Chapter 1

Overarching Statement:

Teacher Professional Development in Performing and Literary Arts Education

Every reception of a work of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective (Eco, 1979, p. 49).

Preface

The research papers in this portfolio refine and elaborate the inter-relationship between the reading and the creation of artistic texts, and the role of teachers in the facilitation of pedagogic experiences that enable such discourse. This is a relatively new area of study for teachers in tertiary, secondary and primary institutions (in NSW, Australia, primary refers to years of schooling one to six, secondary education refers to years seven to twelve of schooling, and tertiary refers to post secondary education). It is acknowledged that the field, especially the discipline of performance semiotics, is problematic for teachers and students alike:

Learning how to interpret and analyse theatrical events is a critical component in the education of students... However, there is very little available to guide teachers who are struggling...How are teachers supposed to help students become more responsive to theatrical events? What skills do students need in order to openly receive and actively interpret a variety of performance texts (Grady, 2000, p.144).
As a researcher, and professional teacher educator, one of my major roles has been as a link between the new area of performance studies research and the pedagogical concerns of teachers. The core research issues presented in this portfolio address these concerns in relation to the creation, and interpretation, of literary and performance/theatrical arts texts.

1 Core Research Issues

The core of the research presented in this portfolio focuses on three key issues framed in the form of four questions:

Teacher Knowledge

The first addresses the area of teacher knowledge and asks:
How can we equip teachers with current theoretical knowledge and understanding of the performing and literary arts?

Student-centred Teaching Approaches and Strategies

The second addresses interactive strategies in learning about literary and performing arts and asks the question:
How can we equip teachers with student centred approaches and strategies to enable them to teach the performing and literary arts effectively?
Comprehension of Literary and Performing Arts Texts

The last addresses the difficulty teachers and students face when approaching difficult artistic phenomena and asks:
What procedures, approaches and learning strategies aid students in their understanding and critical analysis of complex, difficult and often, for teachers and students, culturally alienating artistic texts such as: historical and contemporary theatre, music theatre (especially opera) and poetry?

1.1 Core Issue 1: Teacher Knowledge

All papers selected for inclusion in this portfolio were written to assist preservice and inservice teachers, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, enhance their skills, knowledge and repertoires in performing and literary arts education. This is an academic field where it is acknowledged there is limited research and support (Grady, 2000).
1.1.1 Teacher Anxiety and the Creative Text

The literary and performing arts texts (play scripts, opera and poetry) which form the teaching and learning experiences of the teachers and students researched in this portfolio are, in the majority of cases, not only difficult and foreign to the students, but also present themselves as problematic to many teachers. Teachers cannot, in Winifred West’s words, *inspire* and *awaken* if they lack knowledge of the artistic text, are unaware of contemporary approaches to performance analysis and are fearful of interactive classroom procedures. Changes to syllabus are particularly concerning to arts and literary educators because they involve teachers in substantial research and often material is not freely available especially if this demands access to primary sources. My research has aimed to help teachers access these sources and provide a teacher friendly way to approach performance genres that may be unfamiliar (Grady, 2000).

The fact that many teachers are anxious, not only because they are unfamiliar with the genres that are to be explored, but also because they lack confidence in the new methods of analysis which are required for aesthetic and cultural interpretation of performance
texts, is a realistic and legitimate concern. The field of contemporary performance semiotic analysis is acknowledged as problematic even by leaders in the field. Parvis (1992) has written of the crossroads of culture in contemporary theatre practice and the profusion of genres to be explored:

...unfamiliar discourses and the myriad artistic effects of estrangement are jumbled together...never before has the western stage contemplated and manipulated the various cultures of the world to such a degree, but never before has it been at such a loss as to what to make of their inexhaustible babble, their explosive mix, the inexplicable collage of their languages. Mise en scene in the theatre is today perhaps the last refuge and most rigorous laboratory for this mix...Access to this exceptional laboratory remains difficult. (Parvis, 1992, p. 1).

Other researches support Parvis’ notion of the complexity of the mise en scene and performance semiotics (Aston & Savona, 1991; Counsell, 1996; De Marinis, 1993; Fitzpatrick, 1989; Martin & Sauter, 1995; Marvin, 1996; McAuley, 1996, 1999; Melrose, 1994).

My research, including publications presented in this portfolio, has given many teachers and students a user-friendly window into the laboratory of the mise en scene.
The opera publications are a good example of ‘unfamiliar discourses and the myriad artistic effects’ (Parvis, 1992, p. 1) that produce the fear of the unknown in teachers. While conducting the research on music theatre, contained in this portfolio, it was discovered that many of the teachers, even music teachers, had never seen an opera. They regarded it as a foreign, alienating art form. Many of the teachers who were part of the Opera Demystified Workshops, which I conducted for Opera Australia, attested the alienating qualities of the art works.

A critical impact of my research has been to demystify the operatic text for teachers, thereby enabling them to access this performance genre. Teachers, if provided with contextual information, approaches and strategies for the operatic *mise en scene* can then engage their learners in the art form (Jurisivc, 1999).
1.1.2 Teacher Ownership of Professional Development in Arts Education.

Conditions of teaching and limited resources mean that formal learning opportunities, for teachers, inside and outside school are minimal. This is compounded by the fact that often inservice courses must be taken in the teachers' own time and often at their own expense. All the more important, then, that they are purposeful and relevant to the learning needs of the teacher (Day, 1999).

The professional model adopted in all the papers presented in this portfolio moves away from a simplistic epistemological account of teachers as learners, towards a view of them as active participants in the development of their own androgogy (Schon, 1987; Day, 1999; Sachs, 2000).

Teachers involved in the projects, conducted and reported on in this portfolio, formed part of a community of learners and I, as the principal researcher, was an enabler and learner, as well as an evaluator. Current research on teacher professional
development favours this creation of learning communities, or communities of practice, where teachers and academics creatively explore and solve common problems (Day, 1999; Ewing & Smith, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sachs, 2000; Wenger, 1998). The research in this portfolio represents such communities.

To ensure that the processes and materials were relevant to teachers in their professional development there was constant involvement of practitioners through the inquiries. The opera research (chapter 5) again proves a useful example. While the problem of effective opera education first presented itself via Opera Australia, I immediately involved teachers in focus discussion groups in order to plan relevant inservice courses and materials. Likewise the participants' responses were evaluated throughout the program and the materials trialed in schools to ensure relevance. Jurisevic (1999) said of the Opera Demystified projects:

_The Opera Demystified Workshops were exceptionally successful. Teachers, through their comments and suggestions, indicated a great need amongst their student population for Opera Demystified Workshops to be available in schools...The Teacher Resource Kits were commended for their comprehensive nature and for the_
It is my approach to involve teachers in the development of the research subject and/or the development of the materials and procedures, not only to ensure that the approaches and materials are relevant, but so that teachers may feel an ownership of the processes and the approaches.

Each portfolio chapter therefore presents projects that were immediately relevant to teachers' and arts institutions' concerns. The constant reference to teachers throughout all these projects ensured the research was relevant to teachers' needs. When this happened teachers were willing to make time in the crowded curriculum to enhance their professionalism.

1.1.3 Conclusion Core Issue 1
The first core issue researched in this portfolio addresses the issue of teacher knowledge in the performing and literary arts. The publications presented provide teachers a bridge between complex arts forms, together with new research into performance semiotics, and the teachers' own experiences. This
link allows teachers and students to engage in enhanced and rewarding learning experiences in the arts.

1.2 Core Issue 2: Student-Centred, Interactive Teaching Approaches and Strategies

The second core issue to be addressed in this portfolio is student-centred, interactive approach to teaching and learning. The implementation of such approaches involves a degree of power transference from the traditional source, the teacher, to the student. It follows that the interactive classroom involves risk taking on the part of teachers, and of students, as befits communicative teaching (Brumfit & Johnson (Eds.), 1979; Hughes, 1987). The interactive, child-centred approaches researched in the portfolio, are further supported by the psychodynamic theory of pedagogy (Arnold, 1994) which argues that a dynamic classroom is active, expressive, student-centred, creative and imaginative, and may involve students in a range of other symbolic activities like drawing, movement, drama, model-making and play activities.

For many teachers the shift in the traditional power, together with the improvisational mode demanded by the interactive classroom,
produces fear and reluctance to adopt these procedures (Cusworth & Simons 1997; Taylor 2000). The research presented in this portfolio enhances teachers’ abilities to embrace child-centred strategies and approaches.

Arnold’s research has revealed that, ideally, such approaches will not necessarily become less creative and more formal as students move through the higher levels of secondary and tertiary education (Arnold, 1994). Hence a major focus of this portfolio is on researching student-centred, interactive approaches in secondary and tertiary environments, not just in primary schools where interactive class procedures are already established.

In a dynamic and interactive learning classroom the teacher will encourage exploration and self-expression through reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is driven by the belief that students have the ability and the need to make sense of their world through experiences in a range of discourses. It is generally not acknowledged, in the literature, that the interactive classroom can provide the teacher, as well as the students, with opportunities for imaginative explorations of texts and human interactions, together with opportunities for self-reflection and cognitive development (Arnold,
1994). The teacher’s responsibility is to structure developmental literacy activities that increase the students’ language awareness and language use.

Teachers further provide a responsive, constructive audiences for their students’ language work; so too do the audiences provided by the students’ peers. Teachers and peers help clarify with each other the kinds of thinking, language and creative abilities they may have demonstrated in their work (Hughes, 1975, 1994). The teacher needs to be engaged with students sometimes and appropriately disengaged at other times; in order to analyse sensitively what is happening in the classroom and what needs restructuring. Such a balanced, demanding role for the teacher requires, at the very least, insight, well-developed personal language skills, empathy, flexibility and a capacity to engage students in analysing classroom interactions (Hughes & Arnold, 1998).

All projects researched in this portfolio relate to the type of pedagogy described above and especially to drama as a learning medium. However, as Taylor (2000) has highlighted there are dilemmas that can ensue:
Often educators can forget that drama praxis is characterised by an active and improvisational encounter controlled by a particular educational context...any good drama teacher knows that curriculum is a lived experience; it is negotiated with colleagues and students... (p. 7).

Taylor warns that a lived and negotiated curriculum is demanding on teachers. The powerful learning experiences that can be facilitated by ‘active and improvisational encounters’ (Taylor, 2000) require teachers confident and skilful in interactive, communicative pedagogy. It is understandable that many teachers are apprehensive about such procedures.

Many teachers remain tentative about using drama in their classrooms, and yet...it can be a most powerful teaching and learning methodology across the curriculum. There is a large body of research which suggests that learners are more likely to take risks and ‘have a go’ at problem solving if they are working in a context where they are having fun, feel trusted and supported, and are motivated...Drama challenges the old notion of the teacher as transmitter of expert knowledge. While various kinds of knowledge and skills are obviously important in drama, the best learning comes from negotiating them. (Cusworth & Simons, 1997, preface)

Therefore, to address this apprehension and to enhance teachers’ professional education in interactive procedures and approaches, I established, constructed and participated in a range of teacher-inclusive research projects, which honoured teachers' professional experience, while equipping them with knowledge, skills and confidence in arts education. These projects included: inservice
courses, conferences, workshops, festivals and masterclasses. When teachers undertake such programs and personally reflect on their praxis they are better able to implement interactive, group-based approaches (Jaques, 1984; Thorley & Gregory, 1994; Taylor, 2000).

...when students and teachers are encouraged to make meanings for themselves, and apply their understanding of theoretical ideas to their practical work, they are better able to interrogate and represent a range of ideas in dramatic form, and to engage critically in a diversity of creative practice (Nicolson, 2000, p. 118).

The publications, in this portfolio, specifically offer teachers and their students just such praxis. Evaluations of my programs, by myself and others, have demonstrated that when teachers participate in relevant programs they cease to begrudge the crowded curriculum and gain the confidence, knowledge and skills to adopt these innovative, student-centred approaches in their own pedagogical contexts (see Jurisevic 1999, Appendix B).

1.2.1 Drama in Education

As the dominant interactive, student-centred approach presented in this portfolio is generally known as drama in education, and drama as a learning medium specifically, (Bolton, 1979, 1984,1992; Burgess & Gaudry, 1985; Hughes, 1991a; Neelands, 1990, 1992; Taylor, 2000)
it is appropriate in the overarching statement to briefly outline this field of praxis.

Drama in education has at its core enactment, the experience of an imagined existence; it is a portrayal of this experience through forms that can range from the simplest child’s play to complex multi-art theatrical productions. In drama the participant adopts a new perspective in action so that what occurs is:

...some shift of appraisal, an act of cognition that has involved a change of feeling, so that some facet of living is given (however temporarily) a different value. (Bolton, 1979, p. 41).

This change of thinking and feeling, through enactment, has rightly been a major concern of drama teachers and researchers. There are also a number of events and activities which surround enactment: games, relaxation exercises, role-plays, vocal techniques, physical skills, readers’ theatre, exercises for the development of critical sensibilities, aesthetic judgements and performance creation (Hughes, 1989, 1991a). All of the above are explored in this portfolio, in order to enable teachers to employ drama as a learning medium with confidence and skill.
...drama praxis: activates teachers and students to believe in their own worth; enables participants to reflect on the question: what is happening now?; transforms people’s understanding of their world (Taylor, 2000, p. 130).

Educational drama is a strong discipline in Australian schools despite the fact that there are constant battles to foreground the processes in primary, secondary and tertiary curricular and to avoid it being seen as a ‘transitory enthusiasm’ (T. Metherill quoted in Hughes, 1988a, p. 2). The discipline of drama in education in Australia gained inspiration, in the second part of the twentieth century, from the work of Slade (1954) and Way (1967) from the United Kingdom. There were earlier influences, Cook (1917) in the UK, and in the USA, Ward (1930) and Spolin (1963) however Ward made minimal impact on how drama was presented to Australian students (Taylor, 1994, p. 8) and Spolin’s major influence was confined to acting academics such as the National Institute of Dramatic Art (N.I.D.A.).

In primary and secondary schools in Australia Slade’s emphasis on the child’s absorption in role-play and Way’s abundance of interactive drama activities proved popular with teachers (if not all school executives and bureaucrats) and many Australian

Drama’s central core, its focus, its pivot, is the enactment of events that may have happened, or may be imagined to have happened (Hughes, 1991a). Enactment’s centrality in drama and the value of imaginative, student-centred activities is well documented by researchers and practitioners in the field because of the new perceptions, in action, they can provide. Drama in education provides:

...quality of hyper-awareness that is generated by this very ambivalence of being oneself but adopting an attitude, not
necessarily one's own, relevant to some imagined context. (Bolton, 1979, p. 64).

In educational drama, where the students' involvement in process dominates, often referred to as process drama (O'Neill, 1995), the focus is not on finished theatrical performance but on

...using drama for learning, challenging and thinking about life (Cusworth & Simons, 1997, p. 1).

Both theatrical performance and process drama have role and enactment at their core, together with an aim for a shift in appraisal:

In this drama world, participants are free to alter their status, adopt different roles and responsibilities, play with the elements of reality, and explore alternate existences. When the drama world takes hold and acquires a life of its own, all of the participants will return across the threshold of that world changed in some way, or at least not quite the same as when they began. The key to both the power and the purpose of process drama and theatre lies in the fact that they not only permit but also demand that we discover other versions of ourselves in the roles we play or watch other actors playing. We slip the bonds of our identities and participate in other forms of existence. (O'Neill, 1995, p. 151)
1.2.2 Educational Drama and Language Development

The focus in the research presented in this portfolio is concurrently centred on student language development, especially the comprehension of text through interactive classroom activities and drama as a learning medium in particular. A substantive history of theory supports the positive effects of drama on language and literacy development (Barnes, 1968; Britton, 1970; Boardman & Hughes, 1994; Byron, 1986; Carroll, 1988; Hertzberg, 1998; Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998; Hughes, 1993, 2000; Moffet & Wagner, 1983; Wagner, 1994, 1998).

Further, Kordash and Wright (1987) and Conrad (1998) have undertaken meta-analyses of quantitative studies in the field of drama in education which indicate that drama has a positive effect on children's development in the macro skills in language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Likewise Pellegrini (1980) found a significant relationship between dramatic play and literacy achievement, findings which are also supported by

Many of these studies in the field of drama and language development draw their theoretical base from the work of Vygotsky (1986), particularly the notion of the zone of proximal development (Wagner, 1998). Piaget's (1926) notion that a child symbolises experiences from the real world by engaging in object substitution (e.g. substituting a box for a house) and decontextualized behaviour, that is behaviour and language that occurs outside the immediate, non-abstract, world context of the child, has also influenced educational drama. Likewise Dewy (1959) and his concept of learning by doing, and Bruner's (1986) development of the notion of scaffolding in learning have been of significance.

Since language development, especially literacy and comprehension of text, is dependent on the acquisition and manipulation of symbols and increasingly decontextualized language, Vygotsky argues that social symbolic play (such as occurs in the interactive classroom through drama activities) provides a bridge to literacy and comprehension. Likewise
Bruner's concept of scaffolding is observed in drama activities undertaken by children (Bruner, 1986). In 1998, Betty Jane Wagner's work drew strong attention to the validity of drama activities activating Vygotsky concept of the zone of proximal development. She noted that higher order language modality than is usually presented by the students is observed during enactment exercises. She also noted that children scaffold each other, in Vygotsky and Bruner's terms during play enactments (Wagner, 1998). Researchers such as Simons (1991) have also noted the significance of Vygotsky concept of scaffolding in drama education.

Drama as a learning medium provides powerful, interactive learning experiences for students and teachers. Confident and empathic teachers can employ process drama to enable their students to gain new understandings of themselves and others through creative activities.

...drama education is centrally concerned with encouraging students to reach new understandings by shaping and developing ideas in the process of making and performing drama, and gaining insights into diverse dramatic, theatrical and performative practices, histories and traditions. As a creative subject, however, it is clearly too simplistic to talk about students gaining 'understandings' and 'insights' as if it were a simple matter of transmitting a well-defined body of knowledge
which the teacher knows and the students must memorise. On the contrary, although there are recognisable practices in drama which students might acquire, reaching new understandings implies a creative and personal involvement with the work (Nicolson, 2000, p. 1).

1.2.3 Conclusion: Core Issue 2

Core issue 2 researches student-centred, interactive approach to teaching and learning exemplified by communicative language teaching and drama as a learning medium. These approaches to pedagogy enable teachers and students to explore the dynamic between the creation, comprehension and analysis of artistic texts, and to integrate this exploration with their life experience. The teacher is not seen simply as a transmitter of knowledge but as a facilitator of aesthetic and critical experience. The curriculum is a lived experience that is negotiated in order to gain a shift of affect and cognition.

1.3 Core Issue 3 Comprehension of Literary and Performing Arts Texts

The portfolio publications explore the issue of reading and comprehension of text: both as written discourse in the form of play
scripts and other literary texts (such as poetry), and as performance texts, also known as the *mise en scène* (Parvis, 1982, 1992).

Over the last three decades there has been a wealth of research into the reading process (Barton, 1994; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Goodman & Goodman, 1980; Hughes, 1986, 1987a,b, 1998b; Hughes & Katz 1989; Kress, 1989; Meek, 1983; Smith, 1973; Street, 1984; Wallace, 1988; Winch, 1985) and much has been learnt about how meaning is gained from text.

1.3.1 Theories of Reading

It is now universally accepted that in order to gain meaning from text three cues, at a minimum, need to be operating: semantic cues, syntactic cues and grapho-phonic cues. That is, the comprehension of text requires the reader to have some prior knowledge of the semantic area to be read and some expectation of meaning being possible, and an ability to comprehend the syntactic presentation of the text, (albeit this may be an unconscious understanding), together with a comprehension of the grapho-phonic, that is the symbolic dynamic of the letters, or codes, with sound. At a bare minimum we need these three cues to be operational in order to gain meaning from text. Meaning from text may be possible at the intersection of all three cuing systems.
This psycholinguistic model is generally represented in the following manner:

(Figure 1: Winch, 1985, p. 6)

My research journey began with an explanation of this model and its relevance to teacher education (Hughes, 1975; 1986; 1987a,b; Hughes, 1998b; Hughes & Katz, 1989). The psycholinguistic theoretical reading comprehension model stresses the importance of contextual understanding, which allows for prediction in the reading process (Winch, 1985). In fact many psycholinguists maintain that ‘reading is impossible without prediction’ (Smith, 1983, p. 26).
Each chapter in the portfolio presents research aimed at enhancing teachers' and students' abilities to comprehend very difficult texts; and texts which are, for the majority of students, beyond their immediate semantic field. Many teachers and students are afraid of these texts and unable to bring to bear their predictive strategies; and as prediction plays a major role in reading, for the beginning and fluent reader, there is a concentration in all of the chapters on linking the artistic text with the teachers' and the students' own experience through prediction activities, interactive students-centred approaches which encourage ownership of the text, together with the provision of contextual information which enables the teachers and students to cue themselves semantically into art forms. The psycholinguistic model is implicit, and in several cases explicit, in all the research presented in this portfolio.

In the latter part of the twentieth century social reading theorists (Street, 1984; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Barton, 1994) and critical literacy theorists (Kress, 1989; Wallace, 1998) have challenged the psychodynamic model for not providing a complete account of the reading comprehension process. These researchers and theorists
argue that readers are socialised in the way they comprehend a text and interpret its meaning.

_Different communities, groups or individuals will take meaning from the text according to their relevant social experiences and the social contexts in which those experiences were created._ (Hood, Solomon & Burns, 1996)

As has been already stated, the psycholinguistic model provides minimum requirements for the comprehension of meaning from texts. Notwithstanding, the critical literacy theorists highlight paramount concerns for teachers in the field of arts comprehension and appreciation. Very few teachers and students are socialised in the milieu of the _mise en scene_ (Parvis, 1982, 1992). As noted above, performance semiotics is foreign to many readers and audience members alike. Therefore provision of an understanding of performance semiotics pedagogy is crucial for teacher and student understanding and comprehension in the performing and literary arts.

### 1.3.2 Performance Semiotics

In my research as a professional teacher educator, one of my major roles has been to provide a link between the new area of performance studies research and the pedagogical concerns of teachers.
Readers need semantic information in order to cue themselves into a text; they also need an understanding of the syntactic features of such texts before comprehension is possible. It is therefore imperative that teachers and students have an understanding of the syntactic features of the artistic text. This is essential, for example, in the case of play scripts whose features differ significantly from other text types. Unlike novels or short stories, play scripts are written to be performed and a critical response to a play must reflect the fact that the script is a blueprint for a live, ephemeral happening, the realisation of which will require the creative input of a range of talents. It follows that teachers and students should study a play both in the theatre and as written text, and that the study of the play script should take account of what could be happening on stage.

Performance semiotics is a recent field of study and my research in the pedagogy of performance studies semiotics has attracted both national and international acclaim and has been significantly recognised in the teaching professional literature. (Ackroyd & Hughes, 2000; Ernst & Hughes, 1997a,b,c; Hughes, 1990, 1991a,c, 1998a,b; Hughes & Arnold, 1998; Hughes & Ernst, 1997; Hughes & Freundt,

The pedagogy of performance semiotics is critically explored and addressed in this portfolio. Critical sensibilities and comprehension strategies can be developed which allow the reader to recognise that the artistic text consists of a set of instructions to actors, directors, designers and technicians (Michaels, 1991). When reading novels and other literary text we read for personal and artistic pleasure, what Rosenblatt called aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1978). A play script, however, needs to be read efferently (in Rosenblatt’s terms) in order to imagine the author’s visual intention, that is, we need to read the text as we read a non-fiction piece such as a set of instructions (Michaels, 1991).

Similarly, the division between a semiology of text and a semiology of performance is now passe having been superseded by analysis of multiple texts and an understanding of the concept of the mise en scene (Aston & Savona, 1991; Counsell, 1996; De Marinis, 1993; Fitzpatrick, 1989; Grady, 2000; Martin & McAuley, 1999; Marvin, 1996; McAuley, 1996, 1999; Melrose, 1994; Parvis, 1982, 1992; Sauter, 1995). This field of discipline and research is very difficult for
most teachers and their students because performance semiotics is, as stated above, a relatively recent field of study. Most teachers, unless they have undertaken specific undergraduate or postgraduate courses in performance studies, are unfamiliar with efferent reading as it applies to literary texts. They are confident in aesthetic reading since their own school studies, supported by conventional undergraduate and postgraduate studies, coherently and rigorously explored the principles and practices of aesthetic reading (Grady, 2000).

Unfortunately skills in aesthetic reading alone do not enable the comprehension of a play script or a performance text. Therefore, teachers engaged in performing arts education need an understanding of the grammar of the artistic text, as exemplified by the *mise en scène*. As such performance semiology becomes a cornerstone of the research presented here, and is defined and elaborated in this portfolio.

### 1.3.3 The Arts as Entertainment

It also must be stressed that the performing and literary arts exist to entertain as well as enlighten. It therefore follows that teaching
approaches should support and encourage an enjoyment, as well as an understanding, of the text. Too often teachers, often reluctantly pushed by examination requirements, deconstruct a text to the extent that all enjoyment is lost. In one of my earlier publications I referred to this phenomenon as 'murdering the text by dissection' (Boardman & Hughes, 1994). Willham Sauter’s studies have likewise shown that unless students have a positive experience of theatre in their school years then it is highly unlikely they will ever attend a live theatre event. (Martin & Sauter, 1995). The student-centred, interactive approaches investigated and reported on in this portfolio stress the positive experience teachers and students can have with the creative arts, experiences that are conducive to lifelong learning in the arts (Hughes, 1991b, 1998b).

1.3.5 Conclusion Core Issue 3

Performance studies is a new field of research and teachers’ understanding of the mise en scene is limited. My research has provided teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions with a bridge between performance semiology and pedagogic concerns in the analysis and creation of dramatic and literary texts.
1.4 Research Methodology

If a central aspect of arts education is the new light that is shed on a moment or event, or a different understanding provoked by the work and its non-conventional mode of rendering experience, how can teachers take risks with their students and thereby honour the artistry encountered? If art works are about the possible worlds we can enter and the virtual realities exposed, how can research probe and liberate? (Taylor, 1996, pp. 3-4).

The research conducted and reported on in this portfolio is focused on teachers and students being able to take risks and honour the artistry encountered (Taylor, 1996). My research publications explore approaches and strategies to enable teachers and students to enjoy, comprehend and critically analyse artistic texts, that is, to honour the artistry. The student-centred, interactive approaches enable risk-taking during the creation and exploration of the performing and literary arts; acts which involve artistry by teachers and students.

The following chapters on performing and literary arts pedagogy have been presented so as to reflect the core research issues previously outlined (pp 5-6). Each portfolio chapter contains two publications that are arranged chronologically.
Chapter 2, *Approaching Drama Pedagogy*, provides the theoretical foundations for the pedagogical approaches to performance and literary text explored in this portfolio.

Chapter 3, *Play text and the Interactive Classroom*, presents research into play texts and pedagogy.

Chapter 4, *_operatic Text and the Interactive Classroom*, presents research into operatic texts and pedagogy.

Chapter 5, *Poetic Text and the Interactive Classroom* presents research into poetic text and pedagogy.

### 1.4.1 Arts Based Inquiry

A number of quantitative research studies in performing arts pedagogy have been conducted in the last thirty years, and a great deal of this research involved the development of comprehensive data bases on numbers of teachers and students involved in drama education, and the type of work in which they are involved (Kardash and Wright 1987; Conard, F. 1998). Quantitative research paradigms
have also been used to explore learning outcomes where drama
techniques have been used to enhance learning (Wagner, 1988).
However, as Wagner (1994) and Taylor (1996) have pointed out, the
numbers are of extremely limited use in a humanistic field such as arts
education. Arts education researchers have been urged to find more
illustrations of how research can be negotiated to fulfil the
requirements of process based artistic exploration (Taylor, 1998).
Elliot Eisner (1985) stated that knowing the outcomes of the game
tells us little about how the game is played. One of the key research
questions, related to teacher professional development is: how can
that game be played in a way that

*furthers our practice that relates to our artistic work, and thereby
honours the life experiences of the children we teach?* (Taylor, 1997,
p. xii).

Consistent with these views the qualitative research paradigm has
been adopted in this portfolio.

In recent years there has been a reviewing of arts-based education
research and one of the most significant works in the area is Philip
Taylor (1996) *Researching drama and arts education: paradigms and
possibilities*. The qualitative paradigm, successfully championed by
Taylor, with its emphasis on meaningful research of and for teachers
and learners, is employed in this portfolio. While there is use of limited quantitative methodology in one study (Hughes, 2000). *Drama as a Learning Medium: Researching Poetry*, the dominant methodological paradigm is qualitative. Aspects of this include: reflective practitioner and action research procedures (Cohen & Manion, 1980; Schon, 1987; Eisner, 1991; Taylor, 1996, 1998). The reflective practitioner and action inquiry approach to research elaborates ethnographic methods (Donelan, 1992) to suit the needs of arts education. The researcher is no longer seen as an outsider but as an integral part of the research process; the reflective practitioner stance demands a

...discovery of self, a recognition of how one interacts with others, and how others read and are read by this interaction. (Taylor, 1996, p. 27).

### 1.4.2 The Action Research Paradigm

While many current researchers in the field of education and performance studies favour the action research model it should be acknowledge that this model is not new. Lewin (1946) was one of the first to propose the notion of a cycle: planning, acting, reflecting and planning again. In more recent years Cohen and Manion (1994) have provided a rigorous rationale
and set of procedures for action research. They outline five purposes for action research in educational institutions and settings.

- It is a means of remedying problems diagnosed in specific situations.
- It is a means of in-service training, thereby equipping teachers with new skills and methods.
- It is a means of injecting additional or innovatory approaches to teaching and learning.
- It is a means of improving the normally poor communications between the practising teacher and the academic researcher, and of remedying the failure of traditional research to give clear prescriptions.
- It is a means of providing a preferable alternative to the more subjective, impressionistic approach to problem solving in the classroom.

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<td>Action Research Purposes.</td>
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<td>(Cohen &amp; Manion, 1994. pp. 188-189)</td>
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As this portfolio presents research into teacher professional development the relevance of the Cohen and Manion model is evident. Further, the purposes for action research, outlined above, directly relate to the professional development research concerns outlined in the three core issues presented in this portfolio: teacher professional knowledge, student-centred teaching approaches and student comprehension of text.
Furthermore Cohen and Manion (1994) elaborate areas where the action research model is the preferred paradigm and these areas directly relate to the projects presented in this portfolio. They state that the action research paradigm is best used when reviewing:

*teaching methods*—replacing a traditional method by a *discovery method*...(and) *in-service development of teachers*—*improving teaching skills, developing new methods of learning.* (p. 194)

Several researches refer to action research as transformative research (Wagner, 1998,) because it focuses on transformations to theory and practice. Further it is transformative because it is concerned

...not simply with the study of a situation for understanding but with producing a change for the better...(Orton, 1994, p. 87).

The publications presented in this portfolio have the same aim.

### 1.4.5 Action Research Procedures

Cohen and Manion (1994, pp. 198-199) proffer an eight stage procedure for an action research program from which they stress a researcher should make a suitable selection.
- Stage 1 is the identification, evaluation and formulation of the problem.
- Stage 2 involves preliminary discussion and negotiation among the interested parties.
- Stage 3 involves a review of the research literature.
- Stage 4 may involve a modification or redefinition of the initial statement of the problem in stage one.
- Stage 5 may be concerned with the selection of research procedures such as sampling, administration choice of materials methods of teaching and learning.
- Stage 6 involves evaluation, however this will need to take into consideration that evaluation in this context will be continuous.
- Stage 7 embraces the implementation of the project itself.
- Stage 8 involves the interpretation of the data and publication.

**Table 2.**
Action Research Procedures.
(Cohen & Manion, 1994 pp 198-199)

Cohen and Manion's procedures provide a framework for valid teacher professional development research and yet, presented as they are in linear, written discourse, the dynamic of the action research process is not fully illustrated. Other scholars in the field of action research have further defined and elaborated the cyclical nature of the paradigm which involves a return to previously implemented and reflected upon research issues and problems, and the nature and value of ongoing evaluation, changes and re-evaluation: (Grundy, 1995; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Stenhouse, 1979; Taylor, 1996, 1998). The
research conducted and reported on in this portfolio is a refinement and elaboration of the cyclical research action model.

1.4.4 The Research Cycle

While specific details of the research procedures are outlined in the introduction to the following chapters, the research cycle adopted for the purposes of this portfolio is outlined below.

- The Identification of the Problem.

The relevance, to teacher professional development in arts education, of the research problems and issues presented in this portfolio is demonstrated by the fact that all issues arose from concerns identified by the primary participants: teachers, academics, curriculum consultants and arts institutions.

- Preliminary Discussion and Negotiation among the Interested Parties

The research conducted in this portfolio involved discussion and negotiation with: teachers, students, arts organisations, curriculum authorities, professional associations, academic associations and publishers.
• Review of the Research Literature
All projects involved a literature review, and primary source data collection from theatre institutions and professionals.

• The Selection of Research Procedures
The publications resulted from my establishment and development of, and participation in, teacher inservice courses, workshops, conferences, festivals and performances.

• Implementation and Evaluation
All projects involved extensive evaluation by contributing teachers, students and academic peers; together with reflective practitioner research.

• Publication
The projects in this portfolio have been published in a way that maximises their accessibility and orientation to the improvement of teacher professional development.

1.4.5 Teacher Professional Development and Published Research.
As my research focus has been teacher professional development, I have been mindful of the mistrust many teachers have of researchers.

_Drama educators may have unwittingly contributed to a distrust of research given their own value-laden prejudices about what_
researchers do and meaningful application of research in practice. (Taylor, 1996, Preface x).

I have therefore been particularly concerned to publish and disseminate my research through channels suitable for teachers as well as fellow academics. These channels have included: books, monographs, refereed journals, professional journals, conferences and inservice programs.

One example of the success of this strategy is the review of Hughes, J. (1998a) Teaching plays as theatre in Sawyer, Watson & Gold, Re-viewing English. Bill Simons wrote in Metaphor

...the units dealing with oracy and drama are particularly useful and can be put into immediate classroom use. (Simons, B.1999, p. 84).

Specific recognition is cited in each chapter of the portfolio; however, indicative of the citations is Philip Taylor (1994) who wrote, in the context of an overview of significant international influences on drama research:

The ongoing work of faculty at the University of Sydney (Arnold, R. 1993a, 1993b; Arnold, R. and Hughes, J. 1992; Hughes, J. 1993a) in the field of psychodynamic enactment is making significant inroads in language development ... the research of Glock (1993) on communicative drama strategies in the ESL context develops the studies of other leaders (Hughes, 1993b) and should hopefully lead to further investigations (p. 13.).
As previously stated, these are indicative of many such references to recognition of my research. These are cited specifically as each portfolio item is presented.

1.4.6 Conclusion: Action Research

The action research paradigm, outline above, is supported by these words:

*Action research is situational – it is concerned with diagnosing a problem in a specific context and attempting to solve it in that context; it is usually (through not inevitably) collaborative – teams of researchers and practitioners work together on a project; it is participatory – team members themselves take part directly or indirectly in implementing the research; and it is self-evaluative; modifications are continuously evaluated within the ongoing situation, the ultimate objective being to improve practice in some way or other.* (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 186)

All the criteria outlined by Cohen & Manion have been adhered to in this research. Action research, which is presented throughout this portfolio, is transformative research that aims to improve the professional performance of its participants and the wider community.
1.5 Conclusion: Core Research Issues

As previously stated the core of the action research presented in this portfolio focuses on three key issues related to: teacher knowledge, the interactive classroom and the comprehension of text.

Likewise the inter-relationship between comprehension and creation of text is a major theme of the research presented. The statement by Umberto Eco (p4) is indicative of the dynamic interrelationship between creation and interpretation of artistic texts. The core issue of the nature of interactive, student-centred approaches to the creation of texts permeates all the studies even when the dominant objective is the students' comprehension and critical understanding of an artistic text. The link between performance studies and pedagogy is elaborated in the same way the interactive classroom procedures and approaches presented in this portfolio parallel the rehearsal text analysis now being examined in performance studies (McAuley, 1999). The interactive learning approaches, which abound in all the projects conducted and reported on in this portfolio, incorporate performance semiology, and integrate this field with
drama as a learning medium and communicative language teaching.

As Morgan and Saxton (1987) wrote in their important contribution to drama pedagogy, *Teaching drama: a mind of many wonders*:

...we have come to recognise, through observation and analysis, that the teacher who, instinctively or deliberately, makes use of the devices of the art form (theatre elements and play structure) has a better chance of achieving her educational objectives (p. 1).

My research and scholarship has aimed to produce a change for the better in teaching and learning in the arts for over 20 years. It is pleasing that recognition of this scholarship has been received from teachers and fellow academics, at national and international levels, in the field of arts and literary education (Arnold, 1994; Grumet, 1998; Johnson & Hughes, 1997; Miller & Saxton, 1998; Simon, 2000; Taylor, 1994).
Chapter 2

Enhancing Drama Pedagogy

Preface


2.1 Drama from Intra-Subjective Monologues and Narratives of Self


2.1.1 Research Purpose

This chapter in Drama and theatre in education: the research of practice, the practice of research outlines the psychodynamic approach to student-centred, interactive exploration of dramatic text creation and comprehension. It is appropriate that it is the first publication offered because it demonstrates the reflective practitioner action research paradigm as applied to arts education. The research explores the key issues of teacher professional development through interactive, student-centred approaches to pedagogy; and the dynamic between life experience and artistic text.
2.1.2 Research Methodology

The publication follows the action research cycle (Cohen & Manion, 1994) and has been eight years in development. The project began as an interactive paper given to professional drama academics and teachers at the National Association for Drama in Education Conference, Australia in Canberra in 1991 (Hughes, 1991b). The project was presented to a group of leading Australian drama educators and was then evaluated by academics and practitioners at the conference.

As the result of the presentation I was invited to attend the International Drama/Theatre in Education Association World Congress in Portugal in 1992 and the project was presented to a group of international leaders in the field of drama education who evaluated the research (Hughes, 1992a). Substantial modifications occurred and a version appeared as Hughes and Michaels (1992).
Chapter 2: Enhancing Drama Pedagogy

The project was then conducted and evaluated in several schools and universities in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane between 1993 and 1996.

In 1997 I was invited to be one of four international master teachers of drama at the Second International Drama in Education Research Institute, Canada 1997 (Hughes, 1997). After the masterclass in Canada the leaders in the field of drama in education provided feedback on the research presented. The participants themselves likewise provided written reflections. The data, together with the authors' reflections provide the basis of the chapter.

2.1.3 Co-authorship

Each master teacher was invited to bring a research student to the Second International Drama in Education Research Institute, Canada. Di Johnson was my student.

Two published research projects resulted from the research I presented in Canada: the chapter from a book presented here and the other in a refereed journal (Johnson & Hughes, 1997. See Appendix C.
The conceptual basis of both the publications belongs to Hughes.
The publication presented, in this chapter of the portfolio, was substantially written by Hughes, only one paragraph (paragraph 3 on page 65 of the thesis) was contributed by Johnson.

2.1.4 Recognition of the Research

At the Second International Drama in Education Research Institute, Canada 1997, Professor Madeleine Grumet, then Dean of the Brooklyn College of Education, was the final keynote speaker. Of the master teachers and the conference she wrote:

... it is a rare and confident teacher who will present his or her practice to an audience of informed and expressive colleagues for critique. The generosity of the participants—of David Booth, Warwick Dobson, John Hughes, Cecily O'Neill, Jonothan Neelands and of Johnny Saldana ...was remarkable and inspiring. I was profoundly impressed with the work that took place at the conference as the Master teachers, Booth, Dobson, Hughes and O'Neill each worked with Jonathan Neelands 's students...

(Grumet, 1998, p. 8)

The influence of my research, on practising teachers and performing artists is further demonstrated in Johnson & Hughes (1997), see Appendix C.
2.1.5 The Publication


Drama from intra-subjective monologues and narratives of self.

Saxton, J. & Miller, C. (Eds.)

Drama and theatre in education: the research of practice, the practice of research.

Brisbane: IDEA Publications.
Drama and Theatre in Education

The Research of Practice

The Practice of Research

EDITED BY

JULIANA SAXTON AND CAROLE MILLER
DRAMA AND THEATRE IN EDUCATION

The RESEARCH
of Practice

The PRACTICE
of Research

EDITED BY
JULIANA SAXTON AND CAROLE MILLER

IDEA Publications
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
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Second International Drama in Education Research Institute

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<tr>
<td>David Booth</td>
<td>Master Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Hughes</td>
<td>Master Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Di Johnson</td>
<td>Graduate Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cecily O’Neill</td>
<td>Master Teacher</td>
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<td>Pam Scheurer</td>
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<td>Graduate Assistant</td>
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<td>Juliana Saxton</td>
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Drama from Intra-Subjective
Monologues and Narratives of Self

A major innovation of the second International Drama in Education Research Institute was the introduction of master teaching sessions which were presented to the participants, observed, then deconstructed. Being invited to conduct one of the four masterclasses at the second IDIERI conference, at the University of Victoria, Canada, was a great honour and provided a valuable opportunity to work with the talented and trusting students from Canada and other countries who were enrolled in an intensive drama course at UVic. I titled my session with the students, Drama and Childhood Reflections on Songs. This was an extension of, and variation on, the workshop Music, Drama and Ethnic Diversity which I first gave at the World Congress of the International Drama/Theatre in Education Association in Portugal (Hughes & Michaels, 1992). In this paper, I will outline the objectives and describe some of the outcomes of what proved to be a very gratifying experience.

The Objectives

My teaching approach was based on the principles of psychodynamic pedagogy outlined by Roslyn Arnold in her keynote address to the Institute. Three fundamental propositions (Arnold, 1994, pp. 21-33) underpin the psychodynamic approach:
Hughes & Johnson

- Affect and cognition exist in a dynamic relationship in learning contexts.
- The dynamic between affect and cognition can enhance learning through a process of modification of prior experience and a process of differentiation.
- Educators need empathic understanding and attunement to teach psychodynamically.

The aim of the masterclass was to create an environment where adults could comfortably recall childhood experiences and create an enactment which related to those experiences. This process facilitates an aesthetic encountering of the intersection between cognition and affect. In addition it explores principles of multi-culturalism, an important seam that binds much of my work in this area. Through the careful creation of a working space where the participants feel it is safe to reveal individual memories, a vast store of culturally diverse material can be opened up as each participant is encouraged to encapsulate the memory within its particular social environment. Each participant's contribution is validated by the small group enactment and is seen as part of an ever-evolving cultural life. For example, the memory of a pet parrot that only danced to Rock Around the Clock is every bit as socio-culturally relevant as an old Hungarian folk song.

Other aims which form the intersecting threads to support the fabric of the affective/cognitive dynamic as a whole are as follows:

- To adopt a holistic, humanistic approach to enactment
- To tap into the affective domain
- To affirm and validate feelings
- To encourage collective ownership of individual cultures and experiences

The Process

The venue for the masterclasses was a theatre consisting of a full thrust stage with tiered, unlit seating, stage lights—the works. The format for each master class was that students participated in a warm up session with Jonathan Neelands, the course instruc-
Monologues and Narratives

itor, and then began the class with the “master” teacher. After forty minutes, the institute delegates were to slip silently into the auditorium and sit in the upper levels of seating and observe the workshop “unseen”. This set up a peculiar situation where the students were being observed and yet were not to be seen to be “performing”. I felt this arrangement created an additional layer of stress for them, so I employed several exercises aimed at reducing the effects of the theatre semiotics. In light of this, the class began before the observers entered, with an affective mirroring, self-disclosing exercise where I acknowledged that I was nervous about beginning the work. This seemingly simple tactic was later commented upon by a number of the students in their written reflections. Several of them stated that they felt more at ease after my self-revelation. By seeing that they were not alone in their apprehensions about the proceedings, their own feelings had been affectively mirrored and hence validated. Mirroring and acknowledging unconscious feelings are prime principles of psychodynamic pedagogy.

At this point, I outlined to the students what was going to happen during the workshop but signalled that there was one section that I would not reveal until the appropriate moment. This created a framework within which the participants could feel comfortable but also maintained an area where the spontaneity of a particular part of the exercise would not be jeopardised. This then lead to one of Rowena Balos’ exercises called “I’m scared, I’m powerful” which is well describe by Dean Carey (1995) in his book Masterclass.

One of the first exercises was for all of us to stand with some space around us. Our script was, ‘I am scared’, and the physical movement, a sharp step back. After repeating this four or five times, we were asked again to repeat the line but this time, to step forward.

Why, after this exercise, was the entire room ready to freely experience all the class had to offer? Firstly, because we had acknowledged our fear and secondly, because we now stepped forward, we had replaced the unsaid word at the
Hughes & Johnson

end of the line. "I am scared so (...I'll hold back, protect myself, stay safe)", with "I am scared and (...I'll give it a go, risk, dare to learn)"

The next phase in Rowena's class was to step forward and replace the words "I am scared" with "I am powerful"! This caused a mild earth tremor when suggested. Not just "I am scared and...I'll give it a go", but "and...I will be powerful within my creation" (p. 19).

This activity acknowledged the possibility that some apprehension may still exist. It also, simultaneously, built affective understanding of a sense of control and that strength can be a personal choice over anxiety.

The next exercise conducted before the observers joined us, was based on Boal's (1995) concept of creating an "aesthetic space":

In the affective dimension, the observer observes, the spectator sees; she feels, is moved, thinks, remembers, imagines. She remains a subject, separate from her object... In the affective dimension, the subject observes the physical space and projects onto it his memories and his sensibility. He remembers situations lived or desired, successes and failures; he is swayed by all that dwells obstinately in his unconscious (pp. 21-22).

I chose an activity called "Spot A, B and C." This involves directing each student to choose a spot on the floor and name it Spot A. Spot A belongs to the individual and is endowed with a feeling of safety and familiarity. Two subsequent spots, B and C, are chosen in two other areas and are endowed with only mild feelings of association. The students move between the spots and each time the student returns to Spot A, the sense of relief and safety is reinforced. This became a very useful device later in the workshop when the delegates were observing the proceedings from the audience space and I directed the students to go to Spot A. There was an instant ripple of complicity and mutual support within the group as well as the sense of reaching a safe haven in a stressful situation; there was relief from the pressure the students were under, even though they were being watched like
Monologues and Narratives

goldfish in a bowl. They all had their secret, shared safe place that was inaccessible to the watchers. At this point, the class was reversing the theatre convention of dramatic irony where the audience knows something which is unknown to the characters. The purpose of this reversal was the empowerment of the students.

Next, I introduced an exercise which I call the "Jane Austen Turn Around the Room" which I timed to coincide with the arrival of the observers. This avoided the problem of having the students start "a performance" in as much as the delegates entered into an existing world on the students' terms. The "Jane Austen Turn Around the Room" involves the students imagining themselves to be in a nineteenth century drawing room taking "a turn around the room" while exchanging bits of information about themselves. I had suggested that the "audience" could be relegated the imaginary status of maiden aunts who sit and fan themselves while watching the social niceties unfold around them. In the preliminary stage of this exercise, before the observers entered, one of the students set about making a paper fan—she had to have a fan. I felt she had misinterpreted my directions—it was the "maiden aunts" who figuratively had fans—so I did not give much weight to her proposal because, on reflection, I was more concerned with the next step—the entrance of the observers. Di Johnson, who was acting as my assistant during the workshop, fortunately ignored my suggestion to forget about the fan idea. She quietly and quickly set about finding photocopy paper from the office to make twenty or so folded improvised fans. Many of the students seized upon the idea and either made fans of their own or gratefully accepted the quickly produced items they were handed.

I had, during the set up for this exercise, informed the students several times that I would play some elegant early nineteenth century music to accompany the work. So the scene was set, with many of the students testing out their white, folded paper "Jane Austen" fans and the ninety or so international delegates due to enter any minute. It was with a wicked pleasure that Di
Hughes & Johnson

and I watched the students’ shocked and delighted faces when I
switched on the loud, thumping beat of some hot-off-the-press, 1997
dance music called I Want to Come With You and directed the
students to begin their “Jane Austin Turn Around the Room”
improvisation. The energy of the group soared as the students
fanned and laughed and promenaded around the thrust stage in
linked-arm pairs. The delegates were also noticeably surprised
as they entered the space; there was not the expectant hushed
atmosphere of a workshop about to begin, but a vibrant, seem-
ingly unsselfconscious melee of bright, mannered conversation
swept along by loud, rhythmic music. The students continued
their improvisation, swapping partners as directed and often
wandering off into the audience space sporting their fans and
imagined elegant silk dresses or well-cut tail coats with high-
necked cravats.

This exercise was a predictive-set, outlining the main enact-
ment precursor which created the affective mode that I desired.
The students were relaxed, operating in the aesthetic framework
of narrative and ready to participate in the next exercise which
was the main thrust of the class.

At the end of the “Jane Austin Turn Around the Room,” the
students were asked to move to Spot A. As mentioned earlier,
this intra-group secret boosted the students’ confidence as they
moved to their own individual comfort zone.

Lying or sitting on their Spot A, the students were lead
through a guided visualisation in order for them to experience
an intra-subjective monologue which recalled a happy time in
childhood and a song that was associated with that time. I stressed
the theme of a “happy” time in childhood as a means of avoiding
the possibility of later disclosure of any painful emotional con-
cerns. This class was designed to encourage adults to reflect upon
childhood memories as a way into improvisation and enactment.
It was not meant to place the participant in a position of grap-
pling with personal problems from the past, particularly as this
was a public display and hence the confidentiality code of the
conventional drama classroom could not operate.
Monologues and Narratives

I asked the students to form small groups and discuss their memories and the songs they had recalled. Di and I watched with delight as the small groups of students talked intensely; heads leaning in, concentrating faces nodding, listening and sharing experiences. The sporadic eruptions of hilarity around the space to some related tale touched a common chord. This level of trust and open communication is just one example, which often goes unrecorded, of the benefits of drama enactment work.

Each group then chose one song to work on and present. I asked them to construct a frozen moment to illustrate the song itself, then blend slowly into a visual depiction of the memory associated with the song. As the first group began, the audience, which now included the rest of the students, were presented with a visual depiction of two sequential scenarios from which they drew individual, if somewhat vague, meaning. The next step was for the enacting group to inform the audience of the song’s title then repeat the first tableau. There were spontaneous outbursts from the audience, indicating the pleasure of recognition as the links were made between aesthetic and cognitive realisation; that is, the visual stimulus of the tableau revealing the linguistic base from which it sprung. As the enacting group then moved into a depiction of the association linked with the song, the onlookers were now able to make a triple connection between the original observation, the cognitive, linguistic jump, and then a further retrospective linking of both the aesthetic and cognitive processes.

The sharing continued with each group presenting one of the group’s combination of song and memory tableaux. Then the exercise was repeated in order to have another song depicted. This was a conscious decision I made. Rather than take the work to a new level, I decided it was important to give more students the opportunity to present. This move was commented upon later in the students’ written reflections; some questioned the repetition of the sequence and others supported the decision to have more students show their process to fellow participants. Similarly, some students expressed a feeling that the lesson moved too slowly while others said they did not have enough time to
Hughes & Johnson

develop the work fully. This indicates the difficulty we always encounter; balancing requirements of the task and the needs of the students. It highlights the truism that all lock-step planned lessons go at the wrong pace, too quickly for some, too slowly for others!

The last structured part of this class entailed the students drawing an image of their song on a large piece of paper. This served two purposes; the first was to allow those students whose work had not been viewed to share their memories and, secondly, to shift the students’ experience into yet another aesthetic realm of expression. The “early nineteenth century music” was then switched on once more and the students instructed to take another “turn around the room” while holding up their drawings and conversing with others about their illustrations. This created another opportunity for lively engagement and heightened communication between the students within a theatrical framework.

The class concluded with the students, seated in a circle on the floor, conducting a reflective debriefing of their experience. As the group consisted of teacher trainees, I thought it would be useful for me to outline to them the various aims, outcomes and possibilities of this work.

The Outcomes

Following the class, in an address to the conference delegates, Madeleine Grumet commented upon the satisfactory effect of framing the workshop with a paper artifact; the paper fans at the beginning and the paper illustrations of the songs at the end. This made me smile to myself as the paper fans had been completely unintentional on my part. They would not have manifested themselves without the inspiration of the one of the students and the determination of Di who recognised as an opportunity too good to pass up. The fans were a simple theatrical device used as an aid to the students’ aesthetic framework; an easy and effective prop that heightened the theatrical effect.

Upon reflection, I see that I fell into a situation that Heathcote has often described as common among drama teachers, that of not living in the moment. When the small window of opportu-
nity arose, in the form of the fans, I was too pre-occupied with planning the progression of the work to recognise it as a valuable offering from one of the students. I think, as Heathcote suggests, that this type of incident occurs frequently in drama classrooms and is something of which we all need to be aware.

The psychodynamic principles on which this masterclass was based, define and elaborate teaching approaches and practices which have been regularly adopted by effective educators since teaching began. Throughout the entire class, projected on a screen at the back of the working area were the words of the late, great educator Winifred West, 1881-1971, who was way ahead of her time in her understanding of the special role which teachers fulfil. It is her words that inspire my work:

Teachers need...empathy with the pupils, together with an understanding of the times we live in. Then humility—to realise how little even the wisest of us knows; also there must be faith in the ability of the human spirit to tackle and overcome almost insuperable difficulties. And the teacher’s task? To discover latent ability in the pupils and to stir their imaginations so that they may create or appreciate greatness. A teacher’s work is not to dominate but to inspire, not to mould but to awaken, not to control but to set free. The teaching profession is a great profession (1973, pp. 97-98).

WORKS CITED


2.2 Teaching Plays as Theatre


2.2.1 Research Purpose

This chapter was requested by the editors of Re-viewing English, a book that is regarded as an exemplary addition to English teaching professional development (Simon, 1999). The chapter Teaching plays as theatre offers theoretical semiotic studies and interactive student-centred approaches for the teaching of performance studies to tertiary and secondary level students. It addresses the key research issues: teacher knowledge, student-centred teaching approaches and strategies, and comprehension of literary and performing arts texts.

2.2.2 Research Methodology

The area of performance studies is new to most teachers and in 1996, 1997 and 1998 I was invited to conduct and evaluate a series of inservice courses for the Curriculum Services Branch of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training and the New South Wales Board of Studies in order to upgrade English teachers'
capacity to teach drama, especially in the senior years at secondary school. Similarly, in 1997 and 1998 I was invited by the Centre for Professional Development, the University of Sydney, to conduct and evaluate a series of annual lectures to New South Wales Higher School Certificate drama students and their teachers on how to study a play script as theatre.

An extensive literature review was undertaken specially in the area of performance studies semiotics. Further, interactive approaches were explored to address the pedagogical concerns of teachers and students in the field of theatre analysis. This chapter, from Reviewing English, is a publication that arose from this research.

2.2.3 Recognition of the Research

This chapter has been strongly supported by teachers, fellow academics and students. A version of the chapter appears on the website for the New South Wales Department of Education and Training's Curriculum Branch as an exemplar for teachers on how to approach teaching text as theatre. Bill Simon in his review of Reviewing English wrote:

Let me take this opportunity, early in the review to also state that every aspiring teacher of English at university
should read this volume...units dealing with drama are particularly useful and can be put into immediate classroom use...Re-Viewing English is an invaluable resource and a copy of this fine book belongs on every English teacher's desk. (Simon, 1999, p. 83-84)
2.2.4 The Publication


Teaching plays as theatre.

In W. Sawyer, K. Watson, & E. Gold, (Eds.),

Re-viewing English.

Sydney: St. Clair Press.
Re-Viewing ENGLISH

edited by
Wayne Sawyer
Ken Watson
Eva Gold

© St Clair Press
Teaching Plays as Theatre

John Hughes

Over the last twenty years English teachers have been increasingly concerned with teaching plays as performance pieces rather than merely words on a page. During this period we have witnessed major developments in drama education in classrooms. We have seen the expansion, refinement and elaboration of drama as a learning medium together with the influences of theatre semiotics and performance studies on the analysis of drama as an art form. This paper will focus on the latter while arguing that the former has increased teachers' abilities to encourage their students into an understanding of the richness of the performing arts.

A critical response to a play must reflect the fact that the script is a blueprint for a live happening, the realisation of which will require the creative input of a range of talents. The performing arts involve enactments which bond audiences and performers in a shared set of experiences to which both make differing contributions, hence each performance of the same written text is unique. The dynamics of actor and actor, actor and director, actor and audience, change with every enactment. It follows that students must study a play both in the theatre and as text, and that our study of text must all the time take account of what could be happening on stage.

Readers of play scripts constantly need to ask: who is talking, who is responding, what has happened, what are the characters thinking, where are they positioned and how do they relate to others? In novels or short stories, this information is usually provided by the prose, which establishes the character's mood and non-verbal interaction, the time-duration, the location and atmosphere in which the action takes place. It is difficult for many readers to imagine these elements in the blueprint, which is the play script, and teachers thus need to address the theatrical elements which surround the words.

English syllabuses increasingly guide students to plays where the interrelationships between text and action is all-important. Harold Pinter's The Caretaker, for example, does not begin with the opening lines, it begins with a non-speaking character, Mick, on stage. His presence seems
threatening because of the way he is dressed. His black leather jacket makes us wonder, is he an intruder? He mysteriously exits the stage, leaving the audience in a state of tension as they anticipate his return. The audience, throughout all of the opening dialogue in the first act, constantly wonders when he will reappear. Mick, although he doesn’t speak, dominates this section of the play.

The study of a play as a performance event is a challenge to both students and teachers. The important element of dramatic performance which gives a play its life, that is, the collaborative nature of the art, is now central to contemporary theatrical analysis. In order that students may visualise what could be happening on stage, drama teachers are encouraging them to liberate their imaginations from the hypnosis of print without losing sight of the play altogether. However there are students who write about a play as if it were prose. It is not uncommon to read papers in which students write, “In the novel Hamlet, Shakespeare tells us about...”. This confusion is not entirely unjustified, because if one looks at the types of critical concerns teachers and students have traditionally applied to drama the following appear: themes, plot, character, structure, symbols, imagery and tone. These foci are reinforced by examination questions in English and drama, many of which until recently did not invite answers about dramatic elements. Typical of these questions is the following taken from a Year 12 English examination:

Part C – Drama
Answer ONE of the questions 20-23.

EITHER

“The recurring miracle is that life always does renew itself, in spite of the assaults of time and evil.”
Discuss The Winter’s Tale in the light of this comment.

OR

“Shaw clearly did not know what to do with Joan. She is no heroine, no villain – she is nothing.”
Do you agree? What is your view of Shaw’s presentation of Joan?

OR

“The Winslow Boy is a play about the social importance of decency and trust in the law.”
How does The Winslow Boy deal with the issues it raises?

It is clear that questions 20 and 22 ask the students to write about the themes and issues associated with these plays and that question 21 is a character study. Traditional English teachers, raised in the canon of literature model, would have little trouble teaching for these concerns. However, the
following question (23) in this paper caused much confusion and anguish when it was set because it demanded far more than the conventional literary responses to character, theme, symbol, plot and the like:

What dramatic techniques do you think are most important in The Caretaker? How do they contribute to the meaning of the play?

An answer to this question demands an analysis of performance factors such as the impact of Mick’s presence on stage before any dialogue is uttered, a response to his leaving the stage and the tension of his expected return, coupled with a response to the stage setting. This question calls on students to explore the fact that a play script is a springboard for collaborative action. I referred above to the role of English syllabuses in guiding students to viewing a play script as a performance document, however as all teachers know, the back-wash effect of examination questions can be a more powerful determiner of curriculum content and emphasis than syllabus aims and objectives. One of the features of questions in drama sections of senior examinations, throughout the English speaking world over the last ten years, has been the increasing orientation to dramaturgical issues and the concomitant shift in teaching and learning approaches.

Unlike poetry or prose, there is no intimate relationship implicit between the reader and a play script. A play script is written for a team – directors, designers, actors etc. – to bring to life. It is not possible to read a text for performance without responding to the different genres within the script. For example, at one point the reader will need to interpret as an actor, at another as a designer. Critical sensibilities and comprehension strategies must be developed which allow the reader “to recognise that the play script consists of a set of instructions to actors, directors, designers and technicians” (Michaels, 1991).

Theatre and performance criticism within English education therefore has a multiplicity of factors to take into account. The division between a semiology of text and a semiology of performance is now passé, having been superseded by analyses of multiple texts and an understanding of basic principles of the mise en scène (Pavis, 1980), including the setting, the acting choices, the organisation of space and time. Signifiers such as: the location of the production and the scenery; the relationship between the theatre goers and the performance space; the relationship between off-stage and on-stage; the dynamic between the play script, the director and the dramaturge; the actors and their movements; the lighting and music/sound elements of the performance; the costumes and make-up employed; the pace or tempo and tempo changes implicit in the script and interpreted on stage; the audience response and expectations, and the problems associated with notating a performance, are now being addressed by teachers within the drama.
components of their programs. In addition many are now concerning themselves with the semiotic implications of film, video and web-site performances. (Pavis, 1992)

**Approaches to Teaching**

**Performance Semiotics in English**

Given the scope of this paper it will not be possible to outline methods and approaches being adopted by teachers to cover all the aspects detailed above, nor to cover the complex issues associated with socio-semiotics and theatre analysis. I shall, however, outline some key areas and teaching strategies which are being employed at The University of Sydney for the education of pre-service and post-graduate English teachers.

**The Performance Space and the Mise En Scene**

The architecture and location of performance spaces have historical and performance significance – one only needs to reflect on the relationship between ancient Greek play scripts, the social role of fifth century BC festivals and the theatres of the time, or on the significance of the reconstruction of sites such as The Globe in Britain, to glimpse an understanding of the important semiological practice implied. The location can indicate to the audience the environment, atmosphere and often the type of action that will occur even before the actors have entered the stage. The type of theatre space: proscenium, open stage, thrust etc., is itself a signifier. A very powerful example of location significance was the 1988 Peter Brook epic production of the Mahabharata in Adelaide, Australia. The theatre space was an open-air quarry with the back drop of a massive worked sandstone rock face. The physical setting predisposed the audience for an epic experience before the performance began.

School students often do not feel comfortable attending live theatre performances in grand venues, and this can greatly affect their reception of the text. An analysis of the status of the performance space, the range of traditions, techniques and implicit selection processes contained therein can explain the way audience expectations may or may not be met. Research undertaken at The University of Sydney in 1996-97, in collaboration with Opera Australia, has shown us that many students are intimidated by the Sydney Opera House building itself. The aesthetics and architecture of the building, its imposing stairs and high sail-like roof, combined with the multi-venued, multi-purposed nature of the performance spaces within the structure, signal an environment alien to young people's experience and this psycho-dynamically reduces their capacity to relate to any performances.
within the Opera House. The location of the performing space is an important element which needs to be addressed before we begin to respond to the language of a play script.

**Activity**

Divide your class into groups of 5-6 students. Hand out a copy of a well known nursery rhyme, for example, *Jack and Jill*. Each group devises a short play based on the rhyme to be performed in a the theatre space which is a corner of the classroom, that is, the stage is triangular and the front of the stage is no more than three metres across. Each group performs its version to the rest of the class, who then analyse the performance semiotics with particular attention to proxemics (the spacial relationships between actor and actor, actors and location), gesture, vocal pace and projection, and the audience’s relationship with the performance.

Tell the students to imagine they are a touring company and they need to adjust their play to suit various theatre spaces. The first space is a conventional proscenium stage. Use your school hall or theatre, or mark out a suitable space in the classroom. The next space is theatre-in-the-round. Take your students onto the school oval and adjust the work to fit a large space similar to the orchestra in Greek theatre. After each enactment deconstruct the performance and note the changes demanded by the changed spaces.

**The Setting**

The non-literary, visual aspects and spacial relationships in performance contribute a seemingly self-evident and significant semiology and yet visualising the environment in which a play is established by the script or the director’s interpretation is difficult for many students and teachers to do. When this is outlined by the playwright, students need to read (in Rosenblatt’s terms) in order to imagine the author’s visual intention; that is, they need to read the text as we read a non-fiction piece such as a set of instructions (Michaels, 1991, p70). Katherine Thomson, whose plays such as *Diving for Pearls* and *Barmails* have proved popular with Australian theatre companies, provides clear evidence of the importance of reading for visual cues. It is worth noting that apart from being an excellent word-smith, Thomson is also a very good photographer; her plays have very strong visual elements in them and an understanding of her work requires students to read both aesthetically and efferently. (Rosenblatt, 1978.)

We find it useful for students to study the instructions of the playwright and to draw the set which is outlined. One such example is John Millar’s opening to *Death of a Salesman*. In order to visualise and then draw the set, as outlined by Miller, the students need to read the text as if it were a piece of
non-fiction even though it is evocative and aesthetically pleasing. Likewise they need to be familiar with technical terms such as “stage right”, “stage left”, “cross”, “apron”, etc.

By contrast, in Act 1 of Tom Stoppard’s *Rozencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, the stage direction contains no scenic information although there is some indication of costume: “Two Elizabethans passing the time in a place without any visible character. They are well dressed – hats, cloaks, sticks and all. Each one of them has a large money bag.” Here the director must determine the physical setting/scene in which the action is to be played. Even when playwrights such as George Bernard Shaw do give detailed and specific directions, many directors will eschew the author’s guidelines and adopt their own creative perspective. As a result, some playwrights do not regard it as part of their responsibility to include any stage directions. Michael Gow in the preface to *Sweet Phoebe* writes “I’ve never been interested in stage directions. As a writer ... my job (is) to keep the action moving using only the things the actors say ... Everything else is up to the actors and the director to discover for themselves.” (Gow, 1995, p.v) The students, through a process of discussing, designing and drawing the sets for plays such as *Sweet Phoebe* or *Rozencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, become the director/designer and actors who collaboratively explore and discover the *mise en scène*.

Even a bare stage has meaning. Its shape, its entrances and exits, its horizons, define the possibilities of action. An initial critical assessment of any drama needs to address the force of the building or setting in which the performance takes place and the significance of the set and stage space.

**The Collaborative Nature of Drama**

In order to imagine what could be happening on stage students are now exploring the various roles in the theatre in so that they might read a script and construct meaning from an appropriate base. They do not need to become expert directors, designers or actors but they do need to experience what it is like to be part of the team whose function it is to make the script come alive. There are many theatre art books which offer detailed examinations of theatre practice but practical experience in a school play or musical for performance is the most successful method for exploring theatre roles in schools.

It is not always possible to involve students in full-scale productions; however, it is easy for teachers to organise role plays to develop an awareness of technical and production values in theatre. *Tennis Match* is such a role play used by many of our English and drama teachers at The University of Sydney. The teacher asks two students to role play a tennis match. The class is then invited to comment on the performance and suggest ways in which it might be improved. The class is then divided into groups which represent experts in the theatre: directors, set designers, make-up, actors, lighting designers,
sound designers, costume designers, etc. Each group researches its profession and what its duties might be in the theatre. They then discuss within their groups how they might improve Tennis Match. For example, the directors may decide to plan movements; the make-up team may provide sun tans. Each group reports to the class and a modified tennis match is played involving suggestions from the ‘experts’. The difference between the first role play and the second is discussed to highlight the importance of the professional roles. Students are then taken to a professional theatre performance and each expert group notes features relevant to their profession (such as direction, lighting, scenery, or props), and reports its findings to the class.

Once students have an understanding of the professional roles of the team needed to produce a play, they are better able to comprehend play scripts because the instructions relevant to various theatre professionals will have meaning and thus visualising the script as performance is facilitated.

**Words and Action**

A play script does not provide a straight narrative and, unlike novels, the words in plays rarely reveal all that one needs to know. There is an action which surrounds the words and this can augment, juxtapose or even override the surface meaning of the text. Often the term ‘sub-text’ is used to refer to this complex area; however, the term is inadequate because it implies there is a single text and underneath the words is a bit of action or motivation which augments or changes the meaning. In fact there is little meaning without the dramatic content, which manifests itself through an interplay of words and silence, action and non-action, space and proximity.

An effective exercise for the exploration of action is the communicative exchange first outlined by Dell Hymes, (Widdowson, 1978, p29).

“*That’s the phone*”

“*I’m in the bath*”

“*OK*”

This discourse has little in the way of cohesive ties, no overt linguistic features which link the utterances and yet it has coherence. We can imagine contexts which allow it to make sense and so this exchange can be used to draw attention to the relationship between words and action. We have found the following exercise useful: divide the class into small groups and ask each group to devise a performance containing only the above utterances and which makes sense. Each group performs its scene for the others and the class analyses the differences which emerge. The meaning, the coherence, will depend on the dramatic context: the characters and the proxemics combined with the paralinguistic features of intonation, stress, pitch and pace. Students can then discuss what they would write, as a playwright, to indicate how their scene ought to be performed. Would they leave it to the theatre professionals: director, set designer, actors, etc. as Michael Gow does? Or do...
they wish to add extra directions, like Arthur Miller or George Bernard Shaw? In this way students can see that dialogue does not convey all the meaning in a play, and that a play script is a blueprint. Much of spoken language only has coherence because of context and action. Unlike novels, plays contain examples of such discourse and hence the need for the production team to give life to the script. Drama teachers are now helping students, through role plays and exercises such as the above, to view the play script as a script and to then apply their insights to the wider field of dramatic literature.

**Developments for the Future**

In conclusion, I wish to draw attention to two stimulating developments in the field of drama pedagogy. The first is the elaboration of student-centred drama classroom activities based on improvisation. A particularly fine example of this is Cecily O'Neill’s work on ‘process drama’ in *Drama Worlds*. O’Neill’s work is significant for English teachers and their students because this type of approach enables them to explore the complexity of performance and the collaborative nature of theatre from the inside.

The term *process drama* usefully distinguishes the particular kind of complex improvised dramatic event... from that designed to generate or culminate in a theatrical performance, but the difficulty is that it may suggest an opposition to product and perpetuate the sterile separation of this improvised approach from its dramatic roots. In fact, both process and product are part of the same domain. Like theatre, the primary purpose of process drama is to establish an imagined world, a dramatic “elsewhere” created by the participants as they discover, articulate, and sustain fictional roles and situations. (O’Neill, 1995, p.viii)

An added benefit of O’Neill’s work in process drama is her notion of *pretext* which refers to the source or impulse for the improvisation to follow. O’Neill suggests a rich variety of literary pretexts, in addition to other areas, and drama teachers find this integration of dramatic and non-dramatic text particularly rewarding.

The second development which gives one great hope is the rise of qualitative, classroom-based research in the field of drama and arts pedagogy. A good example of this work is Philip Taylor’s 1996 *Researching Drama and Arts Education*. In this collection of articles from all over the world, we see a commitment to, and celebration of, quality work by teachers, artists and students in the exploration of drama teaching. English educators will find this type of reflection an inspiration to further growth.

Drama has, at its core, the experience of an imagined existence which is made manifest through playtext, body, time and space. The multiple subjectivities and metaphors of society’s historical, moral and spiritual
consciousness are given symbolic engagement in performance. English teachers are to be applauded for their role in the promotion of future audiences and participants in the dramatic arts.

References

Worth Searching For:

The Group Approach to Drama

From the 1960s to the 1980s English teachers with no training in drama found David Adland's The Group Approach to Drama (Harlow UK: Longman, 2nd ed, 1981-2) and the accompanying books for Years 7, 8 and 9/10 a godsend. The students' books were packed with wonderful ideas for drama lessons: story outlines, skeleton scripts, situations, characters, dialogues. If you lack confidence in the area of junior secondary drama, these books are well worth searching for. If the school bookroom and the local secondhand bookshop fail you, don't forget that those universities that have a longish history of training teachers will probably still hold the books, and the internet has booksearch facilities.
Chapter 3

The Playwright and the Interactive Classroom

Preface


Hughes, J. (2001). Katherine Thomson: Navigating: a theatrical approach. In J. Hughes and M. Freundt, (Eds.), Katherine Thomson and John Guare: Navigating and Six Degrees of Separation, Sydney: St Clair Press. This publication presents contextual information on the Australian playwright Katherine Thomson, a performance semiotic analysis of her play Navigating and teaching and learning ideas, strategies and approaches to facilitate a full understanding of this work as a theatrical experience.
3.1 Shakespeare Our Partner: a Joint Venture in Aesthetic Learning.


3.1.1 Research Purpose

The purpose of this publication is twofold: to inform teachers and academics about the partnership between the Shakespeare Globe Centre, Australia and the University of Sydney; and to inform teachers and students of the value of the Shakespeare Globe Centre, Australia in demystifying the Bard by enabling students to engage with the playwright as a lived part of their experience.

The organising committee of the National Association for Drama in Education Research Conference in Brisbane 1998 invited this paper as a keynote address. The theme of the conference was aesthetic partnerships between the arts professions and other organisations such as schools and universities to promote arts education. The paper examines the partnership between the Shakespeare Globe Centre
Chapter 3: *The Playwright and the Interactive Classroom*

Australia and the University of Sydney (the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Arts and the Seymour Theatre Centre). The partnership aims to promote research into innovative theatre practice and effective pedagogy in the field of drama and to encourage a great enjoyment and love of Shakespeare in performance.

As a result of the keynote to the National Association for Drama in Education Research Conference, the editor of *The Education Network*, the refereed journal of the Australian Education Network invited the paper to be submitted for publication.

### 3.1.2 Research Methodology

The action research cycle outlined in Cohen & Manion (1994) was followed. Primary source data from the Shakespeare Globe Centre, Australia was obtained by adjudicating the State Finals of Shakespeare Globe Centre's Festival 1997 and 1998, and by attending the Shakespeare Globe Centre, Australia, National Festival in Canberra, October 1998. Interviews were conducted with: Diana Denley, the artistic director of the Shakespeare Globe Centre; Hugh O'Keefe, the National Education Director of the Shakespeare Globe Centre, and Associate Professor Penny Gay, an expert on Shakespeare
(who was at that time the chairperson of the Education Committee of the Shakespeare Globe Centre, Australia). A literature search and review of the Globe's archives was also undertaken.

As the result of this work the author also became involved in developing and organising the study program for the young Shakespearian of the year in 1998, and coordinated and conducted his scholarship tour to Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and to the Royal Shakespeare Company, UK.

Other major sources of data for this article were interviews with teachers and students who participated in the Shakespeare Globe festivals, and the students' log books. As part of the process of adjudication the students have to perform, and be interviewed by the adjudicators, and also present log books of their rehearsal and performance processes. The logs were extremely valuable because they provided insights into the students' experiences.

3.1.3 Recognition of the Research

In addition to being asked to submit the keynote to The Education Network, further invitations were received to present

Further, I have been appointed Chair of the Education Committee, Shakespeare Globe Centre, Australia, 2000-2002 and continue an ongoing action research project with the Globe.

There is evidence offered of recognition of the research presented in this portfolio by fellow academics and professional teachers, but perhaps more gratifying are the responses from school students. I offer, in support of the recognition of this research, an unsolicited email to the Globe Centre from a year 9 students from Warragul, in country Victoria, who attended the National Festival for the first time this year:

*I'd like to start off by saying that this last week has been the single most bonding experience of my entire life. I feel I know the incredible people I met during my time there better than any of my classmates here at home. It's as if I was visiting long time friends again...I encourage anyone else to participate as well,*
even with no experience of Shakespeare. I knew nothing about him and am now finding Shakespeare not only easier to understand but incredibly interesting. I don’t think I could ever thank you people enough, it was an absolute privilege meeting you all. The skills I gained whilst on this journey I know will help my performance level for life, not to mention boosting my self confidence and social skills...I will be trying my utmost hardest to get back to either participate in the production or help for next year. (Brookes, S. 2001)
3.1.4 The Publication


Shakespeare our partner:

a joint venture in aesthetic learning.

The Education Network

Number 14
December 1998

The Journal of the Australian Education Network
The Education Network
Number 14, December 1998

Accountability and the Literacy Agenda
Gregory Whitby

Politisation of the literacy debate can obscure the real issues and 'condemn students ... to short term, ill-conceived and poorly implemented strategies that do little to support literacy learning and teaching'.

Critical Reflection and the Making of Meanings: Dialogue in Teacher Education
Mary Kooy

The transmission model of teaching treats knowledge as external to a learner. Yet 'knowledge is created and constructed rather than a received commodity' and 'teachers must create a learning environment where the construction of knowledge is encouraged and facilitated.'

The Role of Empathy in Teaching and Learning
Roslyn Arnold

As empathy works both cognitively and affectively, teachers 'who engage students in a dynamic exploration of thought and feeling, promote an increased differentiation in both dimensions'.

Shakespeare Our Partner: A Joint Venture in Aesthetic Learning
John Hughes

An exploration of the benefits of a partnership between schools, the University of Sydney and the Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia.
The Australian Education Network

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Important classroom research too often goes unnoticed, read only by a handful of academics. For research to have an impact upon classroom practice, it must reach the practitioners. Publication in The Education Network is a positive step towards that goal. We therefore look forward to receiving lively, readable accounts of classroom-based research, as well as survey articles dealing with some of the major questions confronting primary and secondary teachers today. (Manuscripts should be on a floppy disk, preferably in Microsoft Word—any version—or some other well-known word processing program. Mac format preferred but Windows is also suitable.)
Shakespeare Our Partner: 
a Joint Venture in Aesthetic Learning

John Hughes
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Sydney

The University of Sydney has established strategic links with a number of performing arts organisations ranging from national institutions, including the Australian Ballet and Opera Australia, to vanguard companies such as One Extra Dance and Cut Theatre. Through its Faculty of Education and the Seymour Theatre Centre, the University has also engaged with major arts education institutions such as the Performing Arts Unit of the NSW Department of Education and Training and the Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia. These partnerships involve the production of arts education resources, such as the Opera Action series, the housing of resident companies, the integration of such companies in undergraduate and postgraduate programs, the development of special courses for teachers and school students in the performing arts, together with research in the field of arts education.

This paper examines the alliance between the University and the Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia, a partnership that attempts to promote research into innovative theatre practice with effective teaching and learning in the performing arts.

The Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia

In 1990, Diana Denley, a Sydney-based actor and director, approached Sam Wanamaker, who was responsible for the reconstruction of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London, with the concept of creating the Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia, a charitable organisation with the dual aims of supporting the reconstruction of the Globe and the promotion and development of Shakespearean arts and education in Australia. In 1991 the Centre, with Diana Denley as its founder and Artistic Director, launched its education program and its first annual Shakespeare Youth Festival.

The Globe Centre now conducts a series of festivals, coordinated by Hugh O’Keefe, the Globe’s Education Director, that involve high school teachers and students from NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the ACT. In 1998 over 230 schools participated: 43% government; 32% independent and 25% Catholic systemic schools. In addition more than a third of these schools were from rural and regional areas of Australia. The school, regional, state and national festivals involve approximately ten thousand students.

Aims of the Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia

The Globe Centre in Australia aims to provide:

- A comprehensive national program of educational, arts and cultural activities based upon the exploration of Shakespeare’s works
- Professional development for teachers and educational opportunities for students through performance and production activities
- Assistance to theatre professionals and performance companies seeking to explore and perform the works of Shakespeare in innovative ways throughout Australia
- International exchange programs for teachers, academics, theatre professionals and performance companies
- A central research centre collaborating with other centres around the world enabling the provision of an immediate link with current research, performance and production

As the Globe Centre’s chairman of patrons, Barry Humphries, wrote: ‘I first became involved in the idea of a National Centre dedicated to the works
of William Shakespeare when I realised how many
Australians have never had the opportunity to
enjoy Shakespeare’s plays as they were meant to
be experienced ... Our highly successful
Shakespeare Festivals for Australian high school
students are examples of how the Centre
courages our young people to develop an
understanding and appreciation of the works of
Shakespeare and to communicate that
understanding in a creative way.’ (Humphries, B.
1997)

Shakespeare Globe Centre Activities

In January 1997, at the invitation of the Faculty
of Education at the University of Sydney, the
Centre moved into office and studio space in the
old Teachers College Building and set up a full-
time operation.

From this location within the University, the
Centre conducts and coordinates a series of youth
festivals which are competitions for high school
students culminating in a National Festival in
Canberra. The winner of this festival receives
return flights to England to study at the Globe in
London and also at Stratford-upon-Avon. There
is, in addition, a Teachers’ Competition in which
Australian teachers of drama and/or English
submit a proposal for a course of study in the UK
on new approaches to the teaching of
Shakespeare. Each year a teacher is rewarded with
return flights to the England to pursue her or his
education. Further, the Centre, in collaboration
with the University, conducts a series of
workshops for teachers and high school students
in the study and performance of Shakespeare’s
works.

The Youth Festivals

The aim of the festivals is to take Shakespeare
off the page and onto the stage. Students are
invited to participate in the categories of
performance (scenes and duologues), music
(composition and performance), movement and
dance, and costume and set design. A very
important aspect of this festival is that it is student
driven and the guidelines issued to all schools
emphasise that the input should primarily be from
the students themselves, with teachers having an
advisory capacity only.

The Shakespeare Globe Centre
Australia and the University Of
Sydney

In 1998 the Seymour Theatre Centre, at the
University of Sydney, hosted the NSW
Shakespeare Globe Centre State Festival, 8–9
August. Over 150 young performers and artists,
from across the State, performed their art in the
York Theatre which, with its thrust stage, is not
dissimilar to original Elizabethan performing
spaces. This is not to imply that the student
Shakespeare; on the contrary they were imaginative interpretations which linked the Bard’s words with the students’ own voices. I can still see the vividness of the Oxley College’s Macbeth which used a bucket of water as a central prop to admirable effect; or the girls from Wagga Wagga who played The Two Gentlemen of Verona in the Clueless genre, and the imaginative and polished enthusiasm of the two Year Tens from Newcastle who held us enthralled with their witches’ scene. The sheer joy with which the secondary students performed, played their original music, presented their designs and danced their own choreographed movement pieces, was matched by students and staff from the Faculty of Education who were involved as audience, adjudicators and researchers.

The Globe Centre has also had a direct input into a number of courses in the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts, at the University of Sydney. In 1997/98, for example, Diana Denley, the Globe’s Artistic Director, conducted workshops on Shakespeare and Performance for Master of Education and Bachelor of Education students. The Globe has also influenced the design and delivery of literature courses within the Faculty of Arts. In the English Department, Dr Tony Miller and Associate Professor Penny Gay have developed a new course called ‘Shakespeare and Co: the comedies’. The course is interactive in that each week a small group of students brings to the class a short analysis of set, key articles. They suggest critical issues arising from these that might be explored in performance or that might inform performance. The whole class then ‘workshops’ selected scenes from the play in question. The course leaders aren’t trying to teach non-actors to act, but simply through this method to get students used to the idea that Shakespeare’s

Shakespeare off the page and onto the stage. Students are invited to participate in the categories of performance (scenes and duologues), music (composition and performance), movement and dance, and costume and set design. A very important aspect of this festival is that it is student driven and the guidelines issued to all schools emphasise that the input should primarily be from the students themselves, with teachers having an advisory capacity only.

Research

During 1996, The Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia co-sponsored a week-long international Shakespeare conference in Sydney, involving academics, students, teachers and performers. The conference, ‘Shakespeare: Perspectives on Performance’, was a great success. Delegates particularly commented on the high standard of the papers presented, the large international contingent, and the congenial atmosphere. Experts who addressed the conference included the director of the English Shakespeare Company, Michael Bogdanov, Professor Peter Thomson, author of Shakespeare’s Theatre, leading Shakespeare editor Professor R A Foskes, Professor Bernice Kliman, an authority on Shakespeare on film, and Patrick Tucker, founder of the Original Shakespeare Company. The five days of the conference were organised
around certain themes: performing Shakespeare today; Shakespeare under original performance conditions; Japanese Shakespeare; teaching Shakespeare through performance; Shakespeare on film, and post-modernist Shakespeare.

Following this conference there have been ongoing projects exploring original performance approaches to Shakespeare's plays, particularly Tim Fitzpatrick's theory that there were only two doors for entrances and exits at the original Globe theatre. This theory is elaborated in Penny Gay's forthcoming book William Shakespeare: As You Like It, to be published by Northcote House. There are also several projects, involving staff and postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education, to devise innovative ways of teaching Shakespeare in schools. Much of this work has involved research into innovative approaches to pedagogy such as those contained in the St Clair Press series on the teaching of Shakespeare as text and as performance. Students and staff have also been involved in adjudicating regional and state festivals and noting the inventive approaches adopted by participants as they bring the Bard to life in their group devised presentations.

The partnership process enables both the Globe and the University to explore one of the key questions in arts education research: 'How do we describe the experience of students as they engage in the artistic-aesthetic curriculum?' (Taylor, P. 1996:16). And the research issues being analysed are not barren projects, whose sole aim is to advance the careers of academics, but collaborative, student-centred, grounded studies which further both aesthetic education and help teachers and students to validate and enjoy their artistic endeavours.

Conclusion

It is the juxtaposition of new theatre and pedagogic practice with scholarly research into original performance modes with typifies the link between the Globe Centre and the University as they examine aesthetic learning. It allows and encourages students to examine Shakespearean text, at a delicate level, for clues as to original performance modes and then to edit, adjust and reassemble the text to give it a contemporary orientation. The work is focused on qualitative experiences which not only enhance understanding of the output of a great literary and theatre figure but aims to allow and encourage young people to create greatness for themselves. It is a partnership which unites the theatre profession, university academics, teachers and students in an exploration of our rich cultural heritage and imaginative, contemporary performance semiotics.

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3.2 Katherine Thomson:

Navigating: a Theatrical Approach


Pages 1-11 are offered as the research for the purposes of this thesis. This section of the chapter on Katherine Thomson’s play *Navigating* contains an introduction to play script reading, research on women playwrights in Australia, background information on the playwright Katherine Thomson, and research on the origins of the play’s themes. The final part of the chapter contains a translation of theory into practice: a guided critical analysis of her play *Navigating*, teaching and learning ideas, plus strategies and approaches to facilitate a full understanding of the *mise en scene*. See appendix D.

3.2.1 Research Purpose

Sydney: St. Clair Press, and Ackroyd, J. and Hughes, J. (2000). Greek theatre: Antigone and Medea, Sydney: St Clair Press, the commissioning editor of St. Clair Press, Ken Watson, approached me to edit Katherine Thomson and John Guare: Navigating and Six Degrees of Separation. I then invited Michael Freundt to contribute to the editing of the book and to write the chapter on Six Degrees of Separation.

3.2.2 Research Methodology

The play was set for the new English syllabus, the Higher School Certificate 2001, and there was very little published on Katherine Thomson. Katherine Thomson, and other members of the production team for the Sydney Theatre Company (STC) production were interviewed and research was undertaken in the archives of the STC. A literature review on Australian women playwrights was conducted together with a literature search on Katherine Thomson’s work. Contemporary approaches to performance semiotic analysis were likewise researched. Experienced teachers evaluated all the interactive classroom approaches and strategies with senior students in a number of schools. These activities appear in Appendix D.
3.2.2 Recognition of the Research

*Katherine Thomson and John Guare: Navigating and Six Degrees of Separation* is the set text for the Master of Education course *Theatre in Education: from Child's Play to Performance*, the University of Sydney.

Further, the Archivist and Education Officer of the Sydney Theatre Company (STC), Judith Seeff, has praised the book and it forms part of the STC's ongoing education outreach program for schools and universities.

The first edition sold out in October 2001 and has now been reprinted.
3.2.4 The Publication


Katherine Thomson: Navigating: a theatrical approach.

In J. Hughes and M. Freundt, (Eds.), Katherine Thomson and John Guare: Navigating and Six Degrees of Separation,

Sydney: St Clair Press, pp 1-11.
Katherine Thomson & John Guare
Navigating
and
Six Degrees of Separation

John Hughes & Michael Freundt

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St Clair Press
Thomson & Guare:  
a workshop approach to  
*Navigating*  
and  
*Six Degrees of Separation*  

John Hughes  
and  
Michael Freundt
Chapter 3: The Playwright and the Interactive Classroom

Thanks

The authors wish to give particular thanks to Judith Seeff and the Archives of the Sydney Theatre Company. Thanks also to Stephen Armstrong, Artistic Associate for the STC for permission to reproduce the STC program covers, John McCallum and The Australian Newspaper for permission to reproduce John's review of Navigating, Jennifer Simons, Nigel Levings, Tracey Shramm, Sally Ryan, Alan Pert and the Music Library of the University of Sydney, Graeme Blundell, James Laurie Management and Katherine Thomson.

About the Authors

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Michael Freundt has been involved in the performing arts all of his working life. He worked as a writer on several major television series including Prisoner, Sons & Daughters and A Country Practice as well as being involved as a writer, actor and administrator with the Australian National Playwright's Centre. For eleven years he co-ran Australia's major cabaret venue, The Tilbury Hotel (1986-1997). In 2000 for the Olympic Arts Festival at the Sydney Opera House he produced and directed Studio Nights, a season of three Australian musicals in a cabaret format, which included Katherine Thomson's Darlinghurst Nights.

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Introduction to *Navigating & Six Degrees of Separation*

→ How to Approach Reading a Play Script ←

Play scripts are written to be performed and a critical response to a play must reflect the fact that the script is a blueprint for a live happening, the realisation of which will require the creative input of a range of talents. The performing arts involve enactments which bond audiences and performers in a shared set of experiences to which both make differing contributions, hence each performance of the same work is unique. The dynamics of: actor and actor, actor and director, actor and audience, change with every enactment. It follows that we must study a play both in the theatre and as text, and that our study of text must all the time take account of what could be happening on stage.

Readers of play scripts constantly need to ask: who is talking, who is responding, what has happened, what are the characters thinking, where are they positioned and how do they subsequently relate to others? In novels or short stories, this information is usually provided by the prose, which establishes the character’s mood and non-verbal interaction, the time-duration, the location and atmosphere in which the action takes place. It is difficult for many readers to imagine these elements in the blueprint which is the play script, and we thus need to address the theatrical semiosis which surrounds the words. This book will provide information and activities which will cover all these areas. Ideally students should read the script as if they were going to direct the play.

In 1996 Katherine Thomson, the author of *Navigating*, addressed an international conference of English teachers and academics at the University of Sydney. She spoke of her love for live performance and outlined the process she employs to write for the stage. Katherine Thomson first researches her topic thoroughly. In the case of *Navigating* she consulted the Whistleblowers’ Association of Australia. She then plots the whole play and writes a summary of each scene on a piece of paper. She sticks these scene summaries around the walls of her office and then begins writing the text in detail. Following the process Katherine Thomson adopts in writing her plays is also a very good way to study them. Note we have said *text* and by this we mean more than words for it includes not only dialogue but stage directions, soundscapes, music, set and prop concepts, lighting, costumes and movement.
→ Reading the Script as a Set of instructions ←

We read a novel or poem for aesthetic reasons and for personal enjoyment but a play script is different. It is a set of guidelines for a director and actors and other members of the theatre company, thus an understanding of such work requires reading both aesthetically and efferently. Efferent reading is the way we read non-fiction, that is for information and/or for instructions (Rosenblatt, L. 1978). This is not easy to do and so we will offer suggestions and activities for areas of semiotic analysis which will enable you to explore the richness of the play you are studying.

These are the issues you need to explore (adapted from Patrice Parvis Languages of the Stage Performing Arts Journal Publications NY, 1982).

What is the script saying?
- How is meaning communicated and made?
- What themes and issues are explored?
- How is the storyline interpreted?
- What is the story? In which genre is the play?
- Where are the turning points?
- What are the ambiguities and what points are explained?

What do we know about the characters?
What sort of language do they use?
- Are there any dominant symbols, images and motifs occurring?
- What is the character relationship with the audience?

Scenography
- How is space organised?
- What is the significance of the set?
- What is shown and what is suggested?
- What is the relationship between onstage and offstage?
- Is the scene indoors or outdoors?
How does the lighting on stage create and send meaning?
► How is the audience situated re lights? Are they in the dark or are they visible?

Music and Sound Effects
► What music and sound effects are used, and when are they introduced?
► How are dialogue and music integrated?

Stage Props
► Type, function, relationship to the space and actors' bodies.
► Are they symbolic?

Costumes
► What is their relationship to actors' bodies?
► Are they symbolic?

Pace of performance
► The overall pace of the play: is it steady or broken?
► When does the tempo change?
Katherine Thomson’s

Navigating:

a theatrical approach
Introduction

This section on *Navigating* contains background information on the playwright, Katherine Thomson, a critical analysis of her play *Navigating*, and teaching and learning ideas, strategies and approaches to facilitate a full understanding of this work as a theatrical experience. Katherine Thomson and other members of the production team for the Sydney Theatre Company (STC) production were interviewed and research was undertaken in the archives of the STC. Contemporary approaches to performance semiotic analysis, as typified by the work of Patrice Parvis (1982), have been adopted and all activities suggested have been trialled by experienced teachers with senior students in a number of schools.

*Katherine Thomson, Playwright*
Background: Women Playwrights in Australia

Little theatres, mainly amateur, sprang up in the 1930s due to the collapse of the vaudeville and commercial theatres caused by the increasing popularity of cinema and radio and the economic impact of the Depression. Women playwrights were well represented in this blossoming dramatic landscape. Oriel Gray, Dymphna Cusack, Mona Brand, Ruth Park, Betty Roland, Gwen Meredith, and Katherine Susannah Pritchard are just some of these and even today there crop up productions of some of their plays. The 2001 Sydney Theatre Company season includes Dymphna Cusack’s Morning Sacrifice (1942), which was also produced by the Melbourne Theatre Company in the early 1990s, which also saw a production of Betty Roland’s A Touch of Silk (1928). By the late 1960s these playwrights began to disappear from the popular and critical view. Except the undaunted poet, novelist and playwright Dorothy Hewett who scored a ground-breaking success with the Sydney Theatre Company’s production of The Man From Muckinupin in 1979, wonderfully staged by Rodney Fisher and starring a young Noni Hazeldine, the leading actor in Navigating for the Sydney Theatre Company in 1998. These women were either active on the political left, and their work was considered propaganda, or they wrote popular soaps for radio which were considered un-literary.

What brought Australian women playwrights back to the centre again was feminism, spurred along by the likes of Alma de Groen. Back in the 40s and 50s women playwrights were writing about women where women were found, that is, in the staff room of an all-girls school (Morning Sacrifice); by the feminist 70s and 80s women playwrights were writing about women in unusual places doing unusual things, for example: having sex (De Groen’s The Rivers of China, 1987), and leaving home (Hewett’s The Man from Muckinupin 1979) It was the era that prompted de Groen to say “If a man wrecks or wastes his life, that’s the subject for tragedy. If a woman does it, so what?” Later into the 1990s came the work of Hannie Rayson who was interested in juxtaposing the free-spirited career woman with the domestically orientated woman (Hotel Sorrento 1990). The tragic woman was now possible on the Australian stage.

In 1979 Currency Press’s publication Contemporary Australian Playwrights, edited by Jennifer Palmer, contained only three women playwrights, Dorothy Hewett, Alma de Groen and Jennifer Compton, although Compton is really a New Zealand writer. De Groen was also born in New Zealand but by 1979 she had been in Australia, and written about Australia, for 14 years.

By the end of the twentieth century the list of women playwrights is impressive. It includes playwrights such as: Tobsha Learner, Elaine Acworth, Hannie Rayson, Joanna Murray-Smith, Katherine Thomson, Hilary Bell, Alana Valentine and Peta Murray.
The Playwright

Katherine Thomson began her career in the theatre as an actor with Sidetrack, the Sydney Theatre Company and Theatre South in Wollongong, where she performed in fifteen productions. Her first play, A Change In the Weather, was written whilst she was acting with Theatre South and was presented as part of the 1982 Women Arts Festival. Under commission from Theatre South she wrote Tonight We Anchor in Twofold Bay, which premiered in Eden, twice toured the south coast and played a season at Sydney Theatre Company (STC)'s Wharf Studio. In 1987 she was commissioned by Magpie, the State Theatre Company of South Australia's youth theatre (now defunct), to write A Sporting Chance which toured South Australia after its Adelaide premiere and has been performed by a number of leading theatre-in-education companies in Western Australia, NSW and Victoria. Darlinghurst Nights, a musical play based on the light verse of Kenneth Slessor and written with composer, Max Lambert, opened the Sydney Theatre Company's 1988 season. It was also produced for ABC radio and also had a cabaret (semi-staged) production in the Studio of the Sydney Opera House as part of the Studio Nights season for the Olympic Arts Festival in September 2000. In 1998 with a Writer's Development Grant from the Australia Council she wrote Diving for Pearls which premiered at the Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC) and subsequently has had a number of Australian productions as well as a rehearsed reading in Japan. In 1990 Katherine was Writer-in-Residence at Deckchair Theatre, Fremantle and wrote Barmaid's, which received its premiere production there in 1991 directed by Angela Chaplin and later produced at Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney and throughout Australia and New Zealand and was recently staged in Canberra. As Writer-in-Residence for STC at the 1995 Hong Kong Fringe she wrote Fragments of Hong Kong which was read for the STC's New Stages program at the Wharf Theatre. Navigating began its life in the Yaddo Writers' Colony in the US where Katherine was resident under the auspices of the Australia Council. It premiered at Queensland Theatre Company and MTC in 1997. A STC production followed. Her latest play This Hospital Is My Country, was premiered in 2000 at Deckchair Theatre in Fremantle, WA directed by Angela Chaplin. A one act play Kayak will be directed by Adam Cook for Griffin Theatre Co's 2001 season.

Katherine's extensive television writing credits include Wildside, Halifax fp, Fallen Angels, Snowy, GP and Grass Roots. She received the Louis Esson Prize for Drama in the Victorian Premier's Award (1996) for Diving for Pearls and was nominated for the NSW Literary Awards for Diving for Pearls, Barmaid's and a GP episode Close to Her Chest; an Australian Writers' Guild Award (AWGIE) for Barmaid's; an AWGIE for Best Single Script in a Series for Halifax fp: Shaking Hands With Time, GP: Close to Her Chest, Ceremony of Innocence; an Australian Film Institute (AFI) nomination for Halifax fp: Cradle and All, GP: Ceremony of Innocence; an AFI award (2000) nomination for Something in the Air (ABC Television). Thomson also wrote for the prime time children's series Mirror Mirror II. Her screenplay of her stage hit Diving For Pearls is awaiting development.
Katherine has twice been invited on to the international jury of the Banff Rockie Awards in Banff, Canada in 1997 and 1998. She is a Director of the Sydney Theatre Company and is Vice-President of the Australian Writers' Guild.

→ An Interview with Katherine Thomson ←

Where did the idea for Navigating come from?

Actually, it was hearing the Science Show one day. Robin Williams was reporting on the sinking of the Vasa in Stockholm Harbour in 1628. The Vasa, carrying wives and children of the shipwrights et al, sailed once around Stockholm Harbour, and in a very light breeze keeled over and sank in front of horrified onlookers. In 1961 it was salvaged from the ocean floor, in good condition due to absence of woodworm in Baltic Sea. I did some reading on the hearing that followed the inquest, and was interested in the progression of blame from the shipwright along the line, to whoever had given the order for the ship to carry more canons than was conventional on a ship that size. Perhaps it was the King? Anyway, that led me to thinking about scapegoating, and a particularly nasty crime that had occurred in Sydney, a crime against a woman, observed by a number of bystanders who failed to intervene. The anonymity of the crowd. Around that time, Whistleblower's Anonymous (as it was called then) had its first meeting, and I tracked its then president down in the ACT and began to meet with some people on that committee. The play changed enormously in its focus from that initial idea, although the sinking of the Vasa is echoed in the sinking of the pleasure boat all those years ago in the town of Dunbar.

What interested you about the idea?

The injustice that is meted out to whistleblowers, the hypocrisy of organisations that charge their staff with honesty and loyalty, yet systematically persecute them should they raise questions about the management, safety, or ethics of their organisation. I was also interested in the way whistleblowers (some, not all) become their own worst enemies, their "madness" often self-fulfilling as, due to lack of support or frustration, they begin to lose judgement: trust in the wrong people, drink too much, alienate the very people who are trying to support them. Good stuff for drama. I could imagine the isolation of the whistleblower, imagine how perplexed they must be at finding no-one who will join them in putting their neck on the line. I thought also of the woman in the city of Sydney who'd been attacked and watched by onlookers who remained passive. The "bystander theory" - how people en masse fail to respond as individuals - is of particular interest to me, when one's morality, or one's moral sense of self, is divergent from one's actions. How would I react? Would I help? How courageous am I?
How did you fix on these particular characters to tell your story?

This is never a cut and dried process. From very early on I had wanted a relationship between two sisters who lived together, and to all intents and purposes looked as if they would until their old age. There's something I don't understand about such relationships, and I thought that the element of co-dependency that I would set into my Bea/I sola “marriage” would mirror the wider politics of the betrayal of trust in the whistleblowing situation in the workplace.

The others were a combination of people I have lurking about in my unconscious and those I heard about in the course of my research. It's not uncommon to have local papers that are basically the council's newsletter, I just carried that character a little further (Brent) and made him particularly needy, particularly weak. Once the history of the town became clear (by this I mean the incident with the boat) and I plotted what they were trying to hide and why, who knew what about the boat's sinking, who had the most to lose, then the characters intentions were clarified. (This changed slightly between the QTC/MTC and STC productions - in the latter, Dick knew more about what had happened that day and wanted to communicate this to Bea.)

What themes and issues would you like the students to consider when reading, or seeing, this play?

Like all writers, I hope I'm writing a dramatic experience first, and themes and issues are there to support that event, that experience, in the theatre. However a note on my board at that time was "We must value our dissidents, for they tell us who we are." I would like them to look at people, "nutters" we sometimes see outside Parliament House or banks, or wherever, and stop to contemplate the frustration that has led them to stand day after day holding up a cardboard sign, hoping someone will support them in their quest for justice. It's not very fashionable to be difficult in the Corporate Age, and more essential than ever.

Could you elaborate on your writing and research process?

My writing process is probably not markedly different from that of other writers. I simultaneously read as much around the area I'm writing about, while interviewing people (tape them, write out transcripts - laborious but that's often where ideas come for me) who I think might be able to help. At the same time, I'm collating images and themes, and then it's just a process of distillation. I trust that the notebooks upon notebooks will eventually lead me to be able to articulate a spine for the play; that detailed work on the characters' backgrounds, core values etc. will eventually lead me to figure out their goals, their obstacles, their actions. It looks and feels messy and one just trusts that there is a moment when one launches into the actual writing of the play. This is often after considered conversations with the dramaturg, or director, when the form and style of the piece also starts to emerge from the material. I know of writers who say, this time I'm going to write a farce, a comedy - that's not what I do.
Even though your comments on the "setting" in the published text are sparse all your plays have a strong symbolic and visual sense. Can you comment on this?

Yes, I think you could say that until I have a clear idea of the place where a piece is set I can't begin. It won't be anything we'll see on stage, and it might not be realistic. For Navigating I always had a slippery slope leading to a river bank, and the street of the town behind it. Perhaps I even made a little map of where all the shops were, and certainly I could walk you through Bea's and Isola's house - but this is just for me. Not for the designer nor for the director. Most writers I think have a clear idea of place - when Geoffrey Atherden and I were writing a film together once we argued about a character's bedroom. What do you mean they go out the door to the corridor? That's the door that leads out to the balcony! Of course there was no such bedroom, we just both had such strong images of what the place looked like, we'd assumed the other must have had the same.

If it's any interest many of my dreams are about buildings I've never seen before, quite weird and wonderful structures, including some rather fantastic hotels that I wish someone would build!

The script is based on the STC production.
Whistleblowers

Katherine Thomson based *Navigating* on real experiences of Australian whistleblowers. Whistleblowing, defined by the Australian Whistleblowers' Association, is when a person, acting on principle, tells the truth, especially in relation to corruption or malpractice. The Whistleblowers' Association's goal is to "help promote a society in which it is possible to speak out without reprisal about corruption, dangers to the public and the environment and other vital social issues, and to help those who speak out in this way to help themselves" (Whistleblowers Australia 1997)

Unfortunately, as their research shows, Bea's experience is all too common. In the Australian study of thirty-five whistleblowers (Lennane, J 1993) it was found that:

- 90% lost their jobs or were demoted.
- 20% got into difficulties with alcohol.
- 20% had longterm relationships break up.
- 20% were threatened with defamation.
- One attempted suicide.
- 9% went bankrupt.

In many cases the whistleblower suffers terribly at work, "Ostracism, active victimisation and betrayal occurred...in three quarters of the cases" (Lennane, J 1997:28). Most whistleblowers also suffer depression with symptoms such as their hair falling out. You will notice that this happens to Bea.

For more information contact: Whistleblowers Australia
PO Box U129 Wollongong University, NSW 2500
or
http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/

**Activity**

- Collect newspaper stories of current or recent whistleblower actions. What similarities to you see to Bea's experiences.

**Activity**

- Compare *Navigating* with other famous works on Whistleblowers such as: *The Enemy of the People* (Ibsen's great play) and films such as, *The Firm*, *Erin Brockovich*, *Norma Rea* and *The Insider*. 
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Chapter 4

Operatic Text and the Interactive Classroom

Preface

This chapter presents two publications:


Ernst, E., & Hughes, J. (1997) *Operation: Nabucco* [video]. Sydney: Opera Australia. (Sections 1 & 2)

These publications, *Operation: The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Operation: Nabucco* supported the highly acclaimed *Opera Demystified* program I conducted for Opera Australia (Jurisevic, 1999), see Appendix B. The program’s aims were to provide educational experiences and support materials that would enable teachers and students to engage in an exploration of opera.
For the purposes of this research portfolio only the research sections written solely by Hughes (Sections 1 & 2 of each publication) are presented in the thesis. The Teaching and Learning Ideas (section 3 of each publication) are in Appendix E and Appendix F. The scores, the video and the audio tape have not been included but are available should examiners so require.

The monographs *Operation: The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Operation: Nabucco* are representative of a series of five published by Opera Australia between 1996-1997 (Hughes, & Ernst, A. 1996; Ernst, & Hughes, 1997a; Ernst, & Hughes, 1997b; Ernst, & Hughes, 1997c; Hughes, Mangan, & Ernst, 1997).

### 4.1 Research Purpose

In 1996, the then General Manager of Opera Australia, Mr Donald McDonald, invited me to conduct and provide research to address a severe educational problem. There had been a disaster at a special school's performance of *La Traviata*. Some of the school students had thrown objects into the orchestra pit causing the orchestra to go on strike. The subsequent special
schools' productions and school education programs were cancelled.

The Managing Director and the Artistic Director of Opera Australia approached me, at the University of Sydney, to develop a new education program for Opera Australia. The program's aims were to provide educational experiences and support materials that would enable teachers and students to access the operatic text, engage in an imaginative exploration of the text and enjoy the experience of attending opera productions.

4.2 Research Methodology

The action research procedures were followed (Cohen & Manion, 1994). International Opera education programs were reviewed, particularly the highly successful programs at Covent Garden (UK) and the Lincoln Centre (USA). Consultations were undertaken with: the Head of Vocal Studies and Opera at the NSW Conservatorium of Music and Chairperson of the Music Board Opera Foundation Australia, Associate Professor Valerie Collins-Varga; two directors of the Australian Opera, Brian FitzGerald and Michael Gow; and the music and marketing staff at Opera Australia.
I then formulated and conducted a series of discussion and focus groups of teachers, who had been accompanied by their students to previous Australian Opera productions and workshops. The purpose of these discussions was to investigate teachers' ideas and suggestions for improvements in the opera education program. Subsequently I developed and coordinated six workshops for teachers, in Sydney and Melbourne, with the aim of demystifying the opera. The workshops were conducted in the weeks prior to the teachers and students attending an opera performance.

Further focus and discussion groups were formulated to gather post-performance data. All these sessions were critically evaluated by Associate Professor Roslyn Arnold, the then Pro-Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Sydney and published as Jurisevic (1999), see Appendix B.

As a result of these evaluations the educator resources were developed. I commissioned audio and audio-visual resource materials for each opera. A literature search was conducted to gain information on: the nature of opera, opera productions in general, biographical information and composing styles of the composers, directorial
intentions for the Opera Australia productions being examined and relevant background information on the subjects and themes presented in the operas.

Interactive, child-centred activities for opera across the curriculum studies were developed and written by Hughes, Ernst and Mangan. These were then trialed in primary and secondary schools by teachers who were studying *Theatre in Education* as part of the Master of Education program, the Faculty of Education, University of Sydney. Subsequently the materials were revised and then published by Opera Australia.

4.3 Co-authorship

All the *Operaction* monographs were conceptualised and edited by Hughes. The sections offered in this thesis were solely written by Hughes. Mangan and Ernst collaborated on the Teaching and Learning Ideas (see Appendix E and Appendix F) and Ernst selected the score items.
4.4 Recognition of the Research

The Opera Action program and its publications became the focus of a comparative international study by Rosanna Jurisevic from the University of NSW and published as Jurisevic (1999), see Appendix B.

The resources and the program were highly commended. Jurisevic (1999) concluded:

*Opera Australia and The University of Sydney have formed ... a partnership to develop the Opera Demystified Education Program which specifically focuses on access and understanding. The program to date has been very successful in fulfilling its aim to allow students and teachers to access music theatre... Program convenor John Hughes - Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, University of Sydney - has had a significant and primary role in the coordination of the Opera Demystified Workshops as well as the development of the Teacher Resource Kits. In 1997, as Education Consultant to the Australian Opera, he supervised the general program and conducted interactive workshops... Teachers highly praised the workshop format, content, quality of presenters and venue... The Opera Demystified Workshops were exceptionally successful... The Teacher Resource Kits were commended for their comprehensive nature and for the ease of application within the classroom environment (p. 43).*
4.5.1 The Publication.


*Operaction: The Cunning Little Vixen* [audio tape].

Sydney: Opera Australia. (Sections 1 & 2).
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

These resources are designed to help teachers introduce students to the opera *The Cunning Little Vixen* and for teachers to use the opera to enhance other areas of the curriculum. Enclosed you will find information about the work as well as some suggested activities for primary and secondary classes. You will find some material suitable for direct use by students. Other activities are suggestions from which teachers may plan lessons. Needless to say there are many more possibilities than those presented here and teachers should see these merely as starting points from which to introduce their students to the world of opera.
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN
EDUCATOR RESOURCE

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GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WHAT IS OPERA?

Opera is a play set to music with the words being sung rather than spoken. It takes much longer to sing something than to speak it so the words of an opera are usually specially written or adapted. The words are called the "libretto" (from an Italian word meaning "little book"). Until recently, most operas were divided according to their musical sections, so that instead of a monologue, a character would sing an aria or there would be a duet instead of a dialogue. In many ways, opera is like theatre, however in opera it is possible to have several people singing at once expressing different emotions while remaining intelligible. These passages are called ensembles, where everyone is singing at once and they are often the high points of an opera or saved for the end of an act.

Opera is one of the greatest Western art forms because it combines the talents of people in many different fields - singers, orchestra players, conductor, design artists, director and all the other people who help put the piece on stage: rehearsal pianists, stage managers, lighting technicians, dressers, make-up artists and all the infrastructure of an opera company. It is also an amazing art form and the singers are very highly trained - usually for at least six years. They use no amplification or artificial help and it is very exposing to have to sing on stage because every little mistake can be heard. Many actors are afraid to have to sing on stage!
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN & JANÁČEK THE COMPOSER

"The composer is a human being; the deeper his experience, the better his expression of it. The composer must be concerned with nature and society. There are composers who don't care about what goes on around them. They write at the table and one of their compositions is the same as another."

Leoš Janáček

Leoš Janáček (1854 - 1928) is one of the most unusual characters in the history of music. He came from the part of Europe which is now called the Czech republic, but when he was born it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and after the first World War it became an independent country called Czechoslovakia.

The province that he came from was called Moravia, and he spent most of his life in a town called Brno. Moravia has a culture and music very different from most of the areas around it and Janáček grew up with the sounds of Moravian music and speech in his ears. The period when he was growing up was a very important time for the people of Moravia and Bohemia, the other Czech province of the Empire, because until then Austrian culture and the Austrian language (German) had dominated musical and social life. In fact, the Czech language that was spoken by people in Moravia and Bohemia was in danger of dying out because everything significant was written in German and people spoke German. No one wrote books or newspapers in Czech, let alone operas!

From the 1860's onwards, people started paying more attention to folk language, music and culture. The Czech language was revived and, among other things, operas started to be written in Czech based on Czech stories. Two of the most famous composers were Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák. Smetana wrote the first great Czech comic opera called Prodaná Neříše or, as it is usually known in English, The Bartered Bride. Dvořák wrote the tragic opera Rusalka. Both of these composers used folk tunes and dances in their operas, and wrote about Czech subjects.

Janáček's early years were spent writing music in a similar style to Smetana and Dvořák. As well as being a composer he was also a teacher, pianist and music critic. As a critic he had made himself unpopular with the management of the big theatres in Prague, the capital of the Czech provinces. Because of this, he found it difficult to have work performed there. It was not until 1916, when he was 52, that his opera Jenůfa was finally performed in Prague. In the same year an event took place which changed his life completely; he fell in love.

He was already married, and so was the much younger woman, Kamila Stoesslova, with whom he fell in love. Janáček and his wife had drifted apart after their daughter died and, although they never divorced, they had little to do with one another. As for Kamila, she hardly noticed that a man old enough to be her grandfather was in love with her. He rarely saw her but he wrote hundreds of letters to her. We don't know what her husband thought, but since Janáček very rarely did anything apart from write letters to Kamila, we can assume that very little harm was done.

From the time he fell in love with Kamila, Janáček produced an amazing number of works unlike anything he had written and unlike anything anyone had heard before. He wrote four operas, two string quartets, several chamber pieces, a mass and many other works between 1916 and his death twelve years later. One of the last of these pieces was The Cunning Little Vixen.
JANÁČEK'S MUSIC

"I would like to sing the majesty of the mountains, the soft tepid rain, the chilling ice, the flowers in the meadows, the snow fields; the bright peaks touching the sky and the ghostly darkness of the forests at night; the love call of the song-birds and the shrieks of the bird of prey; the dreamy silence of noon and the humming tremolo of a thousand insects." Leoš Janáček

There are two important things to know about Janáček's music. Like Smetana and Dvořák, Janáček based his music on the sound of Czech music and particularly Moravian music. Unlike the others, though, Janáček went about it a completely different way. Whereas the others quoted from folk songs, used them or imitated them in their works, Janáček tried to find what it was that made folk music unlike other music. He found that folk music used different scales from the conventional minor and major scales, and that it had different rhythms from conventional music. Folk music also used single instruments with frequently repeated phrases. Janáček used these elements which characterise Czech folk music and his unique application of the elements created his own style. For this reason Janáček's music sounds like no one else's and it is perhaps the most immediately recognisable sound of any composer.

The other thing to know is that, instead of writing arias which were based on a single tune or melody, Janáček based his musical phrases on people's speech patterns, or the sounds made by animals and birds. When he went walking in the woods behind his home, he used to take a notebook and pencil with him so that he could write down in music the sounds that he heard. His notebooks were also full of musical versions of things people said to him. For example, when he visited London he wrote down, in a single day, 26 different ways the doorman said "hello". All of these observations were used in writing his operas. Janáček's lines of music are based on speech patterns, or in the case of The Cunning Little Vixen, animal sounds.

Janáček's works have always presented editorial problems. He had appalling handwriting and didn't use manuscript paper. As a result there were a great number of mistakes in the proofs. Janáček was often too busy to correct the proofs so the published scores frequently contained mistakes. As his music is so unusual his editors often altered his works. The problem is not as serious in Vixen as in From the House of the Dead, which was long thought to be incomplete. Sir Charles Mackerras first heard Janáček's work in Prague in 1956, while studying with the great conductor Vaclav Talich. He went back to the manuscript scores and removed the mistakes and additions that had accumulated over the years. It was Mackerras' enthusiasm for Janáček's work which led to the first English performances of Katya, Jenufa and subsequently all of Janáček's operas.

The most crucial production of The Vixen, however, was one done by the great director Walter Felsenstein in Berlin. It ran for many years and made the work famous throughout Europe. From then on it has been performed many times in most major opera houses.
OTHER WORKS BY JANÁČEK

The opera Jenůfa was the first to gain Janáček attention outside his home town. It is still one of his finest and most approachable works. His other operas include Katya Kabanova, The Makropulos Secret, Destiny and his final and possibly incomplete work From the House of the Dead. He also wrote a number of excellent orchestral works, notably his Sinfonietta, his tone poem Taras Bulba and a Violin Concerto. His two string quartets and his piano works such as On an Overgrown Path, On the Street and Through the Mists are all well worth listening to.

HOW JANÁČEK CAME TO WRITE THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

In the mid 1880's, the Czech landscape painter, Stanislav Lolek had been told a story about a forester and his grandson who had an encounter with an unruly vixen. Lolek was struck by the story as he had worked as a forester's assistant years before, so he made about 200 sketches following the storyline. He was a student at the time and didn't think much of the sketches. He was more interested in landscape painting.

Years later, in about 1919, a newspaper, Lidove Noviny, announced that they would be the first newspaper in Brno (the second largest city in Czechoslovakia) to carry illustrations. They needed some sketches, and the Arts Editor, Dr Bohumil Markalous (whose pen name was Jaromir John) visited the studio of Lolek where he discovered the sketches he had done. Under protest from Lolek, he purchased the sketches and one of the journalists at the paper, Rudolf Tesnihojidek, was ordered to write the storyline. (Tesnihojidek was a morose man, who was actually a poet. His first wife had died under suspicious circumstances and it was unclear whether she had committed suicide or whether Tesnihojidek had actually shot her.)

The story was serialised in the paper from Wednesday, 7 April 1920 to Wednesday, 23 June 1920 and was a great success. Tesnihojidek incorporated satirical allusions against the church and the state - it is important to note that Czechoslovakia had only become a republic after the first World War, before that time it had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Major changes included the legalisation of divorce and the rise of communism. Tesnihojidek had originally called the story Liska Bystronsoska (Vixen Lightfoot), but this was misread by the typesetter as Liska Bystrouska (Vixen Sharp Ears) and Tesnihojidek decided to leave it as it was.

It is reported that Janáček only became aware of the story of the Vixen Sharp Ears from his housekeeper, although many researchers reject the story. Apparently, he heard her laughing out loud in the kitchen one day and, after she showed him what it was she was laughing at, she suggested that he should write an opera based on it. Janáček was almost 70 at the time and, like Tesnihojidek, was a pantheist (a lover of nature, who identified God in all that was contained in the universe). He was immediately taken with the story and arranged to meet with Tesnihojidek and they soon came to an agreement. Janáček then embarked upon a study of the sounds made by wildlife which he tried to capture in his work. He had also always been keenly interested in Czechoslovakian folk songs.

THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN - BACKGROUND INFORMATION
and forms of these he used in his work. Janáček eventually bought a house in the country near a friend who was a forester so that he could study a family of foxes. He finished the libretto in the Autumn of 1922 and the music was completed on 3 April 1923.

In this opera, one can plainly see Janáček's love of nature. The life cycle of man is compared and contrasted with that of the animals in the wood and the theme of renewal through life's cycle is apparent. Janáček said:

"I wrote the Adventures of Vixen Sharp Ears for the forest and the sadness of old age."

It should be noted that the present title, The Cunning Little Vixen, came from the German version of the opera (Das Schlaue Fuchsklein) which was translated by Max Brod, a great friend of Janáček's.

Janáček wrote this opera because he loved nature. He was old when he began it and knew that death was approaching. He was comforted by the knowledge that although things change in nature, the world itself is eternal. The Cunning Little Vixen, is not just about the Vixen herself but also about an unending cycle of birth, growth and death. Every cycle goes at a different speed, eg. the opera ends with the ageing Forester talking to the grandson of the original frog.

The opera is also about the way humans and animals interact. Although Janáček is sympathetic towards his human characters, his real love and admiration are for the animals. The opera contrasts the human and animal worlds; the humans are confused and lack the naturalness of the animals. The important message of this work is to enjoy life and to live it to the full.

Janáček's animals do this instinctively in contrast to his humans. Therefore, although both animals and humans speak the same language in the opera, they cannot understand each other. It is only at the end, when the forester is overcome by the beauty of nature, that the two worlds begin to merge. Janáček called the work:

"Merry thing with a sad end: and I am taking up a place at the sad end myself. And so I fit in there!"

Janáček loved this opera so much that he asked for it to be played at his funeral, which it was, in 1928.
The characters in the opera

Synopsis

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The other creatures in
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References
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

THE CHARACTERS IN THE OPERA

Forester  Cricket  Caterpillar  Mosquito  Frog  Badger  Vixen  Dog  Rooster  Chief Hen  Hens  Forester's son (Pepik)  Son's friend (Frantik)  Forester's wife  Parson  Schoolmaster  Innkeeper  Innkeeper's wife  Fox  Owl  Jay  Woodpecker  Poacher (Harašta)
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN: SYNOPSIS

ACT 1:
Scene One: Summer

The opera opens in a shady place in the forest. A badger, smoking a pipe, pokes his head out of his den and is pestered by the flies. Other animals, including a dragonfly, can be seen in the forest. The Forester appears, he has been drinking and is on his way home. He lies down for a nap. While he is asleep, a grasshopper and a cricket enter and perform a concert. Then a mosquito and a frog appear, the mosquito lands on the Forester's nose and becomes tipsy after drinking some of his blood. The Vixen enters and stares at the frog, wondering if it is good to eat. The frog leaps onto the Forester's nose waking him up. He then sees the Vixen and captures her to take home to his children as a pet.

Scene Two: Autumn

The Forester's yard. The Vixen is growing up and becoming restless. She has a conversation with the dog, Lapak, about love - he makes a pass at her and she knocks him down. The Forester's son and his friend then appear and torment the Vixen, she bites one of them and the Forester enters, catches her and ties her up. While she is tied up, she tries to get the hens to revolt against the rooster. When they refuse, she performs a mock burial - saying that she is in mourning for their helpless slavery. When the rooster approaches her to see if she is really dead, she jumps up and attacks the rooster and the hens. The Forester and his wife enter and the Vixen escapes.

ACT II:
Scene One: Winter

Back in the forest. The Vixen enters and drives the Badger out of his den, backed up by the other animals in the forest. She takes it over for herself.

Scene Two: The Inn

The Forester and the Schoolmaster are playing cards, with the Parson looking on. The Forester teases the Schoolmaster about his love for Verunka and the fact that he is too shy to ask her to marry him. He in turn teases the Forester about the Vixen. Later, when the Innkeeper asks the Forester to tell him the story of how the Vixen escaped, he explodes angrily and leaves the Inn.
While walking in the forest, the Schoolmaster thinks about his love for Terynka, a gypsy girl (and not about Verunka!). The Vixen teases him. The Parson then enters and he, too, talks about his love for Terynka when he was a young priest. Again, the Vixen teases him. The Forester then enters, sees the Cunning Little Vixen and chases after her.

Scene Three: Spring

The Vixen meets a handsome young Fox, they fall in love and are married by the Woodpecker.

ACT III:
Scene One: Autumn

At the edge of the wood. The Forester meets the poacher, Harâsta, who confides that he is going to marry Terynka. He shows the Forester a dead hare, left there by the Vixen. The Forester sets a trap. The Vixen enters with the Fox and their cubs. They find the trap and laugh at the Forester's incompetence. The Fox asks the Vixen when they will have more cubs and the Vixen tells him to wait until Spring. Harâsta re-enters and the Vixen tricks him out of the basket of chickens he is carrying. She taunts him and, in a rage, the poacher kills her.

Scene Two: The Inn

The Parson has been transferred to another parish. The Forester and the Schoolmaster are both feeling sad and bitter – the Schoolmaster because he has heard that Terynka is to marry today, and the Forester because he is feeling old.

Scene Three: Spring

The Forester is strolling through the woods. As in the first Act, he falls asleep, although this time he falls asleep thinking about how beautiful the wood is, with new life every Spring. The animals appear - the dragonfly, the woodpecker, the owl, the cricket and the grasshopper. When the Forester awakes he sees a young fox cub (one of the Vixen's) and tries to catch it, instead he catches a frog. The frog tells him that he is the grandson of the frog from the first Act. The Forester is content to see the cycle of life renewed and falls asleep.
ABOUT FOXES:

Vital Statistics:
Latin Name: *Vulpes vulpes*
Family: *Canidae*

European dimensions:
Adult weight: male – 6.5kg; female – 5.5kg
Head-body length: male 57-77cm; female 56-74cm
Tail length: male 35-49cm; female 28-49 cm

North American dimensions:
Wide regional variation: approx average head-body length 60cm, weight 4.5kg.

Mating period:
January-February (*i.e.*, Northern Winter)
Gestation period: 53 days
Cubbing season: March-April (*i.e.*, Northern Spring)
Birth weights: 100gm
Litter size: average 4-5.
Eyes first open: 11-14 days

*Trotting speed: 6-13km per hour*
*Maximum speed: 50km per hour.*

Description:

Although normally red in colour, there is a wide variation of colour from brown to silvery grey with a dark stripe running down the top of its back. Foxes are renowned for their thick, bushy tail which may be flecked with white or have a white tip.

The fox is a much maligned creature, considered to be responsible for the deaths of many more chickens, lambs, etc then could actually be possible. Although foxes are hunters, they are also opportunists and the number of lambs found around their lairs can often be attributed to their collecting lambs who have died due to a variety of reasons. The word fox has become synonymous with being crafty or sly. Think of all the nursery rhymes and children's stories which paint the fox in this light!

Foxes are hunted for three main reasons: because they are considered vermin; for their fur; and for sport.

Foxes in Australia

In the 1800s, British expatriates imported foxes into Australia for hunting. The first foxes were thought to be introduced in 1845, but by 1893 they were so numerous that the first fox bounty schemes were introduced. Although they were first introduced in Victoria, by 1911 they were established as far north as Southern Queensland.

Today, the fox is found throughout mainland Australia and is held partly responsible for the decline of the brush-tailed rock wallaby, the crescent-tailed wallaby and the meleefowl.
Body Language

The confident fox carries its body in a straight, direct way with its ears pricked up and alert and its tail held high. During play, the ears are perked forward and it rears up onto its hind legs (sometimes leaning a forepaw on its companion's back).

The fearful fox grins in submission with its back arched, body curved and legs crouched. Its ears are flush against its skull and pointing backwards and its tail beats back and forth.

In attack, there is often a bewildering blend of aggressive and fearful signals. The ears are rotated and flattened to the side (not backwards) and the tail is aloft. For communication, foxes produce a wide range of calls which span over five octaves. These calls can be categorised into two main groups; ‘contact’ calls and ‘interaction’ calls. Variations occur in contact calls due to distance, whereas interaction calls vary with aggression.

The most common contact call is the ‘wow wow wow’ call - similar to a bark and lasting between three and five syllables with the last syllable generally the highest in pitch. As the foxes get closer to each other, the call becomes quieter and changes into a three syllable greeting. Like humans, foxes have recognisably different voices which can be identified by other foxes.

Interaction calls, which occur when foxes are close to each other, vary from a high pitched whine or howl, sometimes developing into a shriek. During an aggressive encounter the whine changes into a staccato, rasping, clicking sound (often known as gekkering). Gekkering often occurs during the breeding and cubbing seasons.

There are two other calls which do not fit into either of the above categories. The first is a long drawn-out monosyllabic wail (waaaaah) which is often attributed to the vixen and is thought to be made by the vixen to let the fox dogs know that she is in heat. The other call is a monosyllabic alarm bark, similar to the scream, which is most often used to warn cubs of impending danger. This call alters according to distance; at close quarters it is more like a muffled cough, while at longer range it becomes a sharp bark.

Life Span

Foxes can live until the age of approximately 9 years old in the wild and 14 years old in captivity. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the average life expectancy is 1 -1 ½ years. On average, 60% of foxes die from traffic accidents; 15% due to snares, traps, etc; 8% from disease and 4% due to fighting.

THE OTHER CREATURES IN THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

Some Australian students may be unfamiliar with some of the other animals which populate this opera. Below is a description of the animals and birds featured in the work. There are also insects which appear but these are much the same as Australian insects.

It would be advantageous for students to collect pictures of these animals or to visit them at the zoo.

THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN - ABOUT THE OPERA
BIRDS:

The Jay
The jay is a European bird, the most brightly coloured of the crow family with broad wings, a strong bill and feet. It makes a loud "SCAAARG" sound. It has blue eyes and blue and white wing markings. The jay feeds on seeds, fruit, small mammals and insects. It is not unlike the Currawong in Australia.

Spotted Woodpecker
This is a black and white bird with a patch of red under its tail. They climb up trees and can be heard banging on the bark. This helps them disturb insects which they eat. Woodpeckers live in the forests and have very elaborate courtship displays.

Owls
European owls are much the same as Australian owls. They hunt at night for small creatures such as mice and have very effective eyesight. They can fly silently and their hearing is very good. During the breeding season they become very noisy with their typical "Hoot Hoot" sound. In European culture, owls are considered wise.

ANIMALS:

The Squirrel
The squirrel is a European and American rodent with a bushy tail. It lives in trees and eats nuts, acorns, fruit and other parts of trees. They collect food in autumn and store it for the cold winter months. The European squirrel has a brown coat which becomes chestnut-red in summer. They are popular animals in Europe because they appear to be very playful. The American squirrel is grey and larger than the European squirrel. In Europe the imported American squirrel is taking over.

Rabbits
Rabbits are also a European animal which were imported into Australia where they are a great pest. They are a favourite food of foxes. Rabbits have large eyes, and big ears. They have strong hind legs and have a habit of thumping their hind feet if danger is about. They are gregarious and live in burrows under the ground. Rabbits are very good breeders and produce many young in a short period of time.

Hares
Hares are larger than rabbits and tend to be more solitary. They have larger back legs, larger ears and can run very quickly. Hares have been known to reach speeds of 56km per hour. They are also a popular food of foxes.
Badgers
The Badger is an animal something like a wombat. It has a barrel-shaped body, but, unlike the wombat, it has a black and white striped head and a long snout. Badgers live underground in tunnels which are called setts. They eat earth worms and other small creatures and are very powerful animals.

Hedgehogs
The hedgehog looks a little like a small echidna. It is about 26cm long. It is a nocturnal animal covered in spines. And if it is attacked it rolls itself up into a ball. Hedgehogs are common all over Europe. They eat all types of insects, earthworms and berries. Their babies are born without spikes but soon, too, grow dark-brown, yellow-tip spikes which typify the adult.

Frogs
The frogs in the opera are Woodland frogs which range in colour from grey to yellow to brown. They are active in spring but hibernate in winter in Europe. European frogs lay eggs in water which become tadpoles and then turn into frogs, just as they do in Australia. The adult frog is about 70cm long.
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NABUCCO

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The Score
These resources are designed to help teachers introduce students to the opera Nabucco and for teachers to use the opera to enhance other areas of the curriculum. Enclosed you will find information about the work as well as some suggested activities for secondary classes. You will find some material suitable for direct use by students. Other activities are suggestions from which teachers may plan lessons. Needless to say there are many more possibilities than those presented here and teachers should see these merely as starting points from which to introduce their students to the world of opera.
What is opera?

Opera Production – then and now
GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WHAT IS OPERA?

Opera is a play set to music with the words being sung rather than spoken. It takes much longer to sing something than to speak it so the words of an opera are usually specially written or adapted. The words are called the "libretto" (from an Italian word meaning "little book"). Until recently, most operas were divided according to their musical sections, so that instead of a monologue, a character would sing an aria or there would be a duet instead of a dialogue. In many ways, opera is like theatre, however, in opera it is possible to have several people singing at once expressing different emotions while remaining intelligible. These passages are called ensembles, where everyone is singing at once and they are often the high points of an opera or saved for the end of an act.

Opera is one of the greatest Western art forms because it combines the talents of people in many different fields - singers, orchestra players, conductor, design artists, director and all the other people who help put the piece on stage: rehearsal pianists, stage managers, lighting technicians, dressers, make-up artists and all the infrastructure of an opera company. It is also an amazing art form and the singers are very highly trained - usually for at least six years. They use no amplification or artificial help and it is very exposing to have to sing on stage because every little mistake can be heard. Many actors are afraid to have to sing on stage!
OPERA PRODUCTION - THEN AND NOW

In Verdi's time, you were meant to look at the picture on the stage and admire the way it was painted - the way that the singers looked with their costumes was part of the picture. It was like looking at a picture in a gallery. If it was a realistic-looking picture then it was a good picture – this is what art lovers at the time thought as well. Because of this, for a long time opera productions gradually aimed to be more and more realistic. In the 1840's this was very difficult to achieve because sets were painted onto pieces of canvas on wooden frames. These were called "flats" because they were flat and by layering these in front of each other you could create the impression of depth. There were shortcomings of course. For example, you could lower a flat from the ceiling which showed a row of pillars, but as soon as people started walking around them on stage, you would know that they were simply painted. The lighting was done by gas lamps which created a very bright, almost greenish kind of light, and they could not be turned off or used to create anything more than very basic lighting effects. The famous French painter Degas did a lot of paintings from the theatre which give you a very good idea of the lighting at the time.

To make up for not having these kind of effects, theatre in Verdi's time used lots of other special effects. Stages always had trap doors in them, so that people could appear or disappear instantly. Other special effects used were smoke machines, thunder or lightning or wind machines. People went to the theatre to see how these effects would be used in the same way that you might go to a film today to see the latest computer technology in action.

Acting in Verdi's time was what we would call overacting. Big gestures were used and larger-than-life expressions. This was because actors and singers would concentrate on putting across the actual feelings of the characters through their actions and expressions rather than just letting the audiences "read" their feelings from the situation in the play or opera. An opera like Nabucco has characters in it who are put in extreme situations and have very strong emotions. In Verdi's time, it was important that a singer did not just show an emotion, but also how extreme it was, and this needed big actions and gestures.

Over time, there were developments in staging and acting. One of the big inventions was the use of electric light, which allowed people to do things such as having spot lights, or light coming from different directions, or even no light at all. You could not actually turn a gas lamp off completely in a performance because it had to be relit manually. All this meant that electric lighting could recreate much more precisely the colour and strength of real light.

Another change was the building of three-dimensional sets instead of using flats. This made everything on stage look more realistic still, and designers and set builders became very skilled at imitating real landscapes, buildings and furniture.

Acting also became much more subdued. An actor or singer who is standing in the middle of what looks like a real room with real furniture has to behave very differently from one who is in the middle of a painting. Because of this, actors started to try and be as much like real people as they could. In some productions in Russia, people were very
confused to find that some of the people on stage weren't actors at all, but people from
the street who actually did the job that the character was supposed to do!

Many opera productions still try to be very realistic and to have very realistic acting
because this is one way of making opera alive and moving for audiences. Other people,
though, find different ways of making opera alive and moving for audiences. One person
who did this was a man called Meyerhold who lived in Russia from 1874 until 1940. He
was a director who believed that theatre and opera had to be different from real life.
Otherwise, he said, there was no reason for anyone to go to the theatre! He asked why
people would want to go and see a play about, say, a poor student, when there were
poor students all around them every day? This was even more true of opera where the
artform itself can never be truly realistic because arias are not true to most people's
lives. Why would people want to see a play about a poor student who cannot talk, but
sings instead?

Meyerhold said that what people really wanted to see when they went to the theatre or
the opera was how skilled the performers were, what they could do and how well they
could do it. Being as true to life as possible was just one of the many things that a performer
should be able to do. He made his actors stop trying to be other people, and instead told
them just to express what the character has to express and to do it with lots of energy and
physical skill. In a way, he was going back to the old style of acting, but with a difference.

Meyerhold used sets which mainly consisted of a single structure, such as a piece of
scaffolding, which could be anything the actors wanted it to be. One minute it would be
a forest, and for the next scene it would be a room, or a park bench or whatever.
Meyerhold thought that since everyone in the theatre knew that what they were seeing
was not real, there was no point in pretending it was - it was better to just use as much
as the actors needed and let the audience's imagination do the rest of the work.

The work of Meyerhold, and people who thought like him, has been very influential in
the theatre, especially since films have become so popular. Film technology can almost
always be more spectacular than a theatre can be - think of the money and the time that
a movie studio has to create a single effect. The one thing that a theatre always has,
though, is a highly skilled actor performing right in front of you. This is also very true of
opera, because opera singers are so specialised and have to train for a long time to be
able to perform in this style as well as they do. In many ways, though, Meyerhold's work
has not been used so much in opera, especially in this country. This production of
Nabucco, however, is one which uses some of his ideas and some other more modern ones.

The director, Barrie Kosky, draws on a lot of different areas for inspiration, for example,
surrealism and religious art and writing. Kosky likes throwing lots of action and very
striking images into his productions which have lots of different meanings - seeing how
it all works is part of the fun of the production.
The characters in the production

Synopsis

Some facts about Giuseppe Verdi

How Giuseppe Verdi came to write *Nabucco*

Babylon — fact and fiction

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NABUCCO

ABOUT THE OPERA

THE CHARACTERS IN THE PRODUCTION

Abigail, a slave, believed to be the elder daughter of Nabucco:
Elizabeth Connell

Fenena, a daughter of Nabucco:
Rosemary Gunn

Ismaele, nephew of the King of Jerusalem:
Anson Austin

Nabucco, King of Babylon:
Jonathan Summers

Zaccaria, High Priest of Jerusalem:
Bruce Martin

High Priest of Baal:
John Brunato

Abdallo, an old officer in Nabucco’s service:
Christopher Dawes

Anna, sister of Zaccaria:
Jeannie Kelso

Conductor: Carlo Felice Cillario
Director: Barrie Kosky
Designer: Peter Corrigan
Assistant Costume Designer: Jane Hyland
Lighting Designer: Nigel Levings

Opera Australia Chorus
State Orchestra of Victoria

Video Recorded live at the State Theatre, Victorian Arts Centre, May 7 1996
Sung in Italian with English surtitles
SYNOPSIS

Act I - “Jerusalem”

Thus saith the Lord: Behold I shall deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire. – Jeremiah

Jerusalem is being sacked by the Babylonians. The people gather in the temple to pray to God to save them. Zaccaria, the high priest and a prophet, brings in the daughter of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar - called Nabucco in Italian. Zaccaria has captured her and intends to use her as a hostage. Amongst the Hebrews, she sees Ismaele. She had fallen in love with him when he had been in Babylon as an ambassador from Israel. Ismaele loves her too and is about to help her escape when Abigaille, Nabucco’s other daughter, comes in with some soldiers. When she realises that Ismaele loves Fenena rather than her, she determines to have revenge.

Then a march is heard and Nabucco’s men enter, desecrating the temple. They are followed by Nabucco himself. He is about to sack the temple when Zaccaria holds a knife to Fenena’s throat and threatens to kill her if Nabucco steps any further. Nabucco is furious, but before anything can happen, Ismaele rescues Fenena. Nabucco, no longer held back, orders his troops to destroy the temple. The Hebrews curse Ismaele for betraying them. They are all taken into slavery.

Act II - “The Unrighteous”

Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth: it shall fall upon the head of the unrighteous. – Jeremiah

Abigaille enters, bearing a letter which shows that she is not in fact the daughter of Nabucco, but of a slave. In shame and anger she plans revenge. Babylon’s high priest come in and tells her that Fenena is about to set the Hebrews free. In order to stop her, the priest has put out the rumour that Nabucco has died in battle and invites Abigaille to assume the throne.

Meanwhile, Zaccaria goes to see Fenena, who is about to convert to Judaism. Ismaele enters and is abused by the priests, but they stop when they find out that the woman he saved has joined the Jews. At that moment news comes that Abigaille has taken the throne and is about to have the Hebrews killed. As she tries to crown herself, Nabucco enters in a fury. He demands that everybody fall down before him and worship him. He is the ruler, he says, he is no longer man, but God.

Zaccaria and the Jews are horrified at this blasphemy. There is a flash of lightning and Nabucco loses his sanity - God has struck him down. Abigaille takes the opportunity to have herself crowned.
Act III - “The Prophecy”

_The wild beasts of the desert shall dwell in Babylon, and the owls shall dwell within._

— Jeremiah

Abigaille arranges to have Fenena condemned to death. Nabucco enters and demands to know who has taken his power. Abigaille sends everyone away and tricks Nabucco into signing Fenena’s death warrant. Abigaille then tears up the only proof of her ignoble birth before his eyes. Still not in full possession of his sanity, Nabucco is unable to stop her.

The Hebrews lament the fall of their homeland, and Zaccaria prophesies that Babylon will fall and that they will be restored to Israel.

Act IV - “The Broken Idol”

_Baal is confounded, his idols are broken in pieces._ — Jeremiah

In the royal palace, Nabucco hears the sound of a funeral procession and regains his sanity. He prays to God to help him as he realises that Fenena and the Hebrews are being lead to their deaths. He arms himself, gathers his soldiers and saves the condemned people. Nabucco orders the statue of the Babylonian God Baal to be pulled down but it shatters of its own accord. Abigaille has realised that all is lost for her and, having taken poison, comes in to beg forgiveness of God and the Jews as she dies.
SOME FACTS ABOUT GIUSEPPE VERDI

Timeline:

1813    Born in Roncole, a village near Busseto
1832    Studies in Milan
1835    Married to daughter of his patron Antonio Barezzi
1839    Verdi's first opera is performed at La Scala
1840    Wife and children die. Second opera performed at La Scala
1842    Nabucco performed at La Scala
1842-1850  The so-called "years in the galley" (i.e. years as a slave) during which
         Verdi wrote 13 operas, very few of which are regularly performed today.
1850-1855  Verdi's middle period, when some of his greatest operas were written
1869    After writing Aida, Verdi apparently retires, writing nothing for the stage
         except his Requiem.
1883    Tempted out of retirement to write Otello, one of his greatest works
1890    His last work, the comedy Falstaff
1903    Verdi dies peacefully in Milan. Although he requested a small funeral,
         thousands of people turn up for a huge ceremony in Milan.
HOW GIUSEPPE VERDI CAME TO WRITE NABUCCO

The year 1840 had been terrible for the young composer Giuseppe Verdi. The previous year he had his first opera performed at the famous La Scala Opera House in Milan. La Scala had asked for a second opera, this time a comedy and he had started to write it. Then tragedy struck; first his two young children and then his wife died of fever. He was heartbroken but pulled himself together and wrote the comedy; however the comedy was a disaster and this last blow was too much for Verdi. He swore that he would never compose again, and spent most of his time alone in his small apartment, seeing no-one and almost never going out of his room.

The impresario or manager of the La Scala Opera House, a man called Bartolomeo Merelli, had not lost faith in Verdi. He knew that Verdi was a great composer if he could be persuaded to work again. He found a libretto for him, which was called Nabucco. It was about the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco in Italian) and how he sacks the city of Jerusalem and takes the Hebrew people into slavery. He thought it might interest Verdi as it had great potential; so he called Verdi into his office. He showed it to Verdi but Verdi said he was not interested - he was not going to compose anymore. Merelli didn’t listen to Verdi, and stuffed the libretto into Verdi’s pocket and threw him out of the office. Verdi had no choice but to go home. He took the libretto out of his pocket and threw it on the table, where it fell open at a certain page.

On this page were the words of a chorus that the Hebrews sing in captivity, about their homeland that they miss so much. Verdi thought the words were beautiful, especially as he knew how the Hebrews must have felt. Italy was not a country then. It was several states that were ruled over by foreign powers. Milan, where he was living, was ruled over by the Austrians, and, like the Hebrews, he felt he had no land that he could call his own. He started to compose the chorus. Gradually the opera came together and Verdi took the work back to Merelli.

Merelli had the new work performed at the end of the season, with very cheap sets - just in case it did not succeed, Merelli did not want to lose too much money. On the first night, Verdi took his seat where the composer traditionally sat, in the orchestra pit. When his chorus was performed, there was so much noise from the audience that for a moment he thought that they hated his new work too. Then he realised what the noise meant. They wanted an encore! The piece had affected them as much as it had affected him. The conductor encored the chorus - something which was actually illegal, because the Austrian government was worried that encores of patriotic pieces might turn into demonstrations against them. They were right to be worried: there was an uproar. All the Italians sympathised with the Hebrews and saw themselves in the same situation. The work was enormously popular, and it was performed over sixty times in the next year. Overnight Verdi became a national hero, and the chorus that had first inspired him became almost a national anthem of the Italians as they fought to free themselves from foreign rule. When Verdi died many years later, it was played at his funeral by the chorus from La Scala, where he had his first success.
BABYLON - FACT AND FICTION

Babylon is one of the oldest civilisations in the world. It was where Iraq is now, and had some of the earliest forms of writing and laws known to humanity. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century a lot of archaeological work was done and we have discovered huge amounts about the ancient Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar himself, who was an historical figure.

He was a great general, who spent a lot of his time as King away on military campaigns; but he was also responsible for building great walls around Babylon, as well as the famous "Hanging Gardens" which were described as one of the wonders of the world. The Babylonian civilisation was very highly developed and complex, with a religion that involved many Gods and magic rituals.

For the Jews it must have been a very confusing and frightening place, because it was so different from Israel. Babylon was in the middle of a desert. It was an enormous city with huge and ancient buildings everywhere. It was the centre of a very large empire, and everyone worshipped strange Gods and believed in all kinds of magic rituals. For the Hebrews, who believed in their one God, this seemed like a terrible blasphemy against God, and they thought that God had sent this terrible Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar, to punish them for their sins. They thought that God had made sure they would be taken to the most terrible place on earth to suffer so that they would remember to keep His laws.

Although we know a lot about ancient Babylon now, not much was known when Verdi was writing his opera. Many people were interested in the places that were mentioned in the bible. They wanted to know if the places and people really existed and what they looked like if they did. When Verdi was writing Nabucco, people also saw the Middle East as exciting and exotic and there were a lot of paintings, plays, operas, ballets and pieces of music that were supposed to evoke the atmosphere of the desert and these exotic civilisations. It can be compared to the way that we feel today about space and science fiction. We are fascinated by the idea of aliens and other worlds - just look at how successful films like Star Wars have been. In Verdi's time, somewhere like ancient Babylon was as bizarre and exotic to them as anything Steven Spielberg could come up with!

In the Bible, Babylon is always shown as being somehow evil and dangerous. After a while Babylon is used in the bible as a word to describe any place which is evil and sinful. When the Romans conquered Jerusalem just before the time of Jesus, the people then talked about Rome as "the new Babylon" because they thought that the Romans, like the Babylonians, were only interested in destroying places, killing people and taking away all their treasure. They thought that Empires like Babylon were only interested in causing destruction and pain in order to make themselves more powerful and rich. For that reason, when people in Verdi's time wanted to show the conflict between good and evil, they would often use Babylon to show the evil side. Babylon was seen, in the nineteenth century, as a kind of "evil empire".
BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS

1) In the ninth year of Zedekiah King of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar [sic] king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

2) And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up...

6) Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

7) Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.

8) And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah XXXIX: 1-8

THE JEWISH TRADITION

According to tradition, the capture of Jerusalem could not have been accomplished if Jeremiah had been present. His deeds were as a firm pillar for the city and his prayers as a stony wall. Therefore God sent the prophet on an errand out of the city... Jeremiah rejoiced; he took this as a sign that God would be gracious to Judah. Scarcely had the prophet left Jerusalem when an angel descended upon the wall of the city and caused a breach to appear crying out, "Let the enemy come and enter the house, for the Master of the house is no longer therein. The enemy has leave to despoil it and destroy it..."

The enemy rushed in and plotted how to reduce the temple to ashes. During their sinister deliberations, they beheld four angels, each with a flaming torch in his hand, descending and setting fire to the four corners of the temple. The high priest, seeing the flames shoot up, cast the keys of the temple heavenwards, saying, "Here are the keys of Thy house; it seems I am an untrustworthy custodian," and as he turned, he was seized by the enemy and slaughtered...

...On his return, Jeremiah saw, at a distance, smoke curling upward from the temple mount and his spirit was joyful. He thought the Jews had repented of their sins, and were bringing incense offerings. Once within the city walls, he knew the truth. Overwhelmed by grief, he cried out, "O Lord... Thou didst send me forth out of thy house so that Thou mightest destroy it."

God himself was deeply moved by the destruction of the Temple, which He had abandoned. Accompanied by the angels, He visited the ruins and gave vent to his sorrow: "Woe is me on account of my house. Where are my children, where my priests, where my beloved nation? But what could I do for you? Did I not warn you? Yet you would not mend your ways."

...God said to Jeremiah, "Go, summon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses from their graves. They know how to mourn."
Jeremiah repaired to the Double Cave and spake to the patriarchs: "Arise, ye are summoned to appear before God." When they asked him for the reason of the summons, he feigned ignorance, for he feared to tell them of the true reason. Moses thereupon went to the angels, and from them he learned that the Temple had been destroyed and Israel banished from his land. Weeping and mourning, Moses joined the patriarchs and together, rending their garments and wringing their hands, they betook themselves to the ruins of the Temple. Here their wailing was augmented by the loud lamentations of the angels, "O Lord of the world! Thou hast scorched Zion and Jerusalem, our thy chosen habitation."

God thereupon said to the angels: "Why do ye array yourselves against me in your complaints?" "Lord of the world" they replied, "on account of Abraham, Thy beloved, who has come into Thy house wailing and weeping, yet Thou gavest no heed unto him." [Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses all then reproach the Lord for deserting Israel.] And turning to [Jeremiah and Moses] continued: "Walk before me, I will lead them back, let us see who will venture to raise a hand against them," and the two, Moses following Jeremiah, reached the rivers of Babylon. When the Jews saw Moses, they said "The son of Abraham has ascended from his grave to redeem us from our enemies." At that moment a heavenly voice was heard to cry out, "It is decreed!" And Moses said, "O my children, I cannot redeem you, the decree is unalterable - may God redeem you speedily," and he departed from them.

And then, with the suddenness of a flash, Rachel, our mother, stood before the Holy One, blessed be he: "Lord of the world," she said "Theo knowest that I, a woman, a creature of flesh and blood, of dust and ashes of flesh was not jealous of my rival, O God, everlasting King, thou eternal and merciful father, why wast Thou jealous of the idols, empty vanities? Why hast Thou driven out my children, slain them with the sword, left them at the mercy of their enemies?" Then the compassion of the supreme God was awakened and He said: "For Thy sake, O Rachel, I will lead the children of Israel back to their land."

[Seeing that the princes of Judah carry no burden, Nebuchadnezzar has the books of the law torn up and loaded on their backs] At the sight of this disgrace, all Israel broke out into loud weeping. The voice of their sorrow pierced the very heavens and God determined to turn the world once more into chaos, for the world was created but for the sake of Israel. The angels hastened...and spake before God "O Lord of the world...is it not enough that Thou hast dismembered Thy earthly house, the Temple? Wilt Thou destroy Thy heavenly house too?" God, restraining them said: "Do ye think I am a creature of flesh and blood and stand in need of consolation? Do I not know the beginning and the end of all things? Go rather and remove the burdens from the princes of Judah."

Jeremiah journeyed with [the people of Israel] until they came to the banks of the Euphrates. Then God spoke to the prophet: "Jeremiah, if thou remainest here, I shall go with them, and if thou goest with them, I shall remain here." Jeremiah replied: "Lord of the world, if I go with them, what doth it avail them? Only if their King, their Creator accompanies them, will it be bestowed upon."

When the captives saw Jeremiah make preparations to return to Palestine, they began to weep and cry: "O father Jeremiah, wilt thou, too, abandon us?"

"I call heaven and earth to witness," said the prophet, "had you wept but once in Zion, ye had not been driven out."

From Louis Ginzberg's Legends of the Jews.
It is said of Nebuchadnezzar that when he heard of the miracles that Ezekiel had performed in raising the dead, he started to praise God, but was silenced by a blow from an angel, for had he continued, his psalms of praise would have excelled those of David.

Nebuchadnezzar According to the Jews

There is actually a profoundly ambivalent attitude to Nebuchadnezzar in the Jewish tradition. Nebuchadnezzar, as an instrument of divine vengeance, is as much a servant of God as one of his prophets. According to Jewish tradition, Nebuchadnezzar was the descendant of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and first came into contact with the Jews in the campaign with Sennacherib.

Later, in the service of the Babylonian king Merodach-Baladan he noticed that a letter had been sent which put the name of God after the name of the king, and personally set out to have it stopped and changed, but was stopped after he had taken three steps by the archangel Gabriel, because those few steps for the glory of God had already earned him great power over Israel, and further steps would have allowed him to destroy it utterly. For eighteen years a voice sounded every day in his palace saying, "Oh thou wicked slave, go and destroy the house of the Lord, for His children hearken not unto Him", yet he did not do it, for he feared that the love that God held for Israel would allow them to repent and lead to his destruction. Only when God showed that he had bound the hands of the archangel Michael, the protector of Israel, did Nebuchadnezzar determine to attack Jerusalem.
THIS PRODUCTION OF NABUCCO

Barrie Kosky didn’t want to do a traditional production of Nabucco because he felt that there was much more to the work than just being about the Hebrews in Babylon. He feels that the music and the way that the piece is put together (and of course the language) have a lot more to do with nineteenth century Europe and its ideas and attitudes than with the real ancient Babylon. In other words, Verdi wasn’t writing an opera about the real Babylon – he was writing an opera that was about what an Italian in 1842 thought Babylon was like, which, as we have seen, is a very different thing. His picture of Babylon was coloured by people’s idea of it as exotic, powerful, weird, evil and somehow frightening and magnificent at the same time. As well as this Verdi was writing for a stage with all the effects and limitations that we have already discussed, and for singers with a different style of acting.

A lot of directors do not like to use these elements, because they prefer to use the setting and the text of the opera as the main influence in their concept of the work, but Barrie Kosky, who is an admirer of the work of Meyerhold and his style, likes to take into account all the influences that affected Verdi, and tries to create a sort of piece which has all the most spectacular elements of the different styles of staging.

Because of this you will find that his production of Nabucco uses one main structure for the set – simply a sloping surface – but that there are a lot of spectacular elements and surprises. Kosky wants you always to know that you are in a theatre, and that you are watching very skilled performers at work. They are not going to try and be very realistic, because it is not a very realistic opera and because performers are often at their best when they are allowed to be direct and emotional. The setting, the costumes and the special effects are all there to allow you to experience the emotions and situations that the characters are in. Sometimes you will find that Kosky has used images that are quite remote from what you might expect, but think about how they affect you, and how they make you feel. You will find that Kosky has tried to create an image of Babylon which is like Verdi’s idea seen through modern eyes – using bizarre and frightening images to create an idea of rich, evil and decadent Babylon.

You will find, too, that he uses some symbolic images to reinforce his pictures. For example, in Verdi’s libretto there is a quote from the bible before every act, from which the name of the act is drawn. The first act, which is called “Jerusalem” has the quote from the prophet Jeremiah: Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I shall deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire.

Kosky has the Jews in the first act carrying placards with these words written on them to symbolise how the Jews are the people who “carry the word of God”. When Nabucco’s henchmen arrive, almost the first thing they do is tear the placards away from the Jews, showing that God has deserted the Jews and that the Babylonians do not care about Him, leaving the Jews stripped of their protection. It is a very violent image which expresses in a very powerful way the position of the Jews and the strength and violence of Nabucco. You might like to think about some of the other visual symbols or expressions that he uses when you see the performance. How do they affect you? What do you associate them with? How do they make you feel about the characters associated with them?
REFERENCES

Other works by Verdi

_Nabucco_ was Verdi’s first famous work. After that he wrote most of the operas which are the standard repertoire of Italian opera. Some of the most famous are: _La Traviata, Il Trovatore, Rigoletto, Aida_ and _Un Ballo in Maschera_. His two last operas, _Otello_ and _Falstaff_ are regarded as some of the finest ever written, and some of his lesser known works such as _Simon Boccanegra, Don Carlos, Luise Miller_ and _Ernani_ are also extremely good and worth exploring. For those who want something which is not an opera, there is his superb _Requiem, the very beautiful String Quartet_ and a number of songs.

Books

There are several excellent biographies of Verdi, including:

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Mary Jane Phillips-Matz  
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**Opera in general/different aspects of opera production**

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Other Organisations for exploring themes of *Nabucco*:

Arab-Australian Friendship Association
Department of Semitic Studies,
University of Sydney
Chapter 5

Poetic Text and the Interactive Classroom

Preface

Hughes, J., & Arnold, R. (1998). An Evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney, educator resources, published by the University of Sydney, Education Outreach Program, External Relations Division. This publication presents research undertaken to support teacher professional development in literary and performing arts education.

Hughes, J. (2000). Drama as a learning medium: researching poetry teaching. The Primary Educator, 6(3) pp 19-24. This publication presents research on a drama as a learning medium approach to aid students’ comprehension of poetic text.
5.1 An Evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney, Educator Resources


5.1.1 Research Purpose

This monograph accompanies the CD, *An evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney*, ABC Audio, see Appendix G. The monograph is a support document for teachers and presents research undertaken to enhance teacher professional development in literary and performing arts education. There is strong integration of drama and poetry just as the CD itself is an integrated literary and dramatic experience.

5.1.2 Research Methodology

I was invited by the ABC to write the CD booklet for the CD, *An evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney*, in which John Bell
reads classic poems, excerpts from dramatic speeches, Shakespeare, songs, music theatre pieces and theatrical stories.

At the launch of the CD, at the University of Sydney, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney was informed, by curriculum officers of the NSW Department of Education and Training, of a problem. The officers stated that while the CD and its booklet were very welcome additions to the artistic and cultural life of Australia, teacher support materials would enhance the CD's usefulness in schools and universities.

I was subsequently invited by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to undertake this education project.

The action research cycle (Cohen & Manion, 1994) was followed in the development of this publication. Research was undertaken on John Bell and his selection of texts. I interviewed Bell and researched material written about him. I conducted a literature search on all the works he performed. This proved quite difficult, in two cases Bell could not remember where the works had come from and others of the works that he performed were quite obscure. The literature search also provided contexts for each of the works. Hughes and
Arnold then developed interactive learning approaches to accompany and explore the poetic and dramatic pieces read by John Bell.

In order to analyse the data I established and conducted a focus group of eleven high school teachers and two academics. This group scrutinised the literature review and the interactive teaching approaches developed by Hughes and Arnold. The activities were revised then trialed by these teachers and academics with senior high school students and undergraduate students studying English literature. The focus group participants then provided written evaluations on the materials developed. In the light of the focus group’s findings the interactive activities were refined and the section on psychodynamic pedagogy and poetry was elaborated. The monograph was then published.

5.1.3 Co-authorship

The monograph was conceptualised and edited by Hughes. Hughes wrote Section 1: Introduction to John Bell. Section 2: General principles for teaching about literary texts: demystifying poetry teaching was collaboratively authored. Section 3: John Bell, background information and activities was written by Hughes. Section
4: *Follow up activities* was collaboratively written, however, as it primarily consists of class-based activities it is not presented as part of the thesis, see appendix H.

5.1.4 Recognition of the Research

The book has been very successful and over 2,000 copies are now in circulation in Australian universities and schools, which fits my concerns for research informing good practice in pedagogy through teacher professional development.
5.1.5 The Publication


An Evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney, educator resources.

Published by the University of Sydney, Education Outreach Program, External Relations Division, pp 1-31.
An evening with

John Bell

at The University of Sydney

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

JOHN HUGHES AND ROSLYN ARNOLD

Developed as part of The University of Sydney Education Outreach Program: External Relations Division

The University of Sydney
An Evening with John Bell at The University of Sydney

Educator Resources

John Hughes and Roslyn Arnold

Developed as part of The University of Sydney Education Outreach Program, External Relations Division, The University of Sydney.

With thanks to:
John Bell
Di Johnston
Jonathon Lane
Mandie Kershaw
David Smith
Shakespeare Globe Centre
An Evening with John Bell

The Oral Tradition

In Maclaurin Hall, at the University of Sydney, on the evening of 5 April, 1997 John Bell enthralled his audience with a selection of literary excerpts ranging from Shakespeare to Irish pub songs.

The compact disc developed by the ABC, in conjunction with The University of Sydney commemorates an evening of storytelling, designed to raise funds for student scholarships, and records an instance as old as language itself: the communication of oral culture.

The evening was a great success and John Bell gave his consent to the University and the ABC releasing the recording with all his royalties to be directed to funding scholarships at the University of Sydney. As Maria Prater wrote in The Bulletin it was "a great night for a good cause".

The success of the evening and the CD prompted us to develop this teaching and learning resources book for use in secondary schools. The book contains four sections:

Section 1: Introduction to John Bell and The University of Sydney;

Section 2: General principles for teaching and learning about literary texts;

Section 3: Background information on the authors and the literary excerpt presented together with practical classroom activities for each presentation;

Section 4: Follow up activities for students.

The distinguished Australian poet, Judith Wright, once noted that poetry should not be taught, it should be experienced. The CD, plus these notes, should enable teachers to encourage students to engage with the spoken literary texts in a positive way.
Section 1

Introduction to John Bell and The University of Sydney

John Bell and the Bell Shakespeare Company

John Bell is one of Australia’s most acclaimed theatre personalities and a graduate of The University of Sydney. In a career which has spanned both acting and directing John has been instrumental in shaping the Australian theatre scene as we know it today.

John’s list of credits includes work for all the major state theatre companies as actor and/or director and five years with the Royal Shakespeare Company in England. As co-founder of the Nimrod Theatre Company in Sydney, John presented many of Australia’s premier and landmark productions of Australian plays in the 70’s and 80’s such as David Williamson’s Travelling North, The Club, The Removalists and Peter Kenna’s A Hard God. Nimrod also began the evolution of an Australian Shakespeare style with memorable and successful productions of Measure for Measure, Much Ado About Nothing and Macbeth, among others.

In 1991 John founded The Bell Shakespeare Company as a full time professional Theatre Company specialising in Shakespeare and touring productions all over Australia. The Company’s main aim is to retain Shakespeare’s place as a vital and living part of Australian culture as we enter the twenty-first century.

Between 1991 and 1997 the Company has toured extensively with ten major productions. It also has an interactive education program, Actors at Work, which spends most of each year working in secondary schools all over the country. The Company is engaged in recording and retailing all its productions through the ABC and with Science Press, publishing a new series of Shakespeare’s plays. In its first five years the Company received comparatively little government support and has survived thanks to corporate sponsorship, private donations and a rapidly growing audience.

John Bell’s achievements in theatre have been acknowledged by both the University of Newcastle (1994) and The University of Sydney (1996) each of which has awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Letters. He has also been honoured with an OBE and AM.

The University of Sydney

The University of Sydney, Australia’s first university, was established in 1850. Today, it is one of the largest Australian centres of life-long learning with a tradition of innovation and excellence. The University is well known for its distinguished architecture, including the Great Hall and Main Block of the Quadrangle, designed by Edmund Blacket. MacLaurin Hall, located in the Quadrangle, was designed originally as the University’s library and has one of the finest carved wooden ceilings in the country.

The Main Quadrangle is the heart of the University and is recognised as an icon of the concept of higher learning. When most people in Australia think of the word “university”, it is the Quad they envisage.
Section 2

General principles for teaching and learning about literary texts.

Demystifying Poetry Teaching

Inspirational teaching of poetry is an art in itself. Just as it is difficult to understand completely the creative process involved in the writing of poetry, so too it is difficult to analyse completely how some inspirational teachers successfully engage their students with poetry. We do know that in the field of English teaching, poetry teaching is still a baffling and elusive art for some. This is partly so because an understanding and appreciation of good poetry involves very high level metaphorical thinking, as does an understanding of high level mathematics.

The mental processing involved in such understandings is often idiosyncratic, intuitive and pre-verbal. Another reason why poetry can present difficulties for students and teachers is because the traditional method of analysis and logical reasoning is limited in its capacity to reveal the intricacies of poetry, yet it is the prevailing methodology in upper secondary and tertiary classes. Few poets write to provide material for classroom analysis, but many poets write to understand and ‘paint’ a verbal picture for themselves, as well as to share that ‘picture’ with others. They use the fullest resources of language to achieve their effects; tone, mood, evocative words, silences, sounds, rhythms, metaphors and modulations of feelings.

What we outline here is an approach to poetry which is based on reactivating the multi-dimensional ways in which we all come to understand language and to communicate effectively as youngsters and throughout life. Some of the most important learning we ever did, such as learning to speak, to relate to others, to play, to joke, to ride a bike, to dance or to love music, we learnt through the example and encouragement of others, through practice and often, through sheer determination and belief in ourselves. Analysis alone would never have done the trick for us.

One of the best kept secrets around is that the mastery of high level human achievement involves at the very least, the activation of a particular dynamic which we call here, ‘a psychodynamic’. It means the most effective learning occurs when the learner can engage both thoughts and feelings in the service of learning or performance mastery. Needless to say, such learning will involve quite complex attitudes and skills which may need to be developed, practised and internalised so that eventually they become somewhat automatic. So it is with poetry understanding and appreciation. Hence the importance of a skilled mentor, coach, teacher or performer, such as John Bell on this CD. Here a skilled, deeply poetic performer is able to guide us with his voice and his artistry to levels of understanding way beyond analysis. It may be that some listeners have never really enjoyed poetry because of less than inspiring experiences with it previously. Maybe these readings will open up the possibility of a change in attitude. Maybe your feelings will be stirred and you’ll reflect, even fleetingly, on something the poet has said.

The notes we provide here aim to guide teachers and students through some activities designed to tap some of that vast repertoire of learning abilities which we all possess. A repertoire which serves us best when it involves an engagement between both our felt and our thought responses; a heartfelt and mindful approach to poetry, the most beautiful star in the constellations of the English language.

Language enables us to receive the knowledge of a culture and a society, and it invites us to shape that knowledge in paradoxical ways. Paradoxical because there is a fine balance to be maintained between retaining connectedness with the society while still exploring the boundaries and potential of the connecting points. The metaphors of poetry can test the limits, but if successful, they can also extend those limits - just as can innovative scientific theories. One might even argue that the struggle to recognise and to experiment with societies’ limitations and potentials through the experience of early language learning has a powerfully unconscious influence upon the individual’s self-identity. As an individual develops a conscious awareness of how language functions and can be structured, a feeling of
empowerment, of appropriate self-importance and of connectedness with society and with others can be experienced. No matter how successful one is in other life endeavours, an inability to master language and to engage in effective spoken and written discourse can be humiliating and self-defeating. The struggle and the challenge to make sense of the world and of our individual place in its collective enterprises is one both fraught with defeats and rich with rewards. Indeed it is a paradoxical human dilemma dependent for its resolution on the willingness of parents, teachers and significant others to encourage language learners to engage in a variety of discourse experiences in order to create a sense of oneself as significant within the relatively undifferentiated collectiveness of society. The John Bell CD is one such way of exploring these complexities in classrooms.

A Dynamic Approach to Literature Teaching

A psychodynamic theory of pedagogy underpins a dynamic approach to literacy development. The aspect of literacy development of interest here is poetry reading and appreciation. We argue that a dynamic classroom is active, expressive, student-centred, creative and imaginative, and may involve students in a range of other symbolic activities like drawing, movement, drama, model-making and play activities, alone and with others. Activities which support such an approach will be outlined in general below and in detail in section three. Ideally, such an approach will not necessarily become less creative and more formal as students move up the secondary school, but will continue to encourage the development of both creative and analytic abilities. In a dynamic and interactive learning classroom the teacher will encourage exploration and self-expression through reading, writing, speaking and listening in the belief that students have the ability and the need to make sense of their world through experiences in a range of discourses.

It is generally not acknowledged that the interactive classroom can provide the teacher, as well as the students, with opportunities for imaginative explorations of texts and human interactions, together with opportunities for self-reflection and cognitive development. The teacher's responsibility is to structure developmental literacy activities which increase the students' language awareness and language use, to provide an adult, responsible, constructive audience for their language work, along with the audiences provided by their peers, and to clarify with them the kinds of thinking, language and creative abilities they may have demonstrated in their work. The teacher needs to be engaged with students sometimes and appropriately disengaged other times, in order to analyse sensitively what is happening in the classroom and what needs restructuring. Such a balanced, demanding role for the teacher requires, at the very least, insight, well-developed personal language skills, empathy, flexibility and a capacity to engage students in analysing classroom interactions.

One of the many advantages of an interactive classroom, however, is that the teacher can involve students in perceiving, analysing, reflecting and commenting upon what they hear, see, feel and think as they engage in classroom activities. The classroom can become a workshop for real life and a safe environment for experimentation and risk-taking. This suggests, of course, that the classroom relationships are healthy, positive and self-affirming. If they are not, then the teacher will need to work on understanding the dynamics of that class and try to establish a good working environment of trust and self-respect.

For all the overwhelming demands placed on teachers there is one distinct advantage enjoyed by English teachers: the content of lessons can be the thoughts, feelings, ambivalences, fears, hopes and even regressions of the students themselves. When we add literature to the already present human content of our lessons, we have the potential for highly dynamic and creative language, literature and life work. It goes almost without saying that teachers who do not thoroughly enjoy intense relationships with others, that is, relationships which involve a degree of self-disclosure, a large measure of trust and a certain amount of risk-taking, as in an interactive language classroom, and teachers who do not enjoy working out how the world, themselves and other people tick, are probably not going to be very effective literacy development teachers.

A large measure of insatiable curiosity, good humour and self-reflection, and the ability to endure delayed gratification (language development is a very slow process) are important qualities for interactive literacy teachers. Qualities similar to those needed for good parenting which is so important in early language development. The comparison is important because yet another quality teachers and parents need in order to be effective is the capacity for authentic relationships; relationships in which individuals can be appropriately expressive and exploratory. The ability to
sub-text discourse, or to read between the lines helps us to recognise authentic language. Even the most complex ideas like the speculations of ground-breaking theories or the metaphoric elaborations of poetry can be voiced in authentic ways.

Authentic teaching and learning requires us to apply our own intuitions and world knowledge to the interpretative task, something even small children are skilled at doing. Interactive literacy work is no soft option. Post kindergarten literacy development is notoriously slow to demonstrate consistent, deep improvement.

Humans constantly monitor their self-perceptions as successful or unsuccessful achievers of certain tasks. We all carry images of ourselves as good or bad performers of a wide range of skills. Clearly, the skilled performance of some tasks is highly rewarded, materially and in other ways. Unfortunately, writing is most highly esteemed as a means to an end - a high grade in examinations for school success and possibly tertiary education entrance. Writing is too rarely esteemed for the intrinsically rewarding benefits it can confer on those who experience its self-developing and self-affirming potential. For too long writing abilities of a narrow, transactional kind have been regarded as possible evidence of schools’ and teachers’ success or failure in preparing students for life after school. The over-heavy reliance on teacher dictated notes which still dominates many senior school classrooms can only be explained by a lack of faith in students’ abilities to make sense of information and of their learning experiences through their own reflections and their engagements with reading, writing and related discourse experiences. Hence the focus here is on poetry as part of a developmental program.

We experience a sense of ourselves through our reciprocal engagements with others, and through various forms of self-expression like dance, music, art and writing. We would argue that what is unique to poetry writing is its capacity to symbolise and to communicate extremely well-differentiated forms of thought and feeling. By this we mean we can structure language in ways which sensitively and accurately reflect the thought and feeling we wish to express. The words we choose, the genre, the style, the format, the tone of voice and so on, orchestrate that symbolisation. Poetry is a very highly developed, creative form of symbolisation.

Principles of Psychodynamic Teaching of Poetry

* The best experiences of reading poetry will involve a dynamic between thinking and feeling

* A multi sensory approach to understanding poetry can activate both thinking and feeling by engaging readers through music, movement, visualisation, imagination, creative problem solving and shared oral and written activities

* Effective teachers and readers of poetry can respond empathically to the language of the poetry and ‘hear/read between the lines’.

* The aesthetic dimensions of poetry require readers’ sensitivity to language which is used in both complex and evocative ways.

* It is important for students of poetry to develop over time a sense of pleasure in reading poetry and a positive sense of themselves as sensitive poetry readers.

* Poetry readers who also write poetry themselves will learn in a special way, how to recognise and appreciate the craft of poetry writing.
Section 3

Background Information and Activities

This section contains background information on the authors and the literary excerpt presented together with practical classroom activities for each presentation.

Helpful teaching and learning experiences are provided on the following authors and works:

1. Christopher Logue, Lord Nestor stood and said.
2. William Shakespeare, Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back. Troilus and Cressida.
3. Bruce Dawe, Life-cycle.
5. E. E. Cummings, anyone lived in a pretty how town.
8. Theatrical Anecdotes.
10. Tom Stoppard, The Real Thing.
11. James Fenton, God.
13. The Night I Appeared as Macbeth.
1. Christopher Logue,  
   *Lord Nestor stood and said* from *Kings*

Christopher Logue was born in 1926 of Anglo-Irish descent. He began his career as a writer with London's *Private Eye* journal and has since become one of London's leading contemporary poets. He has written volumes of serious poetry over the last four decades, as well as comic verse, children's verse and plays.

He has also published modern versions of eight of Homer's "books" from *The Iliad* in irregular instalments over the last 35 years. In introducing his "translations" Logue noted that *The Iliad* is "a poem whose composition is reckoned to have preceded the beginning of our own written language by 15 centuries." The poem has "survived the collapse of two cultures... something an English speaker is yet to experience."

*The Iliad* is one of the great epic poems of antiquity and is attributed to Homer whose birth has been placed at various times from 1050 B.C. to 880 B.C. The epic describes the war waged by the Greeks on the city of Troy. The legend tells that Paris, the son of Priam, king of Troy, had abducted Helen, wife of the Greek king, Menelaus. The Greek forces under the command of Agamemnon invade Troy. Archilles is the "hero" of the tale. Eventually he fights and kills the Trojan hero, Nestor. In turn he is killed by an arrow from Paris which stabs Achilles in the heel - his only unprotected area - hence the expression Achilles' Heel.

The extract read by John Bell describes the Greek army's attack on the walled city of Troy. Nestor is the Greeks' senior tactician and adviser, Agamemnon the Greek king and general. Hera is the wife and sister of Zeus, the king of the gods. She was anti Troy in the war according to Homer. Athena was the Greek goddess of war who sometimes turned herself into a bird. The passage invokes a whole people: their land, gods, reverence for the sky, weaponry, artefacts, fleet of ships and frozen chickens in the boats' hulls. The chicken reference is typical of the way Logue's detailed, energetic evocation of an ancient time occasionally shocks the reader with contemporary associations. The past becomes present while remaining the past; a confusion of time that is both humorous and profound.

Activities

The full text read by John Bell can be found in Christopher Logue 1991 *Kings*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York.

Predictive Sets

Before listening to this excerpt it would be wise to acquaint the students with a brief history of the Trojan Wars including the principal characters and gods.

Greek Warfare

Christopher Logue gives a rich description of Greek armory and other implements of war. Students would benefit from seeing pictures of such equipment and these can be found in the following books:


This could be a useful research project for students to present in class before listening to John Bell's reading of the extract.
Readers' Theatre

This section from Christopher Logue's *King* is ideally suited for Readers' Theatre. Below are guidelines for implementing Readers' Theatre in class.

What is Readers' Theatre?
(Barbara Poston Anderson)

Readers' Theatre has been called the 'theatre of the mind' because it encourages the listener to interact imaginatively with the material being presented aloud. In other words, while readers share a poem, story or portion of a novel or play with a group, the individual listener must employ 'double vision' to view not only the readers themselves, but beyond them to the inner world of the literature. The symbolic interpretation of the narratives, character and actions by the readers aids in this effort. For example, a reader wearing a shawl may suggest an historical setting; a person's change of position may indicate a new character; while a reader's quick ascent of a ladder may signify the rising of a hot air balloon. Symbolic cues such as these help to trigger listeners' imaginations enabling them to fill in the details.

What are its characteristics?

Individuals read directly from scripts which are usually uniform in size and design. Occasionally a reader's script may vary to suggest character. For example, if a reader takes the part of a Greek soldier throughout the presentation, he or she may carry a script with a brown cover, shaped as a shield or if he or she plays the part of a giant the script may be larger than the rest. Material which is presented may be of any type (e.g. poetry, short story, novel). Types may also be combined to create a program which focuses on a theme (e.g. Life In Ancient Times).

Readers may suggest different characters through changes in vocal register or physical stance. Since characterisation is not intended to be complete readers are able to change parts easily. During the presentation readers do not look directly at each other even when characters exchange comments. Instead they each focus on a fixed point in the audience to suggest this interaction.

```
Reader B
  /
 X  
/ 
Reader A
  /
Y
/ 
Reader C
  /
   0
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For example if Reader A talks to Reader B, the focus crosses at point X in the audience. However, if Reader A talks to Reader C instead, she/he shifts the focus to point Y. When a reader is not speaking to anyone in particular, she/he establishes eye contact with various members of the audience.

Action within the script is only symbolically represented. A journey may be suggested by having readers 'walk in a place,' while a death may be symbolised by readers sitting down and lowering their heads.

Settings are simple often consisting of just a stool for each reader. Sometimes, portable stairs, ladders or tables are added. Make-up, costumes and properties are kept to a minimum and are usually used only to reinforce characterisation. Lighting, music, sound and other media effects, such as slides projected on a backdrop, are sometimes employed to create the desired mood.

In using *Lord Nestor stood and said* we suggest that groups of students be given different sections of the text to proclaim and the whole class chorus the words "King! King!"

This passage would be an excellent and simple activity to perform at a school assembly.
2. William Shakespeare,

*Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back*

from *Troilus and Cressida*, Act 3, Scene 3

As John Bell says, Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* is another retelling of Homer’s *The Iliad*. Again we are with the ancients as the Greeks invade Troy. But where Logue plays with the epic quality of the story, Shakespeare imagines the shuffling of pride and loyalty, ambition and love between some of the individuals involved.

We join the Greeks seven years into their siege of Troy. Achilles has repeatedly proven himself the best Greek fighter, however he has become arrogant and aloof. Ulysses organises a public humiliation of Achilles: everyone who’s anyone walks straight past him, turning Achilles’ own aloofness against himself.

We in the audience know all this. Achilles does not. We have a sense of partnership with Ulysses as he further humiliates Achilles by turning his arrogance back into ambition in service of the Greeks’ cause.

And that’s all just the subplot. The speech of Ulysses read here by John Bell derives a special poignancy from the very different drama of loyalty and faithfulness being played out in the Trojan camp. Troilus and Cressida are lovers, in the first flush of love. No sooner have they vowed their eternal faithfulness than Cressida is given over to the enemy Greeks in exchange for the release of a Trojan prisoner of war.

Ulysses’ appeal to self-reliance is sound advice within such a whirlwind of inconstancy and betrayal. It is interesting to remember, then, that the appeal is itself a Machiavellian act of manipulation.

**Ulysses to Achilles**

*Time hath, my lord,*

*A wallet at his back, wherein he puts*

*Alms for oblivion, a great-sized monster*

*Of ingratiatudes. Those scraps are good deeds past,*

*Which are devoured as fast as they are made,*

*Forgot as soon as done. Perseverance, dear my lord,*

*Keepe honour bright. To have done is to hang*

*Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail*

*In monumental mock’ry. Take the instant way,*

*For honour travels in a strait so narrow,*

*Where one but goes abreast. Keep then the path,*

*For emulation hath a thousand sons*

*That one by one pursue: if you give way,*

*Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,*

*Like to an entered tide they all rush by,*

*And leave you hindmost;*

*Or, like a gallant horse fall’n in first rank,*

*Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,*

*O’errun and trampled on. Then what they do in present,*

*Though less than yours in past, must o’ertop yours.*

*For Time is like a fashionable host,*

*That slightly shakes his parting guest by th’ hand*

*And, with his arms outstretched as he would fly,*

*Grasps in the corner. Welcome ever smiles,*

*And Farewell goes out sighing. O let not virtue seek*

*Remuneration for the thing it was;*

*For beauty, wit,*

*High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,*

*Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all*
Activities

This is quite an advanced speech from the bard. Ulysses' aim is to encourage Achilles to return to the fight against Troy.

Alter ego

Students will benefit from an in depth study of this speech by the alter ego method.

Method: Students work in pairs. Student A reads a small section of the speech and Student B "translates it" into contemporary, idiomatic language. For example:

Student A:

Time hath my lord, a wallet at his back
Wherein he puts aims for oblivion.
A great sized monster of ingratiations:
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devour'd
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done: perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright: to have done, is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery.

Student B:

Listen here, Achilles! It doesn't matter what great things you have done, with the passing of time no-one will remember your deeds. They just get forgotten.

And so it continues through the whole speech.

Colour the mood

In this speech Ulysses is very crafty. He flatters Achilles and then warns him of his lost reputation. Colour the flattery section in yellow and warning section in red. Notice how clever, and devious, Achilles is.

Move the speech

Have one student stand in the centre of a circle. This student is Achilles. The rest of the students walk around Achilles and decide when to move - to flatter or warn him - and when to move out to distance themselves from him.
3. Bruce Dawe,

*Life-cycle.*

Bruce Dawe, born in Geelong, Victoria, in 1930, has won many of the major poetry awards in Australia, including the Patrick White Award (1980) and the Christopher Brennan Award (1983). He is particularly noteworthy for the use of dramatic monologue, in free, blank and rhymed verse forms. He captures current, everyday idioms and brings them alive with contemporary vigour. As with other selections in this CD the themes of modern civilisation, loneliness, the individual and love dominate Bruce Dawe's work.

The poem *Life-cycle* was published in 1968 in the volume *An Eye for a Tooth*. It is one of the more ambivalent satires in a book that finds much to expose in Australian cultures. *Life-cycle* shoots at the heart of Australian culture because, as John Bell jokes, it is about religion. The Greeks had their Mount Olympus, home to the Gods and portal to the empyrean; generations in the West have had their heaven and hell, saints and demons; more recent generations of Australian had their Anzac legend of an eternally relevant sacrifice. Is sport now the Australian religion? If it is, this may not be such a bad thing. The excitement is real enough, the way it reaches out to young and old alike is real enough, and "hearts shraptelied with rapture" is certainly best left as a metaphor.

**Activities**

**Discussion**

Debate or essay topic:
That Sport in Australia is religion.
This topic can be set as an essay or as a debate or for small group discussion leading to a classroom plenary.

*Lifcycle* is also suitable for Readers' Theatre. (see section on Christopher Logue's *Kings*)

**Drama activities**

Preparing for role play:

- Divide students into groups of about five or six. Give each group an outline of one of the five different role plays.
- Allow the groups time to prepare for presentation of their role play.
- Run the role plays under the direction of the teacher.
- The role plays are to be presented in numerical order.
- Discuss the ideas and thoughts of the students in relation to the role plays.
- Listen to John Bell’s reading of *Life-cycle*

Outline of the role plays:

1. Characters: A young mother and father, their new born son, visitors - friends or relatives.

Scene: Lounge room of the couple's home. The family is fanatical about football. The general talk throughout the scene is about football. A number of friends or relatives visit the couple to see their new born son. Each visitor upon seeing the baby makes some reference to the baby in connection with football. The parents react with enthusiasm to these comments.
2. Characters: A mother and father, their three year old son, and two children who are aged about eight.

Scene: Lounge room of the couple’s home. The father is playing with his son, wrestling and generally being playful. The mother is half-heartedly reading a book. General talk, which includes talk about football takes place between the couple. The father also says something like the following to his son: “You’re a little Tiger already aren’t you, it won’t be long before you are a fully fledged Richmond supporter.” There is a knock on the door. The two neighbouring children take the son out to teach him how to kick a football.

3. Characters: Boy and his father, football players and spectators.

Scene: Father and son are at a football match. The father is very involved in the game, yelling abuse and encouragement. The son, at first, is fairly quiet, however, he then begins to echo his father. There is a lot of cheering and barracking. The son, when all is suddenly a little quieter, yells out, “Ah, you bludger!” His father gives him a pat on the back and agrees with him. The cheering and noise continues.

4. Characters: A guy and girl in their early twenties, football players and supporters.

Scene: Girl and her boyfriend are at a football match. There is general cheering and barracking. It is a very close game and the guy and girl are getting more and more excited. Finally their team wins by a point. In the excitement the guy asks his girlfriend to marry him. She accepts. As they leave the ground they point out that the wedding and honeymoon will definitely have to be after the grand final because they couldn’t miss that.


Scene: Three quarter time at the football. The elderly couple are discussing the game and the level score. In the background there are some young people who are generally mucking about. The elderly couple go on to discuss the chances of their team winning with the advantage of the wind in the final quarter. The couple compare older players with the up and coming younger ones. The game then recommences and the couple feebly barrack and cheer.
4. A. E. Housman,
   *A Shropshire Lad.*

Alfred Edward Housman, 1859-1936, was an academic and a poet. *A Shropshire Lad* he hoped would "harmonise the sadness of the world". In these poems the Shropshire landscape, with its hills and waterways, such as the river Severn, dominates the poet's thoughts. Like the poetry of E.E. Cummings, the individual's loneliness in the wider world is explored.

On Wenlock Edge xxxi

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

'Twould blow like this through holt and hanger
When Uticon the city stood:
'Tis the old wind in the old anger,
But then it threshed another wood.

Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman
At yonder heaving hill would stare:
The blood that warms an English yeoman,
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,
Through him the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet:
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone;
To-day the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uticon.

From far, from eve and morning xxxii

From far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.

Now - for a breath I tarry
Nor yet disperse apart -
Take my hand quick and tell me,
What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;
How shall I help you, say;
Ere to the wind's twelve quarters
I take my endless way.

Where much poetry is concerned with the abiding life of stories and symbols, A.E. Housman is of that school which has mortality itself as its abiding theme. The world we walk through will outlive us by many generations. How shall we respond to our sense of time before and beyond us? Housman described himself as a pejorist: a pessimist who thinks the world could be worse.
Housman was certainly an excellent maker of poems. His long sequence *A Shropshire Lad*, from which John Bell chose these two poems, has never been out of print since it was first published in 1906. Housman has been said to transform a way of thinking about life into a way of experiencing it. His acute sense of our mortality finds expression in easy, musical verse that quietly evokes the consolatory pleasure of natural beauty, thought and friendship.

Housman’s poetry has influenced Australian writing to some extent, most notably in the case of Patrick White’s first internationally successful novel, *The Tree of Man*, which derived its title from the lines here read.

**Activities**

**Predictive Set**

Before hearing the readings from *A Shropshire Lad* arrange the class into small groups and give them the following extracts from the texts:

```
On Wenlock Edge the wood's ........
..............................
The gale, ............... the saplings double,
.............. thick ............... snow..............
'Twould blow like this ..............
When Uricon the city stood:
..............................
.............................. another wood.

Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman
At yonder heaving hill would stare:
..............................
..............................

There, like the wind..................
Through him the gale of life blew high;
..............................
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale................................
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:
To-day the Roman ....................
Are ashes......................

From far, from eve and morning
..............................
.............................. am I.
.............................. for a breath I tarry

Take my hand quick and tell me,
What have you in your heart.

Speak...........and I ....... answer;
How shall I help you, say;
........... to the wind's...........
I take my endless way.
```
The groups report their predictions to the whole class, then they listen to the reading to assess their interpretation of the extract.

**Extension Work: What it was like before.**

In *A Shropshire Lad*, A.E. Housman reflects on civilizations which inhabited the area of Shropshire in bygone times, e.g., the Romans. Talk to your local Indigenous people and find out about the life-style of those who originally inhabited the land around your school. Create a class poem about your school environment, then and now.
5. E. E. Cummings,

*anyone lived in a pretty how town*

Straight from the heart of the American east coast literary establishment, E. E. Cummings is the most distinctive of modern poets. E. E. Cummings was an internationally renowned painter, journalist and essayist, but it is his for his inventive, childlike poetry that he is most remembered. *anyone lived in a pretty how town* was published in New York in 1940 in a collection of 50 poems. It is exemplary E. E. Cummings in its original internal logic, and the simple romance of its story, about the love and death of anyone and no one. The poem elaborates one of E. E. Cummings’ central themes: his affection for the individual as opposed to the oppression of society at large.


Activities

Discussion Issues

E.E. Cummings poems are distinctive not least because he used no capital letters and little punctuation. Have a class discussion about possible reasons for this. What effects does this create?

Discuss: is "anyone" everyone or no-one?

Discuss the mood of the poem. Do class members find it sad, happy, angry or playful?

Find similar themes in popular music, for example, *Sonny came home* by Shaun Colvin. Many contemporary music lyrics deal with the question of the lack of individualism. Have the students bring their own findings to the class regarding contemporary lyrics.

Compare E.E. Cummings’ *anyone lived in a pretty how town* with the Border Ballad, *The Two Ravens*. What are the similarities and differences in these two texts which are some centuries apart?

*The Two Ravens* (also known as *The Twa Corbies*)

As I was walking all alone,
I heard two ravens making a moan;
The one unto the t’other say,
‘Where shall we go and dine to-day?’

In behind yon old fail dyke,
I think there lies a new-slain knight;
And nobody knows that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound and his lady fair.

‘His hound is to the hunting gone,
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl home,
His lady taken another mate,
So we may make our dinner sweet.’

‘Y’ll sit on his white neck bone,
And I’ll pick out his bonny blue eye:
With a lock o’ his golden hair,
We’ll hatch our nest when it grows bare.

‘Many a one for him makes moan,
But none shall care where has gone:
O’er his white bones, when they are bare,
The wind shall blow for evermair.’
6. William Shakespeare,
   And I forsooth, in love,
   from Love’s Labour’s Lost, Act 3, Scene 1

*Love’s Labour’s Lost* is a complex, sophisticated comedy. It is one of Shakespeare’s earliest plays,
printed in quarto in 1598 and thought to have been produced around 1595. It is full of inflated language
and satirises pretentiousness.

**Plot summary**

The play details the love trials of the King of Navarre and three of his Lords. They have sworn to
eschew women for three years and concentrate on study and philosophy. When the princess of France
and her beautiful ladies in waiting arrive, the King and his men find that they cannot help
themselves - they break their vows. A host of other satirical characters add to the mayhem and when
the princess’s father dies, the ladies impose a year of mourning which turns the tables on the men. The
women will now not take part in the love play.

The play’s lead, Biron, whose speech this is, is a paragon of the youthful spirit that shines in
Shakespeare’s early writing. In the space of a couple of hours (*Love’s Labour’s Lost* is set in real time)
his gives himself passionately to the mutually exclusive pursuits of romance and learning, experience
and obedience. One of the reasons he can do this is that he enjoys each of these ways of living as a
conceit: a fictional construct within which he can play. Jumping between world-views doesn’t lead
Biron to doubt his sanity, or capacity for commitment, it just gives him a new set of conventions to play
with. In other words, Biron is a thoroughly, wonderfully *fictional* character. The mark of
Shakespeare’s genius is that he is also thoroughly believable.

**Biron**

And I, forsooth, in love—I that have been love’s whip,
   A very beadle to a humorous sigh,
   A critic, nay, a night-watch constable,
   A domineering pedant o’er the boy,
   Than whom no mortal so magnificent,
   This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy,
   This Signor Junior, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid,
   Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
   Th’ anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
   Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
   Dread prince of plackets, king of ribcages,
   Sole imperator and great general
   Of trotting paritors—O my little heart!
   And I to be a corporal of his field,
   And wear his colours like a tumbler’s hoop!
   What? I love, I sue, I seek a wife?
   A woman, that is like a German clock,
   Still a-repairing, ever out of frame,
   And never going aright, being a watch,
   But being watched that it may still go right.
   Nay, to be perjured, which is worst of all,
   And among three to love the worst of all—
   A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
   With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes—
   Ay, and, by heaven, one that will do the deed
   Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard.
   And I to sigh for her, to watch for her,
   To pray for her—go to, it is a plague
   That Cupid will impose for my neglect
   Of his almighty dreadful little might.
   Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue, groan:
   Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.
Activities

John Bell’s introduction to the speech is illuminating. We suggest it be played to the students who then follow the reading with the text in front of them.

Discussion questions

Why do you think Biron is so critical of Cupid?
How does Biron describe the woman with whom he has fallen in love?
Do you think, from the tone of the speech, that he is really so miserable about being in love?

Group soliloquy

Divide this soliloquy into units of meaning and give each unit to a member of the class. Below is a possible sequence:

Arrange the members of the class in the order given above. Let each member have a few minutes to try out his or her line(s). Practise a reading of the soliloquy as a group reading: number one, followed by number two, etc. On the second reading students should attempt to give the text some feeling and meaning. On the third reading each reader adds one gesture to go with the section read. After this reading the readers explain the reason for their gesture. Re-run the readings and add the gestures.

Bleeding Heart

Pair work. Student A writes a letter as Biron, to an ‘agony aunt’ column, asking for help because he has fallen in love. Student B gives the response. Share the letters and the responses with the rest of the class.
7. William Shakespeare,
If thou wert the lion,
from Timon of Athens., Act 4 Scene 3

Timon of Athens is set in ancient Greece and concerns the downfall of the generous nobleman, Timon, the lead character switches moods dramatically as his associates fail to support him in his hour of need. In the end Timon dies, cursing all around him and order is restored by Alcibiades.

Timon of Athens is a simple story with an uneasy, dark, comic feel. The thread that runs through the play is Timon’s emotional changes: as a philanthropist he is excessive, as a misanthrope he is logically rigorous to the point of self-destruction. He is one of very few lead characters in Shakespeare with no family, and the only one who seems somehow desperate from start to finish. The play affords no explanation of this desperation; all we learn about Timon is that he was once a great soldier, generally admired.

The play dramatises Timon’s disillusionment when his generosity towards others is forgotten in his own time of need. The first part of the play is mirrored by the second part of the play, but the second time round Timon is aware of the sycophancy of his “friends”.

The speech heard here begins the third part of the play. It marks the point at which Timon’s cynical vision of human society opens out to subsume all life. He is speaking to another misanthrope, Apemantus, who replies that if he were ever going to enjoy a man’s speech, this version of the commonwealth of Athens as a “forest of beasts” would have been it.

Timon to Apemantus

Timon

If thou wert the lion, the fox would beguile thee. If thou wert the lamb, the fox would eat thee. If thou wert the fox, the lion would suspect thee when peradventure thou wert accused by the ass. If thou wert the ass, thy dullness would torment thee, and still thou livedst but as a breakfast to the wolf. If thou wert the wolf, thy greediness would afflict thee, and oft thou shouldst hazard thy life for thy dinner. Wert thou the unicorn, pride and wrath would confound thee, and make thine own self the conquest of thy fury. Wert thou a bear, thou wouldest be killed by the horse. Wert thou a horse, thou wouldest be seized by the leopard. Wert thou a leopard, thou wert German to the lion, and the spots of thy kindred were jewels on thy life; all thy safety were remotion, and thy defence absence. What beast couldst thou be that were not subject to a beast? And what a beast art thou already, that seest not thy loss in transformation!
Activities

Misanthropes

Timon was, according to legend, a great misanthrope. Shakespeare, in fact, creates a much more complex character. However, by the end of the play, from which this speech is taken, Timon hates everyone. It may be difficult for students to understand the concept of a misanthrope and hence it would be useful to draw their attention to the well-known misanthropes on television: Mr Burns from *The Simpsons* and Newman from *Seinfeld*. Compare Timon’s speech to one of Mr Burns’ and transform it into an address by Mr Burns.

Animal flow chart

In small groups have the class construct a flow chart of Timon’s extended metaphor on animals, eg.

beguiles  
- Lion  
- Fox  
- Lamb

Animals in idioms and proverbs

The English language is rich in idioms and proverbs which include animals, just as Timon’s speech draws on animals. As a class activity collect as many examples as possible and have the members of the class provide a “translation”.

eg. Idioms - “Raining cats and dogs” = raining very heavily. “As strong as an ox” = very strong. “Lion-hearted” = courageous. “Bull in a china shop” = extremely clumsy

Proverbs - “Never look a gift-horse in the mouth” = don’t be ungrateful for an offer

“ You can’t teach an old dog new tricks” = some people can’t change their habits or attitudes.

“A leopard never changes its spots” = people’s intrinsic nature doesn’t change.

Activity

Have the students, in small groups, first act out the literal meaning of the idiom or proverb followed by an interpretation of the metaphorical meaning.
8. Theatrical Anecdotes

Theatre folk love to tell stories of disasters on stage. John Bell tells two highly amusing tales from his own experiences.

Activities

The Nature of Comedy

John Bell's theatre stories need little introduction. Play them to your students and then discuss the nature of comedy. Samuel Beckett in the play *Endgame* stated that nothing is funnier than unhappiness. In both examples, told here, we laugh at others' misfortunes. It has been said that tragedy is when I cut my finger and comedy is when you fall off a ladder and break your leg. Is it so? Is nothing funnier than disaster?

Create your own disaster stories.

Set your students the task of telling a disaster story from their own experience or observation eg. a sporting match that went wrong, a school excursion with a problem, running late for class etc. Present these stories in front of the class, just as John Bell presents his stories to his audience.
9. "The Ballad of William Bloat"

John Bell complements the comedy of his theatre stories when he recalls the words of a Dublin pub song which he first heard sung by the Clancy Brothers. Paddy, Bobby and Finbarr Clancy have been one of the most popular forces in Irish entertainment for decades and this ballad, with its lifting style, satirises the Anglo-Irish connection in John Bell’s version. Here is one version of the ballad.

THE BALLAD OF WILLIAM BLOAT

In a mean abode on the Skankill Road
Lived a man named William Bloat;
He had a wife, the curse of his life,
Who continually got his goat.
So one day at dawn, with her nightdress on
He cut her bloody throat.
With a razor gash he settled her hash
Oh never was crime so quick.
But the drip drip drip on the pillowslip
Of her lifeblood made him sick.
And the pool of gore on the bedroom floor
Grew clotted and cold and thick.

And yet he was glad he had done what he had
When she lay there stiff and still.
But a sudden awe of the angry law
Struck his heart with an icy chill.
So to finish the fun so well begun
He resolved himself to kill.

He took the sheet from wife’s soul feet
And twisted it into a rope.
And he hanged himself from the pantry shelf, ‘Twas an easy end, let’s hope.
In the face of death with his latest breath
He solemnly cursed the Pope.

But the strangest turn to the whole concern
Is only just beginning.
He went to hell but his wife got well
And she’s still alive and sinning.
For the razor blade was German made
But the sheet was Belfast linen.

Activities

Ballads are generally passed on by word of mouth and hence there are often many versions. Note that John Bell’s version is slightly different to the one presented here. What might cause these differences? Discuss these differences with the class.

Irish Ballads

The Irish ballad has had an influence on Australian ballads. Compare The Ballad of William Bloat with two famous Australian Ballads/poems, for example, the work of Banjo Paterson or Henry Lawson.
The Clancy Brothers

For more than 30 years, the Clancy Brothers have sung their wide repertoire of Irish music around the world. The brothers made their first record in 1956, and they have since put out more than 50 albums among them since.

Paddy Clancy is the eldest of four boys and five girls in the Clancy family. Born in County Tipperary, Ireland, he emigrated to the United States in the early '50s. He was a founder of the Trio Productions at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York where he produced concerts featuring legendary folk singers of the time. His interest in ethnic folk music led him to become a major figure in the folk revival of the '60s, both as a performer and founder of Tradition Records.

Bobby Clancy has had a varied and career as a solo performer, part of a duet with singer Peg, and member of the Clancy Brothers. He has recorded solo albums and won many vocalist awards at Irish music shows. He plays guitar, banjo, harmonica, and bodhran and his performances often include acting, poetry, reading and singing international folk songs.

Finbarr Clancy was surrounded by music from the day he was born. He started playing the bodram at five. When he was round 12 he could play the five-string banjo. He went on to study concert flute, followed by the whistle, acoustic guitar and bass. It was around this time he joined his father Bobby and sister Aoife performing at various folk clubs and festivals in Ireland.

Ed Dillon is a well-known entertainer and song writer who has performed many years in Irish folk clubs and festivals. He plays the guitar, mandolin and bass.
Chapter 5: Poetic Text and the Interactive Classroom

10. Tom Stoppard,
    *The Real Thing*

*The Real Thing* was first performed in 1982, however Tom Stoppard, born 1937, has been a hero of the London theatre world since his 1967 success with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. He has steadily built his reputation as a sharp writer of dialogue and as a brilliant, experimental formalist. Stoppard expert Jim Hunter supposes that in writing *The Real Thing* Stoppard took on three challenges: to write a serious commercial play, to deal with personal relationships and to answer criticisms of elitism by considering some “broader issues of his times”. Henry, whose speech this is, is a successful and sophisticated playwright. He has had an affair with Annie, his best friend’s wife, and they have married. Annie, after two years, begins to have affairs with other men and to help a virile, young working class playwright called Brodie. The play is intellectually sophisticated while at the same time emotionally demanding. Henry has trouble articulating his love and Annie finds this exasperating. In the end, they settle for each other - their love is the *real thing*!

As John Bell explains, the speech here read is the voice of Stoppard’s autobiographical character, Henry who is exasperated by his second wife Annie and disgusted by the protest playwright, Brodie, whom she champions. The recital begins during Henry’s justification of his refusal to rewrite Brodie’s play, that is also motivated by jealousy. See Tom Stoppard 1988 *The Real Thing* Faber Publication, London.

John Bell uses the props of a cricket bat and a coffee mug in this spirited reading of Henry’s laudation of good writing.

Activities

Adapting dialogue for solo performance

When we compare the original script of Henry’s dialogue in *The Real Thing* we note that it is an interaction with another character and not a monologue as we hear it on the CD. Actors will often edit script in this way to create a monologue for auditions and sometimes for performance. Consider other play scripts where it may be possible to turn a dialogue into a monologue.

Wall Poem

Tom Stoppard and his character, Henry, champion a love of language and of English words. As Henry says:

*I don’t think writers are sacred, but words are. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you can nudge the world a little or make a poem* ....

The Wall Poem is an activity which will help your students explore and enjoy the beauty of words.

This activity develops and extends the students’ skills in writing. It focuses the students’ attention on the quality of individual words and on the variety of ways in which words can be combined. The activity involves the students in language creativity and the discussion part of the lesson can be used to extend speaking and listening skills.

Preparation

You will need to collect at least two magazines for each student.
Each student will need a large piece of cardboard.
Each student will need a pair of scissors and glue.

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Lesson Directions

Give each student at least two magazines, a sheet of cardboard, a pair of scissor and some glue. On the piece of paper each student writes down one word they really like. The students then use pictures cut out of the magazines to create their work in collage. The word should fill up as much of the card as possible. The teacher and the student then write down all the favourite words the class has developed. These words are then the vocabulary for the class poem. Write all these words on the board. The class then juggles the words into a poem called "Our Favourite Words".

Note: You may need to add some joining-on words into to allow the poem to flow.

Put the collage words up on a wall to become a wall poem. Discuss the relationship between the words, the collage representations and the whole poem.

Variations

Build an entire school poem.
Put the poem in the playground.
Develop wall poems on other themes, for example: Words I hate, Words of Winter, Words of Summer.
11. James Fenton,  
_God_

God is droll, not dead, and living on a cheerful self-denial according to this piece of whimsy by James Fenton. Fenton is Professor of Poetry at Oxford University and is considered a leading English expert in Indo-China affairs having published two books about his time there as a freelance foreign correspondent. He is also, as John Bell notes, one of Britain's best contemporary poets.

This poem, while witty and erudite, has a darkness which perhaps reflects the horrific experience Fenton witnessed during his period in Vietnam and Cambodia, and his writing on the Holocaust.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion question

Is James Fenton's _God_ a sacrilegious work or is it, as some have suggested, a comment on the despair of twentieth century existence?

Comparison

Listen closely to John Bell's reading of _God_ and compare Fenton's references to God with the following poem. Comment on the similarities and differences.

_God's Grandeur_

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs -  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manley Hopkins
12. Les Murray,  
*The C19-20*

Les Murray was born in Nabiac, New South Wales, in 1938 and was educated at the University of Sydney where he was literary editor of the student newspaper *Honi Soit*, 1957-60. He is rightly regarded as one of Australia’s most distinguished, if controversial, poets.

At the time of the publication of *The People’s Otherworld* (1983) from which *C19-20* is taken Jeff Nuttall wrote in the English broadsheet *The Guardian* that the really disturbing thing about contact with the Australian scene is “discovering the gigantic talent of Les Murray... That a poet of his scope, generosity, vision and stature can be so little known elsewhere is a humbling thought.” Since then Murray has gained substantial international recognition. *C19-20* is the fourth poem in a five poem sequence called *The Sydney Highrise Variations*. These poems comprise a meditation during a delay on Sydney’s Gladesville Bridge which is indeed under the flight path. The poem is a wry tribute to an aircraft overhead.

**THE C19-20**

The Nineteenth Century. The Twentieth Century.
There were never any others. No centuries before these.
Dante was not hailed in his time as an Authentic
Fourteenth Century voice. Nor did Cromwell thunder After all,
in the bowels of Christ, this is the Seventeenth Century.

The two are one aircraft in the end. the C19 - 20
capacious with cargo, some of it can save your life,
some can prevent it.
The cantilevered behemoth
is fitted up with hospitals and electric Catling guns
to deal with recalcitrant and archaic spirits.

It rose out of the Nineteenth, steam pouring from venturi
and every man turning hay with a wooden fork
in his nation’s airline. And his children dream of living
in a palace of packing crates beside the cargo terminal:
No one will see! Everything will be surprises!

Directly under the flightpath, and tuned to listening,
we hear the cockpit traffic, the black box channel
that can’t be switched off: Darwinians and Lawrentians
are wrestling for the controls.
We must take her into Space! We must fly in potent circles!

Further poems by Les Murray can be found in *Collected Poems: Les Murray*, published by Reid Books.
Activities

Substitution

Les Murray is renowned for his precise use of language. Just how effective he is at this can be demonstrated by substituting synonyms, or definitions, for words he has used and assessing the effect. For example, the line:

"It rose out of the Nineteenth century, steam pouring from Venturi"

would read, with a substitution,

"It rose out of the Nineteenth century, steam pouring from a tube for measuring or controlling fluid flow"

Note how this lacks the impact of the word Venturi

Try substituting the following words

*capacious with big, having the capacity to
*cantilevered with fixing a projected beam at one end only
*behemoth with a gigantic beast described in the Bible or something of oppressive or monstrous size or power
*Gatling guns with machine guns
*recalcitrant with not susceptible to control
*archaic with very old
*Darwinian with followers of Darwin’s theory of evolution
*Lawrentians with followers of Lawrence

Urban Living

Write your own poems about urban living: the noise, the traffic, the pollution etc. Compose comparison poems on rural life. If your school is near a flight path, sit underneath, as Les Murray did, and write a poem.
13. Victorian Music Hall Song,  
_The Night I Appeared as Macbeth._

This declaimed boast of a Welfit-style Shakespearian actor satirises the skill, adaptability, pomposity and egocentric nature of many who tread the boards. John Bell first heard it in 1968 in a play by Dan Farson called _Marie_ based on the life of Marie Lloyd.

Activities

Comparisons

Compare this boast with other well-known braggarts, for example, _I am the greatest_, Mohammed Ali, or Bottom, who also thinks he is a great actor, from _A Midsummer's Night Dream_.

Act I, Scene 2

Quince: You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.
Bottom: What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?
Quince: A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.
Bottom: That will ask some tears in the true performing
of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will
move stones. I will condole, in some measure. To the
rest.—Yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play
'er'cles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.
The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates,
And Phibus' car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.
This was lofty. Now name the rest of the players.—
This is 'er'cles' vein, a tyrant's vein. A lover is more
condoling.

Boast about yourself

Write a piece which praises yourself. For example:
The day I starred at the netball tournament
My part in saving the school
How I saved my family
My greatest triumph.

Read your boast to the rest of the class.
14. William Shakespeare,
   *Good morrow, masters*,
   from *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act V, Scene 3

John Bell farewells us all with the gentle words of Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, in the penultimate scene from *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Don Pedro

   Good morrow, masters; put your torches out:
   The wolves have prey'd; and look, the gentle day,
   Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
   Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.
   Thanks to you to all, and leave us: fare you well.

This play is one of Shakespeare's best loved comedies and has enjoyed recent success with the film version starring Kenneth Branagh, Emma Thompson, Keanu Reeves, Denzel Washington, Michael Kenton and many other well-known actors. This version is now available on video. Suggest to your students that they borrow the video - which is much fun - and watch it at home.

The play centres on the love trials of Beatrice and Benedick, and Hero and Claudio. Everything goes wrong for the lovers, in a comic way, although the evil character, Don John, could produce tragedy through his scheming. However, all turns out well in the end.

**Activity**

Form the class into small groups. Each group is to write one farewell in the style of Don Pedro as read by John Bell. The farewells are for the following occasions:

- The end of a:
- Wedding
- Football match
- Holiday with a group of friends
- School year
- Swimming carnival
- Hockey match
- Birthday party
- School formal
- School assembly
5.2 Drama as a Learning Medium:

Researching Poetry Teaching


5.2.1 Research Purpose

This article looks at the use of a drama as a learning medium approach, known as enactment of the expert (Hughes, 1992b), to help primary school students in years five and six comprehend a difficult poetic text.

The article was first developed as a paper for the University of Western Sydney, Education Research Students’ Annual Conference conducted by the School of Learning, Development and Early Education, the School of Lifelong Learning and Educational Change and the School of Teaching and Educational Studies, 20-22 July, 2000, Katoomba.
5.2.2 Research Methodology

I conducted this research with a class of twenty seven students in years five and six at an inner city primary school. The validity of the enactment approach was tested by giving the same reading task to parallel groups of students: one group was simply given the reading task, the second group was given the reading task after some extracts from the text had been used as a predictive set (Hughes, 1992b), and the third group was given the reading task after the same predictive set had been undertaken in the role of expert. An analysis of the students' written responses was undertaken together with an analysis of a video tape recording and transcription of the project. The cooperating teacher's written reflections, and my own reflections, formed part of the action research cycle.
5.2.3 Recognition of the Research

Following the UWS Conference, the paper was invited for publication by the editor of *The Primary Educator*, the National Journal of the Centre for Primary Education, Fitzroy, Victoria.

The editor of *The Primary Educator*, Dr Robyn Ewing, in her role as the coordinator of the Creative Arts Theme of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, *Education Research: Towards an Optimistic Future*, then extended an invitation for the research to be presented as *Drama as a learning medium: researching poetry teaching* at the AARE conference and this occurred 4 December 2000, Sydney. The paper appears in the conference publications: [http://www.aare.edu.au](http://www.aare.edu.au)
5.2.4 The Publication

Hughes, J. (2000).

Drama as a learning medium: researching poetry teaching.

The Primary Educator, 6(3).
Drum as a learning medium:

Researching poetry

This article looks at the use of drama as a learning medium approach, known as enactment of the expert, to help primary students in years five and six comprehend a difficult poetry text. An analysis of the students’ written responses was undertaken together with an analysis of a video tape of the project.

This article presents findings which support the claims that drama as a learning medium can enhance the language learning of students (B.J. Wagner 1994). The principles underlying this research were explored in action, and reflected upon in writing by participants. The sessions were video taped and both the students’ written responses and the transcripts of their discussions were analysed.

Enactment is at the core of drama and is a dynamic between thought, feeling and action. Drama as a learning medium, and its related field process drama (O’Neill, C. 1995), is active, expressive, student centered, creative and imaginative, and may involve other symbolic activities like drawing, movement, model-making and play (Arnold, R. 1991; 1994).

Researchers and teachers for some time have been exploring the relationship between drama as a learning medium in primary classrooms and language development (Simons, J. 2000; Cusworth, R. and Simons, J. 1997; Carroll, J. 1988; Parsons, B. Schaffner, M. et al 1984). This article explores the use of a drama technique, enactment of the expert, to enhance students’ comprehension of poetic text.

What is enactment of the expert?

Enactment of the expert is inspired by Heathcote’s concept of mantle of the expert (Heathcote, D. and Bolton, G. 1994): ‘The group become characters endowed with specialist knowledge that is relevant to the situation ... the situation is usually task-oriented ... power and responsibility move from teacher to group: learners feel respected by having expert status’ (Neelands, J. 1990 : 23).

John Hughes
In refining mantle of the expert we have noted that a danger exists in the implication that this process is a 'gift' or 'mantle' which is somehow transferred to a student. Rather the process, if facilitated to empower, enables the students, individually and as a group, to grow into the role of expert via psychodynamic resources that spring from their latent abilities which in interaction with the drama environment spiral to belief (Arnold, R. 1994). I prefer the term “enactment of the expert” since it reflects this personal dynamic. The teacher, by mirroring and scaffolding (Simons, J. 1991 : 25), both in and out of role, sets up contexts which allow the participants to create and sustain their own expertise.

Case Study
This study tested the hypothesis that the use of enactment of the expert as a pre-reading activity would assist students in the comprehension of a complex poetic text. The validity of this assumption was tested by giving the same reading task to parallel groups of students: one group was simply given the reading task, the second group was given the reading task after some extracts from the text had been used as a predictive set, and the third group was given the reading task after the same predictive set had been undertaken in the role of expert.

The twenty seven students were in years five and six at an inner-city Sydney school and the process was implemented by the class teacher and me. We had previously tested this method with students at a performing arts school who were used to role-play and it had proved successful (Hughes, J. 1992). The students, in the current study, had only undertaken limited drama work and we wanted to see how they would react. They were divided into three groups, each with nine students. The composition of each group was carefully considered by the class teacher to reflect a similar distribution of ability in English, and likewise the groups were balanced for boys and girls.

The text chosen was The Twa Corbies from Beattie, W. (ed) 1952 Border Ballads. As you will see it is a very difficult text for young children. It is Scottish and dates from the middle ages, and hence the editor has given translations of the archaic terms.

**THE TWA CORBIES**
As I was walking all alone,
I heard two corbies making a mane;
The tane unto the t'other say,
"Where sall we gang and dine to-day?"

"In behint yan auld fail dyke,
I wot there lies a new-slain knight;
And nee body kens that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound, and lady fair."

"His hound is to the hunting gane, his hawk to fetch the wild-fowl home, His lady's ta'en another mate, So we may make our dinner sweet."

"Ye'll sit on his white house bane, And I'll pike out his bonny blue een: Wi' a lock o' his godden hair, We'll theek our nest when it grows bare."

"Mony a one for him makes mane, But none sae ken where he is gone: O'er his white bones, when they are bare, The wind soll blow for evermaist."

The Method
GROUP A. These nine students were given a copy of the poem and listened to a reading of it. The students were then asked to write down what they thought the text was about using the peer writing technique. That is, the
student writes to an imaginary friend who is absent from the session and explains what the text is about. (Arnold, R. 1991: 12).

GROUP B. This group of students was given a predictive set before listening to and reading the text. They were given the following extracts from the poem and asked to predict the full story.

_The Twa Corbies_

... As I was walking
... two corbies making a mane
... where sall we gung
... new slain knight
... lady’s ta’en another mate
... pike out his bonny blue een

After offering their predictions to the whole class and the reading of the complete text, students in group B undertook the same written task as group A.

GROUP C. This group was facilitated into the drama activity, enactment of the expert. The students were helped to adopt the role of expert professors of English and their first task was to draw a map of their university, locate the English department and tell the teacher, in the role of a reporter, why their university was the best in the world. (For more information on teacher role see Morgan, N. and Saxton, J. 1987: Chapter 3; and Cusworth, R. and Simons, J. 1997: chapter 4). The ‘professors’ then undertook the same predictive set as group B and the same written task as groups A and B.

Analysis of the Students' Written Responses

Each student's piece of writing was analysed to ascertain how much she/he had comprehended, that is, was the student able to comprehend that there is a human narrator, a crow/raven speaker, an interlocutor (another crow) and certain events, for example, plucking out the eye of the knight? We were generous in our interpretation of the young students' comprehension with all groups. For example, if the student wrote 'There is a dead man' we granted this as a narrative unit and did not insist on the use of the term 'knight'; otherwise group A's results would have been almost nil.

The following tables indicate the narrative units recalled by students in group A, B and C.

<table>
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<th>TABLE 1</th>
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<td><strong>GROUP A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Narrative units</strong></td>
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<td><strong>GROUP B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Narrative units</strong></td>
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<th>TABLE 3</th>
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<td><strong>GROUP C</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Narrative units</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<th>TABLE 4 Total Narrative Units Comprehended by Group</th>
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<td><strong>Group A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Group B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Group C</strong></td>
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</table>
There is now further evidence that enactment can be a powerful learning medium which aids reading comprehension.

I think it's about two crows who want to have food to eat and a knight has been killed and the crows decide to eat him. The knight is all alone and nobody cares about him, his hound has run off and so has his lady. At the end only the wind blows. I thought it was very sad and someone was watching all this happen...

and

A man is walking in the countryside when he hears two ravens talking. A man was killed and nobody knows or cares. One raven says let's eat him and peck out his eyes. They also peck his hair to make their nest... The man has white bones and blue eyes...

For these particular primary students there seems evidence that drama as a learning medium is a strong strategy for aiding reading comprehension of narrative poetic text. It has been noted in earlier studies that drama enhances oracy in students (Carroll, J. 1988; Hughes, J. 1991; Schoenheimer, A. 1991.) and writing (Wagner B.J. 1994.) There is now further evidence that enactment can be a powerful learning medium which aids reading comprehension.

Studies are now under way to explore further the significance of the above. It was noted throughout the process of this study that significant moments were occurring which needed more qualitative description and analysis. For example, it was observed that when the 'professors' where reporting the worth of their university
to the 'TV reporter' (teacher in role), they presented in a higher modality of language than the non-role groups. It was also noted that non-verbal communication was more formal than those who only undertook non-role group work. This observation seems to support Vygotsky's (1988) theory that gesture enhances language. The very process of the drama set-up seemed to have developed an enhanced concept of self in the students. One example from these primary students will illustrate this.

At the stage where the transcript begins the students were sitting in groups and drawing the map of their University and preparing the case for why it is the best university in the world. I (JH) was teaching the group and their teacher was video taping.

164 Student 1 (looking towards JH)
165 Excuse me
166 JH Yes, professors?
167 Student 1 Do we write our reasons for our University
168 being the best on the same piece of paper
169 as we draw our maps?
170 JH Oh that's entirely up to you professors to work out. Humble reporters
171 wouldn't know that sort of thing. I think whatever you decide...
172 I mean, well, you have the status don't you?
173
174 Student 1 (With a dismissive wave)
175 Well be off with you, then.
176
177 Student 2 Be off!
178 Student 3 (Also gives a dismissive wave) Like this.
179 You're lucky... thou shall get my help.
180 (JH moves away)

We see in this extract the students (180-3) using higher order language, 'well be off with you' (line 181), the archaic 'thou' and the formal modal verb 'shall'

(line 186). They use elaborate gestures to a superior, that is the teacher and hence gain status; a status I would suggest which enables them to later confidently engage with the difficult text. On viewing the tape we noticed the shock on the students' faces (at line 184) when they realised that they had told a teacher to go away. In their faces one can see the worry that they may have crossed the line and are going to get into trouble. However when the teacher moves away, an example of mirroring, (line 188), they realise they are in control and proceed to work out the task for themselves.

The children are experiencing an expanded sense of self through enactment of expert, an enactment which need not be triggered by any overt contribution by adults, although the mirroring by the teacher of the child's request to go away acts as a scaffolding device (Simons, J. 1991). As Kathleen Warren has pointed out, children are drawn to power and have a psychological drive for high status and, in the enactment described above, the child explores a primary need: the feeling of hero. (Warren, K. 1992).

The type of classroom interactions described above are of more use in teacher professional development than numbers alone (Taylor, P. 1996). Interesting though the figures above may be, and they do help reassure those of us in drama education that we are doing the right thing, it is more fascinating to explore the dynamic between teacher and students in language classrooms. In a dynamic and interactive learning classroom the teacher will encourage exploration and self-expression through reading, writing, speaking and listening in the belief that students have the ability and

The very process of the drama set-up seemed to have developed an enhanced concept of self in the students.

More...
the need to make sense of their world through experiences in a range of discourses and expressive modes (Arnold R. 1991). Enactment, enthusiasm and engagement with students, so as to enhance their concepts of self, allows teachers and students to overcome seemingly insuperable difficulties.

REFERENCES


Hughes, J. 1991 Drama in Education: the state of the art. Educational Drama Association NSW.


Parsons, B., Schaffner, M., Little, G., Fettor H. 1984 Drama, language and learning. NADIE papers No.1 National Association for Drama in Education.


Simons, J. Creativity processes and the primary classroom The Primary Educator Vol 6, No. 1


References


   National Council of Teachers of English.


University of Sydney. Education Outreach Program, External Relations Division.


Appendix A

John Hughes Publications

BOOKS/MONOGRAPHS


CHAPTERS IN BOOKS


**Articles in Refereed Journals**


**Papers in Professional Journals**


Commonwealth National Policy on Languages Project, Tasmania, S.


Hughes, J. (2000). Drama as a learning medium: researching poetry.
The Primary Educator, 6(3), 19-24.

NON-PRINT MEDIA


**MAJOR CONFERENCE PAPERS**


Hughes, J. (1989, June 18). *Reading psycholinguistics and language transposition.* Paper and keynote address presented at the Adult Literacy Council Annual Conference, Mitchell CAE, Bathurst, N.S.W.


Hughes, J., & Hoogstad, V. (1993, September 1-4). *Communication skills for the modern business world.* Paper presented at the International Conference: Communication in the Work Place; Culture, Language and Organisational Change, NLLIA Centre for Workplace Communication, UTS and National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University, N.S.W.


Australian Association for Research in Education, Education Research:

Building New Partnerships, Singapore.


**ON-LINE**


Funded Research

1980-1981 Total amount $35,000.00

Agency: Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission

1986 Total amount $5,000.00

Agency: Office of the Minister of Education, N.S.W.

1991 Total amount $3,500.00

Agency: Educational Drama Association, N.S.W.
Subject: Drama in Education. Published as Drama in Education: the state of the art. (1991) EDA.

1991 Total amount $1,500.00
Agency: N.S.W. Training and Development Foundation.
Subject: Talent Development Project.

1993 Total amount $1,500.00 (with Dr R Arnold)
Agency: Faculty of Education Research Grant Scheme.
Subject: Students reflections on enactments in pedagogy across the curriculum.

1997 Three Faculty of Education Research Excellence awards
(development) $2,250.00

1997. ARC Small Grant of $10,000 for a project titled 'Evaluation of teachers' needs in psychodynamic pedagogy curriculum implementation in the field of literacy development in a juvenile justice program'.
Appendix B


*NJ, National Association for Drama and Education Journal, 23* (2), 39-49.
Aesthetic Learning
OPERA AND ACCESS: INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN AESTHETIC LEARNING

Rosanna Jurisevic
The University of New South Wales

Abstract
This paper argues that the development of future audiences through education programs promotes a greater understanding, ensures a wider access and encourages a commitment to opera. In addressing this problem of how to assist young people in developing an understanding of opera, this paper will focus on the successful partnership between Opera Australia with The University of Sydney, particularly the 'Opera Demystified'. A review of education programs offered by international opera companies is presented and an evaluated case study of a successful program is explored.

Rosanna Jurisevic has a long-standing reputation as a social analyst and teacher. She holds degrees in Education and Social Sciences from the University of Sydney and has recently completed a Masters degree in Arts Administration at the University of New South Wales College of Fine Arts. Rosanna is currently working on a project that aims to develop innovative partnerships in aesthetic learning between Universities and performing arts institutions.

Keywords: OPERA EDUCATION; OPERA AUSTRALIA; AUDIENCE

One of the principle themes of the international symposium, Pushing the Imagination: Exploring Innovative Partnerships in Aesthetic Learning, held in Brisbane, Australia, 17-20 September 1998, was an evaluation of factors which aid young people to access performing art forms and the development of aesthetic frameworks in education.

The conference not only brought together arts educators and artists but also combined viewing of performing events – being held as part of the Brisbane Festival – with academic dialogue. As the conference co-directors Judith McLean and Philip Taylor said that this symposium was particularly interesting because it gave educators and artists the ‘opportunity to enter into dialogue about the works of art seen during the festival’ (McLean and Taylor, 1998). One such work was the opera The Divine

NJ, 23:2. 1999
Kiss presented by IHOS Opera from Tasmania directed by Constantine Koukias. This was a complex, postmodern production, rich in metaphors and symbols and demanding on the talented performers.

The work was also demanding of many audience members, especially those unfamiliar with the conventions of the form. It was commented by several conference delegates that they would have gained from hearing Brad Hase\-man’s splendid and informative keynote address With Sublime Lips: Shaping The Divine Kiss before attending the performance of the work, rather than hearing his deconstruction of the rehearsal text on the day after the performance.

This led to much discussion on: How can young people be best cued to unfamiliar art forms? How do we assist audiences to be able to respond to new and innovative work? Will knowledge of aesthetics help shape and inform our understanding of arts practice? These, together with the notion of partnerships between artists and educators, were key issues at this conference (McLean and Taylor, 1996).

In order to address these questions, this paper will explore a successful partnership in aesthetic education in opera between Opera Australia and The University of Sydney. The project aimed to aid teachers and students in their enjoyment and appreciation of music-drama. Opera Australia is one of Australia’s premier arts companies. It gives over 250 performances a year to over 600,000 patrons annually. The University of Sydney is Australia’s oldest university and its Faculty of Education is particularly interested in arts education. Further, the paper will present an overview of international trends in opera education and review the partnership between Opera Australia and The University of Sydney in light of such developments.

Youth participation and access to the Arts

Issues related to young people and theatre have been of concern to a number of researchers (Anderson, 1991; Bennett, 1991; Emmison et al., 1991; Johnstone, 1991; Redington, 1983; and Sauter, 1995). Johnstone lists two important aspects which characterise youth views about the cultural arts, outlining findings which have shown that students from public schools and schools without private funding, ‘express attitudes of rejection towards the “high arts” . . . [including] a lack of knowledge of the “cultural code” . . . associated with going to the opera’ (Johnstone, 1991). The attitudes of rejection towards the ‘high arts’ and the lack of knowledge of ‘cultural code’, if not challenged, prevail into adulthood. The concept of ‘cultural code’ is certainly one enmeshed within a knowledge of ‘class code’ and this takes us back to the question of class based systems.

Since a knowledge of the ‘high arts’ is needed before the individual feels comfortable enough with the medium to participate, then . . . ‘skill

---

1. See this issue of NJ, p.19.

NJ, 23:2. 1999
development’ should be initiated in non-private schools on the same scale as their private counterparts.

... Warren Leit (1988) also argues that participation patterns and values are cultivated in the education system. He places emphasis upon a continuity between a lack of experience and opportunity in the school’s art programs and later lack of commitment to them in private or group leisure activity. (Johnstone, 1991)

The preceding statements emerge as areas highlighted by teachers when giving feedback to Opera Australia after attending Opera Demystified Workshops.

Willmar Sauer of Stockholm University has conducted extensive investigations into audience participation. In his 1992 address to members of the Educational Drama Association in Sydney he outlined his study of teenagers and how they respond to theatre. He found the following characteristics:

One is an identification with characters perceived as similar to oneself, the other is an identification with characters which embody qualities one would wish to have. (Frater, 1992)

He further found that stories of young people’s experiences or perspectives have a greater impact on the young person who is reading or viewing the events as they unfold.

This pattern of identification seems to echo the success of characters in fairytales, melodrama and Hollywood genre movies. (Frater, 1992)

It would be logical to conclude that the same can hold for opera, where stories contain elements of fairytales and melodrama. Importantly, further studies conducted by Sauer analysing attitudes to theatre and theatre-going habits indicated the following:

... if people do not experience going to the theatre before the age of 20, they will be unlikely to go to theatre later in life. So education systems have a responsibility to ensure that all young people have theatre experiences before the end of school. (Frater, 1992)

This is a factor which was recognised and supported by the teachers who attended the Opera Demystified Workshops conducted by Opera Australia and The University of Sydney.

The well established trend within cultural organisations over the past number of years has been to allocate funds and promote public access and education in general as a valuable and important venture — not just focussed on the public in general but particularly on schools and young people. The goal, often, is to develop a future visitor/membership base. Given the findings of Johnstone and Sauer, it is important to involve and encourage youth from an early age to participate in the cultural arts and enable teachers to facilitate their students into the performing arts.
The problem with opera

Opera companies around the world have identified a number of problems which, if not addressed, will have serious implications for the future. The gradually aging audience base has meant that many opera companies have sought to attract a younger audience so as to ensure the maintenance of audience numbers over time. The alternative is to see the reduction of audiences quite rapidly over the next 10 to 15 years by natural attrition.

Attracting a younger audience requires overcoming opera’s image problem with young people. For most people under 30, opera is the emblem of an elitist, old-fashioned private club — for them opera is an incomprehensible and an often alien art form, making it inaccessible.

The premise of this paper is that young people can be assisted to gain access through an increased understanding of the art form. This development will only occur over a period of time through a variety of experiences, exposures and educational opportunities relevant to this art form.

International trends: USA, UK, Canada and Australia

There are international developments in opera education programs that are successful, and internationally there is a strong commitment to maintaining opera education programs for young people. It is interesting to note that international opera companies, through their opera education programs, feature many of the same suggestions and ideas expressed during Opera Australia’s program by Australian teachers. A brief exploration of how international opera companies present opera education programs will demonstrate the fact that Opera Australia’s education program was in accord with international standards.

Analysis of education programs of thirty international opera companies in the USA, UK and Canada (Jurisevic, 1998) revealed that the fundamental principles and methods utilised within these education programs are consistent with the findings of researchers in the field of young people and access to the performing arts. (Creedon, 1997; Driver, 1997; Redington, 1983; Sauter, 1995) The success of these programs rests on a commitment by international companies to the younger members of their community. There is also recognition that these younger members may one day be future opera audiences. The companies surveyed also demonstrated a commitment to providing a service for teachers and schools and stressed the importance of opera education programs for young people.

The L.A. Opera Company, for example, sees its education programs as a means of planning for the future.

Our programs seek to build future audiences and expand the horizons of thousands of children throughout Los Angeles. By participating in opera, they feel that they have a stake in its future. Many of the students touched by these programs develop an appreciation for music and art that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. (L.A. Opera, 1998)
In 1995, Cincinnati Opera conducted a study of its audience population and researchers noted the following findings:

Those people who were exposed to the performing arts as a child seemed more likely to attend such events as an adult. School programs and parents were the main provider of these opportunities. Slightly more than half of the Representative respondents (Non users random sample) had attended such an event as a child (55%) but Category Users (Subscribers) and Past Opera Users had attended at a significantly higher rate (80% and 71%). (Cincinnati Opera, 1995)

Opera Illinois issued the following statement which echoes the concerns faced by Opera Australia regarding younger audiences:

It is important to realise that opera might well become an 'endangered species' if one generation is allowed to grow up without an appreciation and love of Verdi, Puccini and Mozart, and dare we risk having no audience left for some of mankind's [sic] greatest musical works? (Opera Illinois, 1998)

Houston Grand Opera indicated the importance of maintaining partnerships with local organisations and has developed community partnership events presented in collaboration with existing multicultural organisations and institutions to foster and enhance Houston Grand Opera's community and to develop new audiences. (Houston Grand Opera, 1998)

As can be seen, the opera companies noted above link education programs for young people with audience access, development and commitment. The link complies with the research findings indicating that education programs focusing on the performing arts for youth are critical in terms of future audience participation.

**Features of international opera education programs**

The international opera companies surveyed engage in a number of methods to provide education programs and many of these approaches are not dissimilar to the methods utilised by Opera Australia. The following brief outline notes some of the differing approaches adopted by opera companies in their education programs.

**In-schools programs:**
Many opera houses offer opera education programs that are taken to schools and conducted on school premises. Methods include – touring opera companies, workshops for students and opera performances (often a condensed version sung in English) with students performing various roles and characters in an opera. Examples of such programs can be found at San Francisco Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia and the Royal Opera House.

**Opera written for children:**
The following short list outlines titles of operas especially written for young audiences: Perfection: A Space Opera In One Act by Lesley Choy; Sid the Serpent
who Wanted to Sing by Malcolm Fox and Les Moose; The Operatic Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle by Alan Chapman. Performances take place in the school environment with performers from various opera companies. Students are prepared prior to the performance and at times take roles within the performance. LA Opera, the Royal Opera House, Toledo Opera, Scottish Opera, Central City Opera all provide such programs and in the year 2000 Opera Australia and Theatre of Image will jointly present a new children’s opera called Grandma’s Shoes.

Writing an opera:

Teachers and students are supported and assisted in writing and performing their own opera. The Metropolitan Opera Guild conducts a Creating Original Opera Teacher Training Program. Through this process, the participating teachers provide an in-school opera education program.

Opera, Image, Audiences and Culture

Opera has been surrounded by a number of preconceptions, particularly that it is for the elite, it is highbrow and incomprehensible. For many people, especially in the English speaking world, opera can be an alien and obscure performing art form; yet it is acknowledged as one of the richest of the performing arts because it is a medium that combines all of the performing arts — music, theatre, design and dance.

Opera contains elements which cannot be produced in the other dramatic arts. Australian composer Richard Mills reflected, while writing an opera based on Ray Lawler’s play Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, that an opera allows a number of characters to express their emotions at the same time whereas, within a play, characters usually speak one at a time. Mills also noted that the music enhances the expressions of emotions by a character and therefore the need for additional words, to express those emotions is not required. The subtleties of emotion created by the music can operate on a hidden plane, which is layered and requires gradual unfolding. It is these subtleties which can render an opera difficult to understand, hence opera often requires exploration for a deeper understanding of meaning. Young people, while understanding emotional response, often require guided exploration of the deeper and often complex emotions. Opera education programs are crucial for this exploration.

Australian director Baz Luhrmann, director of the film Romeo and Juliet and also Puccini’s opera La Bohème for Opera Australia, noted that opera was originally

an extremely popular art form which has been shanghaied into a private-club mentality… Opera was born of something everyone from the streetsweeper to the king could have an experience of. People of many different kinds of intellect and personality and social position could have a very different reaction, and that universality was the key to it. (Cosic, The Australian, 1998)

It is this view of opera as a popular culture performing art form which needs to be conveyed to potential future opera audiences. Opera Australia and The University of Sydney in their programs assumed that opera is a medium which is based in the universality of experience and emotion.
How does Opera Australia encourage younger audiences?

A number of strategies have been developed by Opera Australia to increase younger audiences, including a ‘funky program brochure, allied with a new $25 ticket for under 17-year-olds’ (Cochrane, 1996). Under 27-year-olds are also able to subscribe to a series of set operas — known as the Triple M Youth Series — for $125. (Triple M is a popular youth FM radio station in Sydney.) A distinct difference can be noticed in the 1997 subscription brochure when compared with previous brochures. The images within the brochures now show younger, attractive singers in a variety of seductive and sensual poses. ‘It’s hoped the young may be seduced by a brochure featuring bellydancer’s torso and an accompanying text which reads like a travel supplement’ (Cochrane, 1996). However, this alone does not entice young people to attend opera for the first time, nor does it help them to access and understand this performance form. The changes in program marketing strategies, with glossy pictures, travel supplement-like text and cheaper tickets is insufficient to entice a younger audience to the opera. There is a need and requirement for additional programs for younger audiences which work hand in hand with the repackaging of an image.

International perspectives indicate that the key to attracting a younger audience base lies within an ongoing education program which increases understanding and access to opera. Opera Australia and The University of Sydney have formed such a partnership to develop the Opera Demystified Education Program which specifically focuses on access and understanding. The program to date has been very successful in fulfilling its aim to allow students and teachers to access music theatre.

Opera Demystified — a case study

A number of Opera Demystified Teacher Workshops were conducted during 1996 and 1997 as part of a collaborative partnership between Opera Australia and the University of Sydney. Program convener John Hughes – Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education University of Sydney – has had a significant and primary role in the coordination of the Opera Demystified Workshops as well as the development of the Teacher Resource Kits. In 1997, as Education Consultant to the Australian Opera, he supervised the general program and conducted interactive workshops. The program was aimed at teachers from various disciplines in primary and secondary schools. These teachers received an initial workshop with teacher resources. They then returned to schools and prepared their students for a visit to the opera selected for performance. The feedback gained from the teachers who participated within the workshops include statements which have been reflected in the findings outlined by the researchers who looked into youth, cultural preferences and participation.

Outline of the project

The Opera Demystified workshops aimed to:

- Demystify opera as an art form
- Develop an understanding of the processes involved in opera production
- Orientate participants to the ‘behind the scenes’ creation of opera
• Provide information and resources for Teachers' classroom use
• Encourage participant involvement in workshop activities
• Outline the historical context of opera
• Promote an appreciation of opera

Participants
Opera Demystified Workshops generally had 25 to 90 participants at any one session.

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What happened
The Opera Demystified Workshops were held as an all day event. Guest speakers included conductors, performers, choreographers, musicians, costume and set designers. Activities in the workshop were coordinated in relation to the particular featured opera. The participants had the opportunity to attend a performance of the opera in question on an evening following the workshop.

Workshop evaluation process
At the close of each workshop, participants were asked to complete two evaluation questionnaires — the Workshop Evaluation Questionnaire which focused primarily on the workshop activities and the Post Workshop Reflection Questionnaire which focused on 'first' opera experiences and participant ideas as to what might encourage young people to attend opera. The questionnaires were primarily qualitative in nature.

Two Teacher Opera Demystified Workshops based on the opera Alcina composed by Handel and Falstaff composed by Verdi, have been selected to form the basis for this case study.

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Methodology and distribution
All workshop participants — teachers who had taught either primary or secondary students — were requested to complete the two Evaluation Questionnaires. Fifty-five questionnaires were returned for Opera Demystified: Aicina and 41 for Opera Demystified: Falstaff, making in total 96 questionnaires. 52% of the questionnaire respondents were secondary school teachers, 32% teaching primary school and 16% did not identify whether they taught primary or secondary school students. 87% of the students taught by the workshop participants were aged between 12-18 years.

The Opera Demystified Teacher Workshop evaluations recorded that the workshops were well co-ordinated. The range of presenters included a variety of expert speakers who presented their specialised areas in a clear and enthusiastic manner without jargon. At the conclusion of each workshop, feedback was actively sought from the teachers for further improvements for future workshops. The only negative comments related to the poor acoustics of the venue.

In terms of first positive experiences of opera, 55% of questionnaire respondents reported that this had occurred in their youth; 25% reporting their first experience as adults (for some this being the workshop itself); 15% reported hearing or attending opera in their childhood because of their parents' interests in music and the performing arts.

Workshop evaluations
Teachers highly praised the workshop format, content, quality of presenters and venue. However, a number of recommendations were offered by teachers, many of which reflect education programs offered by international companies (see above). The teachers indicated that they wanted classroom teaching resources, workshops for students and in-school touring opera programs.

Post Workshop Reflection evaluations
Post Workshop Reflection evaluations focussed purely on positive experiences, strategies and ideas that would appeal to students and encourage greater understanding and participation in opera. The teachers offered the following reflections on how young people might be encouraged to enjoy an opera performance:

- Knowledge of the plot/story is important prior to a performance
- Knowledge of processes and conventions which occur at performances of an opera
- Reducing the cost of tickets for youth
- Two-day workshops for students with a performance prior to the second workshop day

Teacher Resource Kits
As a result of these evaluations, Opera Australia and The University of Sydney have revised and produced six Teacher Resource Kits for specific operas. The kits are to be used in the classroom with students prior to attending a specific performance. The classroom activities explore and further develop aspects particular to the featured

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opera and are based on the current school syllabus with particular activities primarily grouped under subject headings of Music, Drama and English.

The *La Bohème* kit has special inclusions (available upon request) for vision-impaired or hearing-impaired students. Overall the kits are well prepared and presented. They contain ample information, which can further lead to the development of more ideas within the classroom. The *La Bohème, Nabucco* and *The Magic Flute* Teacher Resource Kits contain a video recording of the entire opera. These were developed for use in regional areas where access to workshops and performances is limited by distance. Other Teacher Resource Kits contain a cassette tape of excerpts from the opera.

**Conclusion**

The Opera Demystified Workshops were exceptionally successful. Teachers, through their comments and suggestions, indicated a great need amongst their student population for Opera Demystified Workshops to be available in schools. The Teacher Resource Kits were commended for their comprehensive nature and for the ease of application within the classroom environment.

Teachers echo the findings by Johnstone relating to youth participation in the cultural arts and the notions of comfort and familiarity with cultural code. Johnstone quotes author Warren Lett, who argued in his 1988 paper titled, *Youth, the Arts and Context*, that 'patterns of participation and values' are cultivated in the education system. The teachers who responded to the evaluation questionnaires confirmed this view.

They also confirmed the findings by Sauter regarding student interest in plot and character. Sauter noted that young people tend to seek identification with the characters in works of fiction. The teachers validated this view by indicating that preparation of students for opera increases their understanding of the complexities of the story and 'how the universal relates to them'.

Teachers strongly indicated a need for further resources and teaching materials coupled with positive experiences of opera for young people, again echoing Sauter's findings regarding young people and their response to theatre: 'preparation of young children before a performance can make a significant difference to their response' (Frater, 1992).

It would be interesting to re-visit the issues discussed in this paper with further audience surveys to evaluate the impact of marketing and education in the development of opera audiences. Longitudinal studies and evaluations of youth cultural preferences, particularly their views of opera as a performing art, would yield valuable data, which opera companies and other performing institutions could utilise in increasing audience numbers and the quality of experience for their theatre participants.
Opera and Access:
Innovative Partnerships in Aesthetic Learning

Works cited:


Appendix C


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STUDENTS' SELF-NARRATIVES
AND THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION
INTO PERFORMANCE

Di Johnson and John Hughes
The University of Sydney

Abstract
This paper reflects on one of the master teaching demonstrations at the second International Drama in Education Research Institute (IDIERI) in July 1997 held at the University of Victoria in Canada. One of the innovations of IDIERI was that each master teacher was accompanied by a postgraduate researcher whose task it was to reflect upon the teaching processes and elaborate on the implications for the wider field of drama and education. John Hughes was one of the master teachers and Di Johnson was the postgraduate researcher.

Di Johnson is an actor, playwright and artist who runs a Theatre in Education company and has been involved in writing, producing and performing plays for schools during the past twelve years. She is completing her Masters of Education in Creative Arts at Sydney University in order to further her interest in supporting the recognition of the indispensable role that the arts play in education. Her current research interests include psychodynamic pedagogy and aesthetic education.

John Hughes is Chair of the Arts Education Unit in the Faculty of Education at the University of Sydney. He has authored many books and articles in the field of drama and has research interests in enactment and psychodynamic pedagogy. He is currently also researching theatre and young people with Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet.

Keywords: NARRATIVE; PERFORMANCE; PSYCHODYNAMIC PEDAGOGY

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IDIERI 1997

It's a cool, Canadian summer morning, July 1997, and more than ninety enthusiastic drama educators and researchers from around the world are drawn together like magnets around the first of many cups of coffee to be consumed during the second International Drama in Education Research Institute. The setting is the foyer of the enviable well appointed theatre complex of the University of Victoria on Vancouver Island and the buzz of eager participation sets the tone for the next seven days of masterclasses, workshops, keynote speeches and presentations of academic papers, all of which will form IDIERI 1997. The constant cups of coffee were an ever-present ingredient that began, punctuated and completed most of the activities of the conference.

There were many familiar Australian faces scattered around the room and it was with a sense of pride that we reflected on how committed Australian educators are to expanding the field of drama education and how well represented we are at many such international conferences.

At this conference, John Hughes was one of four international drama educators to conduct a masterclass. This involved twenty-four students from the University of Victoria participating in the workshop while the ninety or so conference delegates observed the work from the uppermost seats in the thrust theatre. John's workshop, entitled Drama and Childhood Reflections, employed a visualisation process to facilitate the participants to draw upon recollections of a song associated with a happy time in their childhood. The participants were asked, without revealing the title of the song, to present small group tableaux to illustrate the song and then blend it into another tableau depicting the happy childhood association with that song. For a fuller account of this workshop see Hughes, J. and Michaels, W. (1992).

Reflections of the postgraduate researcher - Di Johnson.

Observing Drama and Childhood Reflections was a riveting process. I watched, fascinated, trying to make meaning from the embodied symbols presented. The tableaux were then repeated but this time the observers, who encompassed fellow workshop participants and delegates, were informed of the song's title and the nature of its association with the childhood memories. The experience was that of a light bulb sparking in your brain when sudden cognitive connections are made clarifying previously indefinable aesthetic experiences. This same sense of delight and satisfaction occurred as each small group of four students presented their stories and enactments. This experience recalled, for both John and myself, Philip Taylor's reflections on narrative in drama: 'In drama we "story" most, if not all, the time. Indeed, there would often be no class if the group did not agree to create and maintain stories' (Taylor, P., 1990, p.2).

Working as John's assistant during the masterclass at IDIERI, I was able to closely observe how this use of personal narrative to construct and enact storylines, which resonates both with the creators and the observers, has parallels with my own working methods, even though the end products are quite diverse.
Students' Self-Narratives and the Process of Transformation into Performance

John's intention, in this workshop, was to create an environment where adults could comfortably recall childhood experiences then reflect upon them to create a dramatisation of those experiences. The aims of John's work in this area were to demonstrate and elaborate the theory of psychodynamic pedagogy, developed by Roslyn Arnold (1991, 1994), and help break down cultural barriers through drama enactments. His use of students' self-narrative, however, mirrors my own work in developing plays for a theatre in education company in Australia known as Blue Squid Productions. My plays, written and performed for secondary school audiences, entail collecting students' own stories, recounted to me through interviews, and then moulding them into material that creates the foundation for my scripts. My objective is to produce relevant and accessible drama for adolescent audiences that, in line with Howard Barker's premise in Arguments for a theatre (1993), does not presume to solve problems but aims to present versions of a central theme upon which the students can relate to experiences in their own lives and consequently reflect upon them.

Since witnessing the success of John's work with the students at the IDIERI conference I have conducted workshops with several classes of senior drama students where I employed John Hughes' initial methodology of exploring personal narrative. I then extended it to create a platform from which students could investigate character structure and analysis as well as observing the fundamentals of playbuilding. It proved to be a very effective method for stimulating the imagination as well as creating a sense of connection between the students.

Obviously, the use of self-narrative in creating literary or dramatic works is not a recent invention but the possibilities are exceedingly rich for assisting students and writers to reach new horizons of understanding and creative exploration. Using a simple structure, such as a song from childhood, helps create a familiar framework from which students can venture into experimenting with improvisation and exploring multiple facets of character-based work. Daring 'to boldly go' into the realms of character work can, at times, be an unnerving experience but the use of self-narrative is a very effective tool to create a safe haven in which to experiment and to find material that will touch an audience with its intrinsic humanity.

The Process of Translating Self-Narrative into Script

As every teacher knows, it can be a constant battle to corral students' perennially pre-occupied minds into a position where they will absorb the gems of wisdom that we have to offer. The search for content that students enjoy and the exploration of methods to re-shape their perceptions about bo-oring subjects renders pale even the quest for the holy grail. But this is the Everest I climb every time I embark upon writing a new play for Blue Squid to perform in schools. Just how do you take a subject like 'inter-generational relationships' or 'the perception of self' and turn it into a palatable, amusing and thought-provoking piece of theatre that does not wreak of a lecture? In my case, it generally takes twelve to eighteen months of research, writing, re-writing and re-shaping in rehearsals to produce a work that resonates with the students and is not merely a thin veil for didactic pedagogy.
The core elements of performance pieces are most often based on actual incidents. For example, my most recent play, Writing on the Wall, uses a story about the recurring incidence of graffiti and ‘tagging’, (sprayed initials on public and private property). And this in turn provides a means by which I explore issues of self-image, inter-generational relationships and tolerance of cultural and individual diversity. The original concept was sparked by a conversation with some teachers at an outer western suburbs school in Sydney at which I had been performing. One weekend, this school had been seriously vandalised resulting in most of the exterior walls being sprayed with denigrating comments about the teachers. Obviously there are very complex social and emotional issues that motivate this form of expression but one of the questions I asked myself was ‘how did these actions reflect the self-image of the perpetrators?’. Was this a collection of youths fired up by the influence of the group while, individually, fuelled by the need to establish their own identities? I subsequently decided to employ the graffiti storyline as a vehicle to carry several different themes, the main one being a concern with self-image. Instead of the school walls being vandalised I chose, for the purposes of the plot, to make the object of the vandalism a high, newly finished suburban garden wall. The man in the story who began building this wall has died just before his project’s completion and his wife has undertaken to finish the wall in memoriam. In this way the stakes are raised by adding an emotional loading to the effects of the property damage. Since the perpetrator in the play is sent to clean off the graffiti, I also examine the current argument of implementing restitution rather than punishment for young offenders. There are several pilot schemes of this type of program in Australia which are trialing a form of juvenile justice that has seen success with similar programs in New Zealand.

After talking with teachers from a broad cross-section of local and interstate schools while on tour with my plays, I began to put together thoughts about how concerns linked with self-image manifest themselves in adolescent boys and girls. My findings showed that many boys under-achieve in school because it is not considered ‘cool’ to excel academically and, the old story, that any area deemed ‘female’ is to be avoided on pain of social ostracism. The worst insult to level at an adolescent male in Australia is to call him a ‘girl’. But while girls feel openly encouraged to achieve academically in Australian schools today following advocacy for girls’ educational strategies, many female students are very conscious of body image and are conscious of how their appearance defines their hierarchical positioning in the adolescent social order (O’Dea, J.A., 1994).

Examples of some of the information I gathered are as follows:

- One boy who was very bright, realised in his early high school years that he did not have many friends. He attributed this to his high academic standing in the class and therefore made a conscious decision to become ‘the class clown’. Even though his comments were often considered inappropriate by the teachers, his fellow students enjoyed the clever jokes at the teachers’ expense and he became instantly popular while his school results plummeted.

- At several schools I was told of girls who pegged all of their future ideas of fulfillment upon hopes of being fashion models. While these girls were generally
Students' Self-Narratives and the Process of Transformation into Performance

 accorded high social status, due to their good looks, they often had low expectations of themselves as academic achievers. At one school I was told how a student, whom I will call Zoe, used to be 'really smart in Year 7 and 8 but ever since she bleached her hair and started hanging out with the other "models" she's really dumb' (excerpt from an interview at a Sydney girls' school, 1996). I was also informed that, for lunch, these 'models' only ever carried a string bag with a bottle of mineral water. The string bag was an essential element because it was clearly visible that they only consumed water for lunch.

From the research I gathered, I could see how the decisions these students were making could become limiting factors in their future life choices. I wanted to represent these ideas for an audience to consider and wove paraphrases of both of these examples into Writing on the Wall. This method of incorporating sensitive material into the script is one I pay particular attention to and generally agonise over in order to find a suitable way to present the material without it being patronising or didactic. Information indicating, for instance, that there are problems with boys' literacy in schools in Australia (boys form the majority of students in remedial reading classes in schools) and that anorexia, bulimia or an imbalanced preoccupation with appearance amongst girls, are still prevalent issues and are topics referred to only in the sub-plot of the play. By having the issue raised, but not highlighted as 'a problem', I avoid alienating students in the audience with whom these subjects may be a sensitive area. I tread a delicate line between representing factual material and work that will resonate with the students. I have found it effective to wrestle the ethics and finer points of these issues in tandem with the director and fellow actors when we navigate the sometimes volatile, sometimes jubilant, rehearsal process. In this way I have two other sounding boards to bounce ideas off before finalizing the script.

By pursuing this form of research — that is, using the students' own stories to furnish various aspects of the play — I am able to keep the content and context immediately relevant to the intended audience. Once I have arrived at a basic idea of the theme, I then begin interviewing students to ask them about any experiences they may have had that are relevant to my fundamental plot. However, as Philip Taylor (1989) has pointed out, often students feel they have no stories to share so I am careful to conduct interviews in a very casual manner in order to gain the students' trust and willingness to talk openly. By introducing myself as an actor and a writer I have found that the students position me in a separate category to that of teacher or parent and their responses are relaxed and often very funny. Frequently, instead of asking direct questions, I will ask if the students have heard of anyone, be it a friend or acquaintance, who has had an experience that may relate to the topic I am researching. This is a very effective method of eliciting information without exposing students to the possible problems of self-revelation as they can maintain anonymity, if need be, by speaking in the third person.

I view my research as resembling the building of a sequentially progressing set of stairs made of Danish pastry. There are many layers and it is not until I complete the first level that I can proceed to the next. After I formulate an idea I interview an initial group of students, refine the ideas which spring from that, then go back to a different group of students to test it out. This process is repeated many times and the Sherlock
Holmes in me emerges as I doggedly collate pertinent and inter-relating data that goes into the initial drafts of the script. It is at this point that I find it necessary to identify and discard the irrelevancies. This process is one that needs scrupulous attention because writers often become fascinated with a false gold that can take them a long way from their task. I know this from painful experience. After the process of eliminating non-relevant material I move to flesh out the now refined framework.

In using the students' own narratives to help build my plays I am even vigilant to hunt out any amusing anecdotes or funny stories that can be included in the cooking pot. Humour is a fundamental ingredient in my work as I find it quickly breaks down barriers and puts the audience in a receptive mode. Considering that all of my plays to date use minimal theatre as a stylistic base, it is essential for my audiences to join in the fiction of the play. My work demands a high degree of an audience's imagination in creating place and fleshing out characters. For instance, in Writing on the Wall, the pivotal piece of set is one that physically does not exist – that is, the wall. The characters construct the wall in the audience's mind through physical actions and verbal references. The 'fourth wall' becomes the garden wall that is graffitied at the very beginning of the play. This graffiti is then pointed at and referred to in several subsequent scenes. The 'wall' is 'scrubbed' in an attempt to remove the 'graffiti', then a landscape is then 'painted' on it. I rely on the audience to travel with the characters and create the 'wall' for themselves and, in doing so, invent their own visual story of the wall. This can be seen as an extension on my work of utilising students' self narrative in that it becomes the student's personal imaginary vision which helps construct the performance.

John Hughes' master teaching demonstration at IDIERI used self-narrative and unashamedly adopted a humanistic celebration of each individual's personal culture which was then incorporated, elaborated and shared by the group. In line with psychodynamic pedagogy John taps into the affective domain, affirming and validating feelings. The collective ownership of an individual's culture, feelings and experiences encourages affective and cognitive growth. Like personal memories, I hope my plays create an opportunity for the expansion of personal perception which exists in a prescribed and potentially limiting form in much of today's mass media.

Observing John's work at the IDIERI has served to reinforce my belief in the value of utilising, thereby validating, people's personal experiences. This can then be expanded into various aesthetic fields of endeavour and is one that serves to enrich and acknowledge the value of human communication through shared stories. I imagine this form of theatre began somewhere in a cave, in millennia past, where the sharing of experience was critical for survival. I believe the same form of communication is no less vital to our survival today, as individuals and as communities.

Works Cited

Students' Self-Narratives and the Process of Transformation into Performance


NJ, 21:2, 1997
Appendix D


Katherine Thomson's Navigating: a theatrical approach.

In J. Hughes, & M. Freundt (Eds.),

*Katherine Thomson and John Guare: Navigating and Six Degrees of separation.*

Sydney: St Clair Press. pp 12-55
The Preliminaries

→ Activities Prior to Reading the Script ←

Predictive-Sets

Before reading a script it is best if we have predicted what is going to happen. We then check our predictions against the text.

Here are some predictive-sets for *Navigating*.

Title

Look at the title, *Navigating*. In small groups discuss what a play with this title could possibly be about. Share your ideas with the rest of the class.

Visuals

Look at the picture on the front cover of your Currency Press script. Who might the two women be? What are they doing? How are they feeling? What might have happened to them?

Look at the cover of the program of the Sydney Theatre Company’s production of *Navigating*. Predict what the play might be about.
Quotes

Here are some quotations from the play. Read them and then discuss what you think the play might be about:

"Thirty-five years ago this November, twenty-eight children drowned out there."

"I was given some information about him. That he's been receiving money"

"... he's on the take."

"I barely slept last night for worry."

"I have in my possession bank statements that look like Peter Greig's been taking regular bribes... someone's trying to shut me up."

"Even before I walked into that man's office, someone had told him that I was either mad or dangerous."

"My guess is she's going mad."

"Don't you understand that you are being lied to?"

"Were you sent to do this? ... For God's sake, Brent, please .... If you throw that gun in the river, no one will ever know."
Activity

Parallel Role Play
Conduct this role play in pairs and show it to the rest of the class. Later, when you have read *Navigating*, compare similarities and differences.

The scene
It is the final year at school and students are vying for a scholarship. They have written an essay on the topic ‘Honesty is the best policy’. Whoever is judged to be the better will win the scholarship.

Characters
A student and his/her brother or sister. Participants can decide on the sex and the names of the characters.

Role card 1
You are a gifted student who is after a scholarship to university. To win you must write an essay on the topic ‘Honesty is the best policy’. You have found a brilliant essay on an obscure English web site and have submitted it as your own. You are going to win the scholarship, however your younger sibling has discovered that you have plagiarised. You try to talk your brother/sister out of dobbing you in. Threaten never to speak to him/her again. Whatever he/she says you are not going to tell the school that you cheated

Role card 2
You have discovered that your brother/sister has cheated on an essay on the topic ‘Honesty is the best policy’. It was taken from an obscure English web site. If your brother/sister gains the best marks he/she will win a scholarship to university. Talk to your brother/sister. You love him/her very much but you have been brought up to believe that cheating is wrong. Try to convince him/her to confess to cheating. Decide whether to tell the school.

Discussion question
Having seen the role plays, do you think the younger brother/sister will become a whistleblower?
Before The Text

Reading a play is the very first thing that happens when a play is being produced. The actors and crew all arrive on the first day of rehearsals and sit, usually in a circle, and read aloud the entire script. Some actors read their parts in a dull monotone not wanting to get into any preconceptions of character, accent and interpretation. Generally, however, it is a good idea to conduct the first reading with gusto and experiment otherwise the first working day can become very slow and disillusioning. But going even further back, the first thing the director does before even casting the piece is to read the text and a very important part of a playwright’s job is the first two pages: the character list, the setting and the opening description of the first scene: all this before the dialogue begins. Thomson uses very evocative descriptions of her characters. They are never about the colour of their hair or what they wear but are more about what kinds of people they are. This is the information that the director, set, sound, costume and lighting designers concentrate on most of all. All the relevant information contained in these two pages needs to be interpreted for the audience’s benefit and to ‘paint the picture’.

Activity

➢ Read the first pages of the text before the dialogue starts and discover what the playwright tells us about the characters and the story.
The Setting

Katherine Thomson: a visual writer. Both authors have had the privilege of travelling through Africa with Katherine Thomson and watched her frame and take magnificent photographs. It is worth noting that apart from being an excellent wordsmith she is also a very good photographer and her plays likewise have very strong visual elements in them.

The Setting

The play is set in the small town of Dunbar. The town’s name links it with the sea and with disaster. The Dunbar was a boat, a clipper which in 1857 sank just off South Head, Sydney. The Dunbar was returning from England and one hundred and twenty-one people drowned. Sydney was a small town at that time and almost everyone lost a friend or family member in this disaster. Only one person survived to tell the story. You can see a memorial to the survivors, together with a monument which shows the Dunbar sinking, in the Cemetery of the historical Saint Stephen’s Church in Camperdown.

Activity

- Study closely Katherine Thomson’s notes on the setting. “Nothing needs to be literal”. Much is created by lights and sound effects in Navigating and this signals a timeless, one could say universal, quality. This play is not just focused on a unique, realistic happening – even though it is based on real events – rather this play presents issues which abound in our society. As Paul Thomson says in his introduction “... the play emphasises the element of historical time and the sense in which the past casts its shadow over the present. The play raises the moral questions of how we are as a nation...” (VIII). The non-realistic setting reinforces the expansive nature of the moral, ethical and human issues explored in Navigating.

- It is worth noting whether a scene is indoors or outdoors. Indoor scenes tend to signify intimate, close human interactions. Outdoor scenes invite more expansive explorations of bigger and sometimes allegorical issues. Note the play begins indoors with a whole community and ends with an outdoor scene including the ocean and the heavens. Notwithstanding the non-literal nature of the setting, a director of Navigating would need to decide on the place of each scene. This will mean interpretative decisions. For example, we know Scene 1 occurs on Sunday. Is it a church service or a small town meeting? You, as the director will need to decide. Do this as you fill out the play grid below.
The Plot

Plot Points

A play, or any dramatic work of art, has a plot structure: the twists and turns that keep our interest and tell the story. Each point in the story where the plot turns on its journey can be called a plot point: the arrival of a character, the exposing of a secret, a discovery. The first plot point is when the audience realises what is at stake or what type of story this is going to be. For example, the first plot point in any murder mystery is usually the discovery of a body; in *Romeo and Juliet* it is when the two teenagers meet. We already know the families are sworn enemies so a possible romance between the two teenagers signals the conflict and the drama ahead.

As you chart the plot points you will begin to see the writer’s job in terms of getting from one point to another without losing the audience’s confidence and her characters’ credibility.

Play Grid

Photocopy sufficient play grids for the play and fill them out as you read the play. We have done the first scene and transition.

Navigating

(Do’t overlook the transitions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Soundscape</th>
<th>Who Enters</th>
<th>What Happens</th>
<th>Who Exits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indoors Community Hall, Sunday</td>
<td>Piano plays. Small choir sings Va pensiero</td>
<td>Lights up on Bea, Isola, Pam, Shaw, Dick, Shaw, Brent, Ian Donnelly</td>
<td>Bea sings loudly. Isola looks at her embarrassed. They all sing Va pensiero. Ian prays for the new prison.</td>
<td>All through a light change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans.</td>
<td>Outdoors, riverside bank</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Bea, Isola</td>
<td>Bea twirls a diviner’s stick and looks at her watch. Bea laughs</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Soundscape</td>
<td>Who Enters</td>
<td>What Happens</td>
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Activity:

▷ It is generally accepted that the first plot point in Navigating is when Bea is handed the letter, via Darcy. Find this in your play grid. Are there any minor plot points before this? Chart the other major plot points in the play.

→ Plot Points and Character ←

The plot is usually tied very closely to the actions of one or more characters: Macbeth plots his way to the throne; Romeo and Juliet have their separate plots that meet and destroy them both. In Navigating, Ian Donnelly is the confidant that Bea goes to in the first place when confronted with her dilemma. Thomson shows us his steps to destroy Bea without implicating himself.

Activity

▷ Trace Ian Donnelly’s plan to silence Bea. How does his plan match your plot structure above? How does Donnelly finally silence Bea?

→ Activity: Plot and Character ←

Still pictures

In groups of seven:

1. Create a still image of all the characters at the beginning of the play (Scene !). The position and shape of the characters should represent their relationship to each other, their status, power and likes, as has been revealed to us at this stage of the play. Where do you place them? What does this tell us about their relationships and the plot? Look at the other groups’ pictures and “read” them. Discuss similarities and differences between the pictures. What do these pictures tell us about the people and the issues?

2. Next create a still image which reflects the position and relationship between the characters at the end of Act 1. Repeat the “reading” of the pictures and what they tell us at this stage of the play.

3. Create a still image which represents the characters at the end of the play. Repeat the process.

4. Each group should then display their three still pictures in sequence. The rest of the class discusses the changes and progresses in the play which these sequences reveal.
Plot Points and Story

The playwright also has to let out bits of information at judicious times to advance the plot and keep our interest and also our credibility. In Navigating there are three stories:

1. The story of the going down of the Harmony;
2. The death, and the reasons for it, of the Shaw's son, Andrew, and
3. Bea's story, the major plot.

All three have their own structure and the first two wind around the major plot and finally are incorporated into it.

Activity

By the end of the play what do you know about the first two stories? Write your own version of these stories as Brent might for the front page of his little newspaper. At what point do the stories become entwined with the major plot?
The Characters

→ Studying the Characters in *Navigating* ←

You may have heard writers talking about their work and using phrases like 'I just put the characters in the scene and the scene wrote itself' or 'I never know what my characters are going to do until they do it'. This sort of writer's confession is not necessarily examples of writers trying to be smart, but it is more likely a statement of fact, and you may therefore wonder where the writer's skill comes in. Well, the skill is in choosing the right characters and putting them in a situation which, because of the sort of people they are, creates dramatic tension by the very things they do to either get out, or overcome, their predicament. Before a writer begins writing a lot of work goes into the character development.

*Navigating*, although based on information from real people's lives, is a work of fiction so it is totally up to the discretion of the playwright to create the characters she needs to tell the story she wants to tell. The characters in *Navigating* can be seen as representing aspects of our society which we recognise and, for which we have some empathy.

The protagonist: Bea
The family: Isola
The enemy: Ian Donnelly
The community: Brent, Dick & Pam Shaw
The outsider: Darcy

Look at the relationships between these community groups to help to understand how these relationships create dramatic affect and advance the plot.

First of all there is an obvious relationship between Bea and Isola - a family tie but the playwright chooses to have Isola emotionally entwined with 'the enemy', Ian Donnelly. This instantly creates tension between the sisters. And the playwright makes us privy to this relationship before Bea is. This heightens our interest in Bea because we know something she doesn't.

You will also find relationships between the characters that affect other characters. Brent starts out as a confidant for Bea, not just as the editor of the local newspaper but also as a friend. Yet he is the one that poses the most brutal threat to Bea in the climactic scene.

Characters can also have symbolic and plot significance. For example, John Hughes, in discussion with Katherine Thomson, mentioned that he saw Darcy as an angel-like character. She is an outsider, which is the original Biblical connotation of the word, she conveys the news that changes Bea's life and she saves Bea in the end. She is also associated with the stars and the heavens.
Activity

» Find examples in the text of the tension between Bea and Isola which is caused by Isola’s relationship with Ian that Bea doesn’t know about.

Activity

» Collect references to Darcy which support the notion that she is an angel-like character.

Activity

» Chart the change of the relationship between Brent and Bea with particular reference to the role Ian plays on the lives.
Char = ter Pro = files

Photocopy one sheet for each of the characters in *Navigating*: Bea, Isola, Ian, Brent, Darcy, Dick Shaw and Pam Shaw. Based on your reading of the script fill out the following information.

Name: .................................................................

Age: .................................................................

Ethnicity (if Known): ...........................................

Occupation: ..........................................................

Body shape/ height/hair colour: ..................................

Clothing: ............................................................

Related to: ...........................................................

Lives with: ..........................................................

Originally comes from: ..........................................

Major motivations: ................................................

Share your ideas with others.
Activity

Character

Richard Wherrett, considered one of Australia's leading directors, reveals in his book, The Floor of Heaven, how he helps actors gain insights into their characters.

"I ask my cast always to ask of their own character the key question, 'What is the most significant thing you do in the play; what is the action that has for you the most significant consequences?' The answer to that question usually gives them the key to the character - by simple deduction."

(Wherrett, R 2000:174)

Ask this question of each of the characters in Navigating. Provide reasons for your choice, say what your choice reveals about the character and share your ideas with the rest of the class.
→ Making the Movie of *Navigating* ←

Imagine you have gained the Hollywood rights to make a film of *Navigating*. Money is no object. Select an international movie star to play each character and justify your choice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character's Name</th>
<th>Star's name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isola</td>
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<td>Reasons:</td>
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<td>Ian</td>
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<td>Reasons:</td>
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<td>Brent</td>
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<td>Reasons:</td>
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<td>Pam</td>
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<td>Reasons:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
→ Still Pictures: Beneath the Surface of Dunbar ←

In groups of no more than fifteen create a still picture of the people of Dunbar as they would like to be seen, that is, how they would like to be regarded by people from outside. You can include people we hear about but don’t see: people such as Peter Greig, Chair of the Dunbar Development Group, Ian’s wife Carol, Brent’s father, Sergeant Kevin Simons and Judith Warren.

Show your still picture or tableau to others on your class. What do they see as they “read” your tableau? Tell them what you were intending.

Now make a tableau which represents how the people of Dunbar really are. This tableau should display the real motives and ambitions of the town folk.

Compare and contrast the two tableaux. What do they tell us about the characters in Navigating?

→ Press Conference ←

Break into 7 small groups. Each group focus on a character in the play.

Group 1, Bea
Group 2, Isola
Group 3, Ian
Group 4, Brent
Group 5, Darcy
Group 6, Dick Shaw
Group 7, Pam Shaw

Each group prepares a press statement which justifies their character’s motives and actions.

Select one student from each group to play the character. The others play reporters and think up questions to ask the other characters. Each student reporter devises at least one question. Focus on motives and actions of the characters.

The seven students playing Bea, Isola, Ian, Brent, Darcy, Dick Shaw and Pam Shaw sit out the front of the class. They read their press statements. The other student reporters ask their questions.
Newspaper Article

Each student writes a 500 word newspaper article for the following headline:

Dirty Deeds in Dunbar
Major Themes:
Key issues in the Play

Katherine Thomson regarded the review in The Australian newspaper by John McCallum of the STC production as one which best captured what she thinks are the major issues and themes in the play.

We have reproduced John McCallum’s review below.

→ The Review ←

Salutary Dose of Realism

When Nori Hazelhurst smiles, she does it with her entire face. When she is hurting, her face collapses, the mouth droops and eyes close up to shut out the world. She is still an extraordinarily expressive actor, with great reserves of humanity. It is marvellous to see her back where she belongs, live on stage.

In this play, she does more hurting than smiling. She plays Bea, the whistleblower in Navigating, Katherine Thomson’s moving small-town drama of corruption and courage. It is a wonderful performance. Bea is a timid, unfulfilled woman surprised into great courage, and great suffering, by her discovery of secret crimes in the small seaside community in which she grew up. It is not that she is particularly brave, a crusader, or a high-minded moralist. It is just that her simple decency and honesty do not allow her to keep quiet and not care. She seems to be almost as bewildered and worried as everyone else in the town as she battles on stubbornly in pursuit of an unpopular campaign to get the truth out.

The narrative is concerned with the individual lives and emotions of the characters as much as with the details of the public scandal, and the resolution of the plot is personal rather than political. None of the characters who appear on stage is wholly good or wholly bad – there are the officious corrupt businessmen and councillors to blame. On stage there is Graeme Blundell as Ian, the compromised civic leader on the way up – another very welcome return to the stage by an actor of whom we have in recent years seen much too little. Ian is the nearest thing the play has to a bad guy, one of those vain, ambitious public men who are too weak to be honest.
Celia Ireland is very good as Darcy, the mysterious lodger with a secret of her own. Her great moment of strength, in the climactic scene, is very powerful.

Peter Carroll and Judi Farr, as the old couple who don’t want to get involved because they are themselves struggling to put a personal tragedy behind them and to move on and lead quiet, settled lives, have too little to do, but the strength of their performances makes up for that.

Rachel Szalay, as Isola, Bea’s troubled and rebellious sister, and Francis Greenslade as Brent, Isola’s would-be lover, play characters who in their own different ways have passions and anxieties that require much navigating, and when their personal boats capsize, they are very affecting.

Thomson is particularly good at charting the complexities of what her characters are thinking and feeling. This is a conventional story of public and interpersonal intrigue, but eventually the solution to the intrigue doesn’t matter. We come to care for the characters and the mystery becomes whether – and if so, how – they will survive.

The realism of the writing is punctuated by sudden moments of lyrical articulateness from these otherwise ordinary characters. Some of it takes the form of slightly obvious exposition and development but – especially towards the end – the special moments reveal things about their inner lives in a way that is articulate beyond the constraints of naturalism. There is a final scene in a rowing boat, that is nearly as beautiful and transcendent as the boat scene in Neil Armfield’s wonderful production of Tim Winton’s Cloudstreet. These people, like all of us, are navigating difficult personal waters – to distant islands and then, we hope, back to the shore.


Activity

> Read the review and in small groups discuss whether you agree with Katherine Thomson’s view that this review reveals the major themes and issues in the play.
→ Self-Discovery ←

When one looks at Katherine Thomson's three plays *Navigating*, *Barmaids* and *Diving for Pearls* as a body of work several threads emerge. The central women in these plays are all victims. The threat isn't necessarily masculine but rather the status quo. We get to know Barbara (*Diving for Pearls*) very quickly and the moment we do we know she is going to fall. She is a tragic figure almost in the Sophoclean sense; her downfall is brought on by something inside her: her doggedness and ambition without any support for that ambition. Here the threat is a world that has made her what she is. Val and Nancy (*Barmaids*) are certainly in control of the bar but the threat here is their boss and what the outside world will do to them if he fires them and they have to live in it. Bea (*Navigating*) discovers the threat is the very community she sought to be part of. Imagine the shock of the moth who seeks the flame only to realise too late that it's going to be destroyed by it. They all are, or discover that they are, strong and determined and even if they don't win they discover something important about themselves and the world around them. All three are stories, in a sense, about discovering one's own reality and their place in it.

The world now has changed and the community she seeks is filled with people she doesn't know any more. Can she be one of them?

**Activity**

► Use the opening and closing scenes to answer this question: does Bea stay in Dunbar?

**Activity**

► *Converging Realities, Feminism in Australian Theatre* by Peta Tait (Currency Press 1994) doesn't mention Katherine Thomson. Is this because Katherine Thomson is not a feminist writer? Discuss.
Public vs Private Responsibility

Bea's public duty is to throw light on the corruption that taints the community's bid for the new prison. Bea's private duty is very much the same thing: to tell the truth. To Bea her responsibility to doubly clear.

Activity

▷ What are Ian Donnelly’s public and private responsibilities? Discuss.

Activity

▷ Thomson puts us, the audience, on Bea's side. Truth above necessity. Discuss, in small groups, how the playwright achieves this.

Activity

▷ Find other themes in the text and discuss their relationship to the plot.
→ Activity: Parliamentary Debate ←

Conduct a parliamentary debate with the whole class. The topic is: That the people of Dunbar would have been better off if Bea had kept her mouth shut.

→ Guidelines to Parliamentary Debating ←

Preparation

Divide the class in half. One group is the government who are in favour of the motion. The others are the opposition who are opposed. Give the students time to prepare a three minute speech for each member of parliament.

Class arrangement.

Arrange the class like a house of parliament

![Diagram of parliamentary setup]

It is important to observe the rules and the language of parliament.

The Debate

The teacher plays the role of the speaker who is addressed as Mr/Madam Speaker.

The Government sits on the right of the speaker and face the Opposition. Their leader is addressed as the Honourable, the Prime Minister.

The Opposition sits on the left of the Speaker and face the Government. Their leader is addressed as the Honourable, the Leader of the Opposition.
All other member are addressed as the Honourable member for (first or last name of student).

The Speaker says:

"The House is now in session and the question before it is: That the people of Dunbar would have been better off if Bea had kept her mouth shut.

"I now call on the Honourable the Prime Minister to speak to the question."

The Prime Minister rises and begins with the words:

"Mr/Madam Speaker, Honourable Members" and then gives her/his speech.

When finished the Prime Minister sits down. The Speaker then says "I now call on the Honourable, the Leader of the Opposition". The Leader of the Opposition rises and begins with the words ...

"Mr/Madam Speaker, Honourable Members" and then gives her/his speech. When finished the leader sits down.

The Speaker then calls on the next member of the Government, then the Opposition and so on in turn, until all have spoken. All members begin with "Mr/Madam Speaker, Honourable Members ..."

**Question Time**

At the end of the speeches we recommend that the members question each other. To ask a question a member rises and the speaker says: "the Chair recognises the Honourable Member for (name)".

The member begins: "Mr/Madam Speaker, I wish to address a question through you to the Honourable Member for (name)"

At this point the Honourable Member rises and hears the question. The questioner then sits down. The Honourable Member replies by beginning with "Mr/Madam Speaker, Honourable Members...."
Rights of Reply

At the end of question time the leaders have a right of reply in which they take issue with their opposition's arguments and sum up their own case.

The Leader of the Opposition goes first and the Prime Minister concludes the debate.

The Vote

The Speaker says: "The question before this House of Parliament is that the people of Dunbar would have been better off if Bea had kept her mouth shut."

"All those in favour say aye."

"All those against say nay."

The Speaker decides on the voices and says:

"I think the ayes/nays have it"

If any Members thinks the Speaker has made a mistake they say: "division!"

At this point the Speaker says: "all those in favour move to the right of the chair, all those against, move to the left"

Then the Speaker counts the members and says: "I declare the question carried/lost".
The Language

Language Study

The language of Navigating is highly idiomatic and rich in symbolism. Given that the play deals with ordinary people in a small country town it is impressive how Katherine Thomson has been able to combine authentic speech with symbolic underpinnings.

The language is particularly Australian in its idiomatic use. An idiom is a "fairly fixed phrase that consists of more than one word with a meaning that cannot be understood from putting together the meanings of the individual words" (Manser, M, 1983. A Dictionary of Everyday Idioms. MacMillan Press. London). Here are some examples:

Idioms

- Having a loan (5) — to treat someone like a fool
- Quick stick (7) — hurry up
- All topsy-turvy (7) — state of confusion
- Smack bang in the middle (8) — the centre
- Shiver down my spine (9) — fear
- In the clink (10) — jail
- Off the record (10) — not official
→ Worksheet ←

Activity

Here are other idioms and metaphorlic language from the play. Look at their meaning in
the script (the page numbers are given) and connect them to their meaning in the
second column. We have done one for you.

Can’t take a trick (10) — Hopeless ... the boss
Movers and shakers (11) — controlled by someone
On the take (13) — else because of bribery
cold weather
In the pockets of (13) — being ungrateful
Word on the QT (14) — Talking without full knowledge
Nip around the old ears (15) — important people
who make events happen

The day just flapped
its wings and flew off (17) — Not concentrating
In secret — Accepting bribes ... stop talking
Off in dream land (15) — time passing very quickly
Weak as railway tea (20) — isolated from everyone
Rubbed someone’s back up (26) — Don’t say anything else
The head honchos (29) — not concentrating
Pull her head in (29) — upset someone
Sent to Coventry (31) — accepts bribe
Half-cocked (41) — powerful people consistently
unlucky (from card games)
Powers-that-be (41) — not strong
Looking a gift horse
in the mouth (44) — talk to someone discretely
Women’s Language

The world Bea wants is really no longer the world she thinks it is. On page 26 Bea describes an incident in Dunbar that she stumbled on soon after she and Isola moved back. This incident in Bea’s mind describes the town she thought she was moving back to. But that time and the time Bea comes from has passed. Thomson uses archaic words in Bea’s speeches to reinforce this. Bea and Isola speak very colourful women’s language which is also very idiomatic. You can find references to this type of language in Nancy Keesing’s Lily on a Dustbin. (Keesing, N, 1982)

Activity

Look at the following quotes. Check them in the script and provide a meaning.

Issie and I are like a pair of pockets (10)

Meaning:

Sweeping dirt under the carpet doesn’t disappear the dirt. (46)

Meaning:

You’re casting broken glass around you then you wonder why I’ve got bleeding feet. (48).

Meaning:

She’s got her head stuck up so another quoit round her neck won’t hurt her. (52)

Meaning:
We've broken like a bone china cup with hairline fractures. (57)
Meaning:

... You want me in a shoe-box that's got holes punched into the top for air ..." (64)
Meaning:

You used to be able to put me in a bath of vinegar, and make me think I was floating in milk. (70).
Meaning:

Everything is turning on a sixpence. (72).
Meaning:
→ Humour ←

Katherine Thomson uses humour in what seems the most unlikely places. On page 43 Bea is distraught about her garbage being strewn all over the front lawn. Amongst it all she picks up an eggplant and says: “We should stop buying eggplant. Or figure out how to cook it.” This is not just a joke about the exotic eggplant but as far as Bea is concerned it is a ‘new’ vegetable and reinforces again that Bea hasn’t really moved with the times.

Activity

► Find other examples of humour used to develop a character and comment on its dramatic effect.

→ Language and Lies ←

Bea tries to tell the truth and yet all around her are lies, for example:

1. Bea says to Isola: “You looked me in the eye, and lived a lie.” (65)

2. Bea: “Lies encase the heart, like oysters growing on top of each other. Hard, calcified.” (66)

3. Bea: (to Dick and Pam) “You are involved. You are. Don’t you understand that you’ve been lied to.”

4. Pam: “Not if we both agree that we haven’t.” (73)

5. Bea: (reading the poster), “At that picnic the drunken heads of families lied to skipper Patrick Samson...” (75).

Activity

► Collect other references to lying then discuss the following question:

Is every character in Navigating living a lie?
→ Water Language ←

Water, sea and nautical images permeate the language used in *Navigating*.

Language examples:

- It’s thirty-five years since the *Harmony* went down...” (4)
- “Batten down the hatches.” (17)
- “Swimming with news.” (18)
- “Run on an even keel.” (45)
- “We’re like 2 bobbing corks at the moment.” (69)
- “It’s sticking up out in the water like Jackie.” (73)
- “As long as we keep a close eye on the tide.” (84)

Activity

- Find other examples of water imagery in *Navigating*? What effects do they create?

→ The Title ←

Michael Freundt remembers a late night bottle of wine shared with Katherine Thomson on the night prior to the final draft being sent to Brisbane for the beginning of rehearsals for the QTC/MTC production in 1997. The play still didn’t have a title. Katherine had collected a vast amount of quotes and technical manuals on sailing, navigation and the sea; and she did not want to use an ‘ing’ word because of the title of her most popular play at that time, *Diving for Pearls*. Many titles were discussed and the night concluded still without a title.

Activity

- Why has the play been called *Navigating*? What would be the difference if Katherine Thomson had called it “The Whistleblower”?
The Production

The Actor

Graeme Blundell, the well known Australian actor, played Ian Donnelly in the STC production of Navigating. We asked Graeme to gives us his thoughts on how it felt to perform as an actor on stage. What follows is a rare insight into the craft of an actor.

Navigating: adrift again

It had been eleven years since I had been on stage. Acting in television for the past three years was going to be no help, I knew from day one when I started rehearsals for Katherine Thompson's Navigating for the Sydney Theatre Company, a play about the moral barbarity of economic rationalism and abuse of authority, so tightly plotted that every word is crucial.

The first day, in fact the entire first week, was spent simply deconstructing the words of the script and the nerves went straight to the stomach and stayed there clutching like a hat band for the next five weeks. I have to remember how to do this, I kept repeating to myself.

In television, because there is no time for rehearsal, let alone reading the script together, directors tell actors things like, "Don't worry about the words - just go for the intention!" Advice one follows with relief, while the production assistant responsible for continuity works overtime running in reminding you of the many memory lapses. Sometimes the "intention" is just to get the brain to function long enough to allow the mouth to open on cue. "Cue"? that's when the other actors stop talking and look at you blankly.

Whenever the production team takes over shifting cameras and laying cables, the actors gather in tense clumps and talk through their lines. Or they stand alone muttering, sometimes whispering, them like those strange pathetic beings you see when driving through the precincts of some psychiatric hospital. It's all a matter of conviction - if you can't convince yourself the words are yours, then you'll never convince the director and you'll never go home. You have to learn the words so that saying them becomes a predictable reflex, so saying them aloud helps them become your property.

This is all right for television, and even film, where, usually in short grabs, you are just playing moments. In the theatre, as I sickeningly rediscovered, you have to carry the entire play in your head for the three hours you are on the stage. The fear of going wrong is overwhelming. One card falls, the whole house comes down.
“Hope there’s a character out there somewhere,” says the distinguished veteran stage actor Peter Carroll (who played Dick Shaw) at the beginning of the first preview, surrounded by technical chaos and the distinct whiff of dressing room fear. “Remember we know more than they do,” Carroll says, referring obliquely to the audience and repeating these lines like a mantra. Advice of no help to me whatsoever.

“You get the words right one minute and the next, they are just not there,” I tell him, coming off stage after one particular disastrous scene in which Noni Hazlehurst’s eyes got wider and wider in disbelief at what I was saying. “They’re bastards, those words,” he mutters. “Bastards sometimes.” It’s alright for Hazlehurst, I complain. Noni (who played Bea) has a photographic memory and, like someone in a long marriage, can finish your sentence before you’ve thought of what to say.

Heightened apprehension is an essential energy source for actors but too much adrenaline can push you right over the top, scrambling all the lines of communication from one’s brain to one’s lips and tongue. Even actors who don’t suffer from stage fright have a cache of anecdotes about those who do.

Old pros have stock speeches at the ready. One, if it was a Shakespeare play, would simply pass the parcel, looking whoever happened to be closest in the eye, and say:

“Thou wearest me.  
Unto my chamber shall I now retire  
And rest me upon my couch a little hour.  
Farewell, until we meet again, farewell.”

It’s said he would then exit, light a cigarette in the wings and watch them trying to cope.

Most subscribe to at least one coping mechanism. Richard Burton always wore a red garment when performing. Laurence Olivier liked to arrive early, stare savagely at the critics from the wings and mutter imprecations at them. There used to be also an initiation ceremony for young actors who were told by their elders to piss into their dressing room washbasin for luck.

I notice the curious, gruesome tradition persists of offering first-night wishes like “break a leg” or “fall down backwards”. (Actors quote legendary wit Dorothy Parker’s famous telegram to the famous actress of her day, Uta Hagen, “a hand on your opening and may your parts grow bigger.”) The dressing room fills with flowers and cards so that it starts to resemble a funeral parlour or a hospital ward. Appropriately I felt, because research has shown that the stress involved on opening nights is the equivalent to being involved in a head-on collision at forty kilometres an hour.
And it goes on night after night, three weeks more, now, of navigating by the seat of the pants. As the phobia of stage fright is intrinsic to performing, any hope for a cure is probably illusory, so as the season progresses I’ve accustomed myself, braced every night now for the natural cycle of fright. The shakes, nausea, hot and cold flushes, raspy dry throat: they’re old acquaintances again; that peculiar mixture of fear and excitement beginning its slow spidery crawl up the spine is an old friend. Remember, I tell myself, you are about to do something for which human beings were simply not intended. Hear the applause, imagine the laughter and remember that they only throw tomatoes in very old movies. Wander up and down behind the stage, go over what you’re about to do, speak the first minute or two to the nearest wall. Then like a parachutist about to launch himself into mid-air, go out there and do it.

And remember Broadway comedian Zero Mostel, who likened being on stage to being incarcerated in a cathedral during a very long service: “At the end of it there’s a cup of hot tea.” Or in the case of this seafaring actor who has lost his bearings, a couple of double Stolis on ice, please.

**Activity**

Graeme Bundell says:

“I knew from day one when I started rehearsals for Katherine Thompson’s *Navigating* for the Sydney Theatre Company, a play about the moral barbarity of economic rationalism and abuse of authority, so tightly plotted that every word is crucial.”

> In small groups discuss what you think Graeme Bundell means by ‘tightly plotted’ and do you think every word is crucial?
→ The Lighting – Designer ←

A play is a collaborative act involving not only actors but technical and production people. The lighting designer is one of the most important in this play

"... If you can't see it, you can't hear it."

The following is based on a conversation with Nigel Levings, lighting designer of the STC 1998 production of Navigating.

When the lighting designer reads a new play for the first time they look for places in the text where the playwright has called for a sense of place and time. This can be either in the stage directions ("Transition to a riverside patch of land not far from the river bar...", page 2) or via the dialogue (Bea: High tide. The poor old Harmony ali covered up again... page 82). These are strong clues; they must look like outdoor scenes. Bea and Darcy in the last scene talk about the stars. We don’t necessarily have to see the stars but the audience must believe that Bea and Darcy can see them. Lighting designers hate to make liars out of the actors. If an actor says ‘Gee it’s a bright sunny day today’ the stage cannot look like it’s raining outside.

Activity

► Find each point in the text that gives a definite sense of place and time. How would you light that particular scene?

But that doesn’t mean the lighting design has to be literal. That can only be done by film. Film can have real rain and real lighting. In the case of Navigating the text is very much televisual: it is not unlike a television script. The scenes are ‘naturalistic’: an office, a corridor, a kitchen; but they are all in the one set and the naturalistic elements have to be defined by the actors, lighting and sound. This is very theatrical; but the amalgamation of all those elements happen in the imagination of the audience. And the best events in a production are always in the imagination of the audience and a lighting designer’s job is to accurately trigger that imagination: its got to feel right.

On a practical level the lighting designer’s job involves synthesising the ideas between the designer and the director. The LD can be there right from the beginning of rehearsals but the actual lighting plot is the last element of the production to be put in place and the lighting design has to blend together what happens in the rehearsal room. Not until the production gets into the theatre is anything locked down.
In a timeline the LD’s job looks like this:

Read: the text, how does the thing feel, look
Note: ideas occur, lighting moments and changes
Meet: discuss with Director and Set Designer
Look: study the set design
Shot List: wish list, what I’d really love to do
Parameters: geography of venue, equipment, time, budget
Plot: fix lighting plot
Modify: during tech run/s

Lighting can also be used to shift the audience’s focus. This is usually a directorial ‘trick’ to make the audience focus on a particular part of the stage while something is happening that the director doesn’t want to intrude into the action: the changing of the set or costume, or a theatrical element that the director wants the audience to ‘discover’ later. Are there any such focal tricks in Navigating?

Ultimately the LD’s job is to make the actors and the production visible. Unlike in Shakespeare’s day when the lighting and soundscapes were part of the text – because the productions were staged during the day – modern productions are performed in a darkened room and the LD has to always ask “Can the audience see it?”. Young LD’s are sometimes seduced by clever and imaginative ideas, especially when they have a lot of equipment at their disposal, but it’s not worth much if the audience loses what’s going on. When the lighting design is good and doing its job it’s an aspect of the show that is the least noticed.

There’s an old Lighting Designer’s adage, If you can’t see it you can’t hear it.

Activity

- Find the scenes in the play that require lighting to give them their look: the corridor, the office, the headland, the riverbank etc. What lighting effects would be necessary for each place?

→ Soundscapes, Music & Sound Effects ←

Let’s look at another aspect of a production: the soundscape. The music and sound designer for the STC production was Andree Greenwell and Katherine Thomson acknowledges the contribution of Andree to the success of the play in performance.
Music

The music in *Navigating* is a striking and integral part of the play. It is readily accessible and should be studied, not only for its dramatic and theatrical effects but for its links to themes and characters.

Va pensiero

The play opens with an amateur choir singing the famous chorus of the Hebrew slaves from Verdi’s opera *Nabucco*. (For more on *Nabucco* see: Ernst, J and Hughes, J 1997. Operaction *Nabucco*: educator resource, Opera Australia). Note that it is *Va pensiero*, not *Va pen siero*, as in the script.

There are a number of links between this chorus and the themes of *Navigating*.

The Hebrew slaves who sing it are in prison, captives of the evil empire of Babylon. The people of Dunbar are not only dominated by the private prison but the town itself is like a prison.

*Navigating* deals with hidden agendas and hidden messages. There was a hidden agenda in the first performance of this chorus in the opera *Nabucco*. In 1842 the opera was performed at La Scala Opera House in Milan, Italy. Italy was not a country at that time. Milan was ruled by the Austrians and the people of Milan hated them. They identified with the Hebrew slaves. Look at the words and the translation below – *Va pensiero* is a freedom song.

**EBREI**

Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate;  
Va, ti posa sui clivi, sui colli;  
Ove allezanno tepide e molli;  
L'aure dolci del suolo natal;  
Del Giordano le rive saluta;  
Di Sionne le torri atterrate;  
Oh, mia patria si bella e perduta!  
Oh, membranza si cara e fatal!  
Arpa, d'or dei fatidici vati;  
Perche muta dal salice pend?  
Le memorie nel petto recendi;  
Ci favella del tempo che fu!  
O simile di Solima ai lati;  
Traggi un suono di crudo lamento,  
O t'ispiri il Signore un concerto  
Che ne infonda al patire virtu.

**HEBREWS**

Fly, thought, on wings of gold  
go settle upon the slopes and the hills  
where, soft and mild, the sweet airs  
of our native land smell fragrant!  
Greet the banks of the Jordan  
and Zion’s toppled towers.  
Oh, my country so lovely and lost!  
Oh, remembrance so dear and so fraught!  
Golden harp of the prophetic seers,  
why dost thou hang mute?  
Rekindle our bosom’s memories,  
and speak of times bone by!  
Mindful of the fate of Jerusalem,  
either give forth an air of sadness,  
or else let the Lord imbue us  
with fortitude to bar our sufferings!
At the first performance, when this chorus was performed the audience demanded an encore because they identified with the Hebrews. The conductor did this notwithstanding that the Austrians had banned all encores of choruses, worried that nationalistic choruses might lead to demonstrations. *Va pensiero* became the unofficial national anthem of all Italy and today represent truth and freedom.

**Note the following:**
From the beginning (page 1) Bea stands out as an up-front, very public figure. Her signing of “*va pensiero*” dominates all around her. Note how Isola glances at her - we in the audience can see, even before a word is spoken, that Isola is embarrassed by Bea’s loud singing. The independent characteristics of Bea are strongly established in the opening.

**Activity**
- Study the translation of the chorus. Can you see other links with *Navigating*?
- What other relationships and characteristics are revealed in the stage directions (on page 1) while the township sings *Va pensiero*?

**Pretty Woman**
A song written and sung by Roy Orbison in the 1960’s and considered very sexy at the time. It is available on CD.

**Activity**
Look at the script on page 18. Isola is dressed in her mother’s sexy clothes and sings a song that reflects her mother’s time. Why might she be doing this? Look at Bea’s reaction? What does this music scene tell us about the differences in the two sisters?

**→ Blow the Wind Southerly (71-74)←**

This sea shanty, like the next song *Waly Waly*, is available on CD (Decca) called ‘Blow the wind southerly: English folk songs’, sung by Kathleen Ferrier. It is a very strong piece of music which would have been bellowed by sailors as they worked on board ship. Your music department should be able to provide you with the music.
Here is the first verse, which was as much as was heard in the STC production

Blow the wind southerly, southerly, southerly,
Blow the wind south o'er the bonnie blue sea.
Blow the wind southerly, southerly, southerly,
blow, bonnie breeze, my lover to me.
They told me last night there were ships in the offing
And I hurried down to the deep rolling sea.
But my eye could not see it, wherever might be it,
The barque that is bearing my lover to me.

The use of this sea shanty has a number of effects. It continues the sea theme of the play but it further highlight how isolated Bea is from the rest of the town. They bellow in unison as she attempts to tell the truth (page 74-75). Note it is Ian who sings louder. The song is a wonderful dramatic/music effect which forces Bea to scream her truth which she does despite all the others' best efforts to drown her out with a sea song.

Activity

> On page 74 the directions read “A choir..is singing Blow the Wind Southerly”. Choose on student to read Bea’s part and all the other students sing the song with vigour. In order to be heard note how loudly Bea needs to shout. What effect do you think this would create for a theatre audience?

Waly Waly

This is a very old ballad and exists in several versions. It is a lament, set to a moving melody and deals with a lover who is deceived. You can get a copy of the music from the Australian Music Centre (see the Acknowledgments section of the script) and this song would work very well with guitar accompaniment.

Waly Waly

The water is wide, I cannot get o'er
and neither have I wings to fly.
Give me a boat that can carry two
and both shall row, my love and I.

O down in the meadows the other day,
agathering flowers both fine and gay,
agathering flowers both red and blue,
I little thought what love can do.

I leaned my back up against an oak.
Thinking that he was a trusty tree,
but first he bended and then he broke:
and so did my false love to me.
A ship there is and she sails the sea,  
and she’s loaded deep as deep can be,  
but not as deep as the love I’m in,  
I know not if I sink or swim.  

O love is hand is handsome and love is kind,  
and love’s a jewel while it is new,  
but when it is old it groweth cold  
and fades away like morning dew.

**Activity**

- Have someone in the class perform *Waly Waly*.

- Follow the words printed above. In small groups discuss Katheriné Thomson’s use of this ballad, page 82. For example note it creates a transition between the horrendous and very violent scene where Brent attempts to kill Bea and the lyrical final scene with Darcy and Bea. What type of mood does it create? How does it change the tempo of the play? How do the words link with what is happening in the play? For example the play ends with a boat “…that will carry two”. Report your insights to the rest of the class.

**→ Soundscapes ←**

The pervasive nature of water in many scenes is created by the language of the play and by sound effects (known in the theatre as ‘Sound FX’) and lighting.

Stage Direction examples:

“Transition to a part of the river bank at night. Water lapping. No wind” (26)

“Sound of rain. Transition to Dick and Paw Shaw...” (35)

**Activity**

- The play’s stage directions and its language constantly refer to water. Find other references to water and the sea in the play and share them with the class. How do these references change and what effects would they have on an audience?
Activity

- Find other references to sound effects, (for example the siren from the prison, the fireworks, the gun shots). Discuss what effects they would have on an audience. Remember this play has been staged in relatively intimate theatre spaces in Australia.

→ Costumes ←

Here are two examples of the costume designs for Bea and Isola from the STC production. Note also the pictures in the script of the various productions.
Activity

- Design costumes for the other characters in *Navigating*. What do your designs tell us about these characters?
- Look at the pictures in the script. What do the clothes they are wearing tell us about the characters?

→ The Properties (props) ←

Props are anything that can be carried onto the stage. There are significant props in *Navigating* such as the figurehead, the boat, the gun, the ring, the documents, the underwear drawer etc.

The props in *Navigating* are an important part of the text, and often act as a visual metaphor when they are used. Each time a prop is used it accumulates meaning and creates differing meanings, moods and atmospheres.

Activity

- Working in pairs list all the props in the play and decide how they create meaning.
- Draw a storyboard representation of each prop, picturing how it is used at each significant moment in the play. Note the quality of the drawing is not important.
Readers Theatre

Navigating is well suited to be performed as a Readers Theatre production.

Readers Theatre is somewhat like performing the work as a radio play. The actors read directly from scripts which are usually uniform in size and design.

During the performance the actors stand out in front of the audience and do not look directly at each other even when characters exchange comments. Instead they each focus on a fixed point in the audience to suggest this interaction.

Reader B     Reader A     Reader C
 O             O             O
  \\
 X             Y             

For example if Reader A talks to Reader B, the focus crosses at point X in the audience. However, if Reader A talks to Reader C instead, she/he shifts the focus to point Y. When a reader is not speaking to anyone in particular, she/he looks in the direction of the audience.

Action within the script is only symbolically represented. For example Bea and Darcy may sit on chairs for the final scene to indicate the boat.

Settings are simple. Often the set consists of just a chair for each for each actor and an actor sits down when not on stage. You might use back-projected slides or you may select one or two props to represent Dunbar.

Make-up and costumes are kept to a minimum and are usually used only to reinforce characterisation. For example a cardigan for Bea and a slinky dress and long gloves for Isola (see page 18 of the script).

Lighting is kept to a minimum but you might like to differentiate day and night scenes.

Music and sound FX are important to set the scene and create the mood in Navigating. Va pensiero is not difficult to sing and your music department in the school should be able to help you with the music. If not consult the Operacion Kit on Nabucco available from Opera Australia. Pretty Woman is a song by Roy Orbison. Waly Waly is available from the Australian Music Centre and Blow the Wind Southerly is available in most collections of books for school choirs; again consult your music department. All songs could be accompanied my guitar. You could even select a group of student whose role it is to create the sound FX, such as gun shots, wind and rain, to support the actors.

For more information on Readers Theatre see Cusworth, R and Simons, J, 1997 Beyond the script: drama in the classroom.
Appendix E


Section 3 pp 1-20.
Music, English and Drama activities

Junior school activities

Writing your own opera

Czech pronunciation guide
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

MUSIC
ENGLISH
DRAMA
JUNIOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
WRITING YOUR OWN OPERA
CZECH PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

The following are some suggested activities for English, Drama and Music students, but this does not mean that students of other subjects cannot benefit from working on the opera. Some other subjects for which this kit may be useful include: Art, Textiles and Design, History and General Studies. There are also some suggestions for junior school students. The section concludes with “Writing your own opera” and a ‘Czech Pronunciation Guide’.
MUSIC ACTIVITIES

This unit of work focuses on The Cunning Little Vixen and serves as an introduction to the use of opera within the framework of study. This kit aims to demonstrate ways in which a study unit on The Cunning Little Vixen can be used to inspire students and at the same time be used to cover a broad section of course requirements for music studies. There is no other single musical genre which comes near to opera in its potential to develop a broad and integrated understanding of music.

Read the story of The Cunning Little Vixen provided in the first part of this resource.

Diversity in Music

Listening is an essential skill in discovering opera. The following guided listening sequence is therefore strongly recommended to help students into the bits and pieces so that they can perceive that an opera is made up of parts that are approachable and comprehensible.

There will be many more ways that you will find to hone students' powers of discernment and analysis. The following tasks will assist the development of students' skills in communicating musical ideas effectively by building on known musical vocabulary.
Excerpt 1:

a) This short section contains a great deal of musical information about the characters who sing in it. How does Janáček contrast the characters of the vixen, the rooster, the hens and the Forester?

b) Concentrating on the vixen’s speech to the hens, how do you think that Janáček has conveyed in music the idea of rhetoric (and possibly insincere rhetoric at that)?

c) How does Janáček use non-singing, or non-articulate sounds to create dramatic effect?

d) How is the chorus used in this scene, and why do you feel it has been done this way? How else might Janáček have set it?

e) This passage comes as the finale of the act and releases the accumulated tension. Discuss Janáček’s use of three of the following musical elements in presenting the sudden release of drama at the end of the act:

   texture, melody, rhythm, harmony, form, instrumentation, tone colour, dynamics, vocal/instrumental balance, articulation/attack

Excerpt 2:

a) Discuss the use of rhythm in this section, especially the cross rhythms of the dance at the end.

b) How does Janáček characterise the two voices (fox and vixen)? How are they distinguished? How does the writing of the two parts contrast the characters?

c) As compared to the Act I finale, what musical form is this section of the finale based around? How does Janáček use it to suggest stage action? Why do you think that orchestral passages and interludes might play such an important part in the opera?

d) How does Janáček use melodic lines to underline the libretto in this passage?

e) Discuss the orchestration here. What do you feel it contributes to the passage?

f) Janáček uses recurring melodic fragments and ostinato rhythms to great effect. How is musical structure built up out of these elements at the end of this excerpt?

g) Discuss the use and effect of harmony and unison singing in this excerpt.

h) How does Janáček feature different voices in this section? How is musical tension created?

i) How does this chorus differ to the ones you have heard so far?
Excerpt 3:

a) How is the end of this passage contrasted to those preceding it? How does Janáček create an impression of the vixen’s death using different means of musical expression?

b) How does Janáček use set pieces, such as folk songs, in this passage? How are they marked as set pieces? What do you think is the purpose of them? How are the melodic structures different from his usual writing?

c) What do you think extra-musical devices such as gun shots add to this passage?

d) Compare the instrumental accompaniment of Haraště and the vixen in this excerpt.

e) Compare the vixen’s music to that in her other excerpts. What differences are noticeable and what effects do they create?

f) How does the music suggest that the vixen is dying?

Excerpt 4:

a) How are strings used in this excerpt as compared to previous ones?

b) How has Janáček used the orchestration in the finale to suggest how the Forester has changed in the opera?

c) How do the vocal line and the orchestral writing interact in this passage?

d) Comment on Janáček’s use of dissonance in this scene.

e) How does the music communicate the Forester’s exaltation?

f) Discuss the instrumentation of the orchestral introduction and how it relates to the aria that follows.

g) Why do you think a child’s voice is used for the frog? What effect does it create?

MORE GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR INVESTIGATION:

- This opera is performed in a language other than that it was written in. Do you think this is a good idea? If so, then what issues do you think would arise in preparing a translation for an opera instead of one to be spoken?

- Janáček is one of the most distinctively sounding composers. What do you think makes this? Do you feel that his work sounds like any other composers you know? If so, whose? Why do you feel there might be a similarity?
• What features of this opera do you think suggest that it is composed in the twentieth century?

• Do you think Janáček had a dramatic purpose in casting the fox as a mezzo? 
  (Hint: look at so called trouser roles such as Cherubino in The Marriage of Figaro or 
  Octavian in Der Rosenkavalier and how those roles are used)

  **COMPARISON OF STYLES**

• Find other music theatre works from other periods for musical comparison.

• Listen to the way other composers have used the forms and conventions of opera. 
  Choose one, such as recitative, ensemble, interlude or chorus.

• In what ways does the opera The Cunning Little Vixen reflect the social and philosophical 
  concerns of its time?

• Janáček was a very strong Czech nationalist. Do you see this reflected in 
  The Cunning Little Vixen?

• With reference to the themes and use of musical elements of particular composers or 
  works, how does opera reflect Western social history in any particular period?

  **CREATIVE ORGANISATION**

• Find a section of The Cunning Little Vixen text from which you can improvise a short 
  dialogue in recitative style.

• Compose a short piece in aria form (vocal or instrumental) using one of Janáček’s 
  ostinato figures.

• Compose a simple guitar or piano accompaniment for the chorus in excerpt 3.

• Devise and record a soundscape to create a mood and motifs for a short children’s story.

• In groups, improvise a folk song in the style of Janáček.

• Arrange the duet in excerpt 3 for two instruments.

  **PERFORMING**

• Perform solo or in ensemble your own compositions above.

• Arrange your own piece for solo performance from your choice of the score extracts.

• Select chorus and ensemble excerpts for group performance.

• Perform an aria from the extracts provided on your instrument.

• Select an eastern European folk song for group or individual performance.
ENGLISH

It needs to be emphasised that music is also a text which is used quite deliberately to underline ideas and emotions and even to fill out settings. It would be fruitful to deal with these ideas or emotions first with the written text in the libretto, then listen to what the music adds and, finally, see what is done with the relevant passage in performance.

An interesting exercise for students is to experiment with turning the sound off in non-dialogue sections of films on television to test what music adds to the visual experience. Just as film music is often taken for granted, as it tends not to intrude consciously, in opera the audience, after the initial shock of hearing characters communicate in such an odd and stylised way (through song) soon forget about the musical text as they are absorbed into the drama.

You may also wish to study the role of music in stage plays. The suggestibility of music is usually communicated at an unconscious level. Think of the best television advertisements you know and explore the role of music in their effectiveness. You do not have to be a musicologist to understand how important the aural text is in flagging musical values. For example, an agency briefed to sell luxury items will use a very different aural text to one trying to capture the youth market. Several excerpts from opera have been used for advertisements. Find out which ones and how the music was used (the British Airways commercial is a good starting point) and to what end. In music an image is immediately conveyed. The apparent contradiction of music is that unlike verbal language it really has no inherent meaning. This point has been debated through the ages and lends to music a perception that it has a kind of mystical quality.

The use of ensembles in opera is a particular text type. Through the use of harmony (and dissonance) both conflict and amity between and within characters can be immediately communicated with great dramatic clarity.

ISSUES TO BE EXPLORED

The story of The Cunning Little Vixen is based on a series of cartoons, which are satirical and entertaining. Newspaper cartoons are important in our society. There are two basic types – comics, which usually use the same set of characters in different, although similar situations. These are a very accurate barometer to some of the concerns and issues that affect their target audiences, and provide an outlet for some of the daily frustrations of life. The other type tend to be overtly political or at least philosophical and may feature caricatures of public figures, events or attitudes. Ever since newspapers have existed, there have been cartoons of one sort or another, and they have often contained some of the strongest and most independent satire or comment of the day. Today most newspapers use cartoonists of one sort or another. Examine the work of cartoonists such as Tandberg, Leunig, Cathy Wilcox, Colquhoun, Matthew Martin or Alan Moir for example. Compare these cartoons with the Vixen cartoons at the end of the kit.
Write a critique of the opera in the light of current attitudes to the environment. To what extent do Janáček’s views coincide with modern ones?

- Discuss changing community attitudes to the environment and the natural world.
- What ways might one adapt the story to a modern context?
- What is it about this text which you think might have induced Janáček to set it to music?
- Write a critique of the portrayal of the human characters in this opera.
- Which character do you think most closely represents Janáček’s own ideas and feelings?

**WRITING**

“*The master took great pleasure from the Brno premiere of The Vixen. He would come back from rehearsals laughing at how the singers were learning to crawl on all fours. The opera chief František Neumann, the producer Otokar Zitek, and the painter Eduard Milen, who designed the sets, made such a beautiful work out of The Vixen, that it surprised even the master.*”

1/ This was the comment of Janáček’s housekeeper, Marie Stejskalova, during the rehearsal period of *The Cunning Little Vixen*. The various people involved may have seen the matter differently:

Imagine you are one of the singers. Write a letter to the head of the opera complaining about having to rehearse this new work — you may think the whole affair is ridiculous, or beneath your dignity, or maybe you simply don’t like the other people you are working with; but remember that you must have good reasons for wanting the chief to intervene.

**or**

You are the director and you have been having trouble with one of the singers, who is being difficult about playing an animal. You feel that the singer is just being petty, after all, everyone else is doing it, and you would much prefer to have someone else doing the part. Write to the chief and outline the situation as you see it and what you would like done about it.

In an extreme situation, you may want to have the singer removed. For this you would have to have very good reasons, because the chief may have to pay the singer anyway, on top of the costs of getting a new one in to learn the role at short notice.

**or**

You are the opera chief. Write a persuasive letter to the singer who has complained. Your main interest is to make sure that everything goes as smoothly as possible. You need to keep the singer happy if you can without interfering with everyone else.
2/ Examine the cartoons in Section Four and write a short story from either the whole series or a section of it. Do not use the words of the opera directly – try to create your own work using the cartoons as a scenario.

3/ Take some of the cartoons in Section Four and write your own captions. Try to do several versions of the one cartoon, perhaps in different genres – one comic, one political, one satirical.

4/ What do you think the difference would be between writing prose, poetry, play script and libretto? Take your story and turn it into poetry, a film script or a libretto.

5/ Write an article suitable for the arts section of The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian or 24 Hours on the difference between a film script and a libretto.

6/ Imagine that you are producing the opera The Cunning Little Vixen. Write your advertising copy for a flyer promoting the opera to the public. Use newspaper material or brochures promoting operas, musicals or other theatre events to use as a guide. Remember brevity and plain English are the essence of effective marketing. You need to make it an irresistible prospect for your potential audience. Do not forget the pulling power of big name artists.

7/ Imagine yourself to be one of the animals. Write about your life, your feelings, your relations to other animals and to humans (remember that being an animal may affect your perceptions).

8/ Compare The Cunning Little Vixen with other works which represent animals eg. Bambi, Wind in the Willows, Storm Boy, The Lion King.

9/ Write a newspaper article covering the events of act two of The Cunning Little Vixen.

10/ After seeing The Cunning Little Vixen write a review of the opera. You should include enough information to help the public to know if they would like to go to this opera. Make sure you write about the strengths and weaknesses of this Opera Australia production. For many people this work is new and it is unlikely that many people will have seen it before. You will have to mention the composer’s style and approach to the music as part of your review.

**STUDYING OF TEXTS**

1a) Listen to the excerpts provided which introduce the main characters and groups of the opera.

b) What is your impression of the following characters?

- The Vixen
- The Fox
- The Forester
- Harâsta
- The Rooster
- The Woodpecker

Explain how the three elements (or texts) verbal, dramatic and musical, give clues about the characters.
2/a) Listen to excerpt 1 while following the words.

b) What do you think this scene is parodying, and in what ways does this reflect the opera's cartoon origin?

c) Although the rooster says “she’s no feminist”, the vixen is later seen as a very independent and forthright creature. In marrying and having children is she fulfilling her independence or betraying it?

d) This is the first scene that shows the vixen in a less than wholly favourable light. What aspects of her personality do you feel this passage shows?

3/a) Listen to excerpt 2 while following the words.

b) Read out the duet in English in class – what difference does not having the music make?
   What does the music tell you about the characters that has to be reconstructed otherwise?

c) Try rewriting the passage, updating it to a modern, human situation.

d) Perform the updated version. Compare it to the original.
   How do you think the situation would be dealt with today?

4/a) Listen to excerpt 3 while following the libretto.

b) How much do Harašta and the vixen have in common – pay special attention to the song that Harašta sings.

c) It is very unusual for the title character of a work to die well before the work has finished. Why do you think the work does not finish with the vixen’s death?

5/a) Listen to excerpt 4 while following the libretto.

b) Why do you think the Frog gets the last word?

c) Why is the Forester worried about them “making our lives into an opera”?

d) Do you feel that the Forester is redeemed? If so from what?
ISSUES AND ARGUMENTS

1/ Is the vixen a villain or a hero or do these categories not apply? If not, why not? Discuss in writing or debate.

2/ Animals are used as symbols for human behaviour, because we associate certain traits with certain animals. Examples of animals from the opera:

She is a vixen
He dogs her footsteps
She has been badgering us all week
He is a bit of a fox (alternately a "foxy babe")
You're just chicken!
He's a bit cocky about that success
She looked owlishly at him

How do you think we come to associate these traits with certain animals?
Do we try to impose human ideas on animal behaviour and expression?
How does *The Cunning Little Vixen* play with and against these ideas?

3/ Find other idiomatic expressions which have animals in them e.g. Raining cats and dogs.

4/ Using the story, chart the Forester's changing relationship with the vixen.
How do you think he changes?

5/ Although foxes are part of the natural order in Europe where this opera was written, they're a feral pest in this country and have to be eliminated to preserve native wildlife. Try to think of other such animals and European stories about them.
Do these stories give us inappropriate ideas about our own country?
How could we write (or rewrite) stories so as to reflect the realities of the Australian ecosystem? You might try starting with Puss-in-Boots or Peter Rabbit.

6/ This work is performed in English, although it was not written in this language. However, singers can still be hard to understand even in English. Think about the kind of music that you normally listen to, whether it is pop, classical or jazz. Which voices do you find easier to understand? Why do you think this is so?
Take a song (e.g., an REM song) and try to write what you can understand of the lyrics. Then try and make up alternative lyrics that sound very similar — they can and probably will be nonsense verse, but see who can get closest in sound to the original and still make some sort of sense.

7/ Write the story of either the Forester and his wife, or the fox in the period before the opera starts.

8/ Write an interview with the Forester for a wildlife magazine about keeping foxes as pets.
9/ Imagine that you are a Czech in 1926. You have just seen *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Write a letter to a friend telling him/her how it affected you. Maybe you are puzzled by this modern music, or maybe you think it is amazingly exciting. Perhaps you think it is strange to have an opera about animals or perhaps you find the humans and animals and the depiction of nature very moving. Bear in mind that there are many things that you would not be aware of in 1926 that would affect your judgement today – eg the environmental movement.

10/ Pretend that the vixen is a movie star or other figure of public scrutiny. The animals around her should also be people – it is up to you what sort you make them. Write for a tabloid newspaper on one of the following topics:

- She was adopted by the Forester
- She bit Pepik
- The dog attempted to molest her
- She incited hens to rebellion and then killed them
- She expropriated the badger from his home
- She and the fox have become romantically involved
- They have celebrated their wedding
- She and her children have avoided a foxtrap
- She was shot after stealing a chicken from Haraňta

11/ Write a poem about the vixen which expresses her emotions re: the Forester, the fox, her children etc.

12/ Write an obituary notice for the vixen in the forest newspaper.

**ORAL COMMUNICATION**

1/ Debate the topic: The director must respect the composer’s intentions.

2/ The fox has an interesting angle on pick-up lines.

Look at the fox’s courtship of the vixen. How have things changed now?

Although the process is greatly compressed in the opera, how has the order of things changed today?

How has the tone changed?

What has stayed the same?

Have a class discussion about best and worst pick-up lines.
DRAMA

ROLE AND CHARACTER

The Cunning Little Vixen is different from many other dramatic works in that the characters, in many cases, are animals. Obviously, this requires a different approach to the preparation and interpretation of these roles.

The Western tradition of theatre does not have a large number of works with these particular demands. Those which do, are not taken particularly seriously. For example, the pantomime tradition often requires actors to play animals. This is meant to be comic.

Some ballets, such as Swan Lake, have animal characters, but there is never any attempt to represent the actual animal. Rather, the choreography will attempt to represent the idea of the swan. This may be achieved through movement which is graceful.

In contrast to the Western theatre tradition, Asian theatre often requires actors to play animal characters in a serious fashion. The impulse for this approach to the characterisation stems from the fact that certain animals are regarded with profound respect and are venerated. For example, in Indian and Indonesian theatre, one of the main characters in traditional stories is Hanuman, the Monkey God. There are other Gods which may have animal characteristics. During the course of the story, people are sometimes transformed magically into animals. The reverse may also occur. In Japanese culture, there are some animals which are thought to have magic powers. These make frequent appearances in performances; for example, in Kabuki theatre, the central concern of one play focuses on a fox.

1/ Listen to the excerpts provided while simultaneously reading the words. What is your impression of the following characters?
   • the Vixen
   • the Rooster
   • the Fox
   • the Woodpecker
   • the Forester
   • Harâsta

2/ The opera begins and ends with the Forester. Do you think the opera should be called The Forester and not The Cunning Little Vixen?

3/ Choose a major character from the opera. Using evidence from the plot as a starting point, develop your character. Consider such things as the following:

   • The physical appearance of the character
   • The history of the character
   • The feelings of the character
   • How the character speaks
   • Relationship to others
   • Events around the character

   Makes notes as you proceed about the development of your character.
4/ Choose a scene from the opera, and in small groups present this to the class.

5/ Build a performance structure with which to communicate your character.
   This may be in the form of:
   - a monologue
   - an interview
   - a conversation
   - a song
   - a panel of discussion

6/ Hold an inquest into the death of the Vixen. Members of the class are the remaining characters from the opera, either human or animal. One class member must play the role of the Coroner. The purpose of the inquest is to investigate how the Vixen died, and who was responsible. Consider the issues of murder, manslaughter, accidental death and suicide. Call characters as witnesses, and elicit evidence from them. This process can incorporate questions about feelings towards other characters, actions and non-actions and the reasons for these. Consider the rules which could be used to hold this inquest. Do human rules or conventions apply? Would the ‘law of the jungle’ or natural order apply?

Deliver the findings of the inquest.

7/ Create a news coverage of the inquest. Assume the roles of news presenter, journalists, friends and associates of the accused. You could use television or radio media. Decide whether you want to present a subjective account eg. O.J. Simpson style or an objective account.

8/ ‘Realism’ and ‘naturalism’ are two terms which are frequently used in the theatre. Research the meanings of these terms, and their application to theatrical productions. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

9/ What are the staging difficulties of mounting a production such as The Cunning Little Vixen? Consider the problems of adults playing the animals. How does one encourage audiences to suspend their disbelief?

10/ You have been asked to direct a new production of The Cunning Little Vixen. The producer has given you absolute freedom as to the manner in which you do this. Your production may be traditional, modern-dress or governed by any style that you determine.

Form production teams within your class - director, conductor, designer and dramaturg. Format your concept for the production. What are some of the problems you might encounter when attempting to implement this concept, and how would you attempt to solve them? Report your solutions for the brief.
11/ With reference to the extracts supplied and your knowledge of this opera, discuss how the opera uses its literary source and various extraneous elements to create a fictional narrative. Consider what importance the original texts are given and how Janáček has made a story out of them, especially the creation of fully rounded dramatic characters and emotions from a comic strip.

12/ Imagine that you are the Artistic Director talking to the Opera Board about why The Cunning Little Vixen is a worthy choice for the company’s repertoire. Discuss the merits of the plot and characterisation and your ideas for production.

13/ Script and/or enact an interview between the conductor of The Cunning Little Vixen and a patron of opera, where they discuss how the music informs the performance.

**DRAMATIC FORM**

1/ Study Excerpts One and Three in conjunction with the translation given. Using this as a script, block the scene.

2/ After attending the performance of The Cunning Little Vixen, write a review. Consider the following:

- direction
- design of sets, costumes and props
- lighting

**AUSTRALIAN DRAMA**

1/ Discuss the relevance of The Cunning Little Vixen to a contemporary Australian audience.

2/ Opera Australia has presented several works by Australian composers. For example, The Eighth Wonder by Alan John and Dennis Watkins is about the building of the Opera House; Larry Sitisky’s The Golem explores aspects of Jewish mythology; Richard Meale’s Pasp, with a libretto by David Malouf, is based on Patrick White’s novel; and Moya Henderson’s work Lindy is based on the story of Lindy Chamberlain. Why do you think composers in Australia continue to use opera as a form of expression?

3/ Research the history of opera in Australia. Present a paper on one of the following where you adopt the persona involved in the field you are discussing. Eg, you are a composer discussing composers.

- composers
- directors
- singers
- designers

4/ Make a model of your ideal opera house. Design five sets that could be used for The Cunning Little Vixen.
ACTIVITIES : ENACTMENT OF THE EXPERT

Each of you are members of an elite team of opera/theatre experts. Opera Australia is planning a new production of *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Money is no object and you can choose the locale. You are familiar with the opera. This is the first meeting. Each of you is an expert in one of the following:

- Set design
- Costume lighting
- Lighting design
- Dramaturgy
- Directing
- Musical direction

Optional - 2 male and 2 female opera singers

Each group has approximately 30 minutes before it has to report back to a panel of 3 experts. Each group will need sheets of butchers paper and colour pencils to brainstorm and then draft their ideas for the production. This can include sketches. Each group can appoint a scribe to report back to the panel, 'sell' your concept and possibly earn a lot of money.

FILMING *THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN* – ACTIVITIES

*Whole class divided into groups*

1/ Your version of the opera was so successful you have been asked to make a film of your production. Decide how you will divide up the work.

2/ *The libretto* - you will need to adapt the libretto for your film. What scenes will you choose? Where will you film the outdoor sequences?

3/ *The cast* - give detailed physical descriptions of each of the major characters including voice types.

4/ *Locations* – give a detailed description of the requirements for the outdoor locations.

5/ *Sets* – give a detailed description of the sets required for scenes (include colour sketches/scale drawings).

6/ *Costume* – give a detailed description of the costumes of each major character for each act (include colour sketches).

7/ *Storyboards* – create storyboards for the camera - what shots are required of the action. (Long, medium, short and a brief description of the action for each shot).
8. Director's notes – detailed notes to each actor/singer in each scene, their objective in scene, their super objective for the act.

- An analysis of the plot in relation to the characters, their motivations, relationships and general appearance.
- Blocking of key scenes including special effects.

**THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN**
**AND THEATRE DESIGN – ACTIVITIES**

1/ Design costumes for the characters in the opera. Include:

- A statement of your concept and reasons for your choices
- 4-8 costume renderings
- A minimum of 2 different characters (age, social standing, occupations)
- Sketches and a brief description, approximately A4 in water colour, colour pencils, collage or computer aided designs

2/ Design a poster, program and advertising/promotion copy. Include:

- Two different design concepts for the opera.
  The finished design for each concept must include:
  1 program (cover, layout, own choice cast and crew, information on the composer, history of the opera)
  1 flyer
  1 Newspaper advertisement
  1 poster

3/ Design the sets for a school production of *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

**PERFORMANCE SPACES AND THE CONVENTIONS OF THEATRE – ACTIVITY**

Consider possible venues, other than a theatre for the staging of *The Cunning Little Vixen* eg, a shopping mall or a warehouse. Imagine you have been asked to make a submission for permission to stage your production in the chosen space. Write a report describing the advantages and disadvantages of the space and the effects on the proposed production, eg, how would the performance space affect the production concept in terms of costing, staging, blocking, performance styles, costuming, sets, props, audience appeal and participation?
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN AND PERFORMANCE STYLES

1/ To which of the following performance styles could The Cunning Little Vixen be adapted? Choose 2.

- Commedia dell’Arte
- Kabuki
- Epic Theatre (Brecht)
- Melodrama

Research them. Discuss the possibilities and obstacles presented by each form. Explain in detail what changes you would make - use diagrams where necessary. Present a section of your adaptation of The Cunning Little Vixen.

2/ Create a short puppet play based on the characters of the Vixen and the Fox.

3/ Choose a character or group of characters in the opera and draw or make a stylised mask for the character(s). Use the masks as the basis of a mask/movement piece or a mask play. You can use music from the opera or from any other source which reflects the mood and dominant emotions or the piece.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE PRODUCTION

Draw up a pyramid chart showing all the people involved in bringing an opera to the stage. Your chart should also show who is in charge of what areas. The three main areas are music, drama and technical. Some positions you may consider are:

- Company Management
- General Manager
- Artistic Director
- Director
- Designers
- Costume Makers
- Set Makers
- Stage Management
- Musical Preparation
ACTIVITIES: SUITABLE FOR JUNIOR STUDENTS

DRAMA

The students select a character from the opera. Then:

1/ Draw their chosen character as accurately as possible.

2/ Use their imagination to devise a character profile around their drawing. Look at the character’s name, age, likes, dislikes, where they live, who they live with, what they do, what they would like for Christmas etc.

3/ Characters can be further developed through techniques such as:

   • hotseating - a child is chosen to sit on a ‘hotseat’. Others ask questions about the child’s character. Child must answer questions in character.

   • playbuilding - children devise short, simple plays around three or four characters.

   • character collages - children draw their character in the centre of a sheet of art paper and stick magazine pictures of images which relate to their character (things the character may like - clothing, places, food, objects).

   • make characters out of materials such as play doh, pipe cleaners, junk materials. These can later be used as puppets or room displays.

4/ Create a class mural of the forest with the animals.

5/ Listen to some music from The Cunning Little Vixen and ask children to paint their reactions.

ENGLISH ACTIVITIES

1/ Make a class big book of the story of the opera.

2/ Make a comic strip version of Act 2.

3/ Rewrite the story in contemporary local community setting.

MUSIC ACTIVITIES:

1/ Listen to excerpts from the opera. Accompany the music using percussion and/or simple tuned instruments.

2/ Learn a folk song about animals.
Appendix F


Music, English and Drama activities

References

Other works by Verdi

Books

Other organisations

nabucco

Giuseppe Verdi

opera action
TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

NABUCCO

MUSIC
ENGLISH
DRAMA

The following are some suggested activities for Music, English and Drama students, but this does not mean that students of other subjects cannot benefit from working on the opera. Some other subjects for which these resources may be useful include: Art, Textiles and Design, History and General Studies.
GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOLLOWING A
VIEWING OF NABUCCO

1/ What characters did you empathise with most and why?

2/ Which characters' relationships impacted on you the most?

3/ What message(s) came from this opera? How current are these messages in society today?

4/ Which scenes had the greatest emotional impact on you? Why? Which were the most important scenes for you? Why?

5/ How effective is the theatricality of the production in making it successful/entertaining?

6/ Would you recommend this as essential viewing for students of opera and/or modern culture? Why?

MUSIC ACTIVITIES

This unit of work focuses on Nabucco and serves as an introduction to the use of opera within the framework of study for year 10 and above. These resources aim to demonstrate ways in which a study unit on Nabucco can be used to inspire students and at the same time be used to cover a broad section of course requirements for music studies. There is no other single musical genre which comes near to opera in its potential "to develop a broad and integrated understanding of music".

Read the story of Nabucco provided in section two.

DIVERSITY IN MUSIC

Listening is an essential skill in discovering opera. The following guided listening sequence is therefore strongly recommended to help students into the bits and pieces so that they can perceive that an opera is made up of parts that are approachable and comprehensible. During the course of listening to operatic forms, recitative, aria, interlude and ensembles will be experienced so as to make the terms and functions of these more immediate to students. Use the accompanying score to assist.

There will be many more ways that you will find to hone students' powers of discernment and analysis. The following tasks will assist the development of students' skills in communicating musical ideas effectively by building on known musical vocabulary.
Excerpt 1: Act I - O vinti, il capo a terra!

_Nabucco, Zaccaria, Ismaele, Abigailie, Anna, Fenena, Chorus_

a) This short section contains a great deal of musical information about the three characters who sing in it. How does Verdi contrast the characters of Nabucco, Zaccaria and Ismaele?

b) Concentrating on Nabucco’s piece of recitative, what do you feel the orchestration contributes to your knowledge of the character? Look also at the intervals in his recitative and compare them to another piece of your acquaintance. What do they tell you about Nabucco?

c) Discuss the use of melody and rhythm in this section.

d) This passage comes as the finale of the act, at the end of a long period of suspense. Discuss Verdi’s use of three of the following musical elements in presenting the sudden release of drama at the end of the act:
- texture
- melody
- rhythm
- harmony
- form
- instrumentation
- tone colour
- dynamics
- vocal/instrumental balance
- articulation/attack

e) How do you feel Verdi manages to articulate the situation of each individual character within the ensemble? What devices does he use?

Excerpt 2: Act II - Salgo già del trono aurato

_Abigaille, Gran Sacerdote, Chorus_

a) What do you feel is the purpose of the coloratura (ornament) in this excerpt?

b) Verdi demands a huge range of the soprano in this excerpt - how do you feel this is used to portray her character?

c) Discuss the orchestration here. What do you feel it contributes to the passage?

d) It is unusual to use a male-only chorus in a woman’s aria in this period. What effect do you think Verdi is aiming at in doing so?

Excerpt 3: Act II - S’oda or me!

_Nabucco, Fenena, Gran Sacerdote, Zaccaria, Abigailie, Chorus_

a) For much of this passage Nabucco sings in a monotone. Comment on this and the devices which contrast to it in this passage.

b) What do you think extra-musical devices such as thunder add to this passage? How does Verdi suggest divine intervention with the orchestra?
Excerpt 4: Act III - Deh, perdona.

Nabucco, Abigaille

a) How is this passage contrasted to those preceding it? How does Verdi create an impression of Nabucco’s madness using different means of musical expression?

b) How does Verdi use modulation to suggest the contrast between Nabucco and Abigaille?

c) Discuss how the melody is apportioned and divided between the characters in this passage.

Excerpt 5: Act III - Va, pensiero, sull’ali dorate.

Chorus

a) Discuss the instrumentation of the orchestral introduction and how it relates to the chorus that follows.

b) How does this chorus differ to the ones you have heard so far?

c) Discuss the use and effect of harmony and unison singing in this excerpt.

d) After looking at the score, discuss how and to what extent you feel this chorus has been “interpreted” by the conductor? Do you agree with the way in which it has been done?

Excerpt 6: Act III - Oh, dischiuso è il, firmamento!

(All characters, chorus)

a) Compare Fenena’s aria with the earlier arias of Abigaille. What is the significance of the marking “cantabile”?

b) In some versions of the opera “Immesso Jeouha” (pp. 231 - 235) is placed at the very end of the opera. Do you think this is a good idea?

c) Compare Abigaille’s music to that in her other excerpts. What differences are noticeable and what effects do they create?

d) How has Verdi used the orchestration in the finale to suggest how the characters have changed in the opera?

e) How does the music suggest that Abigaille is dying?

f) In each finale, one character has “the last word”. How is this device used to contrast the various finales?
Further, more general questions for investigation:

- How does Verdi treat themes of violence through his use of musical elements and devices in Nabucco?
- Does Nabucco follow in the Italian opera tradition of Rossini and Donizetti? Where and how does it diverge?
- What features of this opera do you think suggest that it is composed in the nineteenth century?
- Do you think Verdi had a dramatic purpose in casting Nabucco as a baritone? (Hint: look at principal baritone parts prior to 1842, and how they are used compared to the tenor)

Comparison of styles

- Find other music theatre works from other periods for musical comparison.
- Listen to the way other composers have used the forms and conventions of opera. Choose one, such as recitative, ensemble, overture or chorus.
- In what ways does the opera Nabucco reflect the social and philosophical concerns of its time?
- Verdi was a very strong Italian nationalist. How is this reflected in Nabucco?
- With reference to the themes and use of musical elements of particular composers or works, how does opera reflect Western social history in any particular period?

Creative Organisation

- Find a section of the Nabucco text from which you can improvise a short dialogue in recitative style.
- Compose a short piece in aria form (vocal or instrumental) using one of Verdi’s rhythmic bass figures.
- Compose a simple guitar or piano accompaniment for the chorus in excerpt 6.
- Devise and record a soundscape to create a mood and motifs for a short children’s story.
- In groups, improvise a chorus in the style of Giuseppe Verdi.
Performing

- Perform solo or in ensemble your own compositions above.
- Arrange your own piece for solo performance from your choice of the score extracts.
- Select chorus and ensemble excerpts for group performance.
- Perform an aria from the extracts provided on your instrument.
- Select an Italian folk song for group or individual performance.
ENGLISH

English teachers should also look at the Drama section for ideas and materials.

The story of Nabucco was adapted from the bible, one of the seminal texts of western culture, and in the Authorised version, one of the stylistic milestones of the English language. It is also informed by nineteenth century romantic orientalism. As a context students should first read the story of Nabucco.

This production outraged many older subscribers, to the point that Opera Australia was sued by an irate patron who claimed that he had had no warning that the production would be a radical one.

ACTIVITIES:

1/ Imagine you are the subscriber and write a letter to the Artistic Director of Opera Australia outlining your objections to the production.

2/ Imagine you are the director who has been called upon to respond to these objections and write a letter supporting this production.

3/ Imagine that you are the General Manager of the company. Whether you like or do not like the production in this case is irrelevant. The important issue is the freedom of the director to interpret the work. On the other hand, you cannot afford to lose subscribers. Write a letter of response to an angry subscriber in which you do not try to justify the production, but rather the directors’ right to direct as they wish.

4/ Compare several different versions of the bible at the verses of Jeremiah dealing with parts of this story (Jer. XXXIV). Good comparisons can be made if you take the Authorised version, the Revised Standard and the Good News bibles. What are the features of the different versions? What effect are they aiming at? Try having someone read the passage at Jer XXXIV 2-4 (starting “Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: go and speak to Zedekiah, king of Judah...”) aloud in the different versions. What do you think was the intention of the different translators of this passage towards their readers? For example, most modern translations try very hard to make the language as colloquial as register allows: why do you think this is so? Which do you feel most effectively conveys the idea of the prophet and his message? Why? Write your own version to convey what you feel is most important about the passage.

5/ The following are the words of Zacharia's recitative from the third act in a traditional translation. Compare it to the subtitle version on the video.

Oh, who weeps? Who lifts their lamentations
like fearful women to the eternal God?
Oh, arise, my suffering brothers
The Lord speaks through my lips!
In the mist of the future I see...
Behold, the shameful chains are shattered!
Already on the treacherous desert
The wrath of the lion of Judah descends!

Hyenas and serpents shall come
To rest on the skulls and the bones
Between the dust raised by the wind
A deathly silence shall reign!
The only sound at the fall of night
Will be the owl’s sad lamentations...
Not a stone will remain to tell the stranger
Where proud Babylon once stood!

6/ Write an article suitable for the arts section of The Age or The Australian or 24 Hours on your reaction to a viewing of this video production of Nabucco.

7/ Imagine that you are producing the opera Nabucco. Write your advertising copy for a flyer promoting the opera to the public. It would help if you obtained newspaper material or brochures promoting operas, musicals or other theatre events to use as a guide. Remember brevity and plain English are the essence of effective marketing. Do not forget the pulling power of big name artists.

8/ Write a newspaper article covering the events of act two of Nabucco suitable for a teenage magazine.

9/ After seeing Nabucco write a review of the opera for your local newspaper. You should include enough information to help the public to know if they would like to go to this opera or buy the video. Make sure you write about the strengths and weaknesses of this Opera Australia production. Bear in mind that for many people this production of Nabucco is highly controversial and that you will have to mention the director’s approach to the production as part of your review.

10/ Write a letter to a friend who hasn’t seen this video production of Nabucco. Tell your friend about the work and your feelings about the production.

CHARACTERS, PLOTS AND THEMES

Issues

1/ What is your impression of the following characters? Explain how the three elements (or texts) verbal, dramatic and musical, give clues about the characters?

- Nabucco
- Abigaille
- Fenena
- Ismaele
- Zaccaria
2/ How do Verdi and his librettist create the impression of madness? Compare Verdi’s version to other dramatic renditions of madness (eg Shakespeare’s King Lear)?

3/ What conflicts are resolved and what are suspended at the end of act one? How do these engage interest for the rest of the drama?

4/ Below are the words of Va, pensiero. This chorus is like a national anthem in Italy. Compare it to a song like I Still Call Australia Home.

Hebrews - Va, pensiero, sull’ali dorate

EBREI
Va, pensiero, sull’ali dorate;
Va, ti posa sui clivi, sui colli;
Ove alezzano tepide e molli
L’aure dolci del suolo nata!
Del Giordano le rive saluta,
Di Sionne le torri atturate
Oh, mia patria si bella e perduta!
Oh, membranza si cara e fatal!
Arpa, d’or dei fatidici vati,
Perche muta dal salice pendii?
Le memorie nel petto recendii,
Ci favella del tempo che fu!
O simile di Solima ai fati
Traggi un suono di crudo lamento,
O t’ispiri il Signore un concetto
Che ne infonda al patire virtu!

HEBREWS
Fly, thought, on wings of gold
go settle upon the slopes and the hills
where, soft and mild, the sweet airs
of our native land smell fragrant!
Greet the banks of the Jordan
and Zion’s toppled towers.
Oh, my country so lovely and lost!
Oh, remembrance so dear and so fraught!
Golden harp of the prophetic seers,
why dost thou hang mute?
Rekindle our bosom’s memories,
and speak of times gone by!
Mindful of the fate of Jerusalem,
either give forth an air of sadness,
or else let the Lord imbue us
with fortitude to bear our sufferings!

ISSUES AND ARGUMENTS

1/ Is Nabucco a villain or a hero? Discuss in writing or debate.

2/ Which is greater in Nabucco, spiritual or physical power? Discuss with reference not only to the character of Nabucco, but also to Zaccaria, Fenena and Abigaille.

3/ Do you feel that Abigaille is completely brutal? How does the opera use the fact that she is a woman to highlight her less sympathetic features?

4/ Contrast the characters of Fenena and Abigaille. What is it about Fenena that is depicted as being “good” when compared to Abigaille? What does this say about attitudes to women in the period in which this was written?
5/ Think about how some extreme views are regarded as acceptable while others are not. In the opera, for example, Zaccaria's bloodthirsty visions are somehow seen as righteous, whereas Nabucco's are seen as vicious. Find recent examples of this on a local, national or international level, and think about how these views are fuelled and developed. For example, the power of the media and the people who own it substantially influence the thinking and attitudes of society. Remember that views which seem normal may be extreme to someone else. A good way of doing this is to find someone whose viewpoint you consider extreme and then ask yourself how they would see you.

6/ Pretend that Abigail is a Royal figure.
Write for a tabloid newspaper one of the following scandals:

- She has fallen in love with Ismaele, a Hebrew
- Ismaele has rejected her in favour of her sister Fenena
- She has attempted to have both of them killed
- She is actually the daughter of a slave and not of royal blood at all
- She has tried to take the throne, believing Nabucco to be dead, but he has stopped her.

Nabucco has gone mad and she has taken control and condemned the Hebrews to death (you might speculate on her motives here, in light of some of her earlier scandals)

Nabucco has taken control again and she has taken poison.

7/ Write an obituary notice for Abigail in the national newspaper. Remember that as the official newspaper it should sound as favourable towards her as possible.

ORAL COMMUNICATION

1/ Prepare a case to be presented to the class indicating whether Nabucco is fit to rule or not. If you think he is not, discuss who should rule instead.

2/ Debate the topic: The director must not interfere with the composer's intentions.

3/ There is a Jewish tradition once a year during the festival of Purim, whereby people are allowed to hold mock trials when anyone can be accused and be defended. There is a famous story of one such trial where the sole survivor of a pogrom brought God before a purim trial. Imagine it is the Purim Festival after the events described in Nabucco. Some members of the class prepare prosecution cases against God for having caused suffering to his chosen people (you might find it useful to do some research on the covenant and the biblical explanations for the fall of Jerusalem). Other members of the class prepare the defence.

4/ You are Austrian officials in 1842. Argue whether Nabucco should be censored and why.
Appendix G

An Evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney [CD].

ABC Audio. See CD in sleeve.
Appendix H


*An evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney:*

*Educator resources.*

Sydney: The University of Sydney Education Outreach Program.

*External Relations Division, pp 32-34.*
Section 4

Follow up activities

1. The Poetry Game

This activity develops and extends the students’ reading, writing and listening skills. The discussion of poetry style and the creation of possible endings to selected lines of poetry encourages the students to view the reading of poetry as an active process.

Preparation

Collect a number of poems suitable for the students’ age level. All students need pens or pencils and sheets of paper.

Lesson Directions

The teacher selects a poem or a section of a poem about four lines long. The teacher reads out the two first lines of the poem or section of the poem and then the students write two more lines. That is, they write their own version of the ending of the poem. The students put their names on the top of their page. The teacher collects all the poems completed by the students and numbers the collected poems 1, 2, 3, 4 etc. The teacher reads out all the versions of the poem and the original version and does not indicate which is the original version and which are the made up versions. The teacher does not read out the name of the student on the top of the page, only the number is read out. The students guess which is the original version and write down the number on a page of paper. The teacher asks all students which version they think is the original.

Scoring

Students whose version of the poem is guessed by other students to be the original receive one point per guess. Students who guess the original poem receive one point. The winner is the student with the most points.

Variations

The process can be repeated using other poems. Students can select poems and become the poetry game leader.

2. A Personal Anthology

Students collects ten or fifteen favourite poems and write them into a personal anthology illustrated with drawings, pictures or cartoons. One poem can be selected and read to class. (The teacher can help here by providing pictures and anthologies. Point out that you expect students to practise their poetry reading before it is read to the class.)

3. Poetry Genre

Students collect examples of different kinds of poems - a ballad, a limerick, a haiku, a sonnet, an elegy, or free verse forms. In groups, the students could work out any distinctive features of the poems.

4. Poetry Survey

Conduct a poetry survey. Students ask their parents, relatives or friendly adults what poems they remember from school. (This could be an interesting start to a discussion of attitudes towards poetry.)
5. Poetry Performance

Have a poetry day, or week, throughout the school. Displays of personal anthologies, students' own poems, group poetry presentations, readings accompanied by mimics, poetry competitions, quizzes, a special display in the library, a talk with an Australian poet, raffles to buy more anthologies for the library, readings of poems written especially for children in a nearby primary school, poems written on coloured balloons, poems written on mobiles - all of these activities can be fun and worthwhile.

6. Colour the Poem

Poems in colour. This method seems to work well with years 7 and 8. Students write out a poem using different coloured felt pens for any words they feel like colouring. This is a good introduction to the concept of mood in poetry. You will be surprised how accurate their responses will be to the mood of the poem. In groups, they can talk to each other about their choices.

7. Poetry Register

Keep a class list of words in the register of poetry - stanza, line break, metaphor, metre, mood, etc. Call the list the Poetry Register. As words come up in class, invite the student to write the word in the register. Not only does this alert the students to the special vocabulary of poetry, it also gives them a sense of learning something concrete.

8. Poetry Build-up

Suggest that students write a poem that progresses from a one line stanza to a two line stanza, three line, four line, and so on. The same method can be used for syllables in each line.

9. Name Poems

Student's Name poems. Write your name down the left side of the board or page. Each letter starts a line of the poem. (Teacher can do this too!)

10. Hospital Anthology

Encourage students to collect an anthology of poems for children in hospital. This could be a whole class activity, with an editorial team chosen from the class and contributions written by the students, as well as some published ones. If you followed this through by sending the anthology to a hospital it could be a valuable experience for everyone.

11. Association Game

Play an association game. Put an evocative word up on the board - misery, happiness, school, birthday, conflict - ask students to write down a place, colour, person or idea which occurs to them when they hear the words. You can then ask the students to try writing a poem on one of the themes, and look at other poems on the same theme.

12. Dictionary Exercise

Combine dictionary work with poetry work. If you have enough dictionaries for students to work individually it is better. Pupils skim the pages of the dictionary and pick out words they like the sound of; they then write single lines of poetry using the chosen word. This gives them a sense of the place of sound in creating poetic effects. It can be done without dictionaries if necessary.
13. The Sound of Poetry

In junior years you can spend considerable time working on sound effects and tone of voice in poetry. It helps if you enjoy reading poetry aloud to the class. Often a difficult part becomes clear when a teacher reads it perceptively and sensitively. Some have used the spoken voice method extensively with junior classes, reading the poem several times to the class specifically to help students discover the tone of the poem. This sometimes involves deliberately reading against the vein to effect contrast: for example, a sad poem will be read in a cheerful tone of voice, or a brisk poem will be read monotonously. Students pick up easily enough the disjunction between the meaning conveyed by the words and the inappropriate-sounding tone. They become conscious too of the harmony or disharmony in the poem itself. Changes in tone throughout the poem can be recognised also. This method can lead to group work with students experimenting with different reading voices to discover the most suitable one. They can also compare their reading with John Bell’s reading.

14. The Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia

To encourage a love of Shakespeare in your students, why not contact The Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia which conducts a range of competitions and workshops across Australia. The “jewel in the crown” each year is The National Schools’ Shakespeare Festival for secondary school students. This event consists of regional and state festivals in the areas of performance, music, design and dance. Supported by teaching materials, workshops and performances by international theatre practitioners, Shakespeare becomes a living rather than a dead playwright. Through the treatment of Shakespeare as their contemporary, the students’ exploration of his works reinforces other literature, drama, history and music courses.

For more information about the National Youth Festival, Teacher or Student Workshops call (02) 9351 5231.

15. The Bell Shakespeare Company.

Visit one of the Bell Shakespeare Company’s productions of a Shakespearean play. They also have an interactive education program, Actors at Work, which spends most of each year working in secondary schools all over the country. Invite them to your school. For further information call (02) 9241 2722.
Teacher Professional Development in Performing and Literary Arts Education

A portfolio submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Education

from

University of Western Sydney, Nepean

by

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April 2002
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Abstract

The articles in this portfolio provide an account of research, which for the purposes of this thesis is divided into two broad categories: teacher professional development, and the support of teacher education in literary and performing arts pedagogy.

Within this context three core issues are addressed:

The equipping of teachers with current theoretical knowledge and understanding of the performing and literary arts.

The development of student-centred approaches and strategies to enable teachers to teach the performing and literary arts effectively; together with the impact of these interactive, student-centred classroom procedures, on students' comprehension and critical analysis of literary and performing arts texts.

The support of teachers in aiding students' understanding and critical analysis of complex difficult and often, for teachers and students, culturally alienating artistic phenomena. Texts such as: historical and contemporary theatre, music theatre (especially opera) and poetry.

The thesis can therefore be categorised under research into teacher professional education. Action research and reflective practitioner research methodology were adopted, as this schema is recognised as being highly appropriate to preservice and inservice development of
teachers, and to the improvement of teaching approaches and skills especially in the development new methods of learning.

The research has its theoretical foundations in interactive, child-centred theories of education, performance semiotics and psycholinguistic theories of reading. It is also committed to enabling teachers and students to engage creatively and interpretively in the comprehension of artistic texts and the performing arts.
Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge my academic colleagues, both nationally and internationally, who have been so generous in their support of my work over many years. The educational drama community, in particular, contains gifted professionals who take pride in their innovative theory and practice, and I owe much to the friendship and academic camaraderie of this group.

Equally I wish to acknowledge the teachers and students who have participated in the studies presented in this portfolio. Their contribution and expertise has opened new doors for me and, I hope, for other arts educators.

Likewise I wish to thank my colleagues at the University of Sydney for their friendship and scholarly support. My thanks are also due to John Kearney whose empathic guidance was pivotal and to Hugh O’Keefe, National Education Director, Shakespeare Globe Centre Australia.

Particular gratitude is owed to my supervisor Dr Janice Hall. Her care and attention has been supportive, challenging and wise. One could not hope for a more positive and expanding postgraduate experience.
Certificate

I certify that the material in this portfolio, except where otherwise acknowledged in the text, is my own original work and that it has not been previously submitted towards a higher degree at any other university or institution.

[Signature]
27 April 2002
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Hughes, J., & Arnold, R. (1998). An evening with John Bell at the University of Sydney, educator resources, published by the University of Sydney, Education Outreach Program, External Relations Division.

Hughes, J. (2000). Drama as a learning medium: researching poetry teaching. The Primary Educator, 6(3).
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Introduction to the Portfolio.

Teachers need . . . sympathy with the pupils, together with an understanding of the times we live in. Then humility - to realise how little even the wisest of us knows; also there must be faith in the ability of the human spirit to tackle and overcome almost insuperable difficulties. And the teacher's task? To discover latent ability in the pupils and to stir their imaginations so that they may create or appreciate greatness. A teacher's work is not to dominate but to inspire, not to mould but to awaken, not to control but to set free. The teaching profession is a great profession. (West, 1973, p. 97).

This portfolio presents chapters in books, research articles in refereed and professional journals, and monographs which explore and support teacher professional development in arts education, at both pre and post service levels. It is the purpose of this portfolio to demonstrate that teachers can, in Winifred West's words, 'inspire their students to appreciate and create greatness' in the arts. The focus in this portfolio is, therefore, on teacher education that enables teachers to enhance their students' abilities to understand, comprehend and critically analyse creative arts texts. Each chapter in the portfolio explores innovative approaches to arts education for teachers and students, together with sound theoretical approaches in arts education at tertiary, secondary and primary levels.
The aim of the research presented in this portfolio is to assist teachers to create environments where adults and children can create or experience the arts. The pedagogic processes presented in the research papers in this portfolio likewise facilitate an aesthetic encountering at the intersection between cognition and affect so that both teachers and students enjoy a positive affective and aesthetic experience of the performing and literary arts (Abbs, 1987, 1994; Best, 1978, 1992; Gardener, 1993; McLean, 1996; Ross, 1982).

William Yang (2000), the distinguished Australian photographer and performance artist, postulated in a keynote lecture at the Art Gallery of NSW, that a significant factor in our comprehension of artistic works is how we are cued into the aesthetic experience of the artistic text. He further said that an understanding of the context is as important as what we read, or experience, of the text itself. The research contained in this portfolio is aligned with Yang’s philosophy and focuses on the types of cues teachers can employ to aid students in the process of accessing and appreciating artistic texts; and how, by experiencing such texts within a pedagogical framework the students’ comprehension and understanding of the artistic text can be integrated with their life-context.
The eight portfolio publications represent: thirteen books and monographs, nine chapters in books, thirty refereed articles, hundreds of conference papers, teacher in-service courses and professional teacher support activities to encourage the appreciation and creation of the literary and performing arts. A complete bibliography of my publications is in Appendix A. These publications have, in a variety of ways, explored the appreciation and creation of valued, aesthetic experiences.