

New Zealand Māori

Marae Rituals applied to

Theatre

Jane Boston in conversation with Annie Ruth to discuss how the social improvisatory framework of encounters on the marae (Maori meeting place) can teach theatre practitioners a great deal about meeting and connecting with audiences. The combination of structure and improvisation, aligned to clarity around role and purpose, can shift the paradigm of the encounter.

This event took place at Central School of Speech & Drama on 25 October 2011.

□
Improvisation and *Structure* □

Marae rituals: can their application to theatre enhance the 'liveness' of the work?

Karanga

(0.00 – 1.57)

<i>Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa</i>	Welcome, thrice welcome
<i>Kō te ipu kawē korero e poipoi ne</i>	May the pitcher of our talk nourish us
<i>Te kaupapa o te wā</i>	With the processes that we share
<i>Haria mai ra ngā kotou kete kōreo</i>	Bring out the baskets to fill with our mutual talk.
<i>E noho tahi tatou e</i>	
<i>Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa</i>	Again welcome, thrice welcome.

Whaikōrero

<i>Ka mihi tuatahi kia Papatuanuku e takoto nei</i>	I greet the earth mother beneath us
<i>raua ko Ranginui ki runga</i>	and the sky father above us.
<i>Te whare ō Central School of Speech & tena koe</i>	I greet the house of Central School of Speech and Drama

Annie Ruth - A huge welcome to you and thank you for coming today, I want to acknowledge you in the words that I said before. I acknowledged our ancestors yours and mine, I acknowledged the earth mother and the sky father and this place in which we are now gathered. I started with a *Karanga* with words that were particularly given to me to use in these kinds of occasions, Because this is not when you normally do a *Karanga*, but I wanted to do something of that sort to give you a visceral feel of what some elements of the *Pōwhiri* are like so you know a little of what I'm talking about as we go forward. *Ka mihi nui ki a koutou* - (2.56 passage in Maori) thank you for inviting me today.

Ko Annie au - my name is Annie, *No Te Upuko ō te Ika ahau* - I'm from Wellington. Our mountain is *Tangi Te Keo*, other wise called Mount Victoria by the colonisers when they came, my ancestors, *Ko Raukawa te moana* -

Raukawa is the sea and *Ngāti Pōneke Te Iwi*. So I' acknowledging the mountains the seas and the tribe of Wellington and in doing that I also acknowledge the tribes and the people from this place, you with your mountains and your ancestors and your seas, I welcome you. *E ngā mana, e ngā reo e ngā karangatanga maha* - so with all your shared experienced, your individual experiences that have shaped you, thank you for coming and for your welcome. Jane, do you want to?

Jane Boston – So behalf of all of us Central school and the International Centre for Voice with welcome Annie Ruth and her partner Jo from New Zealand, we're deeply honoured to have them both here, Annie Ruth as a specialist coming all this way to bring both an academic approach to what we do and a wonderful exemplar to those of us involved in this cross fertilisation in practice and theory, Annie is here to do just that with her PhD work, which tonight's presentation is part of. But Annie comes with much more than simply this academic profile, she comes as an actress, a long standing actress in the New Zealand world, a director, a leading director in international theatre and also as prestigiously, the ex-principle of the leading drama school in New Zealand, Toi Whakaari. So it is with a great great pleasure that we bring Annie to these shores and we are hugely looking forward to hearing and experiencing her work tonight.

AR – Fantastic. So I should just say at the outset that if there are any, if I go to fast or if there are terms I use that you're not familiar with, please just feel free to interrupt me, we don't need to be formal here. Interrupt me I won't mind and I can explain further, so feel free to be part of that. And there will be time at the end, I'm not going to use up all our two hours talking at you, so there will be time for you to ask questions and also I hope to share your own thinking, especially where any of the thinking that I've been doing, or the work I've been doing lands with you, so, you know we can make this an exchange. I'm thinking we'll start off with some questions and then we'll get more informal.

I am working to develop a model which would assist in bringing the danger and genuine unpredictability of improvisation to an artistically structured moment.

This paper focuses on one aspect within a wider exploration of models and approaches.

Okay so I'm currently working a thesis whose working title is: 'Kanohi ki te Kanohi: Face to Face: Alive-li-ness, bringing chaos and crafted order to the face to face encounter with an audience. And actually, even today in the steam room, I was getting a better title but that's the one when I was writing this a few days ago. If any of you have done a PhD, that seems to be an evolving thing. Anyway in my exploration is the inclusion of the social improvisationary framework of a *marae*. A *marae* is a traditional meeting place for Māori, every group of Māori, *hapu*, *iwi* or tribe has their own *marae*, so I'm exploring the social improvisationary framework on the *marae* which is directly linked to the effect of that form on theatrical performance within New Zealand and with my own practice. My thesis is both written and performative, all of the ideas I'm exploring have been and continue to be tested on the rehearsal floor and in encounters with audiences. I included a variation on that traditional counter as I said, so you would have a feeling of it, because I imagine that very few of you, with one exception maybe or two have ever been to, actually there's several, how many people have actually been on a *marae*? Oh okay, so that's fantastic.

So, August Wilson wrote in his preface to his play *King Hedley 11*: 'Before one can become an artist, one must first be. It is being in all its facets, its many definitions, that endows the artist with an immutable sense of himself that is necessary for the accomplishment of his task.' Simply put 'art is beholden to the kiln in which the artist was fired'. So I would like to begin by acknowledging the kiln in which I was fired, which is Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School, as Jane said, where I trained in the early 70's. For nearly thirty years Toi Whakaari drama school has been wrestling with the idea that including practices indigenous to New Zealand will lead to artists whose work reflects the country in a living and embodied way. For the past fourteen years I've been director of Toi Whakaari and the six years before that I was head of acting, so my own practice is deeply grounded in the questions raised by taking this approach. Finding a way to do this meaningfully has been a real struggle and I would say that it is only in the last few years that this has been transformed into a more articulate and applied practice but without my experiences at Toi Whakaari I would never have begun this research.



This is Toi Whakaari, this is pōwhiri at Toi Whakaari, it's the one in which the new students are brought into the school at the beginning of every school year and in the picture there you can see, oh there's me, and also Rawiri Paratene who some of you might know his work from the film *Whale Rider*, who is *koro* -grandfather in *Whale Rider* but he was in our staff at our time.



That's the same space. I thought, I wanted to include this because what I want to keep saying is that what has happened at Toi Whakaari and what is really in my practice, is that the principles that are in *marae* structures and Māori protocols, what we've been starting to do and what I'm doing is using those principles underneath the work, rather than mimicking the work. So here is our graduation moment at the end of 2010 and the school is using some of the structures of the *pōwhiri*, but not slavishly. They are using the thinking behind that to underpin the ceremony. And more importantly the whole ceremony was planned entirely by the student body. Now that, if you can imagine, is a huge undertaking and not the most efficient way to go about creating an event, but it is the way in which every single participant is completely a part of it and everyone. Gone were the incidents of people getting up drunk to speak at their graduation which had happened in the past,

because people were really clear about what they doing and why they were doing it and they didn't want to do that, so um, yeah as I guess that most parents know the longest way, the quickest way between A and B is not a straight line but the long curve and that's an example of it.

So the *marae* in Māori in culture is a space for formal encounters, particularly moments for when one groups meets another. This moment of meeting is structured with formal protocols each of which can be interpreted on a number of levels from the practical and the mundane to the metaphorical evocations of the spirit world. And in all of these an element of improvisation takes place, there's a performative element to the event but always in the context of purpose and the desired efficacy around why it is being held. The question of purpose I think is very relevant to us making work and theatre. Likewise the focus on encounter has clear relevance to the meeting between an audience and performers particularly the framing of such encounters, including frames that intrinsically include an element of improvisation.

The *marae*, in Maori culture, is a space for formal encounters, particularly moments when one group meets another. This moment of meeting is structured with formal protocols in all of which an element of improvisation takes place.

Key implications for bringing 'liveness' to theatre events:

- the awareness of role & purpose
- the focus on encounter
- the framing of such encounters
- the encounters are inherently important, sometimes life-changing, to the participants
- the re--framing of reception mode for audience

In this part of my thesis I'm exploring the ritual of meeting in Māori culture, particularly the balance between what is improvised and what is structured,

and the way in which this cultural ritual has informed performative work in New Zealand, including my own. It's significant in the context of my thesis, that the nature of the improvisation that takes place in this setting is founded on encounters and subjects that are inherently important, sometimes life changing to the participants. Unlike comedy improvisation forms like Theatre Sports, that I've also participated in, this is improvisation in a context where the lives of the participants may be vitally affected by the words and actions inside the event, which in turn affects the quality of the listener/listening. The particular framework that *marae* rituals evoke means that their inclusion in a theatrical context changes the reception mode of the audience and moves them from spectators to participants: a significant shift when examining potency and aliveness in the theatre.

So I have divided my thinking into four sections in that particular chapter where I'm focusing on Māori ritual first of all the ritual of the *pōwhiri and hui* (14.56) where I draw extensively on the work of Anne Salmond. For those of you who are interested, she's a historian. An in particular her seminal work *Hui*. And I am examining the balance between structure and improvisation. I've worked with interviews conducted with Māori theatre practitioners, conducted throughout 2009 and 2010 and this year, and interweave that with the writing of theatre theoretician Christopher Balm. He's also written some very interesting essays in this area. And then I've looked at the influence of these forms on actor training, drawing on my work at Toi Whakaari and also the work of two of my Māori colleagues Teina Moetara and Christian Penny.

Karanga: the first moment of encounter



Pōwhiri are an exercise in what Victor Turner calls 'public reflexivity', a community examining and reflecting on itself through performative actions, made more dramatic by the fact that in a pōwhiri at least two communities are encountering each other and, through the process of the ritual, aligning themselves with each other.

And then I've also looked at one of my own productions, *Troilus and Cressida*, which in 2003 I co-directed with Māori director Rangimoana Taylor, where we used the ritual of the Māori as the framework for our work. So encounters in a *pōwhiri* can be difficult and antagonistic or friendly, depending on the circumstances, such as historical tribal tensions or current political issues. Currently, if there was a the group that were inviting the prime minister onto the *marae* there might be a tension or two - there might be a tension or two with regards to the cuts to out health care for example, which is having a huge impact to people in the rural areas and therefore landing disproportionately on the Māori.

Participants use oratory, singing and dance, locating themselves in relation to the other group, improvising content in response to the encounter and evoking metaphorical as well as tangible references, so *pōwhiri* are an exercise in what the theoretician Victor Turner, (if any of you know his writing, he writes about performance studies), he calls it 'public reflexivity'; a community examining and reflecting on itself through performative actions, made more dramatic by the fact that in a *pōwhiri* at least two communities are

encountering each other through the process of the ritual, and aligning themselves with each other in so far as they can. Anne Salmond refers to leading participants in these rituals as actors - I'll come back to this one - and describes preparations for these gatherings as rehearsals - an interesting observation given Salmond is a historian and has no connections to theatre whatsoever. Salmond also observes that improvisation and response within the encounter, rather than something pre-meditated and pre-planned is valued, and noticing that practicing aloud beforehand is frowned upon, the words and gestures belonging only to the moment and the context of the encounter.

So the content is shaped by the structure but it's created within the moment, and everyone there is part of it, they're a participant, they're all what Augusto Boal, the South American practitioner would call 'Spect-actors', actively participating, often unpredictably, within the framework that is set out. This total involvement means that the underlying strand of boundary negotiation; who are you in relationship to me?, which is a feature of any kind of improvisation, is very active and intensely present. Awareness of patterns, attention to the quality of the actions are also key elements in a *pōwhiri* or any of the major Māori ceremonies - because there are other ceremonies other than the welcome one. They magnify the extent of the improvisation inherent to include all participants, even those hidden from view, so the people who are working the kitchen for example, are as much a part of the story, of what is happening, as the people who are visible and speaking in the welcome ceremony.



- There is a performative element to the event, but always in the context of the purpose and desired efficacy for which it is being held. This question of purpose is particularly relevant to work in theatre performance.

And even the walls of the house are telling stories that those who understand them can read those stories and make connections with the *marae*, so everything, it's a total environment that's being read. (19.36)

During a *pōwhiri* everyone present is expected to be alive both to the event and its wider context, attuned to the needs and the actions of the community. And this has echoes of the degree of trust and mutual awareness built up by any theatre company and particularly improvisation companies that have worked together over time where the rules are embodied deep down inside yourself and you work through highly sensitised bodies off each other. That is also true of the *marae*, the confidence in the known rules brings freedom to improvise.

Teina Moetara:

'The general beauty of a marae can be seen by taking the idea of two actors improvising, listening, working off each other and then magnify it by the amount of people that are there.'



Māori actor and teacher Teina Moetara.

I'll just take you through, these are some images from various *pōwhiri*.

The particular framework that *marae* rituals evoke, means that their inclusion in a theatrical context changes the reception mode of the audience and moves them from spectators to participants, a significant shift when examining the potency and 'liveness' of the theatrical moment.



That's at the end of the *pōwhiri*. Part of the conclusion of the *pōwhiri* is that you share breath and it's called the *hongiri* and that's what's happening here. So Teina, Teina Moetara has a unique perspective in drawing parallels between these rituals and theatre performance, because he's a theatre person himself. Teina compares participation in a *pōwhiri* to actors improvising on stage but he notes that the numbers involved are considerably larger and the situation more socially complex than on the stage. (p/p text) and you can see there what Teina had to say. He goes on to note that every element is working to a common purpose with every other element, quote: 'the framework allows you to be part of a singular group especially when meeting another group, awareness of role and the valuing of role bring clarity of purpose and focus to the listening practice'. In the freedom constraint dynamic the roles are fixed but their articulation has a measure of fluidity and spontaneity and that is valued by everyone in the ritual.

I thought I'd pull out just two parts of the ritual to speak about in more depth and then I'll move on to talk a bit about theatre. So, the opening moments of the ritual of the *pōwhiri* the encounter between the visitors, the *manuhiri* and the *tangata whenua*, the people of the place. This encounter includes the unseen as well as the visible world and both of them are acknowledged. The older women begin the ritual with the wailing call, the *karanga*, inviting people into the space. And the sound of the call can be literally - the vocal harmonics as well as the words of the *karanga* take the listeners into a different place, one where the atmosphere is charged and expectant. I've been in a theatre where the *karanga* begins the event and you can just feel everyone change how they are, and I certainly feel it every time I am present when a *karanga* is called. The invocation of the unseen world of the dead carries a possibility of unforeseen responses and in the moment of calling memories can and do surface. Attention is paid to those spontaneous moments, the women often pausing to allow the emotion of the moment to flow right through them before they continue the ritual. The call isn't formulaic, though there's a very clear structure that supports it. Both delivery and content respond to the person calling so even the energy level of the call varies. Sometimes it can lift the hair on the back of your neck and sometimes it can be gentle, more

contemplative. So these qualities vary in response again to what is appropriate to the moment, even the air seems charged in a greater or lesser degree, depending on what is happening with the particular group.

I want to tell you a little story of own, about the *karanga*, this is one of the *Rongowhakata marae* in a place called Manutuke.





It's a really - it's 20 minutes drive south of Gisborne, so it's a very rural place, there's fields all around this building. Um, here's an image of the house inside where we were all sleeping - so there's our sleeping bags - just to give you a little picture of what a traditional *whare* looks like. So in 2008 I was welcomed onto the *marae ātea* of Manutuke as part of a group coming from Toi Wharakaari New Zealand Drama School. For various reason no one in our group felt able to call *the karanga*, there were Māori women in the group, some of them had elders, like their mothers were still alive, and calling it, they felt they shouldn't do it. Someone else had her *mate*, her period so she felt she couldn't call it. I was a white girl, a *pākeha*, I felt it certainly wasn't my place to call it, so none of us called it and we went onto that *marae* without a *karanga*. It was deeply uncomfortable and we could all feel it, it was a terrible beginning to our time at the Marae. However it's been a phenomenal piece of learning for me personally because afterwards Teina said 'okay so someone needed to call' and I said 'oh yeah but I'm a *pākeha* - duh duh duh' and he said 'but could you have called' and I went 'Yes I could have', he said, 'So, you call. Someone needs to call. It's not about you, it's not about whether

you're appropriate, it's not about whether you get told off afterwards - you probably will - that doesn't matter. It was needed, step up do it!

And that was a huge thing for me because I would never have done that. I'd had it really made clear to me that it was not my place to call, and indeed if there was a Māori women there who could do it, it would not be my place. But from that I've learnt something and actually its given me the confidence here in London in *pōwhiri at Ngāti Ranana*, the London-based *iwi*, to call the *karanga* because I knew I could, and it was asked and needed. Function, that idea of function and purpose, is absolutely a total ground thing in Toi Whakaari. And I think it's gold for performers, complete gold, because when you are focusing on what is needed, not by you but by the whole big group, you forget about all those things about 'am I any good, are they looking at me, is it appropriate...' all of those things. You're much more interested in all these other people. And I think all know that that's the big battle for actors, how do you get their attention off themselves and out somewhere else? And I know Jane, when she first came to Toi Whakaari she said that the way she was welcomed was the most unselfconscious and full that she's every experienced and it's because of that focus on purpose not performance. I think we've got a great deal to earn from *tikanga* Māori in that area. As part of the call, the caller will often talk about their own ancestry and acknowledge the ancestry of the people who are arriving, and everyone needs to listen very hard because there are a lot of clues in that, you know sometimes there are people coming onto the *marae* that none of the people that were welcoming them on knew were coming, important people sometimes, and you really want to know that sooner rather than later because they're going to need to be acknowledged and maybe sometimes there are people there with a bit of an axe to grind and you want to know that too. So you listen very carefully to that call. So the first encounter on the *marae* always lies with the women and generally the older women. And then the spirit, the *mauri*,(spirit) moves over to the men, in most *marae*, not all. In the North of the East Coast where some of my teachers come from, women also speak on the *marae* but generally its mostly men.

The speaking is called *whaikōrero* - making speeches - and that's the other thing I wanted to talk about today, so I'm just pulling out two things there, there are a lot of elements but I'll just do those two. So *whaikōrero* is an improvisatory oratorical art form and the speakers make use of humour, poetry, aphorisms, gesture, and song as part of delivering their message and creating a platform from which the two groups can effectively meet. There's an element of challenge and debate. Those of you who've seen a *haka*, will know that there's the element of challenge - it is very, very present there. Often, especially in big formal occasions, a *wero* will be put down right at the beginning, a challenge, something laid down and the other group has to pick it up and you must pick up that challenge. I think we saw France pick up the challenge on the weekend in a really terrifying way! (Rugby reference) So speakers listen intently and when they in turn speak, their facility in picking up points made by the other side and turning and reframing them, echoing or challenging them are really valued as part of the encounter and you can really feel that when somebody is doing that everyone suddenly wakes up and really listens. I've never seen a Māori speaker speak from notes, like this, on a *marae*, you never would. I never would speaking in those context, because I've often had to speak in my previous role as director as Toi Wharakaari and what I've learnt is its better without the bit of paper, because the whole thing is about the engagement. They speak 'extempore from their mother wit' as Shakespeare would say and that's part of it. And you try and draw in the threads of everything, of everyone who's participating so, as Moetara says; 'you never lose who you are, in fact you acknowledge it, you clock it and everyone does that, you understand that all the threads that make you up as a person are person are there, you don't have to leave part of yourself at the door, your task is to pull in all the threads at the same time'. The other thing that is a real feature of *whaikōrero* is the juxtaposition of sadness of humour and its really striking. Speakers will move from very serious and moving ideas to cracking jokes. They'll keep changing, just like Shakespeare does. They'll keep changing the register from the highly poetic to the real mundane and guttural, like Hamlet for example, after he's killed Polonius joking 'he's at supper, not where he eats but where he is eaten'. That could be said on the *Marae*, that is just so in tune with that fullness of humanity that is explored. In

fact I think it's not too great a stretch to assert that this mixture of pain and laughter arises naturally during a *pōwhiri* out of the intense focus on the living moment, an intersection between past and present. I think that when you are so intensely focussed on that present moment then something in us is stretched open to allow that juxtaposition to take place. It's that laughter that happens, that recognises the transience of our life on earth, that wonderful laughter that recognises all the pain and the pleasure and the pressure and then the lightness of living. I've already said it - it's all about making connections.

Balme:

- Maori theatre is less the creation of a new kind of dramatic writing than a new kind of perceptual frame'.

I should tell you a little story there, I was just thinking about it at that moment. I went to a *Tangihanga*, which is a funeral on the *marae*, for a wonderful New Zealand actor Wikuki Kaa, and there were amazing instances of this mix of grief and humour in, well in those many events. Because there were *pōwhiri* after *pōwhiri*, as different groups arrived. You know, people sat on the *marae* for hours and you know they were there for three or four days. And they'd taken days coming up the whole of the North island before that, stopping at lots of *marae* on the way. So people had been going for quite a while by the

time I got there, but I arrived on the first of three days in this tiny remote little place - you drive way North - well I flew to Gisborne, I grabbed the last hire car available, I drove for two hours to Tuki Tuki, then I took this little winding road and finally turned up at the Marae – Rangitukia – a fantastic place. But there were moments in that *Tangihanga* that all the speakers wove into what they said. One of them was that, when I'd left Wellington we were the last plane to take off, it was the most incredible beginning to a flight, I've never been on a plane like it. We were strapped in and I was being thrown so that I could touch the people on the other side of the aisle and back again, it was incredibly violent, we'd just caught a southerly, which is our big storm-backed wind, at the beginning of the flight. So that was how the flight had begun, this wind reached us at Rangitukia about four hours later, and it carried with it dust that it must have picked up off the plains and it was incredible! It was like a wall of dust hit us, so every speaker was going 'of course Wikuki Kaa - what would you expect' you know they completely felt the turmoil of nature as being part of the event. And the next day we moved into high comedy when one of our politicians, Parekura Horomia, was there and a cow wandered into the paddock and Parekura, with his suit jacket off - he's a very big man - was trying to move this cow off the *marae*, everyone was in hysterics and all of us totally believed that cow at that moment of Wikuki Kaa.

So that mix, and that using whatever happens in the moment as part of it, is very much part of the Marae practice. It's really about paying attention and Anne Bogart who's a theatre practitioner who's influenced me greatly, says 'the only gift we can give to a situation is the force of our attention'. And I think it's that gift of the force of your attention that I see made by Māori ritual practices, that we can learn from in theatre, It sheds light on the thing that I'm exploring in my thesis both in my work and

Bogart:

- 'The only gift we can give to a situation is the force of our attention'.



in my written work: how do you make sense of life, live, how do you keep that immediacy in our work and yet at the same time structure it so that it has complexity and depth and beauty?

Cressida:

One woman, 2 tribes



The first time I started using these kind of rituals myself was in this production of *Troilus and Cressida* that I made in 2003, after coming back from working with Anne Bogart. And we very consciously worked - that's myself and my co-director Rangimoana Taylor - we worked with Māori *tikanga* as part of the whole process.

The Directors: Annie Ruth & Rangimoana Taylor

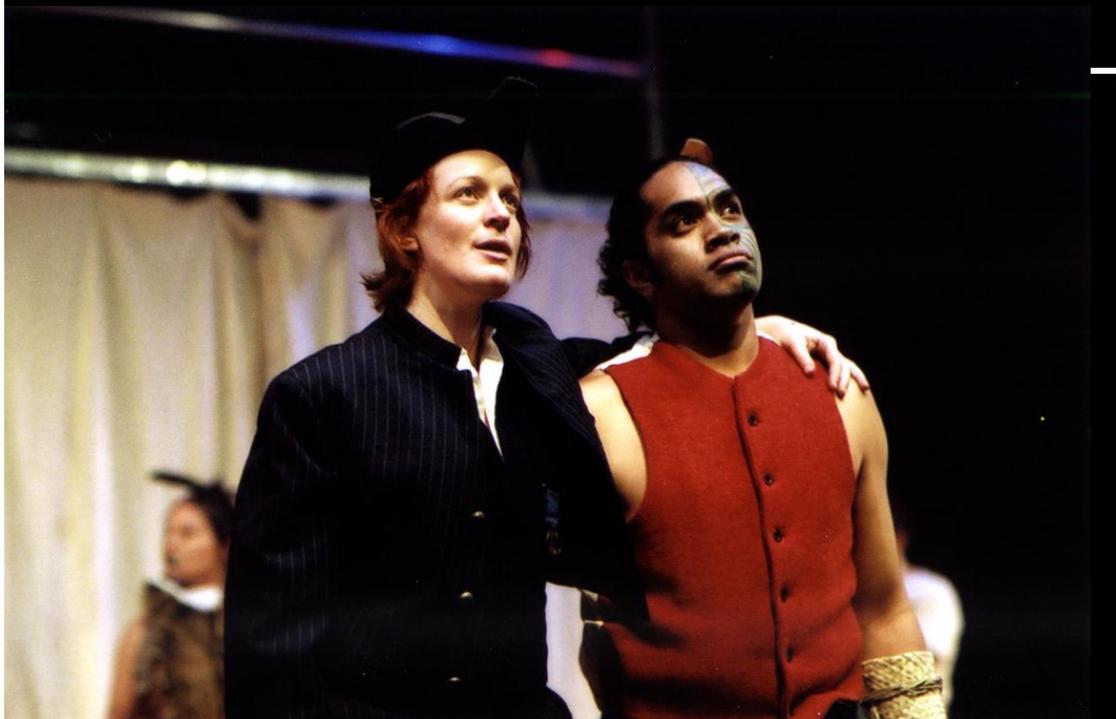


So, for example, we went to stay on a *marae* at Parihaka for a week to do the very first week of rehearsals and I guess to get some blessing from the *iwi* because we were setting it during the New Zealand wars when the British arrived and colonised us. So the Trojans were the Māori and the Greeks were the British. And actually we took the process, the whole production, up the east coast afterwards and did it up where Wikuki comes from.

Hector and Deiphobus (Francis Kora)



Ulysses (Tahi Mapp-Boren) with Hector



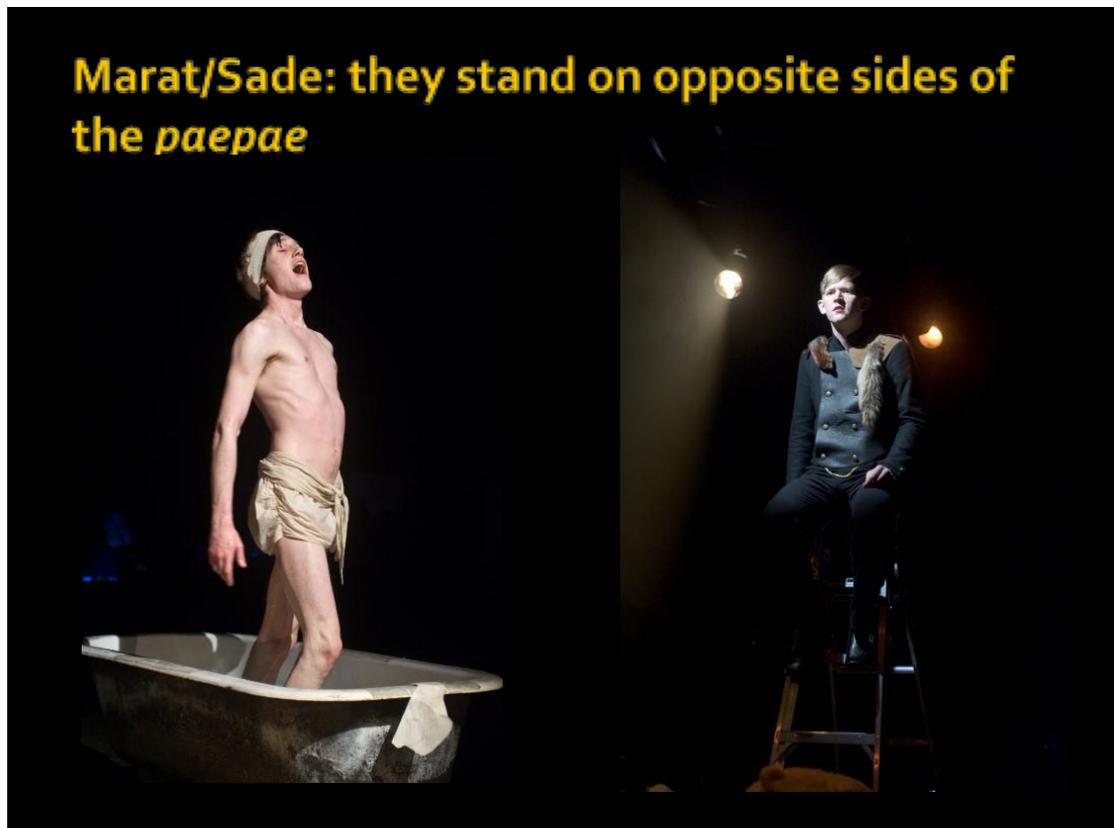
Okay so that was the beginning for me, of this thread through my performance work.

Then in 2010 I directed a production of *Marat/Sade*, and in that play I also worked consciously with these structures to inform and integrate the performance, but without the work looking remotely Māori.



Troilus and Cressida looked Māori and this one, no-one would know, but I used the principles underneath it. We used a *karanga* a kind of invocation or prayer that Teina Moetara wrote for the school to frame every single rehearsal and to bring us into the work and we analysed the performance challenges through the framework of those concepts. Every time we had trouble or difficulties we went back to *tikanga*. Particularly valuable was a concept called *matataki* that's translated as 'stance' - but its not just your literal stance although it is your literal stance, but it's who you are, who you stand for, who you represent, for whom you are telling these stories at this moment, for whom is your responsibility at this moment?

So this play *Marat/Sade* is set in an insane asylum but we'd chosen to work rather than we people with psychological disorders we choose to set it with people with neurological disorders and it was a really strong desire among the among the actors to be eloquent about those people through their bodies and to shine some light on this particular sector of our communities, even while we engaged in those major philosophical debates that the play is about. So they took very seriously using *tikanga*, their responsibility to the neurological patients that they were portraying and I think it freed them from a lot of anxiety about doing that because they knew why they were doing it. And indeed we met a man suffering from Parkinson's who was just a fantastic conduit into the work for us. We took the concept, we thought about it how *Marat*, a lot of the structure, if you know the play *Marat/Sade*, it's kind of like being on the *marae*, it's a debate, it's two ideas fighting it out there. So we kept them (Marat and de Sade) at different times one either side of the space, so that they could have a lot of room to put forward their thinking and then as it gets more heated they come closer together.

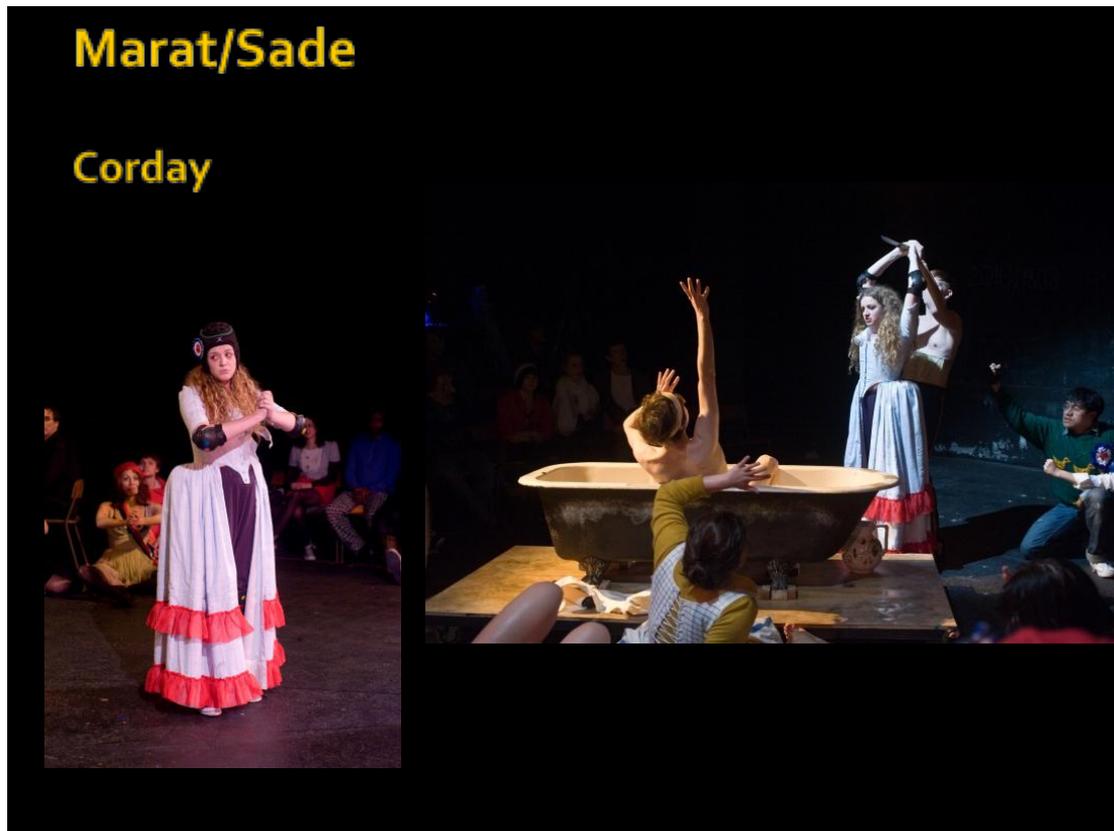


Marat/Sade



We took the concept of *karanga* and used it to assist us in the way that we brought the audience into the space. What we did was have the cast ringing a bell and calling all the audience into the space and helping them get seated and talking with them, telling them what their roles were, in their roles as mental patients. They told them what role they were playing as revolutionaries in *Marat/Sade* and really made sure that everyone got seated properly following the Māori concept of *whakatau*, making sure that everyone was comfortably seated and knew what was going to happen next before getting going with the play. Those individual encounters varied enormously from night to night. It was quite extraordinary, but we'd sit them very consciously thinking about the *marae*. The Herald in the play - if you know it - introduced all the characters. When you're on a *marae* the first piece of *whaikōrero* gives your history, the people that you're connected to, your ancestors, your tribal affiliations - so it was just like a *peperha*. And then what do you do after you've spoken on a *Marae*, someone sings for you, a *waiata*, they stand up and sing to say 'yeah I'll support you with that, I'll stand with that'. So again, there's a lot of singing in *Marat/Sade*, which is rather like

this. We had this moment that I particularly loved so I've put this picture, this is near the beginning when Charlotte Corday sang her first song and



every single woman in the play mirrored her gestures all the way through. So they were doing their equivalent of a *waiata*. Not a literal one, but the thinking behind *waiata* was kept.

None of this would have been visible to the audience as coming from *tikanga* or echoing a kind of *marae*. But we did use it to frame our rehearsal process. (show image) This is the end. We problem-solved as I said before. We had some bits that were so difficult to work out particularly the ending. The ending of *Marat/Sade* for those of you who don't know it - in Peter Brooks film it's in chaos. The patients, there's a sex maniac, he's raping the governor of the asylum's wife and daughter, people are attacking anyone they can get hold of, it's frightening. We started off going: 'okay, we don't have a governor, we have the Mayor of Wellington, that's the woman here (indicating image), cast to be in that role, the person who's engaged this group of neurological patients to put on a performance for the community. And the actor looks very

like the Mayor of that time, Kerry Prendergast, so that was quite good, especially as the Major came on the opening night. We had two Mayors - the real one and fictive one. But anyway, initially we had the sex maniac rape the Mayor the fictive Mayor and, it just didn't seem to feel right for our production. As in Māoridom, we stopped and downed tools and talked in a *hui* until things were clarified. The *tikanga* is that you don't go on until everything in the room has been settled, you have to talk about it. So we stopped and talked. It's very counter-intuitive for me as a theatre practitioner who just wants to get on and do, but what I discovered is, you fix the room, you get everyone in accord and you go on quickly. If you don't do it, then you're gonna just keep going back to the same problems. So anyway we all stopped in one of our mini *hui* about the end of this play and suddenly I had this kind of, someone said something and I suddenly got it! I went 'hey you know, in the world I experience it's not the neurological patients, it's not the mentally ill or event the physically ill who are the problem in most violent situations, it's the able-bodied that can't cope with the afflicted'.



And so what we did was the patients picked the Mayor up paraded her around the space and then they dumped her in the bath. Okay so that's a bit

traumatic for her, but as she's getting up the person who's playing the sex manic goes; 'but she's the Mayor' and goes forward to help her and the Mayor panics, he's a sex manic after all, and kicks him. He hits his head on the bath, falls in the water and is knocked unconscious. So the Mayor in front of many of her constituents, is standing there, she's done the violence. And that is the end of the play. I don't believe we would have found that without the many discussions and I don't think we would have embarked on the many discussions if we hadn't had *tikanga* backing us.

That wasn't the only methodology at work. I also worked through the Viewpoints of Anne Bogart but that's a subject for another time, but together - I think they weave together really beautifully to make a present moment that is incredibly alive and focused and forward leaning.



After *Marat/Sade* I got an opportunity to work on another play, *Welcome to Thebes*, and I just want to say a tiny bit about that before I finish this formal bit of the talk. Because *Welcome to Thebes* was what we call a 'workshop production.' We let the audience come into the process as well as the

performance, so that at the end of each performance, which wasn't a complete rendition of the play (we did about a half of it or less), at the end of that we would then say: 'so this is how we've been working on this' and I would take some little snippets, that I'd asked the actors to learn the words of, but that we'd never rehearsed and I show the audience how we did it in performance.





And the audience would then, then we'd have a discussion with them afterwards, and a cup of tea, as we're going to shortly, very Māori to finish with a cup of tea and something to eat because you always bring things back into the body to the everyday; you've been on this exalted plane and then you come back to the body, to the everyday, to the normal. A Wellington film maker Yvonne McKay, was at one of these performance of *Welcome to Thebes* that later I took onto a *marae*, and here's some images of the performance on the *marae*, there's actually in the *Wharekai*, the kitchen of the *marae*, the dining hall of the *marae* that we performed to a huge group, quite a lot of people, you can see the people from the local community watching.



Anyway, MacKay (this local film-maker) brought someone with her and she quoted this back to me and I thought it was worth reading to you. She says: 'the person I brought that night knows very little about theatre, but just couldn't stop talking about it afterwards. Really intelligent man that runs a big PR company but just doesn't have time to do a lot of theatre and had just never seen, just was fascinated with the process. If he'd missed that bit, that night just wouldn't have had that excitement in it. In my world, film, it's like the making of. They love them. And that's what it did to that man that night. We had a meal and he just couldn't stop talking about the process, and why you did it and what that bought - a freshness. And he felt that it was almost like watching a documentary. People seemed to be doing things for the first time and yet some of them were doing it very very well, so how was that?'

And I think there's a clue there for those of us who make theatre. Surely that's what we want to achieve and I guess that is the holy grail. How do we make it structured and beautiful and poetic and with depth and at the same moment have it filled with life and improvisation and the danger that improvisation brings, where anything could happen. And for that to be true,

not to have a pretended possibility but real possibility. I reckon there's a clue there for how we should make theatre in the future. It's a clue that I don't have, I am in no way suggesting I have the answers around but it's part of something that I am going to keep investigating for the rest of my life in my work. I'm very interested in this question of how do we get the audience so engaged that they are part of it and not observing it? A lot of people who came to both *Marat/Sade* and *Welcome to Thebes* said afterwards 'I felt I was part of the town, I felt I was part of it'. Some of it was the staging but some of it was something else and I think that the Viewpoints together with *tikanga* - that focus on purpose and why you're doing it and the other rather than on the self - I think freed the whole event to be something a great deal more alive. So thank you very much that's the end of my formal part. *Ka mihi nui ki a koutou I tenei wā. Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.*

I'm interested in hearing how that might have landed with you, if there are anything's in that work, that landed in your theatre practice and the things that you're thinking about and making. And of course I'm very happy - I've only spoken very briefly about the productions - if there are other things you want to know about them or about Māori ritual I'm really happy to answer questions.

A1 – You said they can be used as conflict resolution and in part of tribal negotiation or negotiation between communities and politicians. I was just wondering how entertaining it is and how serious it is and how it shifts through that.

AR – So when it's used on the *marae* as a ritual it's not done for entertainment. It's a social ritual that allows two groups to come together. These two group may be very friendly and it can be quite a light occasion or it can be an intensely difficult occasion, even ones that you wouldn't have thought might be difficult. For example, there was one year when it was the opening of the International Arts Festival of New Zealand and there was a dawn *pōwhiri* to begin it so the people coming on were artists from all over the world. And many local tribes, not just one, were welcoming them. And I knew

right from the beginning I thought; 'what's going on here?' because it felt really weird and really tense and the visitors picked up on the electric atmosphere but had no idea that it was abnormal. But I could tell that a serious boundary issue was happening between the *iwi* present around who had the right to do what. And they worked it out during the ceremony to a point where they could go forward as part of that moment on the *marae*. Sometimes it's very explicit. You might be meeting because there's some land, the ownership of some land it being challenged, would be a very frequent reason for a *pōwhiri* and you don't always, it's not always hunky dory. I'm not suggesting that everything gets worked out and everyone's mates forever after, but you find the base-line through that process, you find a place where you can agree a place where you can say 'okay this far we're in alignment, we go forward'. So sometimes you have to take many many *hui*. A *pōwhiri* is just the beginning of a *hui*, so you do the *pōwhiri* then you might take five days living together to talk it through and then you finish it up with a *poroporoaki*, finishing it, in which you give the host group, both groups give the other group instructions going into the future. So it's a very big process but it leaves room for people to just keep talking and stay in the room with each other. And I think the thing that theatre, that I feel when I use these processes in theatre, I see that the audience changes how they are in the room. I've been talking to a guy called Jim Moriarty who makes what he calls *Marae Theatre* that's very explicitly Māori. Jim works with people who've been in prison mostly, people who've had serious emotional disruption in their lives and terrible terrible stories and they (his company) make theatre out of that. Yet when you go to their performances you are always welcomed in. There will always be a *karanga* of some sort, or something that takes the place of the *karanga* theatrically. You will always be given some food and drink at the end and you will always be given the opportunity to have discussion. So it's always framed like that. And when you go in like that, when you're called in, it just makes it different.

I guess one of the best examples as an audience member I felt was I went to a play called *Strange Resting Places* which was produced by Taki Rua, a Māori theatre company. I'm talking about the very first performance of this play, so it was a total shock to me, this work. I went into this tiny little theatre that only

sits ninety people and I sat in the front row as my knees get a bit sore squashed up in the seats. So I went and sat in the front row and, as it sometimes happens, they were all doing this little thing on the stage already, there were some people they had a little billy, they were boiling some water in it. I thought; 'hmm smells like coffee, that smells good', the next minute one of the actors, leans over with a cup and says 'you want coffee?' and I was like 'yeah you bet' and suddenly I could see what he'd done to me, I'd gone from going someone who'd be like this 'I've come to see a play' into someone going 'ah I'm your mate, I'm getting a cup of coffee, I'm um...' You know, later on I got a glass of wine! He changed the parameters, completely, we were participants. And this little story about an Italian and a Māori during the Second World War suddenly became our story in a really organic way. And I think that's the gift of those processes.

A2 – I really gained a lot today because I heard Richard Scheckner speaking in the city over the last few days

AR – Oh is he in London?

A2 – Yes but I think he might have gone already

AR – I've met him.

A2 – You illustrated very well things I've been considering about how ritual in theatre and play ritualisation maybe more interwoven than perhaps is found so useful we might suggest. So I thought I might ask you if there was anything, what the particular aspects are of Māoridom are that reveal that difference, the subtleties. And then an add-on is about whether your position as I presume as a Pākehā allows you to see things that might be not revealed to a Māori viewer . And another question is about how coming away from New Zealand - to think again if there's been shift? So it's really asking where you see those.

AR – So let me try and hold those three things. So the first thing is the particularity of Māori culture. Okay, I think that Māori culture's enormous gift to the world is that they know how to welcome and farewell people better other than any other culture that I've had any connection with. I have done a lot of travelling in my time, I've lived for a very long time in Greece, I've lived in Japan, I'm not entirely unfamiliar with other cultures. I have never seen a culture that has such a beautifully structured gift of welcoming and farewell, and within that structure I think there is something for all of us. That's why I'm using it for theatre and why of course other theatre practitioners are using it too. It's new, you know, even though we've been exploring it for maybe twenty years now, it's still like a baby you know working out how this can happen. We've had some clunkers believe me! At the school when we first started working like this we thought: 'okay we want to work in a Māori way, okay instead of swords we'll use *taiaha*. We'll use *karanga* as part of the voice programme. For singing we'll do *waiata*. And of course what happened then is that we were doing the form of everything but we didn't know what was underneath it. And we got rightly criticised first of all by Māori who went 'you guys don't know what the hell you're playing with' and by Pākehā who went 'you've become so Māori I don't know what the hell you're doing or why do we have to do this'. So it took a while and it's only when we started really going on the principles that are underneath it that it really started to settle in. At the school they have this process called *koiwi*, which literally means bones, so the people in the school are the bones of the building. And that means that the whole school - so that's every staff member and every student - meet for a hour twice a week - half past eight Monday and Wednesday mornings. And in that hour we learn together. This started three years ago and this year the students run it entirely. Last year the staff ran it to about half through the year and then handed over to the students. This year the students have completely owned it. We learn songs together *waiata*, so we can participate in *pōwhiri* and other formal occasions. But the school - that's how we worked out the graduation ceremony through all these meetings with everybody in them, including you know the receptionist and the accountant and all the people who are so seldom included fully in the community. And again it makes a huge difference, you can well imagine, our accountant actually really

cares about the school. Tamara Aluwihare, she is from Sri Lanka herself, and she just totally embraces these processes because she's been invited to be part of them. Oh as Scheckner said, you have to work with the 'local' local.

A2 – The second one was about the inside or outside and seeing things that might be veiled in someway.

AR – I don't know, I don't know whether that's true or not, I think it's probably useful to Māori sometimes to have Pākehā so strongly aligned with some of that thinking. I know that Teina Moetara, who I employed four years ago at the school, is a miracle of translation. He is a man who can really see how theatre is and how the world of Māori is. He is really steeped in his *tikanga*. His grandparents taught him. His first language is Māori. He can really interweave those processes. So it was interesting, when we brought Teina into the school, the same year we employed a young woman called Jade and it turned out, we didn't know this when we employed her, but it turned out she came from the same tiny little town of Manutuke as Teina. She's Pākehā and he's Māori and we'd employed her to do the theoretical studies at the school because she's a university graduate - a very bright woman - and they went 'okay we don't want to do that, he's not going to teach *tikanga* and I'm not going to teach theoretical studies. We're going to teach something together, so that always we're seeing it as one thing' and this evolved into something we call context and practice. So that in a way, she is an outsider because she's white, but again they come from this tiny place and they've had a lot of shared experience.

Um coming over here, that was your last bit. I've been here for less than two months and before that I was in Greece. I don't know, I guess that being part of Ngāti Ranana is very interesting for me because they are a very welcoming group and they're very gentle around their *tikanga*. They meet every week at New Zealand house. Anyone is welcome, so if you are curious at all you just rock up there.

A3 – Inaudible. (1.05.03)

AR – I'm going to perform, I think, if I'm good enough. They are very inclusive in their approach and that's given me a confidence in another kind of way because I wasn't sure what I'd do when I no longer had the *mana* of Toi Whakaari behind me every time I got up. But suddenly I've got this other group of mates who are incredibly gentle and inclusive in the way that they approach things, whilst at the same time being incredibly clear; 'we structure it this way'. So again it's that thing of improvised but with a really good structure and enough room in the structure to cope with deaths that have happened since I've been there, and people in the wider group, the big events can be included along with the small. So yeah I don't know, I'll have to stay away a bit longer to work out whether distance helps yeah. Yeah?

A4 - I would can you speak about any lack of clarity around culture and cultural appropriations and misappropriation? You're taking Māori cultural norms which is like traditional behaviour, and transposing it into let's say a western theatre format. So now we're thinking, well with this cultural norm can we use it for something else? Are there cultural lines where we start crossing over and it starts like, excuse my language, take the piss?

AR – Completely, and it's a very valid point and I'm so glad you asked that question because it's an incredibly delicate thing. And I think in some of the earlier work that we did at Toi, I think that we were in serious danger of appropriating, when we were going for the form, rather than for learning from indigenous wisdoms as part of our thinking. In my own work, if it is clearly in the Māori domain like *Troilus and Cressida* was, - I co-directed it. I immediately once I knew I was going to be working in that territory I asked a Māori director to work with me so that we could work shoulder to shoulder. I do think, and I think that my Māori friends and colleagues would agree, that my twenty years of working in this form have given some right to stand within it. So I don't take it lightly. I was taught how to *karanga* by two extraordinary women, the first Tungia Baker is now dead, but she - when she was teaching, I asked her this question, about teaching white women to *karanga* and she said 'my issue is not with white women who *karanga* but with Māori who

don't'. She was passionate that this form survived vigorously and alive going into the future. And she came from the Kapiti coast and her dream was that you couldn't go anywhere on the Kapiti coast without hearing from some Māori or other sending the sound of the *karanga* up into the air. The other woman who taught me is the woman who gave me the words to *karanga* I did today. She is Tiahuiaa Grey and she is a very senior Māori woman. Again, I wouldn't act without being very careful around, you know, talking to the right people. And I've been so lucky, partly because of my role at the school and partly because of my love of the culture, that I've been welcomed into it in quite a full way. But of course I'm not Māori, it's very obvious I'm not Māori, and I guess that's why I've gotten so interested in the thinking underneath. Like in *Troilus and Cressida* it looked Māori, it was Māori. When we did it up on the coast at Ruatoria we had this great audience. There were kids there who were like babies in arms and really old people. Everyone was Maori, every single person in the audience. And because we'd set it during the NZ land wars, when Cressida left, (in the story she leaves the Greek camp, she's sent from the Trojans to Greeks as a kind of hostage and because she's a hostage in this camp of Greek guys, she gets on with one of the Greeks and her lover is back in the Trojan camp) so at the point where she's being wooed by this Greek guy, this white guy, the British guy in our production, the audience are going 'Don't do it girl! Watch out!' and then when they're fighting (the battle scenes) they are literally tripping up the white soldiers chasing the Māori soldiers round the space - it was incredible! I have never seen such a partisan audience. But there's - but you know I could do that with great confidence because I was working with Rangimoana, and because we'd seeded it at Parihaka Māori community. Again I got the blessing of an amazing woman Mahinikura Rindfeld. We asked the Māori; how do you feel about us working like this? And one of their members wrote us a song about peace to sing at the end because the play is so much about war. So I would say it's how you do it. In Māoridom how you do it is as important as what you do. And I think in the theatre that's also true. And even so you can be wrong. But I guess the thing that I learnt from that *karanga* moment is um dare to be wrong.

A4 – The anecdote about how the audience was getting involved in the clash in that play reminded me of what Brecht talks about in terms of spectator sport and how theatre is a spectator event and how we get so engaged when we're watching some sort of sports event so we have this team we're routing for.

AR – Yes and I'm always writing that actually, it should be like a game of Rugby we should be on the edge of our seat.

A4 – So I was wondering what connections you've drawn with Brecht and some of his and someone who championing some of those ideas but from a western older not older compared to Māori but in terms of theatre.

AR – In my writing I'm drawing that connection a lot and ever more deeply as I get into it, I keep going back to Brecht because I keep going, you know Brecht wants the actions to continue after the play and of course that's that's, don't we all want that? We want to see it, we want to have an effect of this world, you know we're here for such a brief time; we want to have an impact in our brief moment on the earth. In *Marat/Sade*, which you know doesn't look at all Māori, but the engagement with the audience is. And some of them hated it but most of them loved it um but it was fierce, we did it on three sides so they are really close into the action and um like you know you were talking about the thing with Brecht, there's a moment in that play where one of the revolutionaries says 'oh everyone wants to keep something from the old regime, this man keeps a painting, this one keeps his art, this one keeps his mistress, this one keeps his horse' you know blah blah blah. In the production that bit could go quite like (softly) 'everyone wants to keep something from the old regime, this one keeps painting, uh that woman, she keeps her lover' or whatever, you know, so they could be that close. On this particular night I was sitting next to the Chair of our Board who is an avid art collector. The person playing that line had no idea of that but she gave him this man 'this man keeps his painting' and me and the other Board member sitting there went (facial expression) like this, but the better moment was she turned to the other guy who was a judge who was our other board member and went 'and that man keeps his mistress' and then both of us went (facial expression) 'Oh

if the first comment was true then this might also be so...’ I’m not pretending that that doesn’t happen in other productions but I think when you lay the ground that way and everyone’s thinking in that way you make it more likely to happen. And I guess all we can ever do is make a space in which something is more likely to happen. You can’t guarantee it, there are never any guarantees. And I think that was also what Brecht was looking for.

A5 – I was curious, it was either *Troilus* or *Marat/Sade* - were they bi or multilingual?

AR – Ah. *Troilus and Cressida* was bilingual, we did the um, there’s a big scene in Troy where they’re debating giving Helen back, should they give Helen back to the Greeks or not? And so because that was entirely Trojans in that scene we did it entirely in Te Reo, the Māori language. And one of our students, actually a guy called Te Kohe Tuhaka - he’s a beautiful actor but he’s also - he was brought up speaking Māori so its his first tongue, and his Maori is beautiful. And he has a lot of support from his *iwi*. They see him as a future leader of the tribe and so he translated it for us and that was wonderful to have someone inside the school translating. And he’s write a bit and then he’d take it to his uncle to have a look at and discuss the richness of the language. Because Māori is very like Shakespeare - it’s so like Shakespeare it’s all metaphors - everything is told in metaphor. So we did that. And so that the people who didn’t speak Māori would still understand I added a little thing, I had Helen on a little balcony watching with Andromache, and Andromache translating for her a little bit. So you could just follow, though not everything that was said. And we did that scene just like a *hui* on a *marae*.

In *Marat/Sade* we didn’t. We just used English. There were a couple of moments where we used a little bit of Māori, but just in asides not substantially at all. I am going to direct something with a group of Indian students next year and I’m thinking I might... They do a their performances in Hindi because they have so many different languages in India and I am thinking, at least through some parts, to use all the languages that the

students speak because they'll be Gujarati and Malayalam and Bengali many different ... and I think it will be very beautiful to hear all those languages in the work. Does that answer your question?

A6 – Your work ... I was introduced to a Suzuki method that, I'll try and explain where it came from. And you can see in Japan, that there is so much of themselves, people go back and take so much from Suzuki and different martial arts, traditions, and put them together for new methods and use it in traditional actor training. And so I think it is a good idea to respect the groups and explain how they got back to as you say the spirit of it, but still, I hear I think I need to go back and study Suzuki which recently is ... so it somehow keeps and it alive if you like.

AR – I think it's also - and this is not to do with Māoridom but its something, well maybe it is. Well its' something I believe profoundly anyway, that as a practitioner and as a teacher you acknowledge those that taught you. I see it as the *whakapapa* of what you're doing. So when I introduce something to a group of students I give them the *whakapapa*, the history of it. I tell them who taught me and who taught them. Like for example, I've done some work that came to me - originally from Sunkaijuku, a theatre Butoh dance company originated it – it came to me through Inside Out Theatre Company. And I've taught it to many generations of actors. When I start I always tell the lineage. When I do the workshops - I'm doing a workshop on Saturday around Viewpoints - I will acknowledge Viewpoints originators Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. And I think we should always position ourselves in that chain of learning because none of it just comes from us, it just isn't like that. And it gives people a context to weave backwards if they want, and you're already going 'oh I'm interested in Kabuki after I've done that stamping' How are your knees? It's great I did a month of stamping with Anne Bogart in theatre, oh you remember hey it was fantastic!

A7 – How do Māori festivals translate with people who aren't from New Zealand and who haven't been brought up surrounded by the Māori culture?

AR – I can't answer that yet, I'll probably know a little better after I've directed this production in India. I have translated it into um, I have done some work in the States where I used those principles in classes. I didn't direct a whole production although Rangimoana, that I worked with in *Troilus and Cressida* did, and the way we were working translated to that context very well. I think they're human structures you see. And the Pākehā kids at the school, you know initially, (Pākehā means white European um pale face, actually it means something else).

A7 – Isn't it to do with um because it's to do with breath

AR – Yes its breath isn't it. Yeah I think it's about, yes there's a beautiful translation of it that I wish I could just now think of but it is to do with breath and sound, yeah, nice hey, that's how we got named). But those students need to find their own way in.

What I guess the principle I would say, is that none of us come from nowhere, we all have - our body is made up of inherited experience both in our own lifetime and in our ancestors and we can't, that is just how it is, we can't change that. Acknowledging it empowers us so like Jim Moriarty would say, the ancestors are always with us. If you think like that, then you have a better view of how the world is and I know a lot of our students find out so much about their family, they go back, one of the first effects of coming to Toi Wharakaari is they go and talk to their grandparents. You know, if we did nothing else I think that would be a wonderful thing that we achieved. And it doesn't matter what culture you're from that's useful.

A8 – I was just going to say that I worked for Jim for six month and so we worked with young offenders and I think all *tikanga* - but I think for anybody, it's all about like you say your identity, of where you're from. And I think in relation to like the recent riots and stuff a lot of that comes from a sense of lack of community. Or, you know, you don't feel like you really belong anywhere. And that's why people are so angry, especially young people. And I feel that knowing who you are and where you're from is just so healthy,

it's so good for your own well-being. And that can be the same anywhere. And I think that's one of the biggest things from culture that is really...

AR – And I reckon allied with that, if you think for *pōwhiri*, part of it enables you to meet difference so you can deal with difference from that without losing yourself. I reckon *that's* amazing in contemporary world and I think that's another gift that Māori and New Zealand give, and I think we're a bit arrogant about this, we do think we have something to teach the world about dealing with difference.

A9 – I have to say my years spent in New Zealand actually during these two years have discovered more about myself.

AR – Yeah I think that is very common, suddenly going; 'who am I?' and you know I know that's true here, what that thing, what's that TV programme 'who do you think you are?' people love it! They wanna know where they come from, of course you do because you're empowered by it.

JB – Annie I just wondered if you'd say something about the pressures that you may have met through bringing this philosophy forward; with the industry and the more commercial side of the industry that might say; well you know, does it get bums on seats, does it sell? All the kind of commercial pressure that theatre is comprised of as well as the principled aspect?

AR – Absolutely, in fact, that's a great question; 'that Māori school down the road' that's what people were saying about us 'oh I hear you have to be Māori to get into that school' it's ignorant. But actually its worse than than ignorant it's dangerous. And the first year I was at the school - so I was teaching acting part time in the school and I was involved in the recruitment process for that year of actors and at that time -we're going back twenty years now - it was a really tiny school, only training actors. Now we train all the different areas of theatre but then just actors. and then for the first time ever in an in take of sixteen, there were seven Māori women. What did I hear up and down the country? They were chosen because they were Māori. It was a really

dangerous line and it really was so difficult for those young women because they could never feel completely sure that they got in on their talent. I know they did, but you know, how dare you think that somehow because, you know if it was a year, as there once was, that it was all boys in the acting course, no-one went 'oh I guess they only chose boys, they didn't want women' no no no they thought 'they must have been very talented those boys'. I don't know why they couldn't think 'they were very talented, those Maori women'. So that was one example and you know it's serious to undermine people like that. There was one young women, you remember Olivia, who seriously almost killed herself because she doubted her talent. You know I really dedicate myself to squashing those kind of lies. The other thing that's happened, 'Oh! Toi Wharakaari, (they were so sick of us), that school that wants to be Māori, that Māori school blah blah blah. But the quality of our graduates coming out told another story, so that was the first thing. Secondly, time's amazing really, those people, there's a theatre in Wellington, I shouldn't say which one it is, but it's a very conservative theatre, and it and it really had a lot to say about the school and about me and I probably had too much to say about them too with the students. But now in theatre awards it's the graduates of the school, the innovative theatre companies that are winning all the awards and with them the audiences. And now suddenly they are going; 'oh it would be nice if your guys could come and do this with us and, you know, could we do that?' And, 'we're having a big group of overseas dignitaries could you do a *pōwhiri* for us?' You know? So all of those things have changed with time. But you know there was a time in 2007 when I almost lost my job for you know there was a kind of a riot in the school among the staff and there were resignations and I had to fight very hard.

JB – You had to fight and hold your nerve

AR – Yes and believe that what we were doing was the right thing, you know very established people, MPs and theatre families that go back as far as they go back as far as they go back in New Zealand which isn't far, two generations and it's a dynasty.

JB – They can make a lot of noise can't they?

AR – They did and they made a lot of noise and it was quite dangerous there for a while. I was lucky the chair of my board stood with me and also I just believed so strongly. Look I'd been at the school for, I'm a graduate of the school, and I've been at that school for twenty one years. I was not going to see that school destroyed! I believed so passionately in what we'd made and I thought I'm not leaving until we've got it great and safe and yeah.

JB – You focussed on the purpose?

AR – Totally I focussed on the purpose. I knew why I was doing it. We got fierce.

JB – Shall we have something to refresh ourselves?

AR – Yes, So we should complete our process by making things normal and eating!

Applause