

A Decade of Consequences

At Easter this year we were so busy with our third Gathering and the launch of our new web site, that the fact that it was a decade since the 1999 Magdalena Aotearoa International Festival of Performance slipped by almost unmarked. When I look back to 1999, the festival seems unreal - an ambitious, risky, mad endeavour - yet we did it!

Could we do it again?

We've thought about it and discussed it, but ... the financial barriers seem huge even without the shadow of the current economic crisis; the time commitment seems too much to ask of people when everyone is already more than busy; and the distances to bring international guests seem obscene in the face of imminent environmental collapse. But the fact that we did it once stands as a challenge to do it again ... or at least to dream about it.

While we dream, it's worth reflecting on what's happened since 1999 - what the festival inspired and the ways our lives were changed by it. For me, the festival was a huge catalyst: a few months later I left on a one-way ticket to the UK and, after the Edinburgh Fringe, I boldly made my way to Jill Greenhalgh's house in rural Wales. We had barely met in New Zealand but I proposed to build the first web site for the Magdalena Project, and Jill happily accepted.

Coincidentally, I was at Jill's house when I began to write this editorial some weeks ago, once again sitting at her big kitchen table by a roaring fire and working on things Magdalena. And six weeks before that, I had been in Istanbul where I finally had the pleasure of meeting Jale Karabekir of Tiyatro Boyalı Kuş, a Turkish feminist theatre company. I say finally because Jale and I have communicated by email since late 1999; she was the first person to

contact the Magdalena Project after finding the web site that I'd built. As a result of that contact, Jale went to the INFANT Festival in Novi Sad in 2000 and met Jill; she returned to Istanbul determined to start the feminist theatre group which has now grown into a strong company. Just after we met this year, she went to Norway for the Ibsen Prize, and then the company toured to Armenia.

Jale thanked me profusely for making the web site which made it possible for her to meet the people who gave her the courage to start her theatre company. Without our festival, this wouldn't have happened - at least, not like this. And our festival wouldn't have happened if Sally, Madeline and others hadn't attended Magdalena '94; which they wouldn't have known about if Alan Brunton hadn't stumbled across the Magdalena Project book in the Wellington Public Library and brought it home for Sally to read. That book wouldn't have been there if Susan Basnett hadn't written it, and she would have had nothing to write about if Jill and the others hadn't initiated the Magdalena Project in 1983, kept it going for all these years and allowed it to evolve into something that we all needed.

I'm not saying that Tiyatro Boyalı Kuş wouldn't have happened at all if we hadn't had our festival, but we can honestly say that our festival in 1999 directly contributed to the establishment of a feminist theatre company in Istanbul. It's also directly led to many other things, and some of those who were present at the festival in 1999 have commented on this in the pages of this newsletter. Miff Moore, who ran the exhibition at Shed 11, writes from Norway. Natalia Marcet (a.k.a. MISS CAPITAL LETTERS), who came from Argentina to participate in our

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Pavarthi Baul performing at the 6th Transit Festival, Odin Teatret, in August. Pavarthi has proposed to organise a Magdalena festival in India in 2012.

festival, writes about the culmination of her dream to present her solo performance at the Transit Festival. Jale writes from Istanbul about her company and the importance of the Magdalena network for her work. And the festival's technical director, Lisa Maule, reflects back to those exciting and crazy days in 1999.

I continued writing this editorial in New York where, amongst other things, I attended the final season of *Dominicanish* by Josefina Baez, after a decade of performances. Josefina wasn't at our festival in 1999 but I met her at Transit in 2001 and toured her around New Zealand in 2002. Once again this was a tour with many consequences, for people here and for Josefina.

Back home at last, and finishing this newsletter, I am struck by the strength of those ripples from 1999 that continue to spiral outwards ...

Helen Varley Jamieson

Trust News

The Trustees have, as ever, been madly busy over the winter months. Helen and Madeline both managed to have extra summer, attending the Transit VI Festival at the Odin Teatret in August and having other adventures in Europe.

Lisa has been furthering the Southern Corridor project, which she writes about on page 9. Jessica is involved in the Island Bay Festival and other projects which

you can read about below. As well as costuming Jo Randerson's latest play *Goodnight The End*, Janet has opened a new shop in Newtown, selling her own and others' designs. Lilicherie's company Kore Theatre continues its successful schools tours of two-handed Shakespeares - *Lear and His Daughters*, and *Macbeth*; and Dale is settling into a new job.

So with all of that going on, the Trust itself has been pretty quiet!

Ake Ake Update

Over winter Jessica Latton of Ake Ake Theatre Company has been raising her children, Margot (1) and Demetrius (2), and taken on the role of Worship Cultivator at St Cuthberts Anglican Church in Berhampore, standing at the altar as the service leader with a child on her hip.

In March Ake Ake remounted the children's circus theatre show *Our Secret Garden* at the Rotorua Arts festival in a real blue and red striped circus tent! Childhood visions and premonitions (or is that dreams?) come true. We also animated the streets with dancers and a 4-piece gypsy band.



Over autumn Ake Ake ran a collaborative vocal exploration workshop entitled *Pandora's Glockenspiel*. The eight participants fed an expansive array of experience into the work: circus artist Pipi Ayesha Evans, Sasha Perfect (recently returned from studying Body Weather training in Europe), Jade Valour

with her Sun and Moon singing, four part Russian and Bulgarian harmonies from Jessica and Rhys (and Demetri), Anusara yogic 'looping' from Canadian actress Andrea Tutt and some full-on Shamanic journeying from musicians Erica Grant and Isaac Smith. Interesting qualities emerged from having a toddler and a baby in the heart of the improvisations. The drama of actors stamping and chanting bursts wide open when an actress cradles a baby and dances, and when Dada and two year old son improvise in the stamping chanting circle. We become so real, truly awake. As working artists living away from our extended family, we don't have the resources to have our children in care during rehearsals and training - nor do we want to. They keep the company light on its toes. We love to have our children soaked in song, for them to stamp and roll and chant AUM with us, and for Demetri to practise wicked handstands!

Currently, Jessica is organising the Island Bay Festival Community Variety Show (see the notice on the back page of this newsletter and get involved!). The real juice of performance for her at present is in the circle back to community, which means family groups, not just the young and unencumbered. The Serbian Church, the Ethiopian Church, the Romanian

The Magdalena Aotearoa Trust is a charitable trust that aims to encourage and promote the work of women in the performing arts.

Co-founders

Madeline McNamara & Sally Rodwell

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Newsletter contributions are welcome, but may be edited.

Email contributions to:

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The deadline for the next issue is 26 February 2010

Church, the Italian Garibaldi Club have all been invited, as have schools and preschools. Bring out your history! Bring out your romance!

Jessica is also co-directing Emily Buttle's (Empress Stilt Dance) new show *Butterfly*. Featuring stilt acrobatics and stilt aerials with Empress' incredible design and the spaciousness of Tango, it premieres at Te Rauparaha stadium on Waitangi day. Rhys and Pipi perform in it.

Both Jessica and Rhys continue to practise and teach yoga, get up to babies every night, and clean poo off the floor. All is well.

Transit VI

The sixth Transit International Festival of Women's Performance was held at Odin Teatret, Denmark, in August of this year, with the theme "Women on the Periphery".

Immediately before the festival, "On the periphery of Transit" offered workshops with Odin actresses, and Odin performances and work demonstrations. About 30 participants attended this new part, with 150 attending the festival itself.

The festival followed the usual Transit formula with workshops on the first four days, then panels and talks as well as the performances. Unlike previous festivals, a number of the performances were staged in venues outside the Odin: a circus tent beside the theatre was the site for *Para Dores Femininas*, intimate solos for one audience member at a time, by two elderly actresses from Brasil; *h.g.*, a delightful installation by Trickster Teatro (Switzerland) was in a nearby school; Voix Polyphoniques (France) performed *Black Sea Songs* in a church; and *Danzo Danzo* by Teatro Natura (Italy) lead us on a hike through forest and sand dunes to finish at the sea. Teatret OM's fabulous '79 *Fjorden* was in the Odin's red room, but the space was completely transformed by the amazing igloo set.

Pavarthi Baul (India) captivated us all with her songs; Natascha Nikeprelevic (Germany) gave an extraordinary vocal performance; and Pepa Plana (Spain) charmed us with her clown work. There were works in progress from Margaret Cameron (Australia) Dawn Albinger (Australia), Gabriella Sacco (Italy); and shows that experimented with the use of live video, such as *Milk White* from Zid Theatre (Amsterdam) and *IA (UMA)* from Brasil.

The food was wonderful throughout but as usual the final feast was a highlight of performative and gastronomic proportions. At the end, the participants dispersed to their own corners of the globe, exhausted yet deeply satisfied and inspired by this summer Transit.



Above: Geddy Aniksdal performs My Life As A Man.

Below: Cristina Castrillo, Bruna Ghusberti, Jill Greenhalgh, Gabriella Sacco, Helen Varley Jamieson.



Above: Madeline McNamara delivers a telegram from her periphery.

Below: someone let Deb Hunt and Antonella Diana be in charge of decorating for the final feast, and the power went straight to their heads!



Madeline in Transit

In her 'telegram', Brigit Cirila began by saying that she was most comfortable in the kitchen with the kitchen workers. "I am most comfortable serving. Not servile but serving. I don't want to sit in a lonely room and write. I want to sit in the warmth of the kitchen with the cooks who joke because the food is served and the dishes are done". I loved this. It is how I feel. It is a place I would like my work to come from.

Unfortunately the cook-up I had been preparing here in Wellington this past year curdled at the last minute and was inedible. This was one of those dishes that no matter what you did with it, it just keep getting worse. Perhaps it was too rich, the flavours too complex, anyway it soured and when I tried to sweeten it, all I could taste was the sugar. Perhaps I had too many other pots on the boil. I had a lot of assistance but if the head chef doesn't know what they're doing, it's hard for the others, no matter how skilled, to help. In the end I had to come to the feast empty handed. It was hard to face everyone who had brought such incredible and brave offerings. The feast was so varied and delicious that nobody minded, but I still felt stink.

However all is not wasted. I've preserved what I could and either frozen or dried the rest for later. I've been rearranging the kitchen, stocking up on provisions which were in short supply: head space, confidence, money, sanity.

Thank you Julia, Luciana, Odin Teatret, the cooks of Valhalla, feast makers, women of Magdalena, for this Transit, for the experience of a lifetime, for your brilliance, generosity and care, for the warmth of the kitchen, for the jokes, for the food that was served and the dishes that were done. For all the work you inspire and that inspired me this August. Skaal.

Madeline McNamara

Gordas in Transit

Natalia Marcet (Argentina) presented her solo performance *Gordas* at the 6th Transit Festival in August 2009; the following is excerpts from the translation of her full article, which can be found (in Spanish) at: <http://magdalena2dageracion.blogspot.com/2009/10/gordas-en-transit.html>

In 1999, newly recovered from 14 endless years of bulimia, I went to New Zealand to my first Magdalena Festival as a participant. My fear was: what can she make, this lonely girl so far away? Ten years later, *Gordas (Fat Women)* - the solo show that tells my 'season in hell' - has been invited to Transit VI.

Arriving at the Odin, I am welcomed by Ana, Julia, Yamile, Gabriella, Luciana. Then I work with Ana to fix the last things. She suggests a 'dry run' with Julia, to continue to grow the work, but I panic and ask her to put this off. I set to work: the days began at 6 a.m. I find gaps when I can work in the Red Room, and time to repair the set that had broken during the trip, with the help of Fausto, Phillip and Angelo.

The Transit Festival began and I was in charge of preparing breakfast, together with Maria, Jess and Meg, at the same time as making the last adjustments for *Gordas*. I was happy but scared. Also, Ana had proposed that I make cakes to sell at the festival bar. Was that a contradiction or not? Or integration?

The last rehearsal before the performance went until 5pm on August 7, in the circus tent outside the theatre. Deborah helped with some of the manipulation and Francesca suggested a few things. I began to assemble my things in the White Room, the same room that in two previous occasions I had left the sweat of training ... I had dreamt of returning to perform there.

I entered the room after *Songs from the Silent Voice*, the story of Nina Norén (my room-mate in the Suite Royal during the festival) who had spent years in a psychiatric hospital. I cried very much seeing her performance.

Ana and Francesca helped me to set up, then I needed to be alone in the room, to begin to inhabit it. I had to cook the *Gordas'* cakes and fix the technical devices. I worked until 3 a.m. I couldn't leave my costume in the dressing-room, because in the morning there was a workshop there. At 11 a.m. I got up - Yamile had replaced me in the preparation of the breakfast. My whole body was hurting but slowly I began to do the necessary things.

Then the moment arrives ... there I am, behind the table with the cream, the cakes ... people circulate around me and some are wondering, will we eat it? Jill is smiling from afar, Geddy looking at me with her eyes like accomplices, while Ana, my director, my soul sister, looks at me with eyes beaming like sunrise. Then Madeline and Helen from New Zealand, and Deborah ... I was missing Sally. I could not stop thinking, while I beat



the cream, that New Zealand had been my first venture out of the water, the first attempt to tell my story.

I dedicated the performance to Ana, Julia, Sally, my mom, my (dead) sister Virginia, to my grandmother Kúngatà who wanted to be an artist, too.

I began to tremble. I delivered a cake to Phillip and another to Angelo to be kept safe in the fridge ... and I entered the room ... I embraced Ana, Julia and Francesca, then I entered the costume ...

Ten years on, here I was in the dreamed-of place doing the dreamed-of thing ... to tell the story, my story. The

story of all the women who wander, lost, at the mental frontier, the periphery of normality - the precipice. The theatre was again giving me the possibility to transform what had been my poison, into my food; the possibility to take possession of my vulnerability. I ride my story again and again because theatre gives me the tools to do it - to enter, and not get lost in it. There I was, in this place, this moment for which I had worked so hard. As I write, a tear reminds me that everything is already a memory ... the performance ends, the applause explodes, it fills my heart. An intense shyness overcomes me and I can neither say anything or be grateful for anything ... I feel naked. I sit down an adult. I go out to wait for those who honoured me with their presence and give them a piece of cake, like always after every performance.

Everyone is embracing me. Later, Jill says "well done" and asks, "and now? How is it now?" "With troubles in my relationships", I answer her. "Welcome to normality," she says. Normality - delicious normality!

Each evening I sold cakes at the festival bar. Were they looking at me differently? Do they look different now? No, I am the one who looks different. I realise that whenever I do *Gordas*, I center myself. I clean myself. I ritualise that moment of loss of the sense of life that gave to me the air to continue. The poison transforms into food ... a tiny task ... Theatre it makes possible! To go out to tell the story. To do the work. To cross. To exchange.

Returning to the Argentina, I have made decisions that radically changed my life ... there is still much to say. But surely, a part of my soul still wanders there, she doesn't want to return ... Still does not want to come back ...

THANKS ANA FOR GORDAS

THANKS JULIA FOR MANY MORE TRANSITS.

Natalia Marcet
Argentina

Goodnight The End

Jo Randerson's play *Good Night The End* was beautiful to look at, funny, tragic and philosophical, based on the playful conceit that being a Grim Reaper is, well, just a job. And, given the amount of work, you need a few to cover the shifts. There were three on stage: Harvester of Sorrows, played by Jo, Unavoidable Destiny (Felicity McDonnell) and Transitional Friend (Thomas LaHood), a comedy trio of physical types, tall and thin, medium and fat, little and skinny, wonderfully costumed by Janet Dunn. Each act began with a Grim Reaper tour de force: shrouded in smoke and light effects, they philosophise in deep sonorous tones about The End.

Job done, it was time to switch off the sound effects box and go back to a dreary reality, the chore of waiting in the communal work space, a lounge/kitchen decorated in the best of 50's kitsch (great set design from Sean Coyle). Resonances from Sartre's *Huis Clos* and Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, bitching along with workmates you just have to put up with. This Anteroom to the Afterlife is full of boring, repetitious, unsatisfactory stuff like dirty mugs and no milk, and others who are cruel, or greedy, or cowardly. Everyday mysteries abound: where is the lost pie, or mug or milk? Why is Harvester of Sorrows avoiding the Management? Grim Reaping is a tacky job, full of cheap tricks and gimmicks, and none of the undead characters actually know the answer to the big mystery "What's next?", not even Management, an imp-like sort-of-Italian character (Aaron Cortesi) who snoops, pretending to be a seaman smoking a pipe in a painting and pops in and out of magic boxes embedded in the set.

A few reviewers found the play slow. It is a tough assignment to show dullness without being dull. The pace and repetition built a gritty atmosphere of frustration, and gave time to take in decor detail, for example the skull-design alternate lino squares. Nevertheless, sharper direction from Andrew Foster and a snip or two from the (very clever) dialogue would have been good. I would have liked Jo Randerson's character to be more wild, more tragic and more funny, bringing out the gamut of extremes inherent in Harvester of Sorrow's cynicism, practical jokes and denial. However, both the complacent overeater (Unavoidable Destiny) and the worried, put-upon do gooder (Transitional Friend) rang true.

When Harvester of Sorrows' secret was revealed as her imminent death the play began to move fast and furious. The lost pie was found and many other secrets uncovered. There was a brilliant puppet show that came out, literally, from under the overturned kitchen table, revealing a story of lifelong victimisation. Thunder rolled, clouds billowed and a passageway into light opened up to guide the dead reaper into the unknown ... leaving the audience with the question whether this ending is another beginning. Or not.

Caz Sheldon

Double Portrait: Finding Frances Hodgkins

By Jan Bolwell

Directed by Ralph McAllister
Featuring Jan Bolwell, Perry Piercy and John Wraight
New Zealand Portrait Gallery,
Shed 11, Wellington Waterfront
December 4/5 at 6pm
Bookings at Downstage
www.downstage.org.nz



Growing up in Dunedin, I was interested in Frances Hodgkins from an early age. The Dunedin Public Art Gallery always had her paintings on display and we had reproductions of her works at home. How did a woman, born into a colonial world, conceive the idea she could live the life of a professional artist? The play explores this question through Hodgkins' interactions with a number of key individuals in her life. Hodgkins' letters provide a treasure trove of thoughts and information. However she was a very private person, and I have taken my own imaginary journey into her personal relationships. I was fortunate to have a three month residency at the Robert Lord Writer's Cottage in Dunedin where the early drafts of this play were written.

Jan Bolwell

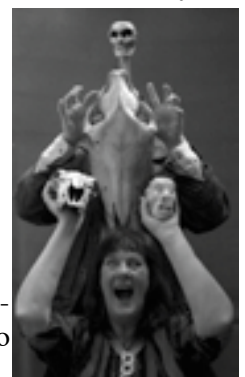
Scary Sagas at BATS

A special children's show at BATS in January offers something different for the kids these summer holidays.

Soul Food Tellers, the story-telling branch of Baggage Co-op, presents *Scary Sagas at BATS* - spine tingling tales from Maori, Native American and European mythology.

"Since we have an adult's show at BATS, we decided to make the most of it and do a kids show too," says Moira Wairama from the Baggage Co-op. "It's a great opportunity for kids to be introduced to BATS Theatre. The show is best suited for older children, 7 years plus, but it will be ok for 'fearless younger children' with parents. We're inviting kids to dress in their scariest outfits and hope parents will also dress up and share the fun."

Scary Sagas features Tony Hopkins, Moira Wairama and Ralph Johnson and has a running time of approx. 45 mins. BATS Theatre, 1 Kent Terrace, Wellington 1pm Fri 8th Sat 9th, and Thurs 14th, Fri 15th, Sat 16th January 2010. Ticket prices \$6. Bookings: ph 802-4175 or email book@bats.co.nz www.bats.co.nz



News

Remembering Judith Dale

In August after a valiant struggle with cancer, one of Magdalena Aotearoa's great supporters and friends, Judith Dale, passed away. Judith was a staunch feminist and an academic who worked for many years as a lecturer in the English, Film and Theatre Studies Department at Victoria University. She had an irrepressible curiosity and a wide variety of interests that engaged her. One of her major passions was New Zealand theatre. She watched enormous amounts of it, wrote about it as a critic and as a reviewer, and she taught it in her classes. She was particularly supportive of the work of women artists and made many opportunities available for women to talk about their work in the context of university studies for which one received a fee. She was a long time supporter of Magdalena Aotearoa, being a generous donor as well as attending many of our events. We will miss her dearly.

Our heartfelt sympathies go out to her close friends, her family and particularly to her partner Sylvia Bagnall, also a long time and treasured supporter of our work.

The photo below is of Judith and Sylvia, looking resplendent in suffragette attire, with me on the platform at Paekakariki train station in August 2008. Their costuming added a wonderfully theatrical element to the local celebrations of the North Island Main Trunk Line Centennial events.

Madeline McNamara



Happy 10th Birthday, the clinic!

Innovative Christchurch-based theatre company, the clinic, turns 10 this December. The clinic is known for its experimentation with multimedia theatre, incorporating film into live theatre and collaborating with both established and emerging artists in visual art, film, music/composition, written word and circus.

The five members of the clinic currently live in 3 different countries, with Lucette Hindin the only member living permanently in Christchurch. Their latest performance, *Love You Approximately*, was created as an exploration of artistic collaboration over distance, through the story of a long-distance relationship between a Christchurch woman and a Spanish man. This show is currently in preparation for New Zealand and European tours.



Congratulations to Miff Moore & Terje Evensen on the birth of Viola Victoria (2812g) on 21 August in Oslo, Norway; Miff and Viola are pictured at left.

The following day at 5.17am in Wellington, Georgi Hart gave birth to Ileana, weighing 3.93kg; congratulations to Georgi and proud grandmother Lilicherie McGregor (pictured right).



On Tape - Eko Theatre

Producer Lisa Maule gives an update on the Southern Corridor Project Update and explains why kids have been drawing on walls with special tape as part of this theatre project.

During three days in November, over 40 kids took part in the first event of Eko Theatre's pilot project. Initiated by director Heather Timms, the project aims to facilitate conversations about identity and relationship to land within and between Maori and Somali communities. These conversations will happen in many ways, allowing accessible participation for many ages and types of people from these communities.

Berhampore Primary School is located at the heart of the area Eko Theatre has chosen for this project – the Wellington suburbs of Newtown, Island Bay and Berhampore. The art form we decided to use for this event is Tape Art, as its dynamic and immediate nature makes it a perfect conduit for dialogue.

Tape Art initiator Erica Duthie says, "Students' confidence builds quickly thanks to the flexibility of the tape - each line can be removed and replaced. Also the entire murals are temporary with the 'life span of a day', reinforcing the pleasure of the process over a pressure on the product."

A highlight for me as the producer was all the positive comments from teaching staff about how it changed their school environment. We also invited the families to come and participate after school as a way of extending knowledge about the project into communities and so to widen the conversation around the themes. It was wonderful to see a packed courtyard at the BBQ on the final day. The outcomes for the school and their community have been very good, with positive press coverage, an article in the *New Zealand School Journal*, Maori and Somali families feeling valued for themselves, an exchange of knowledge between all the communities at the school and the individual children who took part all



For the final day the children decided to make their mural in olden days. They are showing people sharing in the work of cooking and preparing food. Image by Lance Matthews.

have a sense of pride in their achievements.

Mihaere Kirby, Eko Theatre's Cultural Advisor, was able to talk to many of the parents on the last day and was delighted to take part in the Powhiri (welcome) the children of Room 5 did for us at the beginning of the first day. The school's principal, Mark Potter, was also able to use this as a learning experience for the children who come from very diverse backgrounds.

The new timeline for the Southern Corridor Project sees community events continuing until March 2010 and then work towards a theatre performance and multi media installations to be presented in early December 2010. We have a web presence at <http://sites.google.com/site/theatreko/home/> and you can also become a fan of our page on Facebook: Eko Theatre.

Lisa Maule



Above: the wider school parents and kids came to a BBQ on the last day. Image by Shaun Matthews.



Left: one of the Rounds at the recent Transit festival was held outside in the summer sunshine, in front of the entrance to Odin Teatret. Until this year, the Transit festivals have always been held in January, the short dark days often accompanied by snow. This is conducive to spending all day in windowless theatre rooms, however the heat and sunshine this year contributed to the generally happy mood that pervaded the entire festival. One performance was staged outside at a beach, and others in a tent - something unthinkable in the Danish winter!

Touring on a shoestring

Helen Moulder writes about her experience of touring her solo performance, *Playing Miss Havisham*, around small-town New Zealand. Reprinted with permission from Playmarket News.

It all started when I was travelling around NZ in 2004 with Sir Jon Trimmer in *Meeting Karpovsky*, a funded tour to eight centres in medium sized venues. We'd be tootling along a country road and Jon would suddenly nod at a tumbledown old shed in the middle of a bare paddock and say nostalgically, "I've danced in there. In the old days." And he'd then go on and tell these wonderful stories about touring with the ballet company in the 1960's.

It occurred to me that that's what I'd like to do - wander about New Zealand and perform in all sorts of little places. What if I had a one person theatre company? Just me, an audience and a solo piece, with a simple set, that I could assemble by myself, and lights and sound that I could work single-handed.

When I got the chance, I talked the idea over with Sue Rider, the Australian director and dramaturg who had helped Jon and I write *Meeting Karpovsky*. Sue and I put our thinking caps on and began getting ideas down on paper and in 2006, with the help of Creative NZ, we launched *Playing Miss Havisham*, a solo piece with recorded piano music. (Occasionally, of course, the wonderful pianist Richard Mapp, performs with me live, although when he does, I always ask the audience to imagine he is a minidisk!)

While Sue and I were still working on the script, I started sorting out my first tour. I put a notice on the *Listener* "Noticeboard" and got to work on the phone. I called people I knew around the country and asked them if they would like to have *Playing Miss Havisham* in their homes or local hall, maybe as a fundraiser or simply as a community cultural and social event. I approached my extended family, friends, colleagues, friends of friends etc - anybody who might be remotely interested.

Sometimes I even went "cold-calling". I thought, for example, that it would be great fun to perform in the remote West Coast town of Okarito - population 37 and home to the white heron, Keri Hulme and photographer Andris Apse. I looked in the phone book and started with the Okarito Motel. "I'm an actor planning a tour with a solo play. Is there anyone in Okarito interested in the theatre?" I asked the young woman who answered. There was a short silence and a certain amount of crackling on the line and then she replied, "Yes. Anne is! You could try her." And that's how I came to perform in the historic Donovan's Store in Okarito, to 45 people seated on benches borrowed from the lagoon shed, with electricity borrowed from the neighbours and with much excitement that their new hall was at last being used.



So that's how it began. Lots of phone calls, lots of driving and lots of wonderful audiences around New Zealand.

These days I plan a tour for a few months each year, pack up my van with lights (4 x 500 watt fresnels), a minidisk sound system for incidental music and/or my new radio mike, a backdrop and a load of props and costumes, and hit the road. At each

stop it takes two or three hours to set everything up, but I often have a travelling companion - generally a friend or relative, whom I've invited along "on a peculiar kind of holiday" - and the organising group usually provide some strong arms to unload. I have a sliding scale of fees, depending on how many people come (the price per head goes down the more there are in the audience) and so far I've managed to tour without any funding.

I play to audiences of between 30 to 100 people in small venues - people's homes, community halls, libraries, art galleries, churches, little theatres, the occasional farm shed and of course the odd historic store.

Of course, because these venues are not the normal places for plays, peculiar things can happen, like the heifers and barking dogs that interrupted the show in the Otaki Forks farm shed or the freezing temperatures in the hall at Waitaria Bay or the smell of the urea based fertilizer on the plants in the Victorian conservatory in ... well I won't say where.

This is the fourth year I've been doing this and I now have three different shows available and others in the pipeline. It's hard work but immensely satisfying. I get to meet the audience afterwards over a cup of tea (I always encourage them to have a supper because I'm always hungry!), I get to be in rural NZ much of the time, I've upscaled my knowledge about sound, lights and power point presentations and because I am performing these plays over a long period of time, my co-writers and I can continue to improve the scripts. Of course, the other thing is, I am in work, which, I have to admit is a very good feeling.

Anyone care to come along for the ride?

Helen Moulder

www.willowproductions.co.nz

This year Helen is touring:
A Vote for Cynthia - the musical
(Taranaki, Canterbury, West Coast, Otago & Southland);
The Legend Returns with Rose Beauchamp
(Auckland and en route from Wellington);
Playing Miss Havisham (Northland and Coromandel)

Telling Tales

Te Haerenga

Life is a journey all of us are travelling, where have you come from, where will you go?

Make it a New Year's resolution: don't miss Baggage Co-op's show *Te Haerenga, a journey of identity* at Bats Theatre this January.

Originally created for the 2005 Fringe, reworked for The Glistening Waters Festival (Wairarapa) and The Pohutukawa Festival (Coromandal), *Te Haerenga* has been further developed in 2009 through a series of workshops which will culminate in a workshop/performance at Koraunui marae.

"Our set and lighting are very basic so it's easy to perform the show in venues other than traditional theatres," says Moira Wairama, Baggage co-founder and one of the three performers appearing in the show. "However it's wonderful to be back at BATS which has been so supportive of our work over the years. We are also interested in seeing how well a theatre season in January will work. Traditionally there is less theatre on offer during January, but that's when many people are on holiday and could be interested in seeing a show. Hopefully they'll chose ours."



Te Haerenga features performers Moira Wairama, Tony Hopkins and Ralph Johnson, all of whom are known to many Magdalena Aotearoa members. The costumes for the show are being designed by Janet Dunne.

"We decided to have Janet design costumes for us, rather than just find them as we have in the past. Like most independent producers we have a limited budget but Janet's costumes are a great investment, and really enhance the show."

Touching on such diverse topics as the revival of Te Reo Maori, the black civil rights movement in America, and the changing role of the New Zealand male, *Te Haerenga* interweaves three stories into one shared journey of New Zealand identity.

"It's the storytelling aspect of *Te Haerenga* which makes it so unique," says Moira. "We believe that story is at

After the 2009 Gathering

Since the 2009 Gathering I have done some of the things on my 'to do' list. Not all. Things change. Two things I have done:

1. find/choose a new place to perform - my workplace
2. give copies of the DVD to people who have not seen me perform, a sister, a close friend and relatives overseas.

1. telling tales at work - this came about during Māori Language Week. The theme was Te Reo i te Hapori - Māori Language in the Community. A group of colleagues invited people to come and share something of their community with them over the week. I decided to tell a story around my mountain and river, a version of the story I told at the Gathering about going out to Makara. I booked a meeting room for this, bringing the new juxtaposition home. At the end, there was a bit of a silence. Then someone reflected: "Even though you took us to your place, I went to mine." I love that about stories, the resonance they can evoke. I find it a little hard changing from me the work colleague to me the story teller to me the colleague again. Where are the edges?

2. sending the DVD away. That's been a big thing for me - to send me the teller off on a solo journey. Not to be part of the performance. It's not what works best for me, however, better than nothing. I think.

Also I went to a workshop called *Innovating from within*: hosting and harvesting conversations that matter. Exploring, among other things, the creative tension between chaos and order. It struck me that storytelling is a kind of hosting - and while it may seem a one-way conversation in terms of words, there is a lot of connection-conversation going on too.

So, things are shifting in this space for me. Over last summer, I took the time to take this practice more seriously, consider the offer, what my performance is/might be. What are my stories for - for me, as a performer? Making the time and space to focus on presenting at the Gathering has moved into an increased momentum of exploration, some more risk taking.

And summer rolls round again...

Judith Jones

the heart of all theatre and have focused on marrying the dramatic with the spoken word. We were once told by a theatre reviewer that he didn't consider storytelling was 'real theatre' and that's why he didn't review our show. I've taken his statement as a challenge. *Te Haerenga, a journey of identity* is definitely 'real theatre'.

Te Haerenga, a journey of identity

6.30pm Thurs 7 Jan - Sat 16 Jan (no shows Sun or Mon)

Tickets \$16/13

Book BATS ph 802-4175 or book@bats.co.nz

www.bats.co.nz www.bact/panui.org.nz

From Virtual to Real

Jale Karabekir tells the story of how she came to establish Istanbul's only feminist theatre company, *Tiyatro Boyalı Kuş* (Theatre of the Painted Bird).

It was the autumn of 1999. I had just graduated from the Theatre Department and began my Masters degree in sociology. My graduation thesis was on the anarcho-feminist criticism on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and because of the limited academic work in Turkey, I shifted my learning process to sociology to be more involved in feminism.

It was November or December 1999 when I found the web site of Magdalena Project. In my study room in Istanbul, I discovered that there is a network of women in theatre since 1986. The internet was not that much an information site for those times. I wrote an email to Jill Greenhalgh, just to say that 'I am also interested in feminist theatre, but there is no feminist theatre in Turkey, and I do not know what to do, how to do it.' This was the beginning of many things including the changes in me, in Theatre Painted Bird (*Tiyatro Boyalı Kuş*) and in many people who got involved in our work.

I got a reply from Jill. She told me that there would not be an activity of Magdalena, but she would be in Yugoslavia – it was Yugoslavia in 2000! - for the festival INFANT. In June-July 2000, I found myself in Novi Sad, in Jill's workshop with Serbian feminist participants preparing a short *Water[wars]* performance. I am still positive that Jill and I did not spend so much time in speaking, but instead working. Then I found myself at a computer in Novi Sad in which the internet was not working properly, and wrote an email to my friends in Istanbul saying: "When I come back, we will establish the feminist theatre!"

And Theatre Painted Bird was established in September 2000.

This is the short story of how our feminist theatre group got her initial energy. Then the internet becomes

our way of lives, in which we are really connected to each other, are informed about each other's work and so on. The website of Magdalena enables many of us to know each other, and people who wanted to come to Istanbul, or work in Istanbul, wrote to us via the internet. We have had great women friends from Magdalena who we know face to face or just via emails.

Now it is November 2009. Ten years have passed since I found the website of Magdalena. It is our anniversary! In this autumn, Helen Varley Jamieson came to Istanbul for a festival. It was the first time I saw her. Was it? I knew her for a long time ... meeting her was just a transition from 'virtual to real'. In our chat, we figured out that the website of Magdalena was formed in the autumn of 1999. The date that I found the website! Maybe I was one of the first visitors of that website. I thanked Helen and Jill again and again, because I am not sure what there would be if there were no web site of Magdalena. Who knows?

Making Feminist Theatre in Turkey

The journey of Theatre Painted Bird is still in progress. We will celebrate our tenth anniversary next September. What has happened in this ten year period?

Theatre Painted Bird began its journey with a few of women who wanted to make theatre from a feminist approach. Having a dramaturgy background, first of all we wanted to work on the dramaturgical aspects and to struggle with the mainstream/male dominated understanding in Turkish theatre. We created our own text, using texts that society knows very well, like fairy tales or known stories. Here, we tried to change attitudes such as how the male dominated system situates



the women as 'objects' or as 'sexual meta'. Not only with the plays we created, but also we tried to change the dominant ways of working in theatre. We tried to form a feminist space within Theatre Painted Bird. We explored the ways in which the hierarchy should be reduced, in which we could express ourselves in a free atmosphere. We are still searching for these ways.

Today, Theatre Painted Bird has two essential goals: to create a new theatrical language and style in terms of feminist dramaturgy, text and staging; and to work with the techniques of Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed.

Since 2000, we have made eight performances – new texts, adaptations and virtual texts – performed in Istanbul and other cities of Turkey.

We begin to work on old Turkish canons that we have 'trouble' with. In an aesthetic way, we are making 'Stage Readings with Feminist Dramaturgy' with the play texts that are about nationalism, sexism and homosexuality.

We are also using the Theatre of the Oppressed with women's groups all over the country. Finally, we have established the CTO (Center for the Theatre of the Oppressed) of Turkey, this September.

We are not a small group today. We have 'young painted birds', we

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International News

Dominicanish Finale

In 2002, Josefina Baez visited New Zealand at the invitation of Magdalena Aotearoa, giving workshops and performances in seven centres from Auckland to Dunedin. The performance was *Dominicanish*, a beautiful solo work exploring her experience of learning a new language and new culture after her family moved from the Dominican Republic to New York when she was a child. Josefina's performances and teaching had a big impact on many people here in Aotearoa, and in 2004 she returned at the invitation of the clinic in Christchurch, where she held a retreat.

In November, Josefina performed the final season *Dominicanish* in New York City, and I happened to be there. Despite having seen the show 23 times (as I produced her NZ tour), I was delighted to see it again, with the added charge of it being the final season. Josefina's work is incredibly precise - her movements, vocal delivery and timing almost exactly the same from one performance to the next, yet with the variations of tone and energy that make live performance so magical. One surprise was that she had changed the two pieces of video that play during the performance, but I don't think a single other thing had been changed. Yes, she's getting older and her knees are complaining, but the underlying truth and artistry of this performance persists.

A couple of days later I attended the first rehearsal of Josefina's new work, *Comrade, Bliss Ain't Playin'*. With the text already written and published, she plans to create the performance through a series of workshops and rehearsals with invited participants - an open, collaborative process rather than shutting herself away alone or with a director. After physical training and improvisations, we sat in a circle and talked about the text, identifying things that could be important in the performance. I hope to be able to follow and participate in this process as the show develops over the next year.

Helen Varley Jamieson

... continued from page 10

have a volunteer network that consists of more than forty people. We are growing and growing. We are organizing workshops of the Theatre of the Oppressed and also female body performances.

It took me five years to invite Jill to come to Istanbul for a workshop and conference in 2005. She shared her technique of 'sticks and circles' with us. We are still using this technique in all our work, and in our Theatre of the Oppressed studies. Then in 2006, we - with another feminist theatre expert in Ankara who has connection with the Magdalena Project - organized the first gathering of feminist/women's theatres in Turkey; the second one occurred last month.

Future Festivals

There are a number of exciting Magdalena Festivals in the pipeline - start saving now for:

- *Magdalena Torino (Italy) - 12-18 September 2010*
- *Magdalena Wales, 25th Anniversary - August 2011*
- *Magdalena India (Kerala) - 2012*

If you're travelling overseas to develop your craft, attending a Magdalena festival can be a life-changing experience. You will have the opportunity to train in a variety of performance techniques, see a range of different work, learn about how artists in different countries manage to survive, and discover a global network of women in theatre. Visit www.themagdalena.org for more information.

The Open Page

latest issue:

Theatre - Women - Letters

www.theopenpage.org

limited copies available through
Magdalena Aotearoa

'Letters are personal and secret forms of communication, characteristics which enable us to hear the voices of some seemingly silent women on the past and present. The design of individual letters and of different alphabets, seen as paintings or graphic design, emerge in this issue as action, inspiration, sound, awareness, availability and rhythm to emphasise the individuality, age, tradition and cultural circumstances of each author.'



Julia Varley

We are trying to find our own way. We are trying to find our own voice, body, expression ... We say in Turkish: 'water finds its own way' ... Yes, it does ...

I do not know whom I have to thank ... But when we received our first international award in 2009, the Ibsen Award, and when the speaker on the stage described who Theatre Painted Bird is, all the work she did, the ideology she has, and also when he announced that Theatre Painted Bird is a member of Magdalena Project - Network of Women in Contemporary Theatre - I was thrilled with excitement...

Thanks for all the women and thanks to the energy they put in Magdalena ... 'Water finds its way!' ... Yes, it does!

Jale Karabekir

Lisa looks back

Our Magdalena Aotearoa International Festival was pretty big. So big I tried not to think about it for at least 3 1/2 years afterwards. Reflecting now ten years on takes a long time as memories tumble into each other of all the different parts and people and lessons.

The main organisers were myself as Technical Manager; Sally Rodwell and Madeline McNamara as Directors, Fundraisers, Travel & Accommodation, Programmers, Contracts etc etc; and Te Itirawa Nepia as Māori Co-ordinator. In the weeks leading up to the Festival we were saved by Sonia and her sister who helped in the office. Sonia's baby and my baby lay on their backs and batted each other unintentionally. I have a very clear image in my mind of the shelf in the office with the row of manilla folders, each containing a yes or a maybe. They were all yeses from Sally's point of view!

During the Festival I mostly remember clutching my notebook and phone and sustaining energy to be available. I think Sally and Madeline were the same – open for enquiry at all time. I very much enjoyed the daily meetings I had with the company that was next to go into the theatres. I asked lots of favours of people; drilling holes in rocks, finding a piece of rope in their garage, moving chairs around. The festival was so big I think the most anybody could've managed was about 70% of the different events. Three venues changing shows every two nights (Circa Theatre and Shed 11), day time street theatre in Newtown, an opening event constructed just prior, art talks at the City Gallery, lunch and dinner provided, a full workshop programme, and an autonomous but connected residential festival of music, theatre, and workshops hosted by Māori women at the Pakakariki village holiday park.

From this intense experience I galvanised:



- * the need for varied voice in process to be heard and respected (this mostly occurred I think);

- * the knowledge that I could do anything;

- * the belief we (Sally, Madeline and I) made some amazingly great decisions; some marginal ones; and some bad ones too;

- * under-resourcing substantially tests the endurance of people in the arts;

- * an increased sense of the important role of marketing and publicity;

- * sticky stationery notes in different colours are great for festival planning.

The Festival proved to me that I could tackle anything and I am very proud of the work I did. I was constantly given positive feedback by people involved and although I am very self critical there are only a few things I did that I really cringe about. It gave me a boost of confidence that has contributed to all the work I do since then. Pretty crazy I say – I felt very much in a shared role with Sally and Madeline although they definitely carried and drove this Festival. Well done to them and to all who inspired them.

Lisa Maule

Women With Big Eyes

Helen Varley Jamieson reports on this ongoing collaboration, which she participated in at Transit VI.

For the third time in as many years, I entered a room with Julia, Geddy, Cristina, Bruna and Gabriella to work on the collaboration *Women With Big Eyes*. This time we were also joined by Else-Marie Laukvik, one of Odin Teatret's original performers.

It's something of a luxury to do this - to carve out a space within the crazy-busy-ness of our lives in which to play, without pressures or expectations. Once again there was a lot of laughter. Once again we managed to create, in a very short space of time, a performance that moved its audience. Once again it felt like a rare and magical moment.

As in Cuba last year, much time was devoted to remembering what we'd done last time, and attempting to recreate it - in a different space, with a slightly different grouping of people and objects. Each time we go through this exercise, some things are discarded and some things embed themselves more permanently in the work; and so the work evolves. But this time, I found myself feeling frustrated by the time spent on the remembering, this need to try to recreate what we'd done before. If there is a next time, I intend to propose that we forget what we did before - keeping only traces, such as a few objects and the videos like ghosts of past performances - and begin in a new place.

Women With Big Eyes is an experiment, an exercise, a kind of training, and in some way it's also a manifestation of "Magdalena" - performative documentation of where we've come from and where we're going, creatively. Maybe. No doubt it's different for each of us involved, and for each individual audience member; which is exactly how it should be.

Helen Varley Jamieson

Becoming Kiwegian

Ten years have passed since the Magdalena Aotearoa International Festival of Women's Performance changed the lives of many of us. One person whose life went on a definite trajectory as a result of the festival is Miff Moore, and she reflects on this from Oslo.

What was supposed to have been a four-week visit to Norway to participate in an actor's course turned into a year, and then 5 years and now, I can hardly believe it myself, 10 years have passed. This weekend marks the 10-year anniversary since I arrived in the cold, dark, north. It is also 10 years since the miraculous and (currently) singular occurrence of the Magdalena Aotearoa International Festival of Women's Performance.

When I think back to that life-changing event there are several elements that stand out. Sally, wonderful Sally, of course. Sally whose very presence could make you feel confident and at home with yourself. And Lisa, a down to earth and amazing woman who organised the technical budget of a gigantic festival on a (proverbial) shoelace. The whole festival took flight on the goodness and willingness of a wonderful group of volunteers. *Communitas* was achieved, and for a few months we were all family. As technician for that other space, Shed 11, I was facilitatory to the underbelly of the festival, and the days during and prior were packed sideways and longways with people and activities. Ten years on, the lantern of memory swings slowly over a selection of images: Jill's *Child* performance, a glowing statement placed squarely in that vast, yet intimate space; All & Sundry's bizarre trampoline world of accoutrements; Mine and Stasa's own suitcase piece – a prelude to the years that would follow.

The Norwegian theatre practitioner Geddy Aniksdal performed her piece *Blue is the Smoke of War*. I was astounded, blown away, and taking a leap I made contact with her after the festival. That's the second moment, after deciding to make the time to see her perform, that changed my life forever. One little string of binary code, one click over the send button, sparked the catalyst to a succession of follow-on decisions that have led me to this here and now: an apartment in Torshov, winter setting in; my husband sitting across from me, our daughter asleep in our room.

That first winter I lived in an old caravan, an abandoned fire station and at the homes of various generous and well-meaning Norwegians. I was nomadic and unattached. The cold and the dark didn't bother me back then because everything was different and exciting: the loading of lighting equipment into the back of a van while the snow silently enshrouded us; the warmth of the theatre's kitchen, a place to sit and be social or to sit and think; Geddy's millennium piece - I couldn't think of a better way to celebrate the turning of time than working on a theatre performance.

This domino effect: every decision I made created another reason to stay. From those early days doing

grunt work for Grenland Friteater, to touring near and far with Sagliocco Ensemble's children's theatre. But *doing* theatre is for the fearless of heart, and back in 2004 I decided that road was comprised of too many swings. After a while though, I found my way back to university and in 2008 I attained a Masters degree at the University of Oslo. My thesis applied performance theory to the comparison and analysis of social/cultural performances: four cultural events, two from Norway and two from New Zealand. An academic work, and the mapping of my own place between two cultures: my status as kiwegian.

To look at me you'd think I was Norwegian, but then I open my mouth. This leads me in two discursive directions:

One, being that it would seem that it is my nationality, rather than my ethnicity that marks me as different within this context. Nationality can be seen to exist along a continuum: my nationality, as informed by a set of constructed cultural references, still defines very much who I am. I am at core a New Zealander, but I have learnt to blend two cultural codes together. I am placed midway along a cultural continuum.

Two, being that when you learn to speak a foreign language, an altered version of your social self surfaces. You can no longer rely on the colloquialisms and catch phrases of your mother tongue. You stand alone without the safety net of a shared culture, and you dare to fail. The Norwegian and New Zealand cultures are not overly different, but they're different enough. A most annoying question – "Isn't New Zealand just like Norway anyway?" – points to a recurring issue. When a Norwegian asks a New Zealander this question it places us in a no man's land where we are neither "the other" nor "one of us." This has ramifications for how one feels and interacts with one's adopted country. But, however I engage or do not engage in Norwegian culture, I am still part of it. I translate English colloquialisms into Norwegian and vice versa: *Every man and his dog – en hver mann og sin hund. Du kan ikke ha det i både pose og sekk – You can't have it in both a bag and a sack*. I do not manage reversed numbers: three and forty years. I willingly eat pickled herrings and brown cheese.

A while back I heard or read somewhere that after seven years life in Norway for immigrants from western countries becomes markedly better. I can, at any rate, confirm this to be true.

Time and time again I'm asked if I like it/if I'm happy here in Norway. Not an easy question to answer if one should take it seriously. So I usually answer yes, now and then. What about you?

Miff Moore

Notices

ISLAND BAY FESTIVAL

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Toi Poneke Arts Hub

Tena koutou,

For the past year the Wellington Council's City Arts
team has been working with artists, community groups
and arts organisations on developing the idea of an arts
information and resource space.

On the 8th of December from 11am to 1pm we will be
holding a Toi Pōneke Hub Update meeting. This is open
to anyone interested in the Hub, and will be in the Upper
Chamber at Toi Pōneke (61 Abel Smith Street).

Please let us know if you can make it by rsvping to
briar.monro@wcc.govt.nz

At the meeting we will talk about the kaupapa, design
and functioning of the Hub. We'd like to discuss how
you might engage with the Hub. And we would also like
to set up an ongoing reference group to contribute to the
evolving development of the Hub.

To find out more about the Hub please check out the
work in progress blog on The Big Idea. <http://www.thebigidea.co.nz/show/work-in-progress/60106-hub-toi-ponেকে>

We look forward to seeing you there.

Nga mihi nui,

Briar Monro

Arts Advisor

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Remember to check out the blogs and forums on www.magdalenaotearoa.org.nz - and sign up to contribute!
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