personal lesson in authenticity

On my own journey towards clarifying some of the nuances involved in maintaining a balance between authenticity and aesthetics in the creation of socio-political performance, I learnt a great deal from a production called *The Shouting Fence*. As a member of The Shout

[161] Alston, (2016), 261.
[162] Alston, (2016), 261.
[163] Alston, (2016), 262.
[164] Geraldine Harris, "Differences in Degree or Kind? Ockham's Razor's *Not Until We Are Lost* and Punchdrunk's *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable"* in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance,* James Frieze [ed.], (Liverpool: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 284.
[165] Sylivia Jestrovic, "Performing like an asylum seeker: paradoxes of hyper-authenticity", in *Research in Drama Education* 13 no. 2 (2008): 169. Accessed December 28, 2021, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569780802054810

in London, I performed as one of the soloists in the premiere of *The Shouting Fence*, a work by composers Orlando Gough and Richard Chew set to texts they collated, based on the experiences of people living in the village of Majdal Shams in Syria. The village had been divided in the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War, being partially annexed by Israel but with a section of the village remaining in Syrian control. Residents, separated by the new border from family, friends and workplaces, took to gathering weekly on the edges of the village divide and shouting messages to one another through megaphones. To exemplify the difficulties of communication over large outdoor distances, the premiere of *The Shouting Fence* was performed on the rooftop spaces of the South Bank Centre in London with several of the singers using megaphones, the audience watching from the concourse below.

Some years later, I directed a production of *The Shouting Fence* for the Fringe Festival in Adelaide. [166] During my research for this production, it became clear to me that in creating *The Shouting Fence* the composers had unwittingly confused the Syrian and the Palestinian experiences, compiling a libretto that largely used poetry and writings from Palestine and referred often to the Palestinian 'children of the stones', although the work was overtly based on the experiences of a Syrian community. This meant that the message of the work was unintentionally muddled.

As the director, I felt that my responsibility was to deliver a powerful rendition of the extant artistic work while at the same time maintaining respect for the people whose real-life experiences had influenced its creation. One of my solutions was to create a script to add to the previously purely musical score, inserting spoken text between the sung movements. In creating the script, I sought to ensure that the singer/actors were speaking from a combination of Syrian, Palestinian and Israeli perspectives. This went a considerable way towards creating a more balanced representation, removing some of the confusion created by the original and smoothing out the inconsistencies in the sung libretto.

I also chose to enhance the aesthetics of the performance by adding theatrical elements to the work, which previously had been performed in the UK and Europe as a stadium-style oratorio, with massed singers in large spaces. I wanted to create a more immersive atmosphere for the audience to experience, and to do more to remove the divide between

[166] "Various People Inc", accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.variouspeople.com.au/productions

audience and performers. In a reference to the experiences of the separated Syrian villagers, actor 'soldiers' separated family and friendship groups of audience members on entry, sending them to opposite sides of the divided playing space. Each half of the audience sat with its own group of singers and actors, facing the other group through wire fencing and divided by a narrow space covered in sand. The community choir and the audience mingled together, while the professional singers and children's choir ranged between the audience areas, the dividing strip of sand, and two platforms at either end. We enclosed the set with corrugated iron covered with graffiti exhorting resistance to occupation, and used effects such as the sound of stones thrown by the children's choir smacking against the graffitied corrugated iron to heighten the atmosphere.

Interestingly, the audience members who complained most vigorously about being separated from friends and family on entry were often those who expressed the most engagement with the performance at the end, apologizing for their previous complaints and telling us that they now empathised more deeply with the situation of the separated villagers, realising how temporary their own inconvenience and separation had been in comparison. This experience is echoed by Alison Jeffers, in her discussion of works which create theatricalised impediments to the audience's entry to the performing space to reference the discomfort and uncertainty of the refugee experience. Jeffers comments: 'What makes these pieces remarkable is the way in which empathy works. Anger or resentment that *could* be generated when audience members are deliberately made physically and emotionally uncomfortable, is so often transformed into pity and sympathy.'[167] However, as we have seen in the earlier discussion, this experience needs to be finely tempered — too little personal involvement may leave the audience only intellectually engaged, while too much may be overwhelming and can become more about the audience member than about those who have experienced the real-life events.

The intentions of *The Shouting Fence* composers, in desiring to create a work highlighting a little-known and ongoing human consequence of the Six Day War, were honourable, and Rea Dennis' 'goodwill and enthusiasm'[168] were clearly present. However, the research had not been sufficient to create an authentically representative view of the real-life situation. With

[167] Alison Jeffers, (2012), 63.
[168] Rea Dennis, (2008), 211.

the new script in place a greater sense of balance and authenticity within the narrative was achieved, while the added theatricalisation of the production contributed an artistic aesthetic to the experience which allowed an increased personal connection for the audience members.

4.4 Whose story?

The comments made by Adam Alston after witnessing *66 Days in Damascus* underline some of the potential pitfalls in taking on another's story with such personal intensity that we forget that it does not in fact belong to us. The ethics of authenticity and ownership are complex, and creators of refugee-focussed work hold a responsibility not to inadvertently claim another's experience as their own, or to alter it to suit their own creative intentions. It is up to the owner of the story, the individual with the lived experience, to re-imagine their story on their own terms should they wish to do so.

Applied theatre maker and academic Elliott Leffler describes a workshop, part of a community-based project in a South African town, in which a community performer was given the opportunity to artistically re-imagine his story's ending.[169] Howard, a young man who had experienced significant bullying and rejection on the basis of his sexuality, was encouraged to create a dance expressing his experience. His dance was abstract, releasing him from an explicit connection to the circumstances of his story and from the need to continually rehearse the painful details of his experience, while allowing him to express his feelings freely. Howard chose to work his story towards a reimagined positive ending, which Leffler describes as a powerful and enabling experience for the young man. Howard no longer felt defined purely by his painful experiences, and he was encouraged to use his own personal agency in creating the dance and in choosing the story's outcome. While the narrative that emerged was not necessarily an authentic account of Howard's experience, Leffler describes the act of Howard re-telling and re-owning his story within an artistic context as a powerful catalyst towards increased self-esteem and personal agency, while the performance itself provided an aesthetic of abstraction and beauty.

[169] Elliot Leffler, "Replacing the sofa with the spotlight: interrogating the therapeutic value of personal testimony within community-based theatre", *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 17 no. 3 (2012): 347-353. Accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569783.2012.694037

Leffler's description of Howard's experience exemplifies a positive approach in navigating the complexities inherent in trying to uphold respect and acknowledgment of the lived reality within the stories of painful testimony, while also attempting to create aesthetic beauty. In this case, Howard chose to fictionalize his own story, and he remained in charge of the ways in which his own experiences would be used as artistic material.

When dealing with the stories of others, creators need to consider their responsibility to the owners of the stories. The simplest and most easily overlooked demonstration of respect is to ask permission to use another's story before embarking on creating a work of art based on their experiences. However moved an artist may be by the suffering or experiences of another individual, and however well-meaning the artist is in wishing to share a socio-political or humanitarian view, the experiences of another are not automatically the artist's to share, or to use as creative tools for their own intentions. It cannot be readily assumed that the intentions of the artist align with those of the individual whose story is being appropriated. To choose to speak for those who cannot is not to assume we speak with their voice.

During the siege of Sarajevo in the early 1990s, Vedran Smailoviä risked his life by playing his cello for twenty-two consecutive days in a ruined square in Sarajevo targeted by snipers and mortar bombs, in honour of the twenty-two people killed there by a mortar while lining up for bread.[170] Smailoviä's brave and symbolic act in choosing to face the destruction of war with music and harmony caught the imagination of people around the world, and was the inspiration for songs and orchestral works, and for two books by Canadian authors. The author Elizabeth Wellburn spent a week speaking with Smailoviä in preparation for creating a children's book, while Steven Galloway wrote a novel based on but fictionalizing Smailoviä's story, without consulting the cellist. Although Smailoviä had willingly consulted on other creative projects based on his story when invited, the cellist reacted to the lack of communication by Galloway with outrage at what he saw as Galloway's theft of his story and identity. Smailoviä threatened to burn his cello in protest and demanded an apology. A meeting between author and cellist was arranged, enabling the artists to share their views and values, and to reach an understanding of and respect for each other's intentions. Smailoviä's firmly held view that no-one should profit from the war had collided with Galloway's desire

[170] Deryk Houston, "Vedran Smailoviä – The cellist of Sarajevo", *The Economic Voice* (January 27, 2012), accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.economicvoice.com/vedran-smailovic-the-cellist-of-sarajevo/50027558/#axzz2LkgiYERS

to express his own perspective on humanity through the lens of Smailoviä's story. Had Galloway reached out to Smailoviä prior to writing the novel, acknowledging and respecting Smailoviä's ownership of his own story while outlining Galloway's own creative intentions, a great deal of conflict might have been avoided.

The issue of requesting permission before using an individual's story within a work of art has gained complexity with the rise of social media. Although not specifically refugee-related, it is relevant here to mention *Open Secret*, created in 2019 by the artist Andrea Bowers. This project, dealing with aspects of sexual harassment and the #MeToo movement,[171] attracted much criticism for its lack of consultation with story owners. Without seeking permission, Bowers included images and stories of accusers and victims sourced from social media in her work of art, which was priced for sale at $300,000. Several of those featured in the artwork expressed concern that their stories were being exploited for profit, and pointed to the irony of failing to obtain consent from survivors of sexual abuse. Some of the individuals only discovered they were featured in the artwork via social media, and then went on to discover inaccuracies in their stories within the exhibit, adding to their sense of injury. Although Bowers clearly had a strong ethical drive to raise awareness of sexual harassment and abuse, in this case these ethics, even if purely by omission, did not extend to the individuals she featured in her artwork.

In her discussion of two European projects, one a fashion show and the other the week-long performance art piece *Foreigners Out!* referenced earlier in this chapter, Silvija Jestrovic also raises issues in terms of the projects' representation of others. Both projects included asylum seekers and refugees as participants, ostensibly to advance their cause in a public forum. Jestrovic found that 'although the projects in question use real refugees and asylum seekers as performers, exilic voices and bodies are often subordinated to the creative and/or entrepreneurial concepts of the established Western artists.' [172] A tokenistic inclusion of those

[171] EJ Dickson, "A #MeToo Installation at Art Basel raises Questions About Consent", *Rolling Stone,* (June 12, 2019), accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/andrea-bowers-installation-helen-donahue-consent-art-basel-metoo-847237/, and
Claire Selvin, "Following Outcry on Social Media from Survivor of Assault, Andrea Bowers Alters Art Basel Installation About #MeToo Movement", Art News (June 12, 2019), accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/art-basel-andrea-bowers-photos-removed-12765/
[172] Jestrovic, (2008), 159.

whose rights we wish to uphold can inadvertently disempower those we are wishing to support.

As residents of a relatively safe and secure country, Australian artists can sometimes overlook the considerable personal risks undertaken by refugees and asylum seekers who choose to take part in creative work which publicizes their situation. As mentioned previously, participants in the production of *Kan Yama Kan* which toured to Parliament House felt at potential risk of jeopardizing their applications for Temporary Protection Visas. Seekers of asylum often express concern that their actions in Australia, along with any criticism they might make of the regimes they fled, will be reported in their home countries, thereby putting any family members still in their home country at risk. A writer I consulted in the development of *The Migration of Souls* told me that his wife had asked him not to become involved in any more socio-politically based artistic work in Australia. This man's resistance to his Middle Eastern country's regime through writing and film making had been the main cause of their harassment, his imprisonment and their subsequent decision to flee their country, and she did not want to risk any more threats now that they were past the rigours of the boat journey and detention on Christmas Island and had settled in Adelaide.

4.5 The dangers of the single story

In describing the experience of the community dancer Howard, Leffler emphasises the opportunity the project gave Howard to transcend his story of suffering, and to be defined by more than an experience of pain.[173] 'Single stories create stereotypes', says Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. 'And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue in themselves, but that they are not complete. They make one story become the only story'.[174] In addition to taking care not to reduce an individual to a single set of experiences, we need to ensure that in our retelling of an individual's story we do not accidentally invite our audience to view an entire cultural or social group through this single lens. It is important that artists, in their enthusiasm to support refugees, do not inadvertently minimise the very multiplicity that Elif Sharak reminds us is so important to retain in the face of dehumanisation.

[173] Leffler, (2012).
[174] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of the Single Story", Sydney Writer's Festival Opening Address (2009), accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

The identification of an individual or a social group with one specific set of experiences can serve to remove them in the audience's perception from the multiple shared human experiences that an artistic team is endeavouring to illustrate. From her experiences in working with refugees in Canada, artist Julie Salverson found that 'creating performance with refugees means […] continually resisting the tendency to tell "one refugee story" and responding instead to how *particular people* live their multiple positionings.'[175] If confined to a single set of experiences that are not shared by the audience, refugees are denied the possibility of personal connection through other, shared pathways. As Adichie points out: 'The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasises how we are different rather than how we are similar.'[176] In telling only the refugee story about an individual, the creators of refugee-based work can risk disregarding the complex weave of our shared humanity and therefore lessening the possibility of connection.

In discussing the representation of suffering, Susan Sontag warns of the danger that 'the other, even when not an enemy, is regarded only as someone to be seen, not someone (like us) who also sees.'[177] In the desire to arouse awareness and compassion, it is all too easy to inadvertently reduce the 'other' to victim status, disempowering them in the process. The resulting power imbalance allows the audience to view the refugee as an object of pity, thus maintaining a safe personal distance without the shared connection of human complexity. Salverson introduces the term 'an aesthetic of injury' to describe this approach, which can accidentally affirm the very powerlessness that the production is seeking to address. Salverson suggests that in these circumstances 'the refugee becomes an object of spectacle and the audience member — and, by extension, playwright, director and actors — offstage voyeurs.'[178] In seeking to uphold our own ethical and socio-political values, it is important that artists, as Gilbert and Lo phrase it, do not let 'the conditions of ethical responsiveness (be) subordinated to the imperatives of voyeurism'.[179]

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[175] Julie Salverson, "Performing Testimony: Ethics, Pedagogy, and a Theatre beyond Injury", (Doctoral Diss, University of Toronto, 2001), 110, accessed February 1, 2023, https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/15898/1/NQ58602.pdf
[176] Adichie, (2009).
[177] Susan Sontag, (2003), 65.
[178] Julie Salverson, "Transgressive Storytelling or an Aesthetic of Injury: Performance, Pedagogy and Ethics" *Theatre Research in Canada* 20 no.1 (1999): 43, accessed February 1, 2023, https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/TRIC/article/view/7096/8155
[179] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 51.

Salverson's fascinating and unflinching critique of the process of creating a documentary film about refugees for a Canadian audience[180] reveals some of the challenges involved in attempting to balance the desire to move beyond the confines of the single story with the delivery of a specific message to an audience. Salverson and her team created a documentary to bring awareness of the circumstances of Canadian refugees to a wider Canadian audience, hoping to allow Canadians to see and hear refugees as individuals and to educate Canadians in how best to relate with and support them. The intention was to demonstrate multiple experiences of being a refugee, and to move beyond the familiar picture of victimhood and disempowerment. Salverson also wished to reveal the imbalance of privilege and power at the heart of the relationship between refugees and helpers.

Unfortunately, the outcome was not the one that Salverson envisaged. The response from the Canadian audiences was often confused, defensive and hostile. In evaluating the project, Salverson says: 'In our attempt to suggest there was not simply one refugee story that explains all, it is possible we went too far in fragmenting the stories that were presented. For a general audience used to empathizing, to standing in, the gulf was too great.'[181] In some cases, Salverson found that viewing the documentary actually increased audience members' stereotyping of refugees, causing still further alienation. This prompted Salverson to ask; 'what is the value of creating a representation that so alienates the intended […] audience that all listening shuts down and, worse, anger at refugees is reinforced?'[182]

Salveron's experience reinforces the complexity of Balfour's 'paradoxes associated with refugee performance'.[183] Concentrating solely on the refugee experiences of an individual can diminish the multiplicity of their lived experiences and reduce the possibility of personal connection for a non-refugee audience. However, a representation that is too diverse may challenge an audience beyond their capacity for empathy.

[180] Julie Salverson, (1999), 45.
[181] Julie Salverson, (2001), 133.
[182] Julie Salverson, (1999), 6.
[183] Michael Balfour, (2012), 219.

4.6 Alternatives to the narrative approach

Within this complex artistic and ethical terrain, artists are using a variety of artistic approaches to attempt to connect their audiences with the message they wish to share about the refugee experience. The verbatim and narrative approaches already mentioned can have the propensity to lead to a focus on the single story rather than on the rich individual lived experience. As Rea Dennis points out: 'Uncritical trusting of the seemingly logical, sequential order of narrative can lead to organizing the refugee subject into a single, essential or general identity position, thus obscuring the individual.'[184] The following brief overview of three very different productions offers a sample of alternative approaches to the ethical and artistic challenges of socio-political performance. Each different approach exemplifies Dennis's declaration that: 'Performing in the asylum context demands aesthetic transformation of the testimony into theatre that reaches beyond naturalistic repetitions of trauma.'[185]

In an installation performance called *Of All The People In All The World*,[186] which has toured extensively internationally since 2003, James Yarker and the team at Birmingham-based theatre company Stans Cafe display differently sized mounds of rice in large exhibition spaces, each grain of rice representing a single human being. As the audience arrives to view the exhibition, they are each given a single grain of rice, to represent themselves. Categories for each pile of rice range from the tragic to the humorous, changing with the news cycle and with reference to the specific country and city the show is visiting. Piles of rice have variously demonstrated the number of deaths in specific war zones, the numbers of different types of people in prison and the numbers of people displaced in civil wars – they have also represented football games and influential or iconic individuals such as the Beatles.

While not specifically a work about the refugee and asylum seeker experience (although it has included a variety of 'rice pile' statistics on this subject during its journey), *Of All The People In All The World* showcases the way in which a non-narrative, depersonalised approach can actually serve to enhance an audience's ability to connect with the human

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[184] Rea Dennis, "Refugee performance: aesthetic representation and accountability in playback theatre", *Research in Drama Education* 13 no. 2, (June 2008): 212, accessed February 1, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569780802054901.
[185] Rea Dennis (2008), 213.
[186] James Yarker, "Human Empathy in a Granular World", TedxBonn (2018), accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.ted.com/talks/james_yarker_human_empathy_in_a_granular_world

experience. In his TEDX talk, Yarker describes some of the reasoning behind the choice to use rice:

> 'Rice is anonymous. It's blank, and the blankness invites you to invest in it imaginatively, and the blankness allows you a kind of screen to project your emotions onto it. […] The anonymity also allows us to be egalitarian. Which means that no matter what your social status, whatever your race, your gender, your age, your health, your fame or your fortune, everyone is represented by a single, naked grain of rice.'[187]

The decision to use grains of rice to represent human beings removes the potential of voyeurism, as well as the weight of preconceived biases and the possibility of a power differential. Each grain of rice reveals a human being reduced to their universal essence, allowing the individual observer a space in which to connect personally with each representation of an experience or event.

The 2004 production *CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident*, created by the Sydney-based arts organisation version 1.0*,* did employ verbatim texts, but the choice of texts and the ways in which they were used set this production apart from other verbatim productions. *CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident* focuses on Australian political processes rather than on stories of asylum seeker experiences. By choosing to tell stories which are in the public domain, and mostly from Government sources, version 1.0 seeks to avoid some of the pitfalls inherent in representing the stories of others. Yana Taylor, from the creative team, explains that the actors deliberately decided not to speak for the absent refugees. 'As artists, we would dishonour people who sought asylum by arriving on boats by acting in their role in our bodies. [Instead] we chart the parameters of their exclusion, their absence from the Senate's inquiry.'[188] This choice of approach is a direct contrast to productions which choose to feature actors speaking verbatim texts on behalf of absent individuals.

CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident is based on the 2,200 pages of the official Hansard transcript of the 2002 Select Committee inquiry into the 'children overboard' allegations

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[187] James Yarker, (2018).

[188] Ulrike Garde, "Destabilising Notions of the Unfamiliar in Australian Documentary Theatre: version 1.0's *CMI (A Certain Maritime Incident)", PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 10 no.1, (2013): 15 , accessed February 1, 2023, https://researchers.mq.edu.au/en/publications/destabilising-notions-of-the-unfamiliar-in-australian-documentary

regarding the refugee boat SIEV 4[189]. The production also references former diplomat and foreign policy adviser Tony Kevin's testimony to the Senate inquiry about alleged Australian Government complicity in the drowning of 353 refugees following the sinking of SIEV X.[190] Like the production of *Asylum* described earlier in this chapter, the opening of *CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident* seeks to frame the audience's subsequent experience by creating a theatrical construct through which they enter the performing space. *CMI* takes this opportunity to situate the audience immediately and uncomfortably within the consequences of the government policies which are about to be outlined:

> 'The audience enters through a single corridor down the centre of the theatre space. Along the corridor are a number of naked bodies prepared for mortuary storage that the audience has to step over to reach their seats.'[191]

The production also concludes with a representation of the human effects of the tragedy, the audience hearing a spoken compilation of transcriptions of SIEV X survivor testimony read by a computer-generated voice while being 'typed' onto the overhead projector screen, while a single body is washed and prepared for burial.

The central section of the production involves an increasingly nonsensical parody of the Senate inquiry proceedings. In contrast to the quest for truthful representation that is present in much verbatim theatre, the performances of the Senators' verbatim text are described by Gilbert and Lo as 'a carnival of political performance'[192], subverted by a series of theatrical gestures which serve to undermine and deconstruct the seriousness and formality of the inquiry.

Satirical and self–referential interruptions to the proceedings undercut the conventions of both the theatre presentation and the Senate inquiry. For example, as the dramatised inquiry continues, the audience reads the following text via an overhead projector:

> WE KNOW THAT YOU KNOW THAT WE ARE NOT REALLY THE SENATORS WHO TOOK PART IN THE CMI SENATE INQUIRY. STEPHEN IS A LOT SHORTER THAN SENATOR COOK AND DEBORAH WHO PLAYS

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[189] An acronym created by the Australian Government Department of Defence, referring to a Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel. See Tony Kevin, (2004), 6.
[190] In October 2001, an Indonesian fishing boat designated SIEV X by Australian authorities capsized on its way to Australia with the loss of 353 lives. The tragedy occurred during an election campaign, with allegations of Australian government complicity in the event. "SievX.com", accessed February 1, 2023, http://sievx.com
[191] Emma Cox, (2013), 9.
[192] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 140.

> SENATOR FAULKNER IS ACTUALLY A WOMAN. WE FOUND THAT OUT AFTER THE AUDITION.[193]

Using humour to undermine their own theatrical process as well as that of the Senate inquiry, the creative team invites the audience to look beneath the surface of the formal structures and the spoken text, thus critiquing the actions of their elected representatives. The team also seizes the opportunity to bring ridicule to acronyms such as SUNC (suspected unauthorized non-citizen) and PII (potential illegal immigrant) as overt examples of the euphemistic labelling used by the Australian Government to dehumanise people in search of asylum.

As Emma Cox says, 'This approach sets CMI apart from the documentary realist mode of presentation usually favoured in verbatim theatre.'[194] Version 1.0's approach carefully avoids some of the pitfalls of misrepresentation, appropriation and voyeurism that can be an accidental result of well-intentioned verbatim socio-political theatre. The Senate inquiry material available in the public domain is scrutinized in some detail, while the tragedy of the drownings is allowed to speak for itself.

Instructions for an Imaginary Man, which I co-created and produced, was initially created for the Victorian Pentonville prison situated within the old Lincoln Castle in England. Inspired by the writings of prisoners of conscience from countries including Argentina, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Poland and Guatemala, and originally titled *solitary*, this production was designed to express detailed research into the writings and lived experiences of prisoners of conscience in a largely abstract form.

The first iteration of the production invited the audience to move through different spaces within the Lincoln castle and prison complex. It began with a spoken text segment which the audience witnessed from their confinement within the individual pews in the Victorian Pentonville chapel. From there they moved through a video installation in one of the wings of the prison, then an art installation in one of the old castle's prison cells, before witnessing a performance in the castle chapel of a song cycle set to poetry written by ten former prisoners of conscience, in six different languages. In 2012, this work was revised and renamed for

[193] Emma Cox, (2013), 13
[194] Emma Cox, (2013), 4.

presentation in the Old Adelaide Gaol as part of the Adelaide Festival of Arts. As *Instructions for an Imaginary Man*[195], the production was pared back to the abstract and presented within a single space in the gaol. A simple square space surrounded by gauze became a 'cell' inhabited by a single wordless actor, who created a series of physical vignettes as a theatrical impression of coping with solitary confinement. Video projections onto the gauze created a layering of visual images, and two singers and five musicians behind the gauze performed the song cycle. Music, movement and imagery came together to create a poeticized impression of a human being locked in time and space.

The second version of this production was infinitely more successful. More aesthetically sophisticated, it allowed the historic and emotive performance location to permeate the music and the visuals, offering a rich space for audience contemplation. Like version 1.0's *CMI: A Maritime Incident*, *Instructions for an Imaginary Man* did not seek to speak for a particular individual. The background research, and the creative teams' awareness of the experiences of the individual writers, informed the content of the work, but were not overtly present. The aesthetics of the location, the images, the wordless activity of the actor and the sound world were combined to create a heightened poetic impression of the lived experience.

4.7 The burden of compassion

One of the difficulties that Salverson uncovered in her analysis of audience reactions to her documentary was the nature of the burden of compassion. A surge of empathy may lead to increased humanisation of the other, but it may also prove to be counter-productive. Alston pointed to this concern in response to *66 Days in Damascus,* and Salverson found that 'such identification is not only voyeuristic, not only does it distort my ability to listen and respond, it is also too great a burden.'[196]

Often, in the desire to make the wider public fully aware of the hardship experienced by asylum seekers and refugees, performance texts are chosen which recount very difficult and gruelling experiences, involving personal loss, privation, persecution and tragedy. This onslaught of anguished testimony can risk the audience becoming caught up in the aesthetics of injury described by Salverson, inviting us to view the refugee purely as a victim rather than as a complex and multi-faceted human being. Witnessing testimony and re-enactment of

[195] "Various People Inc", accessed February 1, 2023, www.variouspeople.com.au/productions
[196] Julie Salverson (2001), 176.

traumatic experiences and events can threaten to overwhelm us with what Rea Dennis describes as 'the dampening effects of empathy'.[197] As Paul Bloom asserts, 'too much empathy can be paralysing'.[198] An audience can become overwhelmed by their emotional response, focussing purely on their own experience and their own needs.

Susan Sontag discusses the dangers of compassion fatigue when carrying the emotional burden of bearing witness to the suffering of others:

> 'Making suffering loom larger, by globalising it, may spur people to feel they ought to 'care' more. It also invites them to feel that the sufferings and misfortunes are too vast, too irrevocable, too epic to be much changed by any local intervention. With a subject conceived on this scale, compassion can only founder — and make abstract.'[199]

In *Manus*[200], presented in the 2019 Adelaide Festival of Arts, eight actors used verbatim text to represent eight refugees detained on Manus in Papua New Guinea. The stories that were shared were shocking, told in a non-stop barrage of text and heightened emotion, with no potential response available to the audience other than to suffer the weight of the knowledge, just as the refugees suffered the weight of their experience. Productions such as this can be emotionally powerful for audiences to witness and experience and can engender heightened feelings of shame and outrage. However, as Salverson discovered with the reaction to her documentary, audience members may therefore become alienated from the material, or close off from it in order to protect themselves from the sense of personal shame and responsibility.

In contrast to *Manus*, Alison Jeffers describes the creative approach taken by version 1.0 with *CMI:A Maritime Incident* as a rejection of notions of the creation of empathy in favour of a search of an alternative way of engaging the audience with 'questions about responsibility and hospitality.' [201] For Jeffers, this strategy 'shows how eschewing notions of empathy with refugees and using the words of citizens can raise the level of debate beyond pity and into the ethical arena.' [202]

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[197] Rea Dennis, (2008), 211.
[198] Paul Bloom, (2016), 156.
[199] Susan Sontag, (2003), 70-71
[200] "Manus", InDaily review, accessed February 1, 2023, https://indaily.com.au/inreview/adelaide-festival/2019/03/08/festival-review-manus/
[201] Alison Jeffers, (2012), 64.
[202] Alison Jeffers, (2012), 14.

Paul Bloom outlines a powerful difference between empathetically feeling the distress of others and acting with compassion to alleviate that distress.[203] He also questions whether empathy itself does indeed lead to positive action. 'There is almost always an easier way to make your empathic suffering go away than the hard work of making someone else's life better.'[204] How can makers of socio-politically driven work create an environment in which, rather than wishing to escape the uncomfortable emotions aroused by a production, the audience is motivated to take compassionate and rational action towards positive change? James Yarker asks a similar question: 'It's good to have knowledge, and it's powerful to empathise [...]. But that's not enough. How can we, who want to bequeath a better world for those that follow, translate this knowledge and empathy into action, into change?'[205]

In order to avoid shaming and immobilising our audiences with the seeming intransigence and size of the issues, we might consider providing the audience with the immediate potential to take action, potentially allowing the compassion that has been aroused to be transferred into activity before it fades to discontent or discomfort. As Susan Sontag says:

> 'Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated. If one feels that there is nothing 'we' can do […] then one starts to get bored, cynical, apathetic.' [206]

In creating works which seek to raise awareness of issues being faced by refugees and asylum seekers, immediate post-performance opportunities for positive individual action may reduce the audience's burden of compassion and the potential for emotional overwhelm and stasis.

The following chapter interrogates the creation of *The Migration of Souls*, exploring the ways in which this production attempted to answer the question of how to promote positive action, while observing a precarious balance between authenticity and aesthetics, simplicity and multiplicity, and being cognisant of the many potential pitfalls in the representation of the stories of others.

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[203] Paul Bloom, (2016), 141.
[204] Paul Bloom, (2016), 75.
[205] James Yarker, (2018).
[206] Susan Sontag, (2003), 90.

CHAPTER FIVE:
The Migration of Souls - a creative journey

5.1 Introduction

The creative process for *The Migration of Souls* has been complex and multi-faceted. Research, consultation, creative practice and workshop trials have each contributed to the whole. A diverse group of stakeholders has required considered and nuanced team management. The challenging nature of the theme has demanded that many ethical considerations be taken into account. This chapter works through some of the key issues and challenges of the creative process towards *The Migration of Souls*, from initial research and development to the workshop presentations of work in progress, as well as considering consequent artistic decisions to be taken forward to full performance.

To date, there have been two public presentations of creative material — the first presented as a single scene, the second comprising three scenes and two transitions, presented over two nights to invited audiences of arts colleagues and arts industry representatives. Informal feedback was sought from members of the audience, both in conversation following the presentation and via subsequent email correspondence, proving useful in informing future creative decisions. *The Migration of Souls* was under review for Festival inclusion by the Adelaide Festival of Arts, but ultimately was not selected, ironically due to a program too full of refugee-inspired work! Since then, personal and global circumstances have disrupted the planning for full performance. Discussions are currently under way with potential producing partners.

As described in the opening section of this dissertation, *The Migration of Souls* is conceived as an audience journey through three main scenes, linked by two transition scenes. Scene One introduces a simple traditional cabaret performance, which is disrupted after a few songs by an unexpected evacuation. The audience is led through a hazy and unsettling first transition to a checkpoint, where they are asked to remove their shoes and given a numbered tag in return. They enter the arc, an enclosed space with a semi-circular covering, and are seated facing each other on benches along the long sides. Scene Two, taking place entirely within the arc, combines music, dance and immersive rear-projection. Water gradually collects on the floor of the arc, creating a shallow pool in the central performance space. The second transition begins with shouted instructions in unfamiliar languages, leading to an evacuation of the arc. The audience waits in line in a basic administrative space, with gravel on the ground and

industrial fans circulating the air. As they are 'processed' through the space, retrieving their shoes on the way, they are greeted by representatives of support agencies. The final hospitality space, Scene Three, is one of warmth, refreshments and music. There are opportunities for conversation and further debriefing, and to take direct action in response to the issues and emotions raised.

5.2 Authenticity and aesthetics

My background research for *The Migration of Souls* began with an investigation of individual experiences of displacement, both over the course of the twentieth century and more specifically regarding the recent situation pertaining to Australia. In addition to the background research outlined in Chapter Three, I read many individual recollections and testimonies, along with collated experiences and reports written by support agencies and individuals, which often contained disturbing information.

In my desire to increase awareness of the hardships being experienced by asylum seekers on their journeys and in Australian detention camps, a desire which as described in Chapter Four is mirrored by many other Australian artists, I created a working script which combined elements from the experiences of displaced individuals across different times and countries: people held in Second World War German camps, displaced from their homes in the Middle East, travelling to Australia, and within Australian detention centres. I ensured that the stories and experiences I shared were in the public domain, so as to avoid accidental appropriation without permission.

The first development showing took place entirely within the arc, with music and the collage of spoken text enhanced by video projections. This first version followed a chronological path in three parts, beginning with lieder (German art song) and spoken excerpts from survivors of Second World War Germany, then moving to the Middle East with spoken text, a sung Hafiz ghazal and Middle Eastern tunes, before recounting experiences of refugees from the Middle East on arrival in Australia. The surrounding video images suggested a number of environments, from European woods to ruined buildings, storm clouds and night skies, as well as displaying sections of the Hafiz ghazal in calligraphy and portraits of refugees created by South Australian refugee artists.

In a feedback session after the first development showing, the audience reaction included many positive comments. The audience appreciated the immersive nature of the experience, they enjoyed the music and they also appreciated being given an outlet through which to share their own discomfort at the injustices they saw occurring – to be a part of Gilbert and Lo's 'ethical community'.[207] The reservations they expressed centred mainly on the nature of the narrative through-line. Some found it frustrating that they couldn't always tell where in the world or in the timeline the story was situated. There were also a couple of audience questions about the work's intentional comparisons of the experiences in one time and place with those in another, and this aroused some audience members to wish to share their opinions of the politics involved.

I was reminded of my experience with the Bosnian woman I invited to speak to the musicians and singers of the *Stari Most* company, when contrary to my expectations the political message had overridden the human one. I was aware of the dangers of portraying refugees as innocent and non-political[208], thereby reducing them to the single story of victimhood. However, in becoming personally engaged with the time, place and politics of the content, I was concerned that the audience members were in fact becoming more removed from the experience, viewing it in an objective and intellectual manner rather than being able to open to the aesthetic and emotional experience.

This was reinforced for me during a follow-up week with *The Migration of Souls* performers shortly after the first showing. At this stage I was still engaged in extensive background research, and intent on using this knowledge to frame an exploration of the current refugee experience in Australia. However, the follow-up development week proved to be a conflicted and challenging one. The additional research material I provided for discussion seemed to further ignite the actors and creative team into heated conversations about the specifics of certain injustices and the complexities of the socio-political arguments. Although we did manage to devise some additional creative material during this week, my abiding sense of the experience was one of robust political discussions, and of a company that was much less united than for the first development showing.

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[207] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 203.
[208] Tania Canas, "Unwelcome mats: A decolonial intervention, challenging the refugee welcome narrative", *Community Psychology in Global Perspective* 3, no. 1 (2017): 75, accessed February 1, 2023, http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/cpgp/article/view/15618

I decided to remove the specificities of place and time, to minimise spoken text, and to reassert my belief in the importance of the poetry of the artform – to reassert the potentially transformative nature of the artistic experience. In the balance between authenticity to the lived realities of those whose stories I was sharing and the creation of a rich aesthetic experience, the aesthetics had been losing out.

I moved away from the notion of linear storytelling, of following the chronology from Germany through the conflict in the Middle East to Australia. Instead, my approach was along the lines of that described here by Balfour:

> '[…] taking a universalist stance, in which the enforced movement of people is portrayed as the result of larger socio-economic, political and historical interplays. It avoids specific ethnographic stories and experiences, by representing displacement as a broad generalized human happening.'[209]

Instead of asking the audience to empathise with particular people in specific times and places, and thereby risk telling stories which were not my own, I asked myself – what if the audience members themselves are the protagonists? What if, instead of witnessing the stories of others, we embark on a personal journey that includes each audience member as well as the performers?

The Migration of Souls would not seek to replicate a real-life journey taken by others. As discussed in Chapter Four, it is neither possible, nor arguably is it ethical, to depict real life events of this magnitude within a theatrical setting. As a work of art, *The Migration of Souls* would present a universalised and poeticized journey, informed by, but not simply an artistically framed retelling of, the research. The journey would be taken by the performers and audience together, informed by lived experiences and heightened by music and projected imagery. The multiple artistic strands, and the minimal intrusion of spoken text, would provide space for the audience to assimilate and reflect. With this approach I felt I was more likely to achieve some of these positive effects described by Balfour and Woodrow:

> 'Those engaged in refugee performance work (as artists, performers, practitioners, students, settlement professionals, researchers and so on) may be inspired by the moments of potency and hopefulness that appear fleetingly in this space. In these

[209] Michael Balfour, (2012), 222.

> moments there is a potential for resisting bureaucratic, dehumanizing portrayals of refugee trauma, for undercutting a media driven appetite for suffering and spectacle, for supporting communities to celebrate cultural identities, for activism and agency, and for offering a vision of our collective, human capacity for survival and transformation.'[210]

In an example from the classical music world, American philosopher and academic Martha Nussbaum discusses Mozart and da Ponte's treatment of the socio-political themes underlying their opera *Il Nozze di Figaro* in terms of increasing impact by focusing on individual experience rather than the over-arching socio-political environment. [211] Nussbaum suggests that Mozart and da Ponte made a deliberate decision to make their point about social change through the inner emotional lives of their characters, rather than through impassioned political speeches. As an example of this, Nussbaum points to their choice to omit Figaro's Act Four speech from the Beaumarchais play, which rails against the inequities of the class structure, from the opera libretto. Nussbaum suggests that *Il Nozze di Figaro* promotes 'the human sentiments that are the necessary foundation for a public culture of liberty, equality, and fraternity'[212] through paying attention to the lived experiences of a group of people sharing a household, rather than prosecuting a socio-political argument.

Peter Eckersall, reporting on the 2006 Dramaturgies forum in Melbourne, quotes a contribution from John Romeril which speaks to the relationship between politics and theatrical forms, and amplifies my own experience of the confounding nature of the spoken text contained in the first version of *The Migration of Souls*:

> 'I live today in an age in which words represent an incredibly corrupt medium. The feeling I have is that we are living in an age of liars, where what is spoken is almost inherently untrustworthy. In those circumstances, I suggest that the theatrical response to go into dream state, to go into physicality, to go into visuality, is to maybe ask an audience to make sense in areas of their own sensibility that have not been invaded by the general corruption to which language in our time is being subject.'[213]

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[210] Michael Balfour and NinaWoodrow, (2012) 28.
[211] Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters For Justice,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), accessed February 1, 2023, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/adelaide/detail.action?docID=3301331
[212] Martha Nussbaum, (2013), 29-30.
[213] Peter Eckersall, (2006), 294.

I began to work towards a more universal and texturally rich immersive experience. In my creative diary I wrote to myself: ‘Go back to the ‘poetry’ — to the music that inspired you, to the central message you wish to convey.’ By the time we reached the workshop showing there was almost no spoken text included, and much of the remaining text is likely to disappear before the full performances.

I also decided to expand the theatrical construct, extending the work from the initial single setting to incorporate a number of scenes through which the audience would travel with the performers. A cabaret scene, the arc and a final hospitality scene would be linked by two transition scenes. This would serve to unsettle the audience from an initially comfortable and familiar perspective into one in which they were an intrinsic part of the uncertain journey, and then to travel from the arc to a more welcoming and possible future.

A decision was also made that the featured performer within the central scene in the arc would be a dancer. This would provide an additional sensory pathway to the material, one which was kinetic and open to individual interpretation, again moving away from text-based assumptions and interpretations. The dancer would begin his journey amongst the audience in the cabaret scene as ‘the man with a backpack’, entering the arc with the audience like the other actors, and increasingly building his performance into dance. I decided to flood the arc with water, in which the dancer would move. The central scene in the arc would be the poetic heart of the production, with an interweaving of music, film imagery, dance, physical action and ambient sound providing multiple sensory, emotional and intellectual pathways for connection with the thematic content.

5.3 Research and Development

5.3.1 The music

My background musical research for *The Migration of Souls* took its initial inspiration from the memoirs and recollections of survivors of war and displacement. I found that memories of music shared by family, played with colleagues, or listened to with friends, were often described as a powerful reminder of home, of connection and of identity, and were often cited as an inspiration to keep persisting through the most challenging of experiences.

For example, many memoirs exist from survivors of the concentration camp Terezin, also known as Theresienstadt, established by the Nazi regime in the Czech town of Terezin as a holding place for well-known cultural or political figures as well as for those who were to be deported to extermination camps. The rich cultural life of Theresienstadt is often cited as testament to the resilience of the human spirit, sometimes by the survivors of the camp themselves. Alice Herz Sommer, a pianist and music teacher, played more than a hundred concerts during her time in the camp. In conversation with Caroline Stoessinger when Alice was already over a hundred years old, Alice remembers:

> 'In the camp, I sometimes felt that I was protesting against the inhumanity of the Nazis when I played Beethoven. I could feel the audience breathing, feeling with me as they clung to their memories of a better time.'[214]

For Alice, Beethoven's stance for justice and freedom was present in the music she played. Her audience, ill and often close to death, found meaning in the concerts she and her fellow artists gave. 'As our situation became more difficult, we tried even harder to reach for perfection, for the meaning in the music. Music was our way of remembering our inner selves, our values.'[215]

The jazz guitarist Coco Schumann was transported to Theresienstadt at the age of 19, where he played every day as part of the band the Ghetto Swingers. Interviewed decades later for the documentary *Refuge in Music*[216], Schumann insisted 'I am a musician who was once in a concentration camp, not a survivor who was also a musician' – a powerful personal expression of the arguments by Adichie and Salverson against defining an individual by a single set of refugee experiences. Schumann remembers playing the tune La Paloma every day at the request of the overseers in the camp. Asked by the interviewer how he felt playing that song after the war was over, Schumann replied:

> 'I always told myself that it wasn't the song's fault that it was misused. Fortunately I'm the sort of person who tries to make the best of things…I imagined that when they heard music they would feel a taste of normality.'[217]

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[214] Caroline Stoessinger, *Alice Herz Sommer, A Century of Wisdom,* (Great Britain: Two Roads, Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), 165.
[215] Caroline Stoessinger, (2012), 97.
[216] Dorothee Binding and Benedict Mirow, *Refuge in Music: Terezín/Theresienstadt*, Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste, (Deutsche Grammophon, 2013), DVD.
[217] Dorothee Binding and Benedict Mirow, (2013).

People displaced more recently from countries in the Middle East also speak evocatively of the power of music to support them in challenging and traumatic moments in their lives. Australian writer Arnold Zable tells the story of Naji, a Mizrahi Jewish violinist from Baghdad. [218] As a Jew in an Arab country, Naji was forced to flee to Israel in the 1950s. He then found himself an outsider in Israel as an Arabic Jew, and sought a safe haven in Australia. Naji tells of people smugglers and privation, but he also talks passionately of music. When his sister was able to join Naji in Tel Aviv, the one precious item she smuggled out from Iraq as a refugee was his violin. Decades later, Naji doesn't play anymore, but he finds solace in music:

> 'Now I spend hours, upstairs, in my music room. I shut the door, turn down the lights, turn on the tape and lie on the sofa, and listen. You get inside the music, and the music gets inside you. You see? There is no politics in it. Only music. You are back with your friends, in Baghdad, in Ramat Gan, on Napoleon's Hill. You are everywhere, and you are nowhere.'[219]

Zable also recounts Amal Basry's harrowing story of surviving the sinking of the SIEV X in the seas between Indonesia and Australia in 2001. [220] Amal Basry lost one of her sons in the drownings, and spent many hours in the water before finally being rescued. In describing her ordeal to Zable many years later, Basry also remembered her father speaking of his admiration for the great Egyptian singer Umm Khultum.

> 'In the ocean, many times I wanted to die…I was waiting for the angel of death, but I remembered what my father told me and I held on to the body of a woman. And I heard music. I heard Umm Khultum, and the songs my father sang when we walked by the Tigris. Maybe this saved me.'[221]

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[218] Arnold Zable, *Violin Lessons*, (Melbourne Australia: Text Publishing, 2011).
[219] Arnold Zable, (2011), 10.
[220] SIEV is an Australian Government acronym for Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel - terminology to describe boats approaching Australian territory that may contain asylum seekers. This is the incident referred to in version 1.0's 2004 production CMI: *A Certain Maritime Incident*, discussed in Chapter 4.
[221] Arnold Zable, (2011), 146.
The SIEV X, an overloaded fishing boat, was carrying desperate refugees who were trying to reach Christmas Island to claim asylum. The boat sank with the loss of 353 people, mainly women and children who had been hoping to reunite with their husbands and fathers. Australian diplomat and writer Tony Kevin has written powerfully about the circumstances surrounding the sinking, the delayed rescue response by the Australian Government, and the consequent Senate enquiry. Kevin says that the survivor accounts, some of which are available online 'sing of the strength of the human spirit' (Tony Kevin, (2004), 57, "SievX.com", accessed February 1, 2023, www.sievx.com).

For the first showing of *The Migration of Souls* I placed a grand piano at one end of the arc. With the piano, we could share some of the beautiful German music that reflected the heights of German culture and had brought such solace to the inhabitants of Theresienstadt – and with the addition of guitar and oud, we could explore music from Middle Eastern and contemporary Australian cultures. The singing voice has always been central to this production. It has been at the heart of my personal creative journey, and it channels the universality of human emotion with a rawness and immediacy that an instrument external to the body can not quite match. Martha Nussbaum expresses it thus:

> 'All musical instruments refer in some way to the human body, but the voice, alone among the instruments, is a part of the body, and always expresses bodily frailty as well as potentiality.'[222]

However, following the initial development I decided that the piano was not an appropriate instrument with which to accompany a poeticization of the asylum seeker journey. To better reflect the transient nature of this journey and its global resonance, the instrumentation needed to be easily transportable and to be less culturally specific. Grand pianos are generally evocative of the Western classical idiom and of a degree of privilege, while the violin and guitar have close contemporaries in several cultures, and a versatile player can encompass several musical genres. With this combination of stringed instruments and voice, the production can move between Western and Middle Eastern classical and folk traditions, and the instruments can be carried by the performers. For the full workshop showing, the instrumentation consisted of the human voice with guitar and violin, along with their Middle Eastern counterparts oud and kamancheh (an Iraqi spike violin), thus providing a more integrated and organic sound world than one which includes a grand piano.

I undertook extensive musical research before selecting the songs for the workshop showing. My final choices reflect several different times and cultures, and each has thematic relevance to the part of the journey it enhances.

The pared back cabaret setting of the first scene is an echo of Weimar cabaret culture as well as of the reminiscences of musicians who had given concerts in Terezin. The scene begins

[222] Martha Nussbaum, (2013), 52.

with a simple unaccompanied German folksong, *Es geht ein dunkle Wolk herein,* which allows a single human voice to express a sense of foreboding, and to foreshadow what is to come:

Es geht ein dunkle Wolk herein,	*A dark cloud is coming,*
Mich deucht, es wird ein Regnen sein,	*I think there will be rain,*
ein Regnen aus den Wolken,	*Rain from the clouds*
wohl an das grüne Gras.	*On to the green grass.*
Und kommst du, liebe Sonn, nicht mehr,	*And, dear sun, if you don't come soon,*
So weset all im dunklen Wald,	*Everything in the dark forest will wither*
Und all die müden Blumen,	*And all the weary flowers*
Die leiden bitt'ren Tod.	*Will suffer a cruel death.*

This is followed by a Hans Eisler setting of a Brecht poem, *Die Heimkehr*, arranged for voice with guitar accompaniment. As a supporter of the Communist Party in pre-war Germany, Eisler saw his music banned by the Nazis. He went into exile, moving through several European countries and eventually to the United States. *Die Heimkehr* uses musical language influenced by jazz and cabaret styles to describe the anguish of returning after war to a ruined, smoke-filled hometown.

For the last song in the cabaret section (there may be additional songs in the full production) I chose a setting by South Australian composer Anne Cawrse of a poem written by Alena Synkova while she was a teenager held in Terezin. Synkova was one of the few who survived the camp.[223] The song *To Olga*, composed for voice and guitar, speaks of an apprehensive but hopeful journey into the unknown:

> *Listen, the boat whistle has sounded now*
> *And we must sail out towards an unknown port…*

This song heralds the audience's departure from the familiarity of the cabaret presentation into the first transition space. As the audience members move through this space, they are

[223] "Alena Munkova", Centropa.com, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.centropa.org/biography/alena-munkova

accompanied by quiet improvisation on a kamancheh, suggesting movement from the German-influenced space into a different musical culture. An unaccompanied voice sings the first Hafez ghazal during this transition. Hafez was a fourteenth century Persian spiritual and mystical poet and remains the most popular poet in Iran today.[224]

The central scene in the arc contains five songs, accompanied by film and physical action. The song *Wand'ring in this place*, written in 1598 by the English composer Michael Cavendish, is an expression of profound loss, airing universal sentiments across time and place: *Wand'ring in this place as in a wilderness, no comfort have I, nor yet assurance.* Originally composed with lute accompaniment, the song is accompanied here by guitar. *Wand'ring in this place* ends with a prayer in Latin, chosen as an important acknowledgement of the influence and resonance of the great Christian religions alongside the main three songs in the arc, which are settings of Bahá'í prayers in their original Persian.

During the course of my research for *The Migration of Souls* I met Mojgan Khadem, a film maker originally from Iran and now resident in South Australia. Mojgan was very generous in sharing her memories of fleeing Iran as a child with her family, and in deepening my understanding of the Bahá'í faith.[225] Founded by Bahá'u'lláh in 19th-century Persia, the Bahá'í faith emphasises the spiritual unity of all humankind. The three core principles of Bahá'í teaching are that there is one God who is the source of all creation, that all major religions have the same spiritual source and come from the same God, and that all humans have been created equal, with diversity being appreciated and accepted. The Bahá'í have been intensely persecuted in their home country, Iran, and are now scattered across the globe in many different countries.

Mojgan fed me Persian cake accompanied by fragrant tea, sang me the first ghazal by the acclaimed mystical Sufi poet Hafez (which was later included in the production), and introduced me to a selection of Persian prayers, to which Mojgan had added her own tunes which she said had come to her while she was praying. I was moved by the resonance of so many of these elements with *The Migration of Souls* journey — Mojgan and her family's experiences of fleeing persecution, the all-embracing nature of Bahá'í spirituality, and the beauty of the prayers. I invited composer Anne Cawrse to meet Mojgan with me to discuss a

[224] "Hafez", Iranica Online, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hafez
[225] "The Baha'i Faith", accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.bahai.org

new commission to set three of the Persian prayers. After more tea and baklava cake, and what I described in my notes as 'a generous, open and gentle sharing', Anne took away recordings of Mojgan singing her tunes to the prayers, as well as the chosen prayer texts in both English and Persian, with an understanding that she could use as much or as little of Mojgan's original material as she wished.

Anne transcribed Mojgan's melodies, using them as a basis for her compositions and adding her own harmonic language. The unfamiliarity of the Persian language added complexity to her task as composer, and to mine as performer – we both spent time listening and familiarising ourselves with the rise and fall of the text and the emphases and nuances of the language. Anne's sensitive approach allowed her to stay true to the original material while also adding her own creativity and originality to the composition. In the arc, the *Three Persian Prayers* are performed by voice, violin and oud. They are cries from the heart to be seen and held and acknowledged, and of faith, hope and thankfulness in the face of uncertainty and loss.

In an echo of the music from the first scene, into the quiet that stems from an intense moment within the arc we hear a single unaccompanied voice singing *Wiegala*, a lullaby written by Czech author and song writer Ilse Weber while she was imprisoned in Terezin. Ilse was able to send her older son Hans to safety before she was imprisoned, and spent much of her time in the camp caring for and teaching the younger children. Her husband survived the camps, but Ilse and her younger son were killed.[226]

The sound world in the second transition section of *The Migration of Souls* is created by the industrial fans, the gravel underfoot, and the shouts of the 'officials'. But seeping into this austere space is the faint sound of music and conversation, and the audience emerges into the final hospitality space to refreshments, conversation, and the energetic and joyful strains of semi-improvised Arabic instrumental works played on oud and kamancheh. This is a space of hope and possibility. As Rilke says,

> '[…] one may only use the strings of lament to the full if one is determined later to play upon them, with their means, the whole jubilance that grows and gathers behind

[226] "Ilse Weber", DonneUk.org, accessed February 1, 2023, https://donne-uk.org/ilse-weber/

everything burdensome, painful and endured, and without which the voices are not complete.'[227]

5.3.2 Set Design

During the early research period for *The Migration of Souls*, designer Emma O'Neill came to me with the idea of using the shape of the Nissen hut[228] as the central design concept. Invented by Major Peter Nissen during the First World War, Nissen huts are semi-cylinder-shaped prefabricated huts originally intended as portable accommodation near the front line of war. Nissen huts were adapted again for use during the Second World War as barracks, hospitals and offices, and since then have been used widely as temporary accommodation in zones of war, conflict and resettlement around the world. They have been used in Australia as accommodation in migrant hostels, and more recently to house refugees in detention centres. The structure we came to call the arc is based on the Nissen hut shape, with open ends and a semi-circular wall and ceiling surround that can convey rear projection of film. We decided to seat the audience along the two long sides, with a narrow playing space between them. I requested that the design allow for the base of the arc to be gradually filled with water, so that by the end of the scene we might well be in a boat under the night sky.

This design concept became the strong early artistic decision that provided me with the creative parameters within which to situate other decisions about the production. As Haseman and Winston attest in their discussion of aesthetics for applied theatre practitioners, 'the aesthetic forms of their work and the 'feeling for life' that animates them, be it social justice or personal emancipation of varying kinds, are inseparable'.[229] The arc gave me an immersive set design that situated the audience and the performers in the same playing space, with the underlying message that we are all in this together. There would be little space for voyeurism in this design.

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[227] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1942), 143
[228] "Nissen Hut", OxfordReference.com, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100235451
[229] Brad Haseman and Joe Winston, "Why be interested?' Aesthetics, applied theatre and drama education", *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 15 no.4 (2010): 469, accessed February 1 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569783.2010.512182

As described earlier, in the earliest iteration of *The Migration of Souls* the entire performance took place within the arc. It was after the first development showing, in contemplating the audience questions and responses, that I decided to provide an audience pathway to and from the arc. I was keenly aware of the impossibility and ethical naivety of depicting the real and challenging events of an asylum-seeking journey within a theatrical setting. I was also concerned to diminish any potential voyeurism in an audience being asked to observe performers making even a poeticised version of that journey. Without text, without obvious references to time and place, it was possible to create a new journey, one that performers and audience could share. Instead of representing others and asking the audience to observe and empathise with their experiences, I could create an audience journey that asked, 'what if?' With skilful juxtaposition of multiple artistic pathways, I could involve the audience in a sensory and aesthetic experience that asked them to place themselves in a position of gentle displacement and uncertainty, inviting them to consider how this experience might resonate for them personally, and thereby hope to arouse their curiosity, empathy and compassion for those enduring a real-life journey of displacement.

5.3.3 Film and Sound

Once I had some firm ideas about the musical, dramaturgical and design structure of the work, I was in a position to invite a film maker and a sound artist to join the project. The opportunity provided by the design to project onto the curved walls of the arc meant we could use film to immerse the audience in a series of different places or atmospheres, potentially enveloping them within a scene, providing background content or amplifying a specific moment. This immersive imagery would enhance the aesthetics of the experience, providing an additional sensory strand for the audience. In addition, we could project live footage of the performers and audience, captured by mobile phones, onto the screens.

I commissioned short stand-alone films for each of the three Persian Prayers. My brief to the film maker for the first film, for the song *Manam*, was to represent a gradual build of people joining the audience on their journey. The film begins with a single figure, with more people gradually becoming visible amongst a growing mountain of rubble until the clouds lift to reveal a crowd of people stretching across a plain into the distance. The second Persian Prayer film introduces the concept of water, referencing the arduous boat journeys made by many refugees, amplifying the real water which begins seeping into the

performing space during the scene, and creating the impression that the arc might now be a boat. In the third film, some personal items – identity papers, a ring, cash, a strip of Panadol – are seen gently sinking through the water. This is a reference to the tragic outcomes for boats like SIEV IV and SIEV X discussed in earlier chapters. I chose to allude to these experiences in an aesthetic manner rather than to express them more overtly, in respect for those who had personally endured the experience and in line with my intention to create a space in which the audience could empathise and consider, rather than creating a shocking moment that might risk audience overwhelm.

We also began to create a film we titled 'Memories' to accompany the song *Wandering in this Place.* The main function of this film is to express the warmth and richness of the homes and lives that have been left behind. Many of the refugees I spoke with during my research in Adelaide wished to emphasise that, far from the often repeated trope that they are economic migrants fabricating levels of danger in their homeland so that they can take advantage of the greater riches on offer in Australia, they had led rich and fulfilling lives, they missed their people and their home, and they only left because it was too dangerous to stay. An early draft of the Memories film was shown during the workshop performance, consisting of a series of gentle domestic scenes – picking oranges, fastening a necklace, shaking and holding hands. The aim is for the film to deepen audience appreciation of what has been lost, and to humanise and individualise the crowds we have seen in the *Manam* film with glimpses of a warm, secure home life, while the actors in the central space pack up their now meagre possessions in preparation for the next uncertain instalment of their journey.

The sound designer and I experimented with a number of voice-over tracks to texts I had written, editing the actors' voices into layered clips and montages of sound. Some of these sound files were used for the workshop showing, but most will not be taken forward into full production. Like the live spoken text, they proved to be too didactic and specific for the atmosphere I wish to create.

The sound designer also created a sound file suggesting the creaking of infrastructure. The Iranian film maker with whom I consulted on the production, and who had travelled to Australia by boat, had described to me the fear and apprehension of the people on the fishing boat as it pitched, creaked and cracked in the high seas, causing the passengers to

fear its imminent collapse. The 'creaking' sound file created by the sound designer is very effective during the entrance to the arc and in some quieter early moments in the central scene.

The main sound set piece is the 'hate storm'. I compiled a list of prejudiced statements about asylum seekers and refugees from verbatim reports, which were then spoken by the actors and recorded, and asked the sound designer to craft the phrases into a 'storm' of noise, building gradually into a cacophony of negativity. The track ends with the sound of static, which the Iranian film maker advised me was a sound people heard before they drown, and which also represents the failure of communication technology. This piece references the dangers of asylum seeker boats encountering huge storms at sea, and underpins the increasing desperation of the main dance within the arc.

5.4 Representation

I was keenly aware that, as the leader of a project based on the journeys of displaced people, I had no personal experience of my subject matter. The decision to invite the audience to take a poetic journey with the performers, rather than to recount the experiences of others, removed some of my ethical concerns regarding appropriation. In addition, it was important to me that the creative and performing team reflected something of the global impact of the refugee crisis, and that I consulted and worked with people for whom our theme was a personal reality. This would ensure a creative context in which my socio-political agenda and research could be enriched and tempered by listening to and learning from those with direct experience of displacement.

I welcomed the opportunity to invite recently arrived South Australians to be a part of the project, as well as locally based artists who had personal or familial experience of displacement. The generously shared personal experiences of these individuals, their artistic skills, and the discussions we had, enriched both the process and the outcome. Members of the performing and creative team included the granddaughter of a Russian doctor who fled with her child to a camp in Italy and finally to Australia in the aftermath of World War Two; the granddaughter of a Polish Jew who escaped the German camps in the 1940s, travelling first to Palestine and later to Australia; and the daughter of a Persian family from Shiraz who fled the riots after the Shah was deposed, fleeing to Lebanon and finally to Australia. As mentioned earlier, I also undertook cultural and artistic consultation with an Iranian writer

and filmmaker, a dissident who escaped imprisonment and travelled with his family to Indonesia and then to Australia by boat, spending some time in detention on Christmas Island before arriving in Adelaide.

I was particularly aware of my duty of care that the experiences so generously shared within the creative team should not become subservient to the artistic outcome, and that the individuals concerned should not be put at risk by participating and contributing. Salverson reminds us of the importance of considering the additional personal stakes of those whose stories are being told. 'Creating performance with refugees means taking into account that people who talk about difficult histories run emotional, economic, and sometimes political, risks.' [230]

As the experience of the refugee actors in *Kan Yama Kan* reminded me[231], I needed to remain cognizant of my own relative personal security in choosing to create this production, in comparison to those for whom Australia had not yet extended full citizenship rights. For example, I had several fruitful creative meetings with the Iranian film maker, who generously recounted many stories of his and his family's personal experiences, made comments and suggestions for the script, and expressed pleasure at being part of a creative team again, as he missed his former creative colleagues in his home country. However, he also revealed that his wife was concerned about him being too overtly involved in a socio-political work here in Australia. His writing and film work in Iraq had been one of the causes of his imprisonment there and of their need to escape, and the family had yet to be granted residence in Australia. He did not attend the workshop showing. Mojgan, who had introduced me to the Persian Prayers, gave a moving performance of the Hafiz first ghazal, but also expressed concern that her family would find her singing in public culturally inappropriate.

Through consultation with the Australian Refugee Association, I was able to invite one of their Youth Ambassadors[232] to be a part of the production. A young African woman joined our team, a charming and generous individual who spoke seven languages and brought powerful energy and commitment to her performance, as well as a wealth of personal

[230] Julie Salverson, (2001), 110.
[231] The refugee actors who performed the production for government officials in Canberra took the risk of potentially undermining their applications for Temporary Protection Visas, a risk that the Australian citizens of that creative team did not experience.
[232] ARA Youth Ambassadors are trained public speakers with a personal experience of displacement.

experience which enhanced some of the production details, particularly with the processing transition scene.

For the workshop showing, I was able to engage two South Australian migrant and refugee support service organisations to be represented in the final hospitality scene – the Australian Refugee Association and Baptistcare. Both organisations are poorly funded and hugely oversubscribed, faced with more needs than they can easily meet, and I was acutely aware of not wishing to add to their workload with an artistic project. My hope was that this exposure to new audiences would increase awareness of their work and possibly attract some additional support for their organisations. Their feedback after the showing was generous and positive, and provided me with additional recommendations for audience engagement in the full production.

While it is critical to remain mindful of the dangers of voyeurism, it can also be very powerful for a theatre audience, in a society in which refugees are often hidden from view, to meet individuals who have been displaced from their homes. Visibility in itself can be powerful. Alison Jeffers, discussing the decision of the actor Shafaei to place himself in the centre of the post-show discussions for the play *Refugitive*, comments:

> 'The opportunity of a face to face encounter with a 'real' refugee created a strong dramatic move in a system where refugees are routinely incarcerated and where official strategies deliberately obscure the humanity of refugees.'[233]

In the face of a campaign of dehumanisation and fearmongering, the opportunity to converse with someone who has a refugee background can help to expand our concept of the single refugee story to encompass individual human beings with a variety of life experiences. In *The Migration of Souls*, the audience share their poetic journey with individuals for whom there has been a real journey of displacement, and with whom they now have an opportunity to connect.

I also needed to remind myself to question where the benefits were for the refugees who were taking part in this production. As I discovered for myself during the creative process, individuals with a refugee background are often generous in sharing their stories with others,

[233] Alison Jeffers, (2012), 152.

and productions such as this can certainly act as an acknowledgement of the injustices and harm they have suffered, and as a welcome into a new community. However, I needed to remain vigilant that I was not involving refugees in a tokenistic manner merely to illustrate the theme of this work, without considering that they would have their own personal and socio-political intentions.

I learnt valuable details from the individuals in my team who had experienced bombing, displacement and arduous journeys to seek safety. I have already mentioned the Iranian filmmaker who spoke about the terror he and his fellow passengers experienced at the creaking and cracking of the boat, fearing that it might disintegrate at any moment in the open ocean. This conversation was the basis of the sound effect created for the arc entry. We also spoke about the backpack one of the actors is carrying, discussing which items might need to be left behind as the journey progressed. He suggested that the actor might collect things as well as part with them. 'We don't only lose things, we bring things,' he said. This was a timely reminder of the need to be aware of the potential for accidentally diminishing the personal agency of people who have refugee experience.

In the final transition scene of *The Migration of Souls*, the audience is to an extent 'rescued' by the actors from refugee backgrounds. I needed to make sure that these actors were comfortable with this scenario, in essence a reversal of their lived experience. In travelling through *The Migration of Souls*, the audience has experienced risk and uncertainty, and the relinquishing of personal power. These role reversals are another pathway to understanding that the refugee experience is one that might happen to anyone, not an experience reserved for specific cultures or types of people. The individuals with refugee experience that I worked with were very generous in helping to share this awareness with the audience.

5.5 Audience engagement

With the audience journey becoming an organic artistic component of *The Migration of Souls*, I needed to give careful consideration to the form that journey would take, and how it might be experienced by individuals within the audience. In his discussion of immersive theatre, Alston describes audiences in immersive productions as 'part of the means of aesthetic production'[234] , and goes on to question whether this is always a meaningful

[234] Alston, (2012), 7.

experience, or is sometimes just filling in the gaps according to the performers' directions. If not well-managed, an immersive audience experience can turn out to be a dissatisfying one, either overwhelming the audience with sensation without any clear direction as to what it might all mean, or allowing too much space for external thoughts and conversations to intrude. As Gareth White observes: 'many people have found this form immensely frustrating, that these layers of physical experience interfere with the process of reception and response to a performance that seems to be on offer, yet always in some way out of reach.'[235]

Once an audience is involved within a production, their own experience tends to become the prime lens through which they filter the artistic content, rather than the artistic components themselves. Discussing what he describes as participatory performance, Frieze comments that:

> 'the crux of participatory performance lies not in the object of our attention, what might normally be called 'the content', but in the ways that our attention is managed, the ways in which our engagement is co-opted *with and as* content.'[236]

As my intention for the audience was to provide them a space in which to consider the experiences of others more deeply, I needed to pay careful attention to the audience journey, moderating the level of audience involvement so that ideally it contained enough immersion to allow them to feel personally involved and connected, but not so much that their own experiences would swamp the messaging about the refugee experience of others. The audience experience I was hoping to go some way towards creating is described vividly by Josephine Machon:

> 'By exploiting the imaginative and experiential possibilities that exist in live performance, immersive theatres can trigger intense responses to the emotional and philosophical content of the work, the narratives that texture it and themes that underpin it. Immersive practice stimulates the human capacity for perception that shifts between realms: between the sensual and intellectual, the literal and lateral.'[237]

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[235] Gareth White, "On Immersive Theatre", Research International 37 no.3, 229. Accessed December 12, 2022. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/theatre-research-international/article/on-immersive-theatre/9B7E65D36308389C77542D00E6C8845F
[236] Frieze, (2016), 23.
[237] Machon, (2016) 32.

It was important to me that the audience, although perhaps a little unsettled and discomfited by their journey, was not given too confronting or shocking an experience. Firstly, as Alston commented in his reaction to *66 Days in Damascus*[238], it would be a disservice to those who have personally experienced a refugee journey to suggest that their privations and hardships could be simulated with any authenticity within the security of a theatrical production. And secondly, too shocking an experience might trigger alienation in the audience, causing them to close down to alleviate their own discomfort rather than to open to the experiences of others. On the other hand, I needed to ensure that the production did not so aestheticise the subject matter as to remove all authenticity, inadvertently creating poignancy and beauty out of the suffering of others as Alison Moore witnessed with Górecki's Third Symphony[239]. My artistic imperative was to provide an aesthetically engaging experience, while my socio-political intention was to offer a space for contemplation of the experiences of others, and the possibility of positive action.

Of course, each audience member brings their own experiences, values and expectations to the performance, and is affected in different ways by the experience. As the collective *non zero one* comment in their discussion of immersive theatre audiences, 'What one person feels is exploitative or too risky, another might find tame.'[240] However carefully the audience journey is planned, the experience will be mediated through the individual perceptions of each person, and it is just not possible to create an experience which affects all audience members in exactly the way the creator intends. Indeed, two separate pieces of audience feedback that I received after the workshop showings were an effective demonstration of the challenges in creating an audience experience that will speak to every individual. One audience member was almost angry that he had been challenged and unsettled, rather than taken care of and invited in, as in his previous experiences with my work, while another audience member exhorted me to go much harder in terms of challenging and discomfiting the audience.

The first development showing, which took place entirely within the arc, contained several early experimental versions of audience involvement. For example, one of the performers entered the arc amongst the audience, and volunteered her story of her family's displacement

[238] Adam Alston, (2016), 260.
[239] Alison Moore, (2011), 7.
[240] Non zero one, "Reflections on Immersion and Interaction", in *Reframing Immersive Theatre*, James Frieze [ed.] (Liverpool: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 143.

after the performance had been running for some time, as if prompted to speak up through witnessing the stories of others. This served to create the sense that anyone in the audience might have a similar story to share, and might speak at any time – that the audience and the performers were sharing the same experience – a prelude to my later decision that we would all undertake the journey together.

In one first development scene, an actor moved along one side of the audience, handing out cards with five-digit numbers written on them and asking each audience member to display their number in front of them. The other side of the audience looked on. The intention was to create a sense of separation between those with numbers and those without, and uncertainty and unease as to what the numbers might mean. By the time we reached the workshop showing, the numbers were on the tag given to each person in exchange for the shoes they were asked to remove on entry to the arc. This small moment of disempowerment proved to be a simple surrender to some, and a considerable intrusion for others. In choosing small intrusions like being required to remove shoes, rather than more personally intrusive actions, I was in agreement with Frieze's estimation that 'the most pedestrian tasks can be the most affecting in performance. Tasks such as walking, shedding or donning items of clothing, singing, dancing or just speaking can, in the ritual context of participatory performance, be more intense than sensational, script-driven doing such as the aiding of a hostage-taker or a flight from slavery.'[241]

During the first development we also began to experiment with live streaming through mobile phones, some experiments more successful than others. It was here that the 'big brother' image, which was taken forward to the workshop showing, was created. An actor slowly walks the length of the audience, capturing each of their faces individually on a mobile phone which is linked to the large screen. This simple device creates a visceral sense of uncertainty and discomfort, with the audience barely daring to breath into the silence. When he reaches the end of the row the actor leaves the space, his face replacing those of the audience and staring at them wordlessly from the screen.

There were also elements of audience involvement that were tested in the early development and not taken forward. During the first development of *The Migration of Souls*, we

[241] Frieze, (2016), 12.

experimented in a number of ways with the notions of power and choice, and their arbitrary nature depending on cultural hierarchies such as race, religion, gender and class. We worked through several methods of unexpectedly swapping power roles during the production, as well as explorations of the unexpected power of having choice, and the impossibility of having no choice. In the end, none of these scenes were carried forward. The detail proved to be confounding. It was best to get out of the way, to allow the audience to gradually surrender their own power during the production, and to take them on a journey with us.

In one version of the draft script I included a scene in a detention camp based on those on Manus and Nauru. I had been reading some of the leaked staff reports from the camps[242], and was horrified both at the appalling treatment of the asylum seekers there and at how little awareness there was within the Australian population that this was occurring. For some time I wrestled with the content of this scene, trying to balance my desire to share this knowledge with as many people as possible, my duty to those whose story it was to be respectful and truthful to their experience, and my desired outcome for the audience. In the end, I decided to remove the scene, and instead to create a transition 'processing' scene that evoked reminders of the camps through simple design elements and tightly managed audience movement through the space. I felt that translating the shocking information from the camps through an artistic channel would belittle and undermine the real-life experiences of the detainees, and that the confronting nature of this information would be likely to cause the audience to close down in self-protection. For some of those who have undergone these experiences, there have been times when there has been no remaining spark of hope or humanity to lift the soul. Hanna Levy-Hass described these depths of despair in her *Diary of Bergen-Belsen 1944-1945:* 'Everything we see here, everything that happens under our eyes makes us begin to question our own human qualities. A dark and heavy doubt awakens. Doubt in mankind.'[243] Here the truth is too stark, too pitiless for art.

[242] "The Nauru Files', TheGuardian.com, accessed February 1, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/news/series/nauru-files

[243] Hanna Levy-Hass, *A Diary of Bergen Belsen 1944-1945,* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 114

5.6 Transforming empathy into action

I viewed the final hospitality scene as crucial to the socio-political intentions behind the work. As Haseman and Winston observe: 'For the applied theatre practitioner, the purpose of the work is paramount, often rooted in a profound interest in achieving emancipatory or life-changing impacts with participants and audiences.'[244] My aim was that *The Migration of Souls* might create an outlet for the shared sense of shame and culpability that is a prelude to the ethical community[245] described by Gilbert and Lo: 'to implicate the audience in that self-reflexive process so that 'reality' is located not in the historical evidence presented, but in the social relationships thereby activated.'[246] I wanted *The Migration of Souls* to arouse in the audience a personal connection to the current reality and urgency of refugee experience.

In addition, I hoped to be able to encourage the audience to use their heightened emotional response to the production as a catalyst for taking positive action. While the shared acknowledgement of shame and discomfort over the plight of others can be validating, it is a salve created for the audience rather than for the people whose suffering is the subject of the production. Witnessing and responding to an aesthetic rendering of the suffering of others should not be confused with a political act. I wanted to avoid the possibility of Moore's 'gratuitous indulgence in the pleasures of sorrowful empathy'[247]. My intention was to create a scenario in which the actions of this ethical community might go some distance towards creating real-life positive change.

Mindful of Susan Sontag's warning that compassion 'needs to be translated into action, or it withers'[248], I decided to provide the audience with immediate outlets for potential positive action during the final hospitality scene. I was also aware of the danger expressed by Sontag that such a global issue can cause us 'to feel that the sufferings and misfortunes are too vast, too irrevocable, too epic to be much changed by any local intervention.'[249] In place of the enormity of the task when faced by just one individual, I hoped to create the empowering sense of possibility of a whole community – represented by the audience – acting together for positive change.

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[244] Brad Haseman and Joe Winston, (2010), 467.
[245] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 203.
[246] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 192.
[247] Alison Moore, (2011), 7.
[248] Susan Sontag, (2003), 90.
[249] Susan Sontag, (2003), 70-71

Paul Bloom outlines a significant difference between empathetically feeling the distress of others and of acting with compassion to alleviate that distress. He also questions whether empathy itself does indeed lead to positive action. 'There is almost always an easier way to make your empathic suffering go away than the hard work of making someone else's life better.' [250] Within the hospitality scene I needed to make the work of contributing to the welfare of others easily available and eminently possible. I decided to liaise with local refugee support agencies to offer a variety of pathways for the audience to access, some as simple as signing a petition or making a small donation, others more personally involving like supporting a campaign or joining a specific project. The different options would be relevant and useful to the support agencies, cater for variations in the reactions and capacities of individual audience members, and would be readily available and simple to access. With Paul Bloom's commentary in mind, I intended to make it easier for the audience to alleviate their empathic suffering by taking compassionate action.

I also wanted the hospitality scene to symbolise the alternative welcome with which we might choose to greet refugees when they find asylum in our country. Salvadoran/Australian artist and educator Tania Cañas makes a strong critique of Australian welcome to refugees as 'asserting a spatial power of the group that has the power to do the welcoming',[251] reminding us that a guest is 'made to feel at home only so much as the welcomer makes them feel so.'[252] Alison Jeffers asserts that 'there can be no hospitality without risk. That risk is taken on both sides because, in the truly hospitable encounter, both host and guest must be prepared to be changed'.[253] In *The Migration of Souls*, the audience experiences a loss of power during their journey, the attendant vulnerabilities and uncertainties reminiscent of Cañas's description of the guest. During the hospitality section they regain their personal security as members of the Australian community, with additional insight into the role of the guest and the potential means of offering a true welcome.

[250] Paul Bloom, (2016), 141.
[251] Tania Cañas, (2017), 72.
[252] Tania Cañas, (2017), 74.
[253] Alison Jeffers, (2012), 162

5.7 Towards the full production

To assist in informing future creative decisions, I collected feedback from several sources following the workshop showing of *The Migration of Souls.* I conducted debrief sessions with members of the creative team and performers, and sought responses from the representatives of the refugee support organisations who had participated in the hospitality scene. I also spoke extensively with audience members immediately after the showings, and invited them to share their personal responses to the experience with me by private email. Much of the feedback was extremely positive, signifying that the immersive and multi-dimensional nature of the experience had been effective.

The four specific responses quoted below each speak to one of my intentions for the production:

> After hearing the Persian Prayers for the first time, Mojgan sent me an email which read in part: *'It is such a pleasure to hear music dedicated to these words, when on the other side of the globe, in Iran, many beautiful souls were killed simply for believing in the Bahá'í faith and reciting the prayerful words that you have now set to music.'*
>
> One of the representatives from a refugee support organisation wrote that '*it was a great amount of interaction that was involving and engaging but not threatening which would allow more people to engage.'*
>
> An audience member wrote: *'I am moved to live out more actively the empathy I have towards asylum seekers.'*
>
> And I was particularly gratified by the following response which likened *The Migration of Souls* to Artaud:
> *I found it deeply moving. I emerged from the experience almost speechless. It had touched my innermost being, as Antonin Artaud thought theatre should. All the elements of the production were of the highest artistic quality and executed with the greatest restraint to create an aesthetic of rare beauty and depth.*

These responses were a welcome validation that many of my intentions in creating *The Migration of Souls* had been realised – in particular, that the balance of aesthetics and authenticity had felt appropriate, and that audience members had been engaged by the beauty, the intimate intensity and the subject matter of the work. Gratifying as this is, there are several areas of the workshop production which I wish to revise before going into full production – some are aesthetic considerations, and some are adjustments that need to be made in order to engage the audience more actively with a real-life outcome for their experience.

Resources for the workshop showing were limited, and there are several design and technical aspects that will be developed further before full performance. For example, lighting in the audience trial was minimal, and a specifically created lighting design will enhance the production enormously. The film footage created for the set pieces in the arc will be fully realised, and additional abstract images will be added throughout the scene. The use of mobile phone technology within the production may be expanded, with an eye to the many functions of this technology, particularly in sharing multiple points of view.

Design details will also be developed and enhanced for the full production. The technical aspects of flooding the arc with water will be streamlined, so that the audience leaves the arc through ankle-deep water. I envision the arc itself becoming something like a musical instrument, 'singing' through the manipulation of air pressure running through pipes within the set. The sensation of sitting within the vibrations of the sounding structure will be a visceral addition to the creaking infrastructure soundscape created for the workshop showing. In creating its own sound-world the arc can become even more powerful as a discrete environment, defamiliarizing but contained.

A complicating factor for my own working process was that I was juggling several artistic roles. In addition to acting as producer, director and dramaturg for the production, I was the main singer for the performances. Inevitably, as the process moved toward rehearsal for the workshop showings, my own performance preparation took a back seat to the intricacies of the technical and directorial aspects of the production. There was no time to prepare more than a straightforward concert rendition of the cabaret songs, which will be given more presentational detail in the full production. Additionally, the musicians expressed the regret that there had not been more time for music rehearsals, particularly for the more demanding

Persian Prayers. Unfortunately, music rehearsal time was lost in the need to troubleshoot some technical challenges.

One of the issues still to be addressed is the traditional expectation of classical vocal concert audience members that they be provided with translations of the lyrics of the songs in languages other than English. The nature of the audience movement through *The Migration of Souls* means that there is no place for printed programs. For the workshop showing, production details and translations for the song lyrics were made available for the audience to pick up in the hospitality scene. Several audience members reflected that they would have liked to have known during the performance what the words to the songs meant, although one response was as follows:

> 'The music was sublime and conveyed the deep reverence with solo voice and solo instrument, seeing the words or hearing all of them clearly would have taken away from the mystical ambience created.'

This particular response reflects my intention to employ the music as one of the many strands which, when woven together, create the heightened experience of the immersive journey. However, I will investigate the option of incorporating fragments of the song lyrics into the projection footage without interrupting the artistic flow of the work.

Thought will also be given to the journey of the musicians within and between the different spaces. The actors and dancer are able to move freely with the audience, but the musicians, playing complex music, need not only to carry their instruments but also at times to be able to read the music they are playing. For the workshop showing, the musicians made the journey with the audience, but were set up separately at one end of the arc so that music stands could be pre-set. Ideally, the musicians will be completely embedded within the audience, but for the musicians this would mean that a great deal of complex music would need to be learnt from memory. Further options will be investigated, to try to minimise any sense of separation between the musicians and the audience.

For the workshop showings, my intention of encouraging audience engagement with real-life action following the performance was only partially successful. The unexpected intensity of the audience's emotional response to their journey was extremely gratifying, but it also meant that the entry into the warmth and colour of the hospitality section felt too abrupt for many.

They were still profoundly moved by their experience, and their heightened emotions made it difficult for them to see beyond their own personal response.

It became clear to me after the workshop showing that in order to encourage the audience to translate their emotions into practical action, the two transition scenes need some adjustment. The first transition, from the cabaret scene to the arc, can be enhanced by addressing the question of why people leave their homes. One of the refugee support organisation representatives wrote in her feedback: 'We find a common misunderstanding/question is why do people actually have to leave? Is it that bad? Why would they risk their lives on boats which seems more dangerous etc?' The Iranian film maker also asked these questions of the draft script: 'Why do we leave? And what did we leave? – it was a good life…'. The film sequence in the arc called 'Memories' will be expanded as intended, and this will go some way towards expressing the fullness of the lives that have been left behind, but more can be done in this regard within the first transition scene.

The audience will also require a debrief scene within the second transition. In creating this scene, I will be guided in part by the research of American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. Haidt recently coined the term 'moral elevation' to suggest that witnessing an act of moral beauty, such as an unexpected act of kindness or compassion, warms and uplifts people, and also has a motivational influence, making them more likely to do similar things.[254] Haidt has gone on to undertake studies which support the positive effects of moral elevation in areas including prejudice against gay men[255], mother and baby relationships[256], and moral excellence in leadership[257].

The debrief section of the second transition will be designed with the concept of moral elevation in mind, to acknowledge the audience experience and to offer them support, and to allow this act to settle into an inspiration to offer similar support to others. Small groups of audience members will be greeted and taken aside by representatives of support services as

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[254] Andrew Thomson and Jason Siegel, "Elevation: A review of scholarship on a moral and other-praising emotion", *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12 no.6 (2017), accessed February 1, 2023, https://doi-org.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/10.1080/17439760.2016.1269184

[255] CK Lai, J Haidt and BA Nosek, "Moral elevation reduces prejudice against gay men", *Cognition and Emotion* 28 no. 5 (2014).

[256] JA Silvers and J Haidt, "Moral Elevation Can Induce Nursing", *Emotion (Washington, D.C.)* 8 no. 2 (2008).

[257] M Vianello, EM Galliani, and J Haidt, J, "Elevation at work: The effects of leaders' moral excellence", *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 5 no. 5 (2010).

they leave the processing transition scene. The effects of their journey will be acknowledged, and they will be offered examples of support as if they themselves are newly arrived South Australians. Having experienced and witnessed the benefits of this support, the aim is that they will emerge into the final hospitality scene in a less emotionally heightened state, ready to interact with colleagues of the support agency representatives who have just offered them support, and to translate their own compassion into positive action.

It is anticipated that creative changes will continue to be made right up to the first performance, and in all likelihood beyond, as creative direction responds to evolving individual and external factors. This complex interplay of artistic strands, creative minds, arts and non-arts stakeholders and challenging thematic material will require constant and nuanced creative oversight to ensure a continuing balance between the aesthetic and the authentic, and to maintain an ethical approach to the sensitivity of the material.

CONCLUSION

The creation of *The Migration of Souls* was an ambitious task. Not only was this work intended to be a significant extension of my previous practice in expanding the presentational forms of classical vocal concert music, it was also to address one of the most significant and compelling social issues of our time, and in a manner designed to inspire the audience to engage actively in effecting positive change.

My experience with physical and immersive theatre had introduced me to the powerful intimacy and personal connection that could be created through removing some of the traditional barriers between audience and performers, and through including additional sensory pathways – visual, spoken, kinetic – within a musical performance. Brad Haseman offers this description of the aesthetic experience I was seeking:

> 'Many applied theatre and performance practitioners recognise and work towards deep, sensuously rich moments of engagement when participants or audiences are moved to 'experience' the situation that confronts them. Such experiences go beyond a mere recognition of conceptual content; instead cognition, imagination, memory and the body work in complex interrelation to produce insight and fresh understanding.'[258]

During my creative journey towards the workshop showing of *The Migration of Souls*, I gained deeper insight into the importance of both the management of working relationships and of ethical considerations surrounding the representation of the stories of others in creating a work of this complexity.

Working relationships

There is a delicate balance to be found in maintaining a nuanced and self-aware approach to relationship management in a project involving disparate individuals with an array of skill sets, a lengthy time period, and a challenging socio-political theme. As Taylor describes[259], different approaches will need to be taken at various stages of the production, depending on personalities, designated roles, and the specific stage of the process. And just as Hayden and Windsor discovered during their 3D-Music project[260], communication of the leader's intentions and approach from the outset, along with overt discussions of roles, relationships

[258] Brad Haseman and Joe Winston, (2010), 466-467.
[259] Alan Taylor, (2016), 568.
[260] Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor, (2007), 39.

and responsibilities, can avoid misunderstandings and contribute to an amicable and productive working environment.

Individual artists need different amounts of time for their own creative process to unfold. Once a first draft of creative material is in place, it can be revealing to allow time for the juxtapositions between artistic components, whether uncomfortable or surprisingly magical, to create their own initial resonance without immediate mediation. Carter's 'second cross-weave of thought'[261] generated by artistic collaboration may yield unexpected riches – it may also have uncomfortable repercussions that will require further examination.

In the interests of authenticity and representation, the views of every stakeholder, whether an artistic or non-arts participant, need to be heard and acknowledged. This is particularly important when the subject matter is of such a potentially emotive nature. I found that during the follow-up week after the first development for *The Migration of Souls*, each individual artist felt a need to express their strong opinions about the subject matter to me and to the group. While this was challenging at the time, particularly as it took up valuable sessions that I had set aside for creative work, it was an important aspect of the process for these artists. It also revealed to me that I needed to rethink the creative direction I had been taking, and reconsider some of the included material. Meanwhile, the input from the artists and consultants who had direct experience of personal displacement was invaluable in deepening my understanding of the experience and requiring me to interrogate my creative choices with more rigour.

The creative process is an organic balance between allowing individual creative work to flourish, keeping track of Eckersall's 'complicated flow of ideas, technologies and forms'[262] that emerge, experimenting with juxtapositions, and taking on the over-arching creative decision-making regarding the dramaturgy and composition of the final product. During this process, it was after the challenging post-development week that I took up the leadership reins of *The Migration of Souls* more firmly, imposing more specific structural and contextual guidelines and providing more detailed briefs to artists.

[261] Paul Carter, (2004), 5.
[262] Peter Eckersall, (2006), 287.

In creating a work based on confronting and sensitive socio-political material, I found it critical to keep in mind Carter's edict that 'the process of making the work becomes inseparable from what is produced.'[263] I tried to maintain active and self-conscious consideration of the intentions and creative offerings of each arts practitioner, accompanied by open communication and acknowledgement of all contributions, and to remain open to new information and to perspectives that were not necessarily my own. In this way I could work towards the creation of a cohesive artistic community through which the new communal aesthetic world would be created.

Representing the stories of others

When addressing the experiences of others, accuracy and permission are important initial considerations. It is a matter of respect and professionalism to ensure that as far as possible the artist's understanding of the issue is clear and correct. It is also a matter of respect and courtesy to request permission from any individual before representing their story. There is an inherent power imbalance in having the opportunity to speak for another who is not currently in a position to speak for themselves or their group. Authority to speak on another's behalf cannot be assumed, and it cannot be taken for granted that the owner of the experience would necessarily share the aesthetic or socio-political intentions of the artist.

As Adichie reminds us,[264] the experiences of others cannot and should not be reduced to a single story. Not only is the refugee experience complex and multi-faceted, but those who have suffered displacement also have many other life experiences, and are diminished by being defined solely by their refugee status. Reducing an individual to the role of victim denies them agency in their own story and inadvertently plays to the power imbalance between refugee and citizen. The act of observing the suffering of another can all too easily reduce that individual, as Salverson describes it, to 'an object of spectacle, [with] the audience member as […] offstage voyeurs'.[265]

Artists who create refugee-related work often do so in the desire to support refugees by increasing public awareness of the damaging results of Government refugee policy and of the plights of individuals suffering within the detention system. As we have seen, it is important

[263] Paul Carter, (2004), 11.
[264] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, (2009).
[265] Julie Salverson, (1999), 43.

to avoid didacticism,[266] and to allow the artwork to lift beyond the documentary to the aesthetic, allowing space for potential transformation.[267] The balance between aesthetics and authenticity is complex. Individual stories can be powerful touchstones, but simple verbatim recounting is not art. A powerful aesthetic experience can touch an audience through a variety of pathways – visual, aural, sensory, kinetic – and thereby arouse personal responses on intellectual, emotional and physical levels. I chose to move further in the direction of aesthetic beauty and poetics for *The Migration of Souls* after the initial single-scene showing, when it became clear to me that the level of narrative detail had been a confounding factor in the audience's ability to connect personally with the experience.

It is equally important not to over-beautify the experience so as to remove all authentic meaning and to allow the audience Moore's 'gratuitous indulgence in the pleasures of sorrowful empathy'.[268] This may indeed contribute to the creation of the 'ethical community'[269] posed by Gilbert and Lo, providing space in which audience members can share their communal shame at the situation being portrayed. However, there is a danger here that self-congratulatory empathy may be mistaken for activism. Attending a socio-political artistic performance is not to be confused with socio-political action.

Empathy and the burden of compassion

Salverson finds that overly empathic identification with others 'is not only voyeuristic, not only does it distort my ability to listen and respond, it is also too great a burden.'[270] Paul Bloom agrees that 'too much empathy can be paralysing'.[271] A production that aims to invite shock and anger on behalf of refugees by being deliberately confronting may result in the audience closing down to the discomfort of their own emotional response. These emotions — along with those of shame, and overwhelming empathy — may prove too uncomfortable to bear. Having worked to arouse strong responses in our audience, we do not then wish to see them close down to an emotional burden too great to carry, or become so enmeshed in their own emotional response that they are unable to look beyond themselves to consider the real-life experiences underlying the work.

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[266] Emma Cox, (2013), 116.
[267] Susan Sontag, (2003), 68.
[268] Alison Moore, (2011), 7.
[269] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 203.
[270] Julie Salverson, (2001), 176.
[271] Paul Bloom, (2016), 156.

This was an unexpected consequence of the workshop showings of *The Migration of Souls*. While it was gratifying to discover that the audience was deeply moved by the experience, for many their powerful emotional reaction to the creative journey rendered them only partially capable of interacting with the refugee organisations and support material in the hospitality scene. This revealed to me the importance of ensuring that the audience was given the necessary support to move through their personal reactions so that they could emerge into the hospitality scene with a renewed and focused compassion.

From compassion to action

Socio-political works of art are often described as 'preaching to the converted', audiences for these works arriving with socio-political views already in line with those of the production they have chosen to attend. As Gilbert and Lo argue,[272] this can be a valuable exercise in giving voice to citizens whose views are not represented by the prevailing Government, and can create the comfort of an ethical community within which communal shame and outrage can be expressed. With *The Migration of Souls* I sought to invite this ethical community to take positive social action in response to the emotions aroused within them by the production.

Two writers in particular influenced my decision to create a space offering possibility for action as the coda to *The Migration of Souls*. The first is Susan Sontag – the specific quote is worth repeating here in full:

> 'Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated. If one feels that there is nothing 'we' can do […] then one starts to get bored, cynical, apathetic.'[273]

The second quote is from Paul Bloom, who reminded me that 'There is almost always an easier way to make your empathic suffering go away than the hard work of making someone else's life better.'[274]

With Sontag's observations in mind, I set out to create a space in which there was an opportunity for compassion to be translated immediately into action before it could wither to

[272] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 204.
[273] Susan Sontag, (2003), 90.
[274] Paul Bloom, (2016), 75.

apathy. And in response to Paul Bloom's warning, I sought to make taking positive action an easy as well as immediate option, offering a positive pathway for the audience to alleviate their empathic suffering.

I also learnt from the workshop showings that an additional step was needed. The deep personal emotions aroused by the audience experience of *The Migration of Souls* needed to be addressed, to allow the audience to assimilate and process their own responses to the production before being able to address the needs of others. In creating this debriefing moment, I will keep in mind the findings of Jonathan Haidt, that witnessing an act of moral beauty can be a positive motivation for similar action. My intention is that, in being provided with a supportive and validating debrief moment, the audience will not only be enabled to move through their own emotional process, but they will also feel empowered and inspired to take action in support of others.

How then do we create a considered, nuanced and authentic representation of the socio-political issues we wish to share, respecting the intentions and experiences of those to whom the stories belong, and creating a heightened artistic aesthetic, while at the same time conveying our own desired message, connecting with rather than alienating our audience, and seeking to enable positive action? The task is indeed complex. Too overtly didactic an intention may distance our audiences, even though our aim is to humanise and connect. If our work is too shocking, or carries too much emotional weight, we are in danger of alienating or exhausting our audience rather than inviting them in.

However, it is natural to expect initial resistance from some members of our audience if our intention is that their current personal narratives be challenged by the material we are presenting. We human beings are often resistant to the prospect of changing or adjusting our hard-won perspectives on the world around us. We can also feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the issue. Salverson suggests that the audience 'may be resisting not only the enormity of the task they suspect is before them but the impossibility of that task, the inevitability of their complicit failure before it,'[275] a comment reminiscent of Sontag's observation that we might feel that 'the sufferings and misfortunes are too vast, too

[275] Julie Salverson, (2001), 169.

irrevocable, too epic to be much changed by any local intervention.'[276] Is it possible for an artistic production to enable the audience to feel empowered to take action as an 'ethical community'[277]?

Often a production has many stakeholders: the creative and performing teams, organisational partners both within and outside the arts industry with multiple perspectives and needs, and a diverse audience base. Salverson, acutely aware that her own personal agenda of social justice needs to be only one factor in her decision-making about the way in which she represents the material, declares that her refugee-related projects are now designed from the outset to embrace both the strategies of representation which 'maintain the dignity and authority of refugees' and the potential for 'dialogue and listening with Canadians'.[278] It is important to create our work with both those whose stories we wish to represent and our intended audience in mind.

The Migration of Souls integrates several art form strands with classical vocal music, creating an immersive journey shared by audience and performers alike. A compelling socio-political issue — the privations suffered by increasing numbers of displaced people and the punitive Australian Government response to these individuals — is represented through a largely poetic aesthetic, replacing narrative information with an offering to the audience to consider the experience from their own perspective. The opportunity to consider a poeticized version of the asylum seeker journey 'as if', without the overlay of potentially confounding detail, is intended to open a pathway for a more personal and intimate experience, leading to heightened empathy. The final scene of *The Migration of Souls* seeks to translate this heightened empathy into positive social action.

For some, *The Migration of Souls* may remain purely an aesthetically moving experience, with the additional benefit and personal salve of creating an invitation to join an ethical community. For others, the empowerment of being able to act on their convictions may be deeply compelling. *The Migration of Souls* seeks to offer an aesthetic transfiguration and a deepening of personal connection and awareness. It may also be a prelude to real-life acts towards social change.

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[276] Susan Sontag, (2003), 70-71
[277] Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, (2007), 203.
[278] Julie Salverson, (2001), 133-134.

PART B – Introduction to the creative work and archival footage of the workshop showing

This section of the exegesis provides introductory material for the archival footage of the workshop showing of *The Migration of Souls*. The information provided outlines the members of the creative team and performers, offers text translations to the songs included in the performance, and includes notes to explain the archival footage that will be viewed.

PART B - 1:

Creative team and performers for *The Migration of Souls* workshop showing

Creatives:
Cheryl Pickering – Artistic Director, Dramaturg, Singer
Emma O'Neill – Designer
James Kalish – Film Maker
Jason Sweeney – Sound Artist

Performers:
Aidan Kane Munn - Dancer
Philip Griffin - Guitar, Oud
Nawres Alfreh - Violin, Joza Tarhu

Actors:
Catherine Campbell
Martha Chew
Mojgan Khadem
Emma O'Neill
Rachel Nyiramugisha
Stephen Sheehan

Partners:
Australian Refugee Association
Baptistcare
Vinnies Migrant and Refugee Centre
Vitalstatistix

Biographies for lead creatives:

Cheryl Pickering is a director, creative producer and singer, with a current focus on cross-art form and socially engaged classical vocal music performance. Cheryl is Artistic Director of Various People Inc, was inaugural Chair of Chamber Music Adelaide, and was selected as a member of the 2014 cohort of Australia Council Emerging Leaders.
Cheryl's creative and performance work in the UK and Australia ranges from intimate performances to large productions with both professional and community performers, in opera, concert, theatre and multi-art form events. As Chair of Chamber Music Adelaide, Cheryl created the award-winning annual event *On The Terrace*, attracting over 1200 people each day to curated chamber music performances within Adelaide's four North Terrace cultural institutions.
Cheryl recently acted as Associate Director to Neil Armfield on the highly acclaimed premiere of *Watershed* (Joe Twist, Alana Valentine, Christos Tsiolkas) in the Adelaide Festival of Arts. She is a sought after and highly regarded singing teacher, and lectures in classical voice and performance at the Elder Conservatorium, University of Adelaide.

Emma O'Neill has worked and toured nationally and internationally in theatre and community arts. Emma is a designer, puppeteer and community artist with extensive experience in stage, production and tour management. Companies she has worked with include State Theatre of SA, State Opera of SA, Melbourne Theatre Company, Australian Dance Theatre, Performing Lines, Windmill, Sydney and Melbourne International Arts Festivals, Various People Inc, Magpie, Patch, Red Shed, Brink, Restless Dance and Tutti. Emma has also worked on many local South Australian events including WOMADelaide, Come Out, High Beam, Adelaide Festival and Adelaide Fringe Festival. Emma was Production Director at KneeHIGH Puppeteers for eight years where she also designed and built puppets, props, sets, costumes and fire and lantern sculptures. Current work includes designer/production manager for Vitalstatistix and Various People Inc.

James Kalisch, filmmaker, has created experimental short films which have screened in Sao Paulo, Osaka, Mannheim and Melbourne. He has been commissioned to produce promotional videos for various state government programs, and has crewed on vampire films, animal films and big Muppet films shot in Australia. He has collaborated with visual artists, composers, dancers and actors to assist and produce gallery and installation work. James

collaborated with Brink Productions to produce the video component for its theatre production *Skip Miller's Hit Songs*, which was awarded the inaugural John Chataway Award for the use of Digital Technology at the Adelaide Festival Fringe. Occasionally he paints.

Jason Sweeney is a composer, musician and sound artist. He has developed and presented composition, sound art and live performance works across Australia and internationally at such places as Performance Space (NSW), Arts House (VIC), Australian Experimental Art Foundation (SA), 24HourArt (NT), Banff Centre for the Arts (Canada), Theatreworks (VIC), Vitalstatistix (SA), Centre for Interdisciplinary Arts (WA), Australian Centre for the Moving Image (VIC), Mardi Gras (NSW), ISEA (international), Experimenta (national), SPILL Festival (London), TEDGlobal (Edinburgh), Nadine Arts Centre/ Plateau (Belgium), Raygun Labs (QLD), Adelaide Festival (SA) and Adelaide Film Festival. He has been commissioned to create sound scores and experimental compositions for Zephyr Quartet, FourPlay String Quartet, State Theatre Company of SA, Domenico de Clario, pvi collective, Chunky Move, Restless Dance Company, version 1.0, Tanja Liedtke, DV8 Physical Theatre, Force Majeure, Closer Productions, SOIT (Belgium), Pacitti Company (UK).

Part B - 2:

List of songs and translations

<u>Cabaret scene:</u>

***Es geht ein dunkle Wolk herein* – German folk song**
A dark cloud is coming
I think there'll be rain,
rain from the clouds
on to the green grass.

And, dear sun, if you don't come soon,
everything in the dark forest will wither
and all the weary flowers
will suffer a cruel death.

Die Heimkehr – Hans Eisler/Bertolt Brecht
And how will I find you, town where I was born?
Following the swarms of bombers
I am coming home.
Where is my town? Where the monstrous
mountains of smoke stand.
That in the fires there,
that is my town.
How am I likely to be received in my home town?
The bombers arrive ahead of me. Lethal swarms
announce the son's return. Infernos
are my harbingers.

To Olga – Anne Cawrse/Alena Synkova
Listen - the boat whistle has sounded now
And we must sail out towards an unknown port
We will sail a long, long way
and dreams will turn to truth.
Oh, how sweet the name Morocco - Morocco…
Listen - now it is time.
The wind sings songs of far away
far away
Just look up to heaven and think about the violets
Listen.
Now it is time.

The arc:

Manam – Anne Cawrse/ Abdu'l-Baha
It's me here, it's me
I am a servant at your threshold
I am seeking your refuge
I am looking forward to seeing you
I am at once drunk and sober
Please open the door, have some pity on me, grant me your attention
Hear my prayer
O Thou creator of the most Glorious Name Oh Thou discoverer of the Hidden Secret Oh blessed beauty
It's me here, it's me
Oh God, it's me.

Wand'ring in this Place – Michael Cavendish
Wand'ring on this place as in a wilderness.
No comfort have I nor yet assurance.
Desolate of joy, replete with sadness.
Wherefore I may say, Oh Deus,
Non est dolor sicut dolor meus.
(There is no sorrow like unto my sorrow)

Komak – Anne Cawrse/ Abdu'l-Baha
Oh God, help me
Oh Thou the protector, protect me (from desire)
O Thou my confidence and my friend, give me some relief (from cruelty and bloodshed)
O Thou the most Mighty and Powerful, make me steadfast (give me entrance into Paradise)
Oh God, help me to do the right thing
Help me in this world. Help me in the world to come
Thou art the most Powerful, oh God
Thou art potent to do what Thou willest, The most Mighty, oh Protector
Thou art my Guide and my Refuge, oh Confidante, oh Friend Thou art the all-seeing and all-hearing
Thou art the all-knowing, the all-wise
Oh our Sovereign Lord
Help me, protect me, give me some relief
Thou art God in this world. Thou art God in the world to come
Thou art God in every world of existence
Help me. Help me. Help…

Wiegala – Ise Weber
Wiegala, weigala, wille,
how silent is the world!
No sound disturbs the lovely peace.
Sleep, my little child, sleep too.
Wiegala, wiegala, wille,
how silent is the world!

Thankfulness – Anne Cawrse/Bahá'u'lláh
My God, my adored one, my king, my desire!
What tongue can voice my thanks to Thee
I was heedless, Thou didst waken me
I had turned back from Thee, Thou did graciously aid me to turn towards Thee
I was as one dead, Thou didst quicken me with the water of life
I was withered, Thou didst revive me with the heavenly stream of Thine utterance which hath flowed forth from the Pen of the All Merciful
Oh Divine Providence! All existence is begotten by Thy bounty
Deprive it not of the waters of Thy generosity, neither do Thou withhold it from the ocean of Thy mercy
My God, my adored one, my king, my desire!
I beseech Thee to aid and assist me at all times and under all conditions and seek from the heaven of Thy grace Thine ancient favour
Thou art, in truth, the Lord of bounty
and the sovereign of the kingdom of eternity.

Instrumental music in first transition and hospitality scene:
Improvised from Persian tunes by Nawres Alfreh and Philip Griffin

PART B - 3:

***The Migration of Souls* - Notes for the archival footage of the workshop showing:**

This archival footage was not created for public showing. It is a documentation device for the purposes of creative decision-making going forward. The edited archival footage included here is a combination of footage taken over the two showings over consecutive evenings, which is most obviously reflected in changes in the audience membership from scene to scene.

It is not easy to represent an immersive sensory experience through video footage, and the archival edit can only be an impression of the multi-faceted experience. Some scenes took much longer in the live version than are depicted here, being opportunities for audience members to submit themselves to the process and to become immersed in the sensory and emotional experience. These moments do not translate well onto a two-dimensional screen and have been shortened accordingly for the archival footage. The central arc scene is shown almost in its entirety. The cabaret scene has been truncated. In the full production there are likely to be additional songs, delivered more in cabaret-style than the archival concert performance. The two transitions and the hospitality scene are also truncated in the footage – they are experiential, and not designed for lengthy screen viewing. The full production lasts a little over an hour, with the length of the final hospitality scene being open-ended depending on audience engagement.

A lighting design had not been completed at the time of the workshop showing. Many scenes are therefore rather dark. As the lighting and the films on the arc screen often conflict with each other visually in the footage, James Kalisch's draft films have been inserted, with crossfades between the raw films and the arc footage. Images from the *Memories* film for the song *Wandering in this Place* have been inserted into the corners of the archival image to offer a flavour of the final product.

The sound quality is variable, not having been recorded with public viewing in mind.

The edit has been completed to reflect some of the changes that will be made going forward. For example, spoken text not being taken forward has been removed, and in the case of the evacuation scene has been replaced to include only the alarm sound that was used.

PART B – 4:

The Migration of Souls **archival footage of the workshop showing**

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