Weaving Worlds:

Multimedia and space in contemporary theatre

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Abstract

This play, *Weaving Worlds*, and the accompanying case study of its use of multimedia examine how multimedia can complexify space in theatre. The case study explores the process of writing a play that has multimedia elements scripted into it. Space in theatre can be defined in terms of its function as well as its location, its representational ideas and as an area used to present an argument, otherwise known as the fictional space. This is achieved through the narrative (that is presented traditionally in theatre through movement, gesture, and text). Multimedia has complexified this fictional space by expanding its location and being able to deliver multiple narratives within it. Multimedia has complexified the time and the space continuum of the narrative through its ability to present mediated images from the stage to the audience at the same time as traditional live performance. This challenges the definition of live performance.

The multimedia elements in the play are soundscapes, virtual characters composed of multimedia animations captured on pre-recorded digital video, and live video displays of performance. The world of the play exists in an augmented reality of the memories of the two main characters, Bev and Ben. The addition of multimedia assisted me as a playwright to present my idea of augmented reality in the world of the play, as well as a means of presenting the underpinning themes of the play being disassociation and recorded memory, violence as a means of control, and issues on change. Twentieth century theatre theorists, including Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, pioneered the use of multimedia in the theatre. In some way they contributed to a contemporary theatre that has evolved in tandem with multimedia. Correspondingly, multimedia requires its own skill sets and equipment and brings with it new aesthetic possibilities as well as becoming an agent of narrative. Multimedia creates opportunities for improvisation. This means that despite the pre-recorded nature of multimedia elements each presentation of multimedia that involves live actors can still create a unique performance experience. The exchange of touch is removed between virtual characters created by multimedia technology and live actors. At the same time the idea of live performance is challenged by the inclusion of multimedia elements.

New audiences understand the narrative presented by multimedia because their
world is filled with technologies that contain multimedia applications. Playwrights, who are aware of the spatial implications of multimedia, can utilise these new elements to create narratives to alter the structure of their work, and to create new ways of presenting characters, soundscapes and thematic digital displays to enhance and support the performance of their plays.
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Statement of Authorship:

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other institution. The thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:…………………………

Dated:……………………………
I wish to thank the Queensland University of Technology staff for their assistance with this project particularly my supervisor, Dr Stuart Glover, for his patience and guidance with this exegesis, Dr Errol Bray for co-ordinating the playwright cohorts, and Leanne Blazely for her administrative help. I also thank my fellow candidate Jonathan Hardy for his assistance in theatre practice.
**Weaving Worlds: Multimedia and space in contemporary theatre.**

Space is big. You just won't believe how vastly, hugely, mind bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the drug store, but that's just peanuts to space.

Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Interestingly, according to modern astronomers, space is finite. This is a very comforting thought particularly for people who can never remember where they have left things.

Woody Allen, ‘The U.F.O. Menace’

**Introduction**

Space can be thought of, among other things, as an infinitely layered complex of augmented reality. Space is not only big, it’s wide and deep. Beyond science, space can be a mystical exploration of dimensions that never reaches its full conclusion. As a writer, I am drawn to explore space through the idea of mixing our reality with the contemplation of other dimensions. My fascination with augmented reality and the mysteries of space, lead me here to experiment with new approaches to expressing narratives by using soundscapes, visual arts, and multimedia.

This exegesis explores the spatial implications of the use of multimedia in the theatre and its elemental inclusion in the world of the play. How does multimedia (meaning here the use of a number of media such as text, sound, film devices, animation, and digital technologies) along with traditional theatrical elements of live performance change our understanding of space in the theatrical context? The study considers the nature and complexity of space in the theatre, and some technical, production, performance, and audience implications arising out of the application of multimedia in the theatre space.
It proceeds by revisiting definitions of multimedia and space then follows a contextual exploration of theatre practitioner/theorists who utilise multimedia in theatre production. It concludes with an examination of some of the implications for the playwright, which include the development of the script through to production and performance as well as audience implications through the consideration of my own play, *Weaving Worlds*. The research contributes to an understanding of the relationship between playwrighting and multimedia in theatre space. In particular, the research provides an insight into the implications for playwrights who might consider using multimedia elements as agents for narrative in their prospective theatre projects. I argue that space in the theatre can be defined according to function and when the space becomes multifunctional it also becomes more complex. Space in theatre usually refers to a three dimensional presentational area contained by the stage. This space is complex because it contains the physical components of the play as well as the thematic, narrative, and energetic components of performance. The addition of multimedia components, which here I will call *multimedia portals*¹, creates new functions in that space. These additional functions increase the complexity of theatre space. Multimedia elements may also be placed beyond the perimeters of the theatre stage (presentational space) and change passive space into active space by providing performance content in that location. These changes to the space again deepen its complexity, or change its shape.

Multimedia portals may be created for specific functions according to the playwright’s vision. When multimedia elements are used on-stage, they challenge the idea of live performance (Auslander 1999). This idea of redefining what is a live performance helps playwrights to understand the implications of incorporating multimedia elements as live performance elements, which are either previously produced and replayed, or are performed² in real time during the performance in the theatre space. The new possibilities to shape the performance

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¹ This is a designated display location used to capture audio visual information projected into that space. The display might be a virtual character, or background images and sounds that are multimedia representations of narrative and characters either pre-recorded or live feeds.

² Performed here means a multimedia portal displaying live film footage of actors who are either performing in or outside of the theatre space.
space affect the process of creating theatre from the writing of the play to its final production and considerations on how it will impact the audience. In this paper, the contextual review revisits the definitions of multimedia and space. It suggests contemporary theatre has evolved in tandem with the development of multimedia including the take up of multimedia. It traces the steady inclusion of multimedia in the theatre space by theatre practitioners and examines examples of multimedia production in contemporary theatre. Multimedia developed over the last century beginning with the incorporation by theatre practitioners the film and slide projections developed by a fledgling film industry. Multimedia elements have been used by innovative theatre theorists and practitioners such as Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht through to current contemporary theatre groups such as Elizabeth LeCompt’s Wooster Group and Robert Lepage’s *ex Machina* as part of their explorations of space in the theatre. I argue, through the examination of recent examples of contemporary theatre practice and demonstrate (in the case study of my play, *Weaving Worlds*), that the multimedia technology can become an agent of narrative. The application of multimedia in contemporary theatre is dependent on the availability of equipment, the technical skills of production teams, and an understanding of the medium. The ability to produce a work is thus limited to those theatre companies with the equipment and expertise to integrate multimedia into the theatre space. The technical limitations of multimedia may influence the playwright’s allocation of roles between virtual characters³ and live actors.

Multimedia might also be categorised according to its capacity to interact with live actors on stage. In some cases because of a general contemporary familiarity with the computer screen, its multiple interfaces, and the Internet, audiences seem able to read multiple narratives in the space created by multimedia. As the blurring of arts and technology continues, the integration of multimedia in the theatre space can present to an audience the complexity of art, technology, space and cultural interplay. These ideas are evident in the work of Bob McGarth, the collaborative work of Jeannette Lambermont, Dany Lyne, and

³ Virtual characters are created through multimedia technology and are displayed in multimedia portals.
Wade Staples, the Wooster Group, and its director, Elizabeth LeCompt, and the multimedia theatre work of Robert Lepage. An examination of the Australian praxis suggests Australian contemporary theatre is incorporating multimedia into the theatre space. At the same time, multimedia is in constant flux. Experimentation follows in part from the progress of technology. This all suggests the use of multimedia in the theatre space will continue to develop aided by the loose parameters for its use.

The playwright can benefit from understanding or exploring the possibilities of multimedia in the theatre environment. Multimedia can serve narrative and artistic ends rather than degrade them. Back-stories and additional scenes might be replaced by elements presented through multimedia portals. Multimedia elements, rather than being a distraction, can add a subtle thematic layer to the overall production. When the playwright understands the tools of multimedia and their implications for the theatre space, the playwright can become the architect of space.

**Contextual Review**

This exploration of theatre, multimedia and space draws on general theatre studies because specific studies on the implication of multimedia for theatrical space or accounts tracing the development of multimedia in the theatre are scarce. Because multimedia continues to evolve through experimental performance most of the literature on the use of multimedia in theatre practice is restricted to recent critiques in theatre journals of contemporary performance, and video documentaries containing interviews with current theatre practitioners.

It is possible, however, to follow the pathway indirectly through experimental theatre’s embrace of new technologies in performance as well as new technology’s contribution to new theories of theatre. Philip Auslander’s exploration of live performance, historical studies in experimental theatre by

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4 The limited probing into the theatrical aspects of multimedia means the debate is still emerging. The bulk of the available literature on multimedia, theatre, production techniques, playwriting, and space deals with each element separately. Most helpful was the research of Dr David Saltz, who specialises in the exploration of live performance and interactive media, and studies on the work of Robert Lepage.
Richard C. Beacham, Edward Braun, James Roose-Evans, Mariellen R. Sandford, J.Micheal Walton and John Willett, the video documentary series work of Producer and Director Roger Parsons, and the writings of Adolphe Appia, Bertott Brecht, Edward Gordon Craig, Micheal Kirby, Vsevolod.E. Meyerhold, Marie Ley-Piscator and Erwin Piscator provide clues for the interlinking of multimedia and experimental theatre over the last century. Likewise, the explorations of performance space by Helena Grehan, Henri Lefebvre, Gay McAuley and David Saltz, the practice of theatre and performance innovators such as Erwin Piscator, John Cage, Allan Krapow, Bob McGrath, the collaborative work of Jeannette Lambermont, Dany Lyne and Wade Staples, and the contemporary performance work of Johannes Birringer, Elizabeth LeCompt’s Wooster Group, and Robert Lepage’s *Ex-machina* provide a starting point for understanding the implications of multimedia in the theatre space.

**Multimedia**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2006), *multimedia* (when applied to the performing arts) means to use “more than one medium of communication, artistic expression” and “designating or relating to applications which incorporate a number of media, such as text, audio, video, and animation, especially interactively”. This research does not explore multimedia in cyberspace (meaning the Internet or mass communication technologies). This research concentrates on analogue and digital formats of multimedia that are not web based. Analogue devices include sound recording equipment, and slide and film projections. Digital technologies include computer generated digital video, soundscapes, animations, still images, and kinetic interactive equipment either worn or triggered by live actors in the theatre space. David Saltz argues that the digital technologies of multimedia can be further categorized according to its ability to react with the performers and other elements on stage. The two categories are linear multimedia and interactive multimedia. Linear multimedia does not react to performance in the theatre space. Its changes are triggered by the computer technicians who operate under direction from a stage manager. This form of multimedia remains
unchanged in the space (unless changes are generated by the computer operator) regardless of the performance in the theatre space. Interactive multimedia is responsive to stage actions of the performers and other elements, meaning that this type of technology changes its contents when triggered by either the physical movements or by the voices of the performers or light and sound elements on stage. The response can be either random or programmed in some way. In other words, it is the live performance that creates the changes to the multimedia portal displays (Saltz 2001, pp. 107-108).

**Space**

The work of philosopher, Henri Lefebvre explores space in terms of object, subject and forms of representation, and it interrogates its definitions and status. Our language and thinking process enable us to construct the ideas of space through a spatial code of words and ideas. At the core of his writings is the “conceptual triad”. This is made up of spatial practice, representations of space, and “representional” space (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 5-16, 33, 39).

As a playwright I use of metaphors and emotive descriptions to encode visions and feelings of the characters and scenes within a script. These become elements of the fictional space. This craft, along with other theatrical elements, falls into Lefebvre’s categories of representation of a space and representational space. These spaces are generated through the elements of performance, gesture, mise en-scène, and text, and they exist through the “suspended belief” of the audience. At the same time, the space is a presentational experience for members of the theatre production.

The theatre space frames meaning for the audience by providing a theatrical landscape made up of multimedia elements as well as the text of the play, sound and lighting, objects in the space, movement, and performers. These elements are the agents of performance informing the audience of the narrative and themes of the play. The literature attending to theatrical space mainly addresses space in terms of performance demarcations, narrative, and the interchange between the performer and objects contained in the same location.
Gay McAuley suggests that theatrical space is a complex place of interlocking functions that is able to be divided into categories such as textual, fictional, presentational, performance and thematic space for the purposes of examination. McAuley argues that space contains both the narrative and the elements of performance that meld together to form the “fictional place”\(^5\) (or fictional space) of performance (McAuley 1999, pp. 23-33). Modes of space extend beyond the physical to include the space of abstraction, meaning the intangible energetic spaces, which hold temporary communal beliefs for the audience and are created by performance and narrative. Together all performative representations on stage constitute the presentational space. Theatre, in its ability to surround the audience with images, actors, and sounds, creates more spatial options than the flat screen television experience that is limited to its two dimensional display. Theatre can physically locate performance thus creating the fictional space anywhere around the audience at anytime element.

Helena Grehan in exploring cultural identity in contemporary performance argues, “a performance space is one of interaction” (Grehan 2001, p. 22). This interaction includes the interaction with the audience:

It is a layered space where the interplay of performer/performance can create rich and often contradictory minglings of story, body and space: minglings which may help expose the ironies and complexities involved in attempting to address issues of belonging and locatedness (for both performer and spectator) without suggesting static responses or finite decisions. Indeed, much contemporary performance is concerned with questioning its own boundaries and borders, as theorists and practitioners attempt to redefine the terrain of locat/ion/edness and its relationship to representation (Grehan 2001, p. 22).

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\(^5\) Fictional space, referred to as “fictional place” by Gay McAuley, is defined by her as a space bound by the actions of the performers and by their reference to that space. She argues the “thematic space” links all the categories of space together (McAuley, G. 1999. *Space in performance: making meaning in the theatre*, Theater-theory/text/performance. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: pp. 29- 33).
Grehan’s view of boundaries within the space and McAuley’s analysis of categories of space underline the complexity of the theatre space.

**Multimedia and Space**

Multimedia can extend the fictional space of the play beyond the stage. For example, multimedia is capable of being displayed anywhere in the theatre space by focusing data projections onto a delegated location within the space thus expanding the performance beyond the stage. This creates new fictional space where virtual characters and narrative representations can be projected into the multimedia portals. Multimedia opens up the possibility to explore the structure of the play because the world of the play can move around the theatre space via data projectors or can be located in a number of places at once.

**Evolution of Multimedia in the Theatre Space**

Historical accounts of the evolution of experimental theatre provide an explanation of how multimedia has been integrated into the theatre space (increasing its complexity) as multimedia technology developed concurrently with experimental theatre and space. As James Roose-Evans argues, “In order to move forward one must first be able to look back” he considers the transformation of theatre space as ongoing (Roose-Evans 1989, p. 75). By the beginning of the twentieth century theatre designers and practitioners were beginning to experiment with the elements that occupied the theatre space and question the hierarchy and function of those elements in the space. Some of the most important accounts of the performance and presentational space come from the practitioner/theorists.

Edward Gordon Craig, theatre director and designer, was fascinated with the elements of light and movement. His theories were transcribed in *The Art of the Theatre*, which was originally self-published in 1905. These ideas became cornerstones of modern and post-modern theatre. His work entitled, *Scene*, written in 1923, is a study on scenery and its relationship to other elements in the theatre.
space. In the section of Scene entitled the Artistic Values, he describes the scene as “a living thing”. He describes light and its movement in emotional terms where “light caresses or cuts” and “it floods or it trickles down.” He also recognizes the constant movement of light when he states that “light travels over the scene” and that never stays “in the one fixed place”. Craig’s theories on the animation of light and movement in the theatre space contributed to the rethinking of the spatiality of theatre (Craig and Walton 1983, pp. 3, 33, 129).

Appia’s writings on rhythmic space and lighting also contributed to new ideas on utilizing lighting and the theatre space. In Music and the Art of Theatre (Die Mussik und die Inscenierung), written in 1899, he argues that the mise en scène is “an integration of various technical means”, which make theatre presentation a complex process, and that the organization of space needs to serve the “fictive form of the inanimate setting in order to relate as far as possible to the actual form of the actor.” The argument for the setting and space being designed to interplay with the performer and drama are outlined in his schematic diagrams of the “hierarchy of production” (Appia 1899, cited in Beacham 1994, pp. 45-48).

The interest that Appia and Craig had in space in theatre represents one of the shifts in attitude that occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in relation to the role of theatre space. The new visual technologies were taken up by innovative theatre practitioners and used in conjunction with other traditional theatrical elements including sound, light and performance. The mixture of these new technologies is something that we have come to know as multimedia. The experimentation with space among other changes in theatricality opened pathways for further integration of multimedia in the theatre space. The integration of multimedia in the space perhaps first became evident with the invention of the still photography, and accelerated with the later development of cinema, which as new technologies were the predecessors of digital multimedia.

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6 His enthusiasm for movement might have been attributed to his relationship with Avante Garde dancer, Isadora Duncan (Craig, E. G. and J. M. Walton. 1983. Craig on theatre. London: Methuen).

Erwin Piscator was one of the principal theatre theorists to experiment and develop the use of multimedia in the theatre space. His systematic techniques, style of presentation and applications still have currency in contemporary theatre. He developed his theatrical techniques against a background of immense political and ideological change in Europe. The Expressionists, Dadaists and Surrealists brought new styles and forms into their work which challenged the traditional concepts of time, space and action. He argued that “styles are born out of necessity, out of the characteristic modes of expression of an era; they are made-made, yes, but made from the mores and customs and social conditions of the moment” (Erwin Piscator, cited in Ley-Piscator 1970, pp. 14-15).

Piscator’s use of theatre space was a collaborative process. The Bauhaus group in Weimar, including theatre designer Walter Gropius, supported Piscator with the process of theatre design and technology. The Bauhaus school of design sought “a synthesis of art and modern technology”. Their focus on light, space, and form, as well as developing spatial stage effects with mechanical constructions, assisted Piscator in creating his visions for theatre (Erwin Piscator, cited in Ley-Piscator 1970, p. 149).

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8 During his time, other theatrical productions used multimedia formats. In 1911, *Rund um den Alster*, was a Hamburg revue which featured a film of the God, Neptune arriving in a submarine, touring Hamburg with the leading actors “entering the theatre door” followed by the actors appearing on stage. On 3 November, 1923, Berthold Viertel produced *Nebeinander* which began with a projection of the title and cast and a filmic effect of an artificial flicker (Willett, J. 1978, *The theatre of Erwin Piscator: half a century of politics in the theatre*. London: Methuen: p. 113).

9 Following the First World War, Dadaism, an avant-garde movement, transformed into a political movement “under the guidance of the painter Huelsenbeck, George Grosz, the satirist; John Heartfield, stage designer; Walter Mehring, dramaturg and theatre theorist Bertolt Brecht; and Erwin Piscator”. The political motivation of this movement was to break down the ideals of imperial Prussia and this activism contributed to the style. Expressionism provided a new form to playwrights such as Karel Capek, Ernst Toller and Franz Werfel (Ley-Piscator, M. 1970, *The Piscator experiment: the political theatre*, Arcturus books. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press: pp. 65-66).

10 Piscator attempted to have a theatre purpose built for his style of presentation. This was to be known as the Total-Theater using Walter Gropius as the theatre designer. The plans included giant cyclorama, seven projection rooms around the auditorium, nine projectors and a projection turret above the audience. Gropius stated that the aim was to construct “mechanical and light generated fields of force which can be shifted in all three spatial dimensions, and by their components and their cubes of light, permit the director to conjure up the dreamscapes of his imagination with infinite variability within the invisible network of co-ordinates imposed by the neutral blacked-out auditorium” (Gropius 1934, p. 7 cited in Willett, J. 1978. *The theatre of Erwin Piscator: half a century of politics in the theatre*. London: Methuen: pp. 117-118). This theatre was never built. The aspirations of the design represented the complexity of space in the theatre created by the additional of multimedia in the space.
Three productions of Piscator, *Hoppla, We Live (Wir Leben!)*, *Rasputin* and *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik*, demonstrate his pioneering work with multimedia technologies in the theatre space. *Hoppla, We Live!* was performed in 1927 at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz and integrated film, set and sound effects. “Film interludes or illustrations” were screened in the centre of the fictional space. The film had been edited and scripted by dramaturgs. It included newsreel material and scenes with actors shot for the production. “Brecht thought the film the best aspect of the performance.” Piscator’s *Rasputin*, was produced in 1927 and employed the dramaturgs; Gasbarra, Lania and Brecht. The film elements and theatre set “made theatrical news.” The set designer, Traugott Müller, created a rotating globe containing rooms that could be seen through openings on stage. Film was projected onto it. Illustrations and text were projected on the side of the stage. *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik* was produced the following year in 1928 and was scripted by Brecht and Gasbarra. Brecht later described the production in an entry of his Arbeit’s Journal on 23 June, 1943 as “pure montage from the novel”. The production contained treadmills so that the “scenes in turn could pass across the stage as cut-out objects and people, or be seen moving past on the projection screen”. The production also contained projections as scenery, cartoon-film, and real film (Willett 1978, pp. 84-91).

Multimedia elements of projections and film in these performances expanded the fictional space by illuminating previously passive spaces into the presentational and fictional space. The technology had become narrator. Multimedia served Piscator’s purpose. Film was instructional, dramatic or served as commentary. Piscator’s writings on *Das Politische Theatre* in 1929 state that film “extends the subject matter in terms of time and space” (Piscator 1929, p. 171, cited in Willett 1978, p. 113). The idea of surrounding an audience or enclosing them in the fictional space is an example of the innovations that began to develop with the introduction of multimedia into the theatre space.

Bertolt Brecht who was one of the most influential theorist/practitioners of the past century also explored the theatre space using multimedia. With regard to Piscator’s innovative integration of multimedia in theatre, Brecht stated that his
collaborator was “without doubt one of the most important theatre men of all times” (Brecht and Willett c1964, p. 77). Inspired by Erwin Piscator’s multimedia innovation of using film projections, newsreels, sound, and mechanical technologies in the theatre space, Brecht experimented with multimedia in the theatre space by including photographic slide projections, film, and slides presenting figures and statistical information all together in the theatre space. These methods contributed to the alienation experience of Epic Theatre. Brecht’s notations on his play, Die Mutter, exemplify his use of multimedia in the theatre space:

Die Mutter is such a learning play and embodies certain principles and methods of presentation of the non-Aristotelian, or epic style, as I have sometimes called it; the use of the film projection to help bring the social complex of the events taking place to the forefront; the use of music and of the chorus to supplement and vivify the action on the stage; the setting forth of actions so as to call for a critical approach, so that they would not be taken for granted by the spectator and would arouse him to think; it became obvious to him which were right actions and which were wrong ones (Brecht and Willett c1964, p. 79).

Brecht, in shifting the theatre space from a singular narrative and singular intention of theatrical illusion to one of alienation, presented audiences with simultaneous actions on stage and multiple narratives to engage critical thinking. Piscator and Brecht were also influenced by the impact of the film industry and its impact on audience, presentational and narrative styles.

The response of theatre practitioners to the fledging film industry and to the induction of multimedia into the theatre space was threefold: expansion, simplification, and inclusion\(^{11}\). Some theatre practitioners argued that theatre

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\(^{11}\) Each form of theatre utilized multimedia elements in the theatre space to display complex imagery by using either still photographic projections, or film, or sound effects. However, it was experimental theatre that openly used multimedia either to shift the sense of time and space in the theatre by creating simultaneous forms of narratives in the space, or by interacting with the multimedia elements.
needed to match the cinema experience by developing theatrical performances into a giant spectacle in the theatre environment. Again, it was theorist-practitioners who articulated this shift.

Soviet theatre director, Vsevolod Meyerhold recognized the impact cinema had on drawing an audience away from theatre. Meyerhold might have been influenced by the political rallies held in the streets of Europe. He observed the Italian political rallies of Mussolini and stated that it was “clear that the fundamental desire of the masses is to pack into great stadia with room for tens of thousands.” He argued that the “cinemification” of theatre meant that theatres must be fitted with the technological “refinements of the cinema” so that the space could “meet the demands” of spectacle theatre. This plan was meant to attract more people back to the theatre. He envisioned “tens of thousands” of people in the audience arguing that “the modern spectator demands the kind of thrill which only the tension generated by an audience of thousands can give” (Braun and Meyerhold 1991, pp. 255-256). Earth Rampant is an example of Meyerhold’s spectacle theatre. It was performed in an open space and adapted several times to the locations. The performance held for the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in Moscow on the 24 June, 1924 included an infantry and horse cavalry and was presented to an audience of 25,000 (Braun and Meyerhold 1991, p. 189).

Spectacular theatre grew in popularity and continues to produce lavish set designs and a large cast in the performance space. It now thrives in the form of the contemporary musical. Miss Saigon, with its helicopter on stage, is a contemporary example of a successful theatrical spectacle providing its audience with grand sets, giant props and exciting effects. Nicholas Hynter, former director of the Theatre Royal London for the production of Miss Saigon, commented on attracting audiences through spectacle theatre’s capacity to move them:

What people come to see Miss Saigon for and what people come to see these shows for is a big emotional experience. They like to see the spectacle and thrill that can give but they come to have their heart touched (Hynter, video recording, Changing stages Episode 6: Law of Gravity 2000).
The second response was to simplify and to empty the theatre space by removing stage furnishings and scenery and replace the scenic elements with simple abstract or symbolic set designs. This approach focused on text and actor in the space. The work of English theatre director Peter Brook exemplifies this response when he simplified the contents of the theatre space by stripping away all objects. Sir Richard Eyre, theatre theorist and former director of the Royal National Theatre interpreted Brook’s work:

Peter Brook argues that for the theatre to be simple and unaffected. A distillation of language, a distillation of language, gesture and design, where meaning is the essence. [Brook says] I take an empty space and call it a bare stage, a man walks to cross this empty space while someone else is watching him and that is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged (Eyre, video recording, Changing stages Episode 6: Law of Gravity 2000).

The third response came from experimental theatre, which developed into the hybridised theatre of the new millennium. The experimental theatre practitioners were open to new presentational ideas, which led to the overt use of multimedia in the theatre space. Theatre’s take up of multimedia challenged established ideas about structure and spatiality of theatre. It also created new ways of presenting the narrative in the space, which contributed to the development of new styles in theatre. The audience could engage with multimedia in the theatre space through a variety of narratives in the form of dance, spoken word, puppetry, film, sounds, and any other form borrowed from the installation practices of the visual arts. Text and actors were no longer necessarily the dominant force in the space. Narratives expressed through movement, sounds, new audio visual technologies, and music could independently and simultaneously share the same presentational space.

In some sense the “clearly defined boundaries between the arts have been fading since Fluxus, Happenings and Performance Art for over half a century”
Happenings were a new form of performance. Theatre theorist, Micheal Kirby, defines Happenings as a “purposefully composed form of theatre in which diverse alogical elements, including nonmatrixed performing, are organized in a compartmented structure” (Kirby 1965, cited in Sandford 1995, p. 11).

In the early 1950s, composer, John Cage was influenced by the concepts of the Dadaist and Futurist performance. In 1952, he presented at Black Mountain College a performance combining multimedia elements of film and pre-recorded sounds with spoken word and movement. When applying Kirby’s definition of a Happening, this event meets the criteria. The performances were self-contained units, presented at the same time with a focus on the “found environment” and open to chance occurrences that might change the interactions. Cage included multimedia in the performance space by using tape recorders and film.

Reminiscent of the Dadaist performances, Cage read a lecture as Charles Olsen and other performers sat with the audience and spoke lines. At the same time, Merce Cunningham danced, David Tutor played the piano, M.C. Richards “recited from a ladder”, and Robert Rauschenburg played music on an old wind-up phonograph. “A film played during the entire performance. A dog began to follow Cunningham and was accepted into the presentation.” The dog’s inclusion is an example of chance and found environment in the performance space (Kirby 1965, cited in Sandford 1995, p. 19).


13 The “found environment” was used by many Dada activists. In April, 1920, an exhibition of works by Jean Arp, Johannes T. Baargeld, and Max Ernst was held in a small court behind a café in Cologne, Germany. It could only be reached by passing through the public urinal. At the opening a young girl in a communion dress recited obscene poetry. (Ernst exploited the spectator-presentation relationship by exhibiting a wooden object to which a hatchet was chained (Sandford, M.R. 1995. Happenings and other acts, Worlds of performance. London New York: Routledge: p. 17).

14 These ideas can be traced back to the Dadaists performances where guests in the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, Germany in 1916 were exposed to diverse simultaneous performances of lectures, readings, sound poems and dance (Sandford, M.R. 1995. Happenings and other acts, Worlds of performance. London New York: Routledge).
other artists and performers of his time. Allow Krapow\textsuperscript{15} studied with Cage\textsuperscript{16} from 1956 to 1958 at the New York School. Kirby states that the “material and structure of \textit{18 Happenings in 6 Parts}, resulted directly from this work” (Kirby 1965, cited in Sandford 1995, p. 24).

Allan Kraprow’s \textit{Happenings in 6 Parts} was performed in 1959 as part of the American Happenings that developed in New York. Kirby states that “despite Kaprow’s initial protestations and the objections of the other artists, the media picked up on the title as a label for an emerging genre.” Not all participants in the movement referred to their work as Happenings. For Oldenburg it was Ray Gun Theatre, for Robert Whitman it was “theatre pieces” (Kirby 1965, cited in Sandford 1995, pp. 3-7).

An examination of excerpts from \textit{Assemblages, Environment and Happenings} by Kaprow shows that spatial consideration was important in Happenings. Kaprow stated that the performance “should take place over several widely spaced, sometimes moving and changeable locals.” He also stated that “time, which follows closely on space considerations, should be variable and discontinuous.” This time should be either “real” or “imagined” (Kaprow 1966, cited in Sandford 1995, pp. 236-237). Happenings could extend performances over several days and allow the scene to change like an eroding extended art installation. These experiments opened up the idea of decay and construction of the fictional space. An example is \textit{Chair} by Robert Ashley where a wooden chair was transformed “on each successive day” (Kirby 1965, cited in Sandford 1995, p. 43). The ideas on compartmentalization, explorations in time and space, and grouping elements into unitary self-sufficient performances and enable more interactive multimedia elements to be used in the theatre space. The screen technology compartmentalizes performance into its space and is both interdependent and independent (depending on its application) of any

\textsuperscript{15} Allan Krapow was a painter and sculptor who practised “action painting” (also known as abstract expressionism), which explored the act of painting and the movements encountered in the act itself. This was a parallel exploration by visual artist into the realm of space (Sandford, M. R. 1995. \textit{Happenings and other acts}, \textit{Worlds of performance}. London New York: Routledge).

performance outside of the screen. The audience is challenged to focus on a narrative in the theatre space.

**Contemporary Multimedia**

Multimedia continues to develop in sophistication. It has progressed from linear analogue technology to interactive digital technology alongside the spatial explorations of hybridised theatre. Contemporary theatre sees increasing collaboration between digital technology artists, dance, film, sound artists and artistic directors to create interactive spaces within the theatre space.

Elizabeth Lecompt’s, *Wooster Group* is a contemporary theatre group that continues to experiment with and influence the application of multimedia in the space. LeCompt’s mastery in using multimedia in the theatre space enables the element to be fused into the fictional space with purpose. The production of *To You, the Birdie! (an interpretation of Jean Racine’s Phedre)* directed by LeCompt in March 2003, exemplifies the exploration of multimedia in the fictional space. During the performance, the crew manipulated the sound to produce amplifications of shuttlecocks mixed with chirping birds. “Far from gratuitous effects”, Lecompt created “technical necromancy” to comment on the “cultivated artifice of her characters’ mythic stature.” LeCompt projected close-up camera images of characters’ sexual play as “they face the audience expressionless” (*Theatre Journal*. Washington, March 2003, pp. 173-175). The company’s program of the performance demonstrated the way space was intentionally manipulated by LeCompt:

*To You, The Birdie! allows us to further our exploration of the possibilities of “dance with technology” in three specific ways. We work with live feeds from on-stage cameras, which force the performer to simultaneously consider both framed, mediated space of the monitor and the actual stage space simultaneously. We are also creating sequences that rely on the performer dancing a pas de deux with their own pre-recorded image, yielding movement that is psychologically evocative as well as*
physically captivating. A third approach involves the use of existing video tapes – including Marx Brothers films and dance pieces – on monitors visible only to the performers, who then translate physical actions and camera moves through their bodies onto the stage” (Wooster Group, 2002: Programme Notes, cited in Causey 2006, p. 43).

Canadian director and theatre theorist, Robert Lepage\(^\text{17}\) has become renowned for his masterful use of multimedia in the theatre space. Although Lepage is not the first to use multimedia in the theatre space (as has been previously mentioned with the seminal work of Erwin Piscator), he has been able to articulate its role in the theatre and relationship to a contemporary audience through his productions and interviews. Lepage’s solo performances exemplify the fluidity of moving space around and through the actor. He states that “The performer isn’t the sole focus: he interacts with the mise en scène” (Lepage, cited in Lavender 2001, p. 109). This can been found in Lepage’s productions of \textit{Vinci} and \textit{Needles and Opium} where the character constantly interacts with the space via multimedia effects. Lepage states “my growth as a human being and as an artist is accompanied by machinery and technology...You can tell a story that everyone knows in a different way, how you can change a point of view, in a cinematic way, a televisual way, in a multimedia way, whatever it is, the next trend” (Lepage, cited in Lavender 2001, pp. 109, 136).

As well as being influenced by his effective use of multimedia in the theatre space, I admire his collaborative approach to production. In conversation with Alision McAlpine on 17 February 1995, at Le Café du Monde, Québec City,\(^\text{17}\) Canadian playwright, director, actor and theatre theorist, Robert Lepage, studied his craft at Quebec’s Conservatoire d'art Dramatique between 1975 and 1978 and continued his studies by attending workshops with Swiss Director, Alain Knapp’s school in France. He joined Theatre Repere in 1982, an experimental theatre company in Quebec where he collaborated on works for nearly a decade. He toured \textit{Vinci}, \textit{The Dragon's Trilogy}, \textit{The Polygraph}, \textit{Tectonic Plates}, \textit{Needles and Opium} from 1985 to 1991. These productions demonstrated his enthusiasm for including multimedia in the space and thereby producing a highly visual, technologically based theatre. His productions also included elements of ritual, opera and cross cultural interplay. He was the Artistic Director of the National Art Centre of Canada’s French Theatre from 1990 to 1993. In 1994 he founded a new company, \textit{ex Machina}, which continued to experiment and develop the use of multimedia in the space. Robert Lepage’s development work and presentational style has become an internationally renown. (http://www.exmachina.qc.ca/ENGLISH/ex.asp?page=Lepage accessed 22 November, 2006).
Lepage stated that in his role as director is about “trying to find a way of devising work that gives the impression that people are playing...That’s much more what theatre is about: that’s a theatrical process” (Lepage interviewed by McAlpine 1995, cited in Delgado and Heritage 1996, p. 135).

*Polygraph* and *Elsinore* (an interpretation of Hamlet) demonstrate Lepage’s treatment of space in theatre using multimedia as well as the technological implications. *Polygraph* is an early example of the collaborative, technologically driven work of Lepage. The play was first produced in 1988. There were several other versions produced over the following two years. Its changes occurred through “playing” with its elements and presentation, which is one of the development processes found in Lepage’s work. Scenes are called “projections”. The scene directions are filmic and refer to actions on stage as slow motion and flashbacks. There are multimedia elements of slide projections and soundscape cues. The final image of *Projection 1: The filter* describes the character, Lucie, rising “stage left behind the wall, lit by anatomical slide projections: muscles, veins, organs and bones superimposed on her flesh, as though she is transparent. The scene ends in music crescendo and a brief blackout” (Lepage and Brassard 1997, p. 5). This example illustrates how multimedia in the space can merge with the actor, creating a hybridization of both the character and the space. Questions arise out of this image. Who and what is performing? (The case study, *Weaving Worlds* explores the multimedia as performer in space.)

Although space is complexified by multimedia, not all effects are technologically demanding. Lepage incorporates shadow play through projections in his works. In *Projection 15: The call*, the character of Francois is “lit so as to blow up an enormous grotesque shadow18 across the entire wall, in such a way that every movement of his dialing and speaking on the phone registers” (Brassard and Lepage 1997, p. 32). The character in the space is transformed by multimedia into a moving silhouette located onto a vertical plane, thus expanding the fictional space and converting the presentational style.

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18 This effect was also used in Lepage’s play, *Needles and Opium.*
Lepage’s *Elsinore*, a re-working of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, was described as a “pivotal moment in *Ex Machina*’s early history” and toured internationally (Lavender 2001, p.100). The play was initially presented in Montreal in 1995. The production integrated the multimedia components of three screens, slide projectors, a video projector that captured images from four cameras on stage, and moving computerized lights. Lepage’s theatre designers devised a mini-camera, which mounted onto the sword handle and was described as “an experiment which resulted in the eventual depiction of Hamlet’s duel with Laertes and the play’s notorious sequence of deaths by way of a huge view form the duellers’ rapiers.” The set was designed to constantly move, thus changing the fictional space location and the performance focus. It was an expensive production costing up to one million Canadian dollars, which mainly funded the development of the “mechanical set”. Vision mixing for the multimedia elements was done by the multimedia crew rather than being supervised by a stage manager. Collaboration of cast and crew denotes Lepage’s productions. The production experienced technical problems. Some performances were cancelled including “the entire run of performances at the 50th Edinburgh Festival” because of a small technical failure of a computer component, which “created another series of problems” (Lavender, A. 2001, pp. 103, 107, 137).

The new work brings vast technical hurdles such as experienced by Bob McGrath, who was the artistic director of Ridge Theatre in New York City, 2004 and encountered problems during his “multimedia production of MacWellman’s *Jennie Richee*” performed at the Stratheater in Darmstadt, Germany (McGrath 2004, p. 35). The problems were recounted by McGrath:

> The company I head, Ridge Theatre, is known for its fantastical productions: large-scale visual and aural works that use original musical scores, film and slide projections and meticulously staged ensemble movement. Our shows are necessarily “heavy tech” and call for thousands

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of cues. We’re used to the demands of our kind of work and know how to do it… In Germany, however, everything is compartmentalized - each aspect is done separately. The schedule called for one day for teching the lighting, separate rehearsals for the performers and another day for dealing with the sound… But soon the German stage manager had mental overload, like a pinball game that can’t tilt. There were too many cues. It was all going too fast for him… I had learned that their way of making theatre puts greater focus on the text… “Everything else is considered in aid of that”… In America, I replied, the text is sometimes the chassis of a piece, but my work, the look - the image - is just as important. Theatricality is just as central (Mc Grath 2004, pp. 35-36).

It is clear that successful integration of multimedia in the theatre space is dependent on the experience and skills of those mounting the production. The need for high tech equipment and experienced operators limits the possibilities of staging to a theatre company with equipment and a skilled production team. Despite its technical limitations, multimedia shapes the use of the theatre space and has become a contiguous part of contemporary culture.

The Australian theatre is also engaging multimedia in the theatre space. An example of its use in the theatre space can be found in the performance, Honour Bound, which premiered at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House in August and September, 2006, where Nigel Jamieson presented a play on David Hick’s detention in Guantanamo Bay. The performance was described in Sydney’s Sun Herald newspaper as using “multimedia and cutting edge techniques” where “aerial performers” scrambled around a “metal cage” with their images captured through a “perspective-scrambling video projection” (Sun Herald, 6 August, 2006, p. 14). This response to the impact on the spatiality of the presentation highlights the way in which space can be activated in the fictional zone. An article in Hobart’s The Mercury newspaper on the performance work of Bridget Nicklason-King and Samora Clark describes the theatre as “having a new face” that is “somewhere between performance art and electro fringe, combining technologies of multimedia, dance and acting” (The Mercury, 22 June, 2006, p.
These comments reflect the current Australian praxis where new theatre practitioners are playing with fictional and performance space as technology becomes accessible to them. The willingness to accommodate the technology can be found in such venues as The Visy Theatre in Brisbane’s Powerhouse, which is equipped to hold regular performances that use multimedia in the space. The production of David Malouf’s novel, Johnno, which included interactive multimedia and OEDrx were two performances featured in the 2006 Brisbane Festival (The Courier Mail, Brisbane, 14 July, 2006, p. 39, 27 July, 2006, p. 63).

A sample of reviews and articles written by the Australian press on multimedia in the theatre space indicated that there is limited probing of the use of the multimedia element in the theatre space. Theatre is either categorized as multimedia theatre or multimedia is mentioned in descriptions of the performance. Reviews suggest that multimedia is a new inclusion in theatre. There is little reference to its history and development in the theatre space.

**Contemporary Audience and Multimedia in Theatre Space**

The convergence of multimedia technology, performing arts and experimental theatre is now seamless. Johannes Birringer “independent choreographer/filmmaker and artistic director” who conducts research in performance and multimedia, states that performing arts “outside of the established traditions of theatre, ballet, opera and orchestral music” is indebted to the avant-garde movements in the visual arts. Birringer argues performance:

> Is also intertwined with the evolution of technological media whose impact on our cultural environments has now entered the digital stage at which the computer recodes all communications and art forms (Birringer, J. 1999, pp. 361-362).

The line between technology and culture has blurred. In some sense (and in a profound inversion of C.P. Snow’s 1964 two cultures argument) technology is
culture. If one accepts this notion, then the use of multimedia in the theatre space becomes the cultural narrative for the media savvy audience.20

Part of an article by Kevin Nance critiqued the multimedia elements of the 2001 production of *Henry V* at the Canada Stratford Festival. The production was devised by director, Jeannette Lambermont, Canadian Toronto costume and set designer Dany Lyne, and video designer Wade Staples. These theatre practitioners realise that new audiences are media savvy. The design process began with an exploration of presentation that could portray the horrors of war in new ways:

The question immediately became: How do we set *Henry V* in a context where the violence of war would reach the audience in a very real way? And we felt we just couldn’t serve that purpose by staying in the play’s historical period” (Lyne 2001, cited in Nance 2001, p. 43).

This lead to the inclusion of multimedia in the space as a component of Lyne’s set design to achieve the desired effect. Both Lyne and Staples, challenged with the job of making Shakespeare’s *Henry V* relevant to a new audience, were aware of the audience’s ability to read a multiple narratives so they presented the audience with a collage of visual scenes. Nance described the results and quoted some of Staples’s remarks:

All of the images were turned into grainy black and white, then played using a stuttering effect that made them look like newsreel footage from the first two world wars, as well as CNN videotape of more recent conflicts. Staples also developed what he came to call “the honour roll”- a series of ghostly, silent, pre-recorded video portraits of the individual cast members that are played before, during and after the play. “At the beginning you’re seeing the cast, and at the end, you’re seeing the faces of the dead,” he says. “There so [sic] much desolation, death and destruction

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20 One unusual attempt to lure new audiences to theatre happened at the Wolfskill Theatre in Los Angeles, USA. This venue was a ‘drive-in theatre’ where audiences listened to the performance through their car radios and watched the performance in their cars (Associated Press 1998, cited in Auslander, P. 1999 Liveness: performance in a mediatized culture. London: Routledge: p. 24).
in war, and the video images were there to convey that in a very contemporary context using contemporary technology” (Nance 2001, p. 44, Staples 2001, cited in Nance 2001, p. 44).

Nance commented on the live video integrated into the production:

Young actor Paul Dunn, who played a boy wandering through the battlefields, carried a video recorder throughout the production. At one point he lay flat on the floor and delivered a monologue directly into its lens, his smudged, tear-stained face looming huge on the upstage screen (Nance 2001, pp. 44 - 45).

Nance described twentieth century sonic landscapes of war, which were mixed with the sound of a cellist playing live during the performance while video projections screened behind the stage, which created the “unique syntax” (Nance 2001, p. 44). Staples understood the ability of a new generation of theatre goers to decode or at least enjoy the new technologies. Staples’ explanation revealed his intention to key in a young audience by using multimedia:

The idea was to bring the audience into the psyche of this young boy caught in the midst of this turmoil… That was amazingly well received, especially by younger audiences. You’re touching on subject matter and time periods that most of these kids have no knowledge of, and using multimedia like that brings the material within their realm of understanding. It was powerful (Staples 2001, cited in Nance 2001, p. 45).

The positive response from the contemporary audience familiar with digital multimedia reveal how the complexity of space in theatre brought about by the integration of multimedia can make theatre entertaining and compelling for an audience attuned to technology. Returning to the ideas of Robert Lepage, some contemporary theatre acknowledges the audience’s ability to engage in complex presentations of narrative. Lepage argues:
For a long time theatre had been only using the naturalism from film - saying we need real food on stage, we need to pretend that there’s a fourth wall. That’s wrong. Theatre’s theatre. There’s no fourth wall; it’s live, it changes every night... We’re facing an audience now that knows what a flash-back or a flash-forward is, that has a very strong culture and education in how to tell stories in many different ways because of film and TV. Theatre has to go along with that and use that in a theatrical way. I’m afraid I see a lot of theatre that only borrows the realism, and only the people in the front rows get to appreciate it (Lepage 1992, cited in Huxley and Witts 2002, p. 281).

His comments recognise that new audiences are able to follow the complexity in the theatre space because their exposure to technology in their daily life underpins this understanding of multimedia. Multimedia elements in the theatre space offer a bridging style of presentation and performance in the theatre space to a younger contemporary audiences who otherwise might be alienated from traditional forms of theatre. Multimedia has for these media savvy audiences become part of the fabric of the theatre space.

**Methodology**

I regard myself as a playwright and composer. My other creative pursuits in visual arts, multimedia art and performance inform and influence my work. As a multi-disciplinary arts practitioner, I tend to integrate a range of media into creative forms and I am drawn to use strong visual elements and compose emotive sound elements. This investigation of multimedia, theatre and space uses creative practice as research, built around the above interests, as its central research strategy. The proceeding contextual review sought to define space in theatre, explore the evolution of multimedia elements and to introduce the concept of multimedia portals. This brief historical account and exploration of contemporary theatre practitioners who have integrated multimedia elements informs the
following research of the contemporary theatrical use of multimedia elements in the theatre space and the idea that it can be seen as extension of experimental theatre of the twentieth century. *Weaving Worlds*, likewise, is an extension of these traditions of experimentation of multimedia, theatre and space.

In terms of multimedia, my play, *Weaving Worlds*, is a ninety minute exploration of space in theatre to present my ideas of augmented reality in the world of my play. The accompanying exegesis investigates the implications of multimedia when it is integrated into the theatrical environment. In *Weaving Worlds* I tried to integrate multimedia into the theatre space and use the technology to create virtual characters that were located in multimedia portals. Rather than limiting the multimedia elements to provide atmospheric effects in the theatre space, these multimedia elements became virtual characters and were to part of the ensemble of the play. I wanted to give the audience a sense of being in the performance so I tried to extend the fictional space in the theatre beyond the traditional stage demarcations by using multimedia soundscapes21 and recording them in such a way that the sound could travel throughout the theatre with the actors in some scenes. I also tried to create the surreal world of the play by using multimedia elements. Finally, I tried to set up some criteria for the integration of multimedia elements into the theatre space and concluded that, at its best, each element contributes directly to the narrative and that it must not distract the audience from the drama on stage. This was difficult to assess since distraction is subjective, so I decided to ensure the element needed to be functional in some way other than aesthetically, otherwise it was not included in the theatre space. I settled on the criteria that it must either provide a back story of the characters’ lives, or be a virtual character of the play, or metaphorically represent the memories of the characters.

The multimedia elements used included audio soundscapes, digital film, digital stills and lighting effects. These elements were intended to extend the fictional space in the theatre by suspending multimedia portals, which are designated locations for displaying the multimedia elements, above the stage. I

21 See Appendices B, D, K, L, M for soundscape examples.
also intended to reshape the space by transforming the central aisle of the theatre into a space that represented a train carriage for the characters by using multimedia elements in that location.

Diary notations made at each stage of the development of the play provided a subjective account of my experiences in writing the work. The creative practice in its iterative process of development provides opportunity for reflection and analysis (Haseman 2005). I took particular note of how virtual characters might impact the interpretation of the relationships of the characters by the audience in the play because of the limitations of physical interaction between actors and virtual characters in the theatre space. My diary recorded problems I encountered in writing the play, and the solutions I postulated to resolve them. I also recorded the reactions of peer playwrights had to my ideas of multimedia elements in the play. Following on from these notes I summarise how the integration of multimedia in the theatre space was implicated the writing of the play.
Weaving Worlds: A Play Script
Characters

**Bev:** (Ben’s Mother) an obsessive compulsive neurotic middle-aged woman who is suffering from anxiety and delusions. She lives in a co-dependent abusive relationship with her lover, Mick. Bev dreams of a sea change.

**Ben:** (Bev’s son) A shy young man, who has grown tired of his party lifestyle. He is anxious to change his life, kick his addictions and he believes his first task is to rid himself of his mother.

**Bev Con:** Bev (virtual character) is Bev’s present state of mind that is reflective and melancholic.

**Ben Con:** (virtual character) is Ben’s current state of mind reflective and insightful.

**Mick:** The lover of Bev who is an elderly petty criminal. He is a sociopath with a passive/aggressive temperament.

**Rosie:** Ben’s old school friend who is a young migrant girl. She is ambitious, naïve and anarchistic and has a crush on Ben.

**Bradley:** Mick’s nephew who is trying to break into the gang. He teases and flirts with older women.

**Charlie:** Ben’s dealer who is an aging drug addicted bank teller.

**Jacko:** A middle aged taxi driver (virtual character) who is big hearted and wants to protect his passengers from harm.

**Charlene:** A street person who is a University drop-out. She is angry with what she sees as the inequality in the world.

**Rodney:** A street person, who was hardworking professional, and through a financial and legal crisis finds himself living on the streets with Charlene.

**Sarah:** A bored shopkeeper at Costa Roma’s Cake Shop.

**Malcolm:** The Roma Costa Cake Shop Boss (virtual character and live actor) who has a fiery temper.

**Three Dancers:** The shadow aspects and primal urges of the characters in the world of the play. They are only seen and heard by the audience.
**Tea Lady:** An improvising actor only visible to the three dancers and the audience. She is a manifestation of an apathetic society responding in emotionally detached and peculiar ways to the action in the world of the play.

**Washer Woman On Scooter:** She is a manifestation of repression and guilt. She spends her time trying to scrub out the past.

**Old Woman:** An ancestor memory and the feeling of hope for Bev and Ben. She is the promise of change and freedom.

12 dancers perform to soundscapes. These dancers perform the roles of train passengers, the commuters at the bus station, and patrons in the pub. This additional cast is optional dependent on theatre production resources.

Although the play contains representations of virtual characters using the technology of multimedia, these characters might also be presented as live actors who exist on the “skin” of the world of the play. Their purpose is to create interior monologues of the main characters manifested on stage.

All soundscapes have been composed, arranged, and produced by the playwright.
ACT I  SCENE 1: Arriving Nowhere

STAGE DIRECTION: Bev is standing on a podium that is surrounded by water. The Hills Hoist turns on stage. Old Woman is raised above the audience. Bev tosses a pebble into the water.

DIGITAL FILM: Bev’s reflection in the water is captured by a live camera above her. The ripples are seen breaking up her image. Image dissolves into images of Bev’s life.

SOUNSCAPE: Ancestor short version fades in.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: three dancers appear standing in the water. The dancers carry Bev and immerse her into the water. The dancers leave Bev in the water. A Washer Woman riding a child’s scooter with a washing basket enters and hangs out the washing on the Hills Hoist. The Washer Woman on the scooter circles Bev and rides off stage.

SOUNDSCAPE: Ancestor fades out.

DIGITAL FILM: projections on screen fade out.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev strips off her wet clothes down to her underwear, walks up to the Hills Hoist, puts on the clothing that hangs from the Hills Hoist, paces around muttering to herself. The three dancers either side of Bev pace up and down arguing with her. Bev Con and Ben Con appear.

BEV CON: Can you see me there?

STAGE DIRECTIONS: train lights come up.
Sound of train

DIGITAL FILM: inside a train carriage. Image dissolves into scrolling text, “you could be the storm, blow it all away.” Text dissolves into a stormy sky.

BEV CON: Can yah see me there Benny?
BEN CON: On the train?

BEV CON: The train. I always dream about trains, always moving, moving, moving, I’m completely still but everything else. It’s always moving and Ben.(BEAT) I can’t get off.

BEN CON: But you’re not dreaming.

BEV CON: You don’t have to be sleeping.

BEN CON: To be dreaming?

BEV CON: To see myself. I have no reflection. Not in dreams. Now there’s something happening. Something I remember.

BEN CON: Or something you made up?

BEV CON: Made up?

BEN CON: Made up.

BEV CON: What’s the difference?

BEN CON: The difference is the truth.

BEV CON: Which is?

BEN CON: Lost. Somewhere on that train.

**AUDIO:** screeching train wheels and train rushing past.

**BLACK-OUT/LIGHTS UP.**

**DIGITAL FILM:** Bev on the train staring out the window.

BEV CON: And I never saw it coming.

BEN CON: How could you? It was ahead of you.

BEV CON: No Ben. It was behind me, pushing me through my past.

PAUSE

BEV CON: So there I am. Staring out the window. The world’s a blur. If it spins fast enough it stops and you. You can live in the eye of the storm. Like when you’re a little kid and all the yelling’s going on and you.
BEV CON & BEN CON (SLIGHTLY OUT OF SYNC): You block it all out. Count backwards. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Washer Woman scoots onto the stage, takes down washing and hangs out a sheet with the words four and twenty black birds baked in a pie.

**DIGITAL FILM:** Bev on the train (film running backwards) then fades out.

**BLACK OUT/LIGHTS UP.**

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev is standing alone. Bev speaks with the rhythm of the train.

BEV: You drop into a place like this. Quiet, too quiet. All the sound gets blown outa the room. They say you only get to know one thing in your life. Then they don’t even tell you what that is supposed to be. The only thing I ever known.

BEV CON: When I stare into a mirror. I can’t see myself (echoes).

**AUDIO:** train fades out.

BEV: Then those feelings come back stitched into every fibre in my body. Weaving in and out and in and out. Just like Nana. Needles busy knitting life together after pop smashed everything up. “Don’t drop a stitch Bev will yah?” She’d knit on the train and tell me to stay on track. “Forget about the tunnels swallowing you up whole. There’s a light waiting for you at the end”.

BEV CON: In the darkness of your mind, the light moves forward. Bringing a new day.

BEV: I wanted to fit in again. For both of us, me and my boy, Benny. I wanted things to settle. Go somewhere where we’d be invisible. Unnoticeable. Wanted things to go smoothly. No dramas. Just glide along.

DANCER ONE: Be on track.

DANCER TWO: And I had one thing on my mind.

DANCER THREE: Tunnel vision.

BEV: If I could get this out the way!
Weaving Worlds

Act I Scene 1: Arriving Nowhere

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** lights up on bag. Dancers pick up the bag and toss it to Bev who catches it and carefully places it on the ground. Beach sounds and classic holiday lounge music fades in.

BEV: Then I was gonna go down to the bank. Draw out all my money and go on that holiday I promised myself on a beach and watch the sunrise. Just Benny and me. We’d do one of those package holidays where you get free breakfast. Eggs over easy. What’s ever that easy anyway? And you get some of those city bus tours tossed in. Yeah that’s it. Waking up late.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Tea lady with trolley appears and serves up tea to Bev and the dancers. The dancers lift Bev up onto the trolley and wheel her around the stage.

**DIGITAL FILM:** retro tourist and holiday style images.

DANCER ONE: Brunch. Room service.
DANCER TWO: Go for a swim in the rooftop pool.
DANCER THREE: Have a UDL on the deckchairs.
BEV: Yeah can yah see me now!
ALL DANCERS: A movie star.
BEV: Do the markets.
DANCER ONE: T-shirts for the boys.
DANCER TWO: Stock up on ciggies.
DANCER THREE: Duty free scotch.
BEV: Get away and start again. Move down to the sea. Leave them all behind. No refs. No team. No rules.
ALL DANCERS: Too far to ever find us.
BEV: Blend in with the locals. Be invisible. The whole thing. That’s all I wanted to do. For once in my life.
ALL DANCERS: Be the bloody brochure!
DIGITAL FILM: Retro tourist brochure with Bev’s head super-imposed.

AUDIO: beach and music fade out.

BLACK-OUT
ACT I  SCENE 2  Getzas A Beer Lovey

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev sits on bar stool in the kitchen. Washerwoman pegs up another load of washing on the line and scoots off. Mick watches television on the sofa. It’s late night. Dancers appear on top of the lounge and tackle Mick to the ground then drag him back up onto the sofa.

DIGITAL FILM: sports images mimic the stage action.

DANCER ONE:  Hear someone’s not been playin’ fair Mick.
DANCER TWO:  Yeah. I heard that too Mick. Word gets around son.
DANCER THREE:  Someone’s seen him. Might of even recognised him. Heard he was.

DANCERS ONE & TWO: Off side.

DANCER TWO:  Pity he’s gonna be sent off.
DANCER ONE:  Has he been injured?
DANCER THREE:  Terrible wounds, terrible, terrifying Mick. Probably scar. That’s all if he’s lucky.

DANCER ONE:  But has he been hurt yet?
DANCER THREE:  Might even bleed to death drop by drop.
DANCER TWO:  Yeah can be a rough game. Gotta be so careful. Take responsibility.

DANCER ONE:  But has he been caught yet?
DANCER TWO: Yeah can even cripple a man. Ugly. Very, very, very Messy. Wouldn’t wanna have yah lunch after that.

DANCER ONE:  So he’s still out there?
DANCER THREE:  When a player’s cheating, someone on the team’s gotta get sent off. Don’t mind who Micky.

DANCER TWO:  See it’s all about.
ALLDANCERS:  Team pride.
DANCER THREE:  Wouldn’t wanna let the team down.
DANCER TWO: May as well let yourself down.
DANCER THREE: Oh? Have they caught him yet? Is that what your asking me?
DANCER ONE: Yeah have they?
DANCER TWO: Have they Micky?
DANCER ONE: Have another beer Mick.
DANCER THREE: Never know. Might be yah last.(echoes)
MICK: Get us another beer will yah Bev?
BEV: (mumbles) It’s so cold, can you feel it, always trembling beneath my feet.
MICK: Hey, what you say Bevy.
ALL DANCERS: Kill the killer that killed the kill!
MICK: What?
BEV: I said it’s on the top shelf, Mick.
MICK: Crickeys, a man’s out working comes home and all he wants. Didn’t I bring yah home some flowers hey? Didn’t I? And yah favourite cask of card-din-nay and a block of your favourite chocolate? Talk about ungrateful. And now yah pushing me. Pushing me again Bevy.
ALL DANCERS: Kill the killer that killed the kill.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Mick yells at the television. Tea Lady rolls down the aisle past the audience with a trolley of team banners and flags dressed in jersey, and sports clothes.


BEV: There’s no beers left.
MICK: I put half a doz in there this arvo. That was out. He put his foot on the bloody line! Should be reffing lawn bowls. Yah see that. Yah see that Bev. It’s those young blokes on the field. You can’t trust ‘em. Someone’s gotta go Bev.

ALL DANCERS: Team pride. Kill the killer that killed the kill.
MICK: Speaking of which where is the little bastard?

BEV: He’s. He’s gone out.

MICK: Gone Out? What’d you mean he’s “gone out?” Where would he go? You mean he’s out of it. Should be home by now. Gave him some money for a carton of long necks. I’m dying of thirst here. The games on. It’s the semis. What do you expect me to do? Have a cup of tea while the footy’s on. That’d be impressive, the boys roll up to watch the second half. Got anything to drink Mick? Scotch? A beer? How about a bourbon? What’d you into Mick? I’m having a cup of earl fucking grey!

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Tea Lady arrives on stage and pours out a cup of tea and carefully places it next to Mick, sits down and watches the game with him.

BEV: He’ll be home by six.

MICK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He betta be here. He betta be here. And if he’s not.

ALL DANCERS: It’s all on you Mick.

BEV: You leave him alone. He’s still only a boy.

MICK: (mocking) He’s still only a boy. He’s taller than me.

BEV: Who isn’t?

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Tea Lady lifts Mick onto the trolley and wheels him around the room following Bev.


STAGE DIRECTIONS: Dancers push Mick off the trolley and wrestle him onto the lounge.

DANCER ONE: One player.

DANCER TWO: Whose it gonna be?

DANCER THREE: For the love of the game.
DANCER ONE: For the love of your life.

ALL DANCERS: Kill the killer that killed the kill.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Dancers release Mick. Tea Lady cleans up the trolley and pours a cup of tea for Mick then sits on the lounge with him.

MICK: Betta off without him you know.

BEV: Who?

MICK: Us. You and I. This place it’s too small for another person.

BEV: What’d mean?

MICK: Bevy, you’ll have to do something, make some changes.

BEV: Changes?

MICK: Yeah changes. ‘Bout time he left don’t you think?

BEV: Mick, he’s still only a boy. Just finding his way.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Mick crawls back onto the trolley. Tea Lady gets up and wheels him around.

MICK: (mocking) Mick. “He’s still only a boy”, she says. Listen Bev. You mother him too much. Gees this place stinks, don’t you ever clean it. No way. He dropped the ball before he was over the line! Penalty my arse! You can’t send him off. He’s done nothing wrong. Nothing, nothing, nothing! They penalise the poor bastard he’s been with them for nearly 10 years! (BEAT) I’m out scrounging around for every last dollar and I come home to this shit hole. Like living in a bloody humpy. Like living at your mother’s place. Crap everywhere. Filthy washing flapping out the back all day long in the dust. Bit’s of old car parts and the silly old fool in the shed all day. You wanna go back to that eh? Do yah? Well do yah? No. Didn’t think so. Couldn’t drive you outa here with a number three iron could I?

MICK: You know the little bastard’s been getting into the stuff out the back. Finding things and.

BEV: He wouldn’t know.
MICK: Of course he bloody would. They all do these daze. Look, I don’t wanna hurt the boy Bevy, believe me I don’t but. If I don’t sort him out.(BEAT) Someone else will. And it’ll be.

BEV: You leave him alone.

MICK: Bevy he’s not the golden child. He should be out exploring the world. Go on one of those tiki bird bus tours. Get a place of his own. Get a trade, a woman, and a dog. Ha! Or just a dog.

BEV: He was here first!

MICK: He’s outa school so he should be outa home. Be a man. Bev. Be. A. Man! (BEAT) He’s been stealing! (BEAT) Stealing from the team. If any of the others find out. You know what that means? They’ll slit the little bastard into a thousand and one pieces then stuff him in the pond out the back. Then they’ll drag his body up and down the storm water till the flesh falls off his bones and washes all the way back to town, and if his lucky he’ll be dead by then, otherwise they’ll…

BEV: How could they?

(MIKE)

MICK: If the others find out?

BEV: How could they?

MICK: If they find out?

BEV: How could /they?

MICK: I’m just saying. If they find out. We’re all gone. One in all in. No point the lot of us going. Gotta give ‘em up.

(PAUSE)

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Mick leaps off the trolley and caresses Bev from behind. She tries to pull away. Dancers hold her still.

MICK: I’d have to go. I couldn’t stay here with you. I mean. You want me to be here with you baby, don’t you? Who else would have you? Your background. I mean you’re getting on. Filling out. I don’t mind. Something to hold onto.
**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Mick pushes Bev’s torso over and pushes his groin into Bev from behind her. He pushes her away and yells at the television.

MICK: Come on, off side. See that Bevy?

DANCERS: He was off side.

MICK: Look. All I’m sayin’ is, someone’s gotta take responsibility here. Benny. He can’t keep sniffing around the sheds. They don’t like his type. Stuff’s gone missing. Com pren day? Stuff that don’t belong to any of us. Stuff that’s gonna cause a shit load of drama. Serious shit. Gone. Missing. That hasn’t been paid for. So you gonna fix it or dump it on me?

BEV: What’d mean?

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Mick and the Dancers stretch Bev out on the trolley. Mick straddles over her.

MICK: *(mocking)* “What’d mean?” She says, “what’d mean?” *(BEAT)* You know what I mean. He’s gotta go. He’s been caught off side Bev. They seen him. Someone recognised him, they told me. He stands out like dogs balls.

BEV: No not my Benny, he wouldn’t.

MICK: How do you know? How do you know? Tell me! Tell me! How do you know. You with him everyday? Spends most of his time running away from you. He’s different. Isn’t he?

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Tea Lady drops the bag at Bev’s head and opens it up. Dancers slide Bev over the trolley.

MICK: Go on. Have a look. Don’t just bloody lie there. Have. A. Look!

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev reaches over, pulls out the gun and drops it back into the bag.

MICK: It’s your choice.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Mick leaps of the trolley and picks up the gun and aims it at Bev.
BEV: That’s not a choice.
MICK: You’re right. It’s a solution. (BEAT) Never underestimate the power of conflict. Look if you’re a bit. If you want I can do it.
BEV: No! No don’t you touch my boy. Never again. No!
MICK: Come on Bev.
BEV: I don’t understand.
MICK: Yes you do.
BEV: I don’t understand.
MICK: Yes you do. Yes you do Bev. Yes you do! Don’t play missy innocent with me. That’s bullshit.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Dancers lift Bev off the trolley. Tea lady hands the gun to her and draps banners and flags over her then makes a cup of tea. Dancers march like a parade.

MICK: Look Bev. I’m sorry OK? (BEAT) You’d do it to his father wouldn’t yah. You said you’ve done it before. Down the Cav.
BEV: That was different.
MICK: No different.
BEV: That wasn’t family.
MICK: He’s not my boy is he? Wouldn’t even pass for my boy would he? Would he? Poses the question doesn’t it? Where is his father? Belongs in one of those detention centres.
BEV: I’m his mother. He’s my boy. No! My baby boy. He came from me. In here!
MICK: Then you’ve got more right to do it than anyone. You made him. It’s your job. Sort it out. You sort it out your way. Or I’ll sort it out mine. Gotta give him up. Send him off the field. It’s only fair. They’re given us a chance to sort it out. Send him off ourselves. You got a right to do that Bev. So come on.
BEV: I can’t. Please. Mick. No, no, no.
MICK: They can’t lose face..
BEV: Tell them I did it.
MICK: Don’t be ridiculous.

BEV: I did it, it was me, tell them. I did it.

MICK: Where? When? How did you do it Bev? You don’t know do you? Do you? You don’t know nothing. They’d never believe you Bev. You don’t even know the rules of the game. Besides it’s too late. He’s already dead. He just doesn’t know it yet. And as his mother you got to choose, you get to choose how he died. It’s your right. You got an opportunity here to show some mercy. You can choose how. He’s already dead love. Either way he’s gone.

BEV: You said they didn’t know. You said if they find out. You just said, “if they find out”. I asked you how could they find out!

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Mick places the gun in Bev’s hand and wraps his arms around her.

MICK: I only said that to protect you lovey. Didn’t know how else to break it to you. You know you have to do this. Remember what they did to Barry? Your own little baby brother. How old was he? No more than Ben’s age. You had a choice then. You didn’t take it. He suffered because of your selfishness. They tortured him for days. The bleeding. Every last drop of life dripping out of his carcase. Swaying in the breeze. You can still here him screaming can’t yah? Yeah, yeah, yeah, you remember. In the end it was a relief. All held him down. Ugly. Ugly. Bev. You don’t want that, do you? No, you don’t want that? You’re always saying, fate, it’s all fate, well, here it is Bevy. You can be the hand of fate. Yeah you remember all that stuff about fate, spirits, voices dribbling outa your mad, mad mother’s mouth. It’s in the genes. Take a look in the mirror! You don’t know what’s real Bevy do yah! No you don’t. (BEAT) He’s next. He’ll turn too. Just like your mother. He’ll turn. He’ll go off and leave you. Either way. He’s gone isn’t he? So you choose. Bevy you know that deep down don’t yah? Of course you do. Yeah you do. He died, he died when he took that stuff. He killed himself. That’s a gift Bevy, they’re giving you a gift. That’s fair. Almost kind.

BEV: He’s my boy. My blood. My family.

MICK: No. I’m your family. And you’re mine. That’s all the family we need. You and I. We’re a team Bevy. A team. You and me team players. Our team with the boys, the crew. He’s not a team player Benny. He’s only ever gonna be a ball boy. No future.
He’s broken the rules Bevy. He’s gotta pay. Consequences. That’s all that’s happening here Bevy. Consequences. Either way. He’s gone.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev pushes away from Mick, drops the gun into the bag and kicks it away.

BEV: We could all move. I can pack tonight. We could move tomorrow. I can load up the van. Won’t take long. You said it yourself this place is a junkyard. Leave it all behind us. Leave as soon as he comes home.

MICK: *(mocking)* “We could all move”, she says. Where we gonna go? Where we gonna go Bev?

BEV: The sea, we could move down to the coast.

MICK: And what? Watch the tide go out? Guess what? It comes back in again doesn’t it? Doesn’t it? Yeah, yeah, now you get it. You understand. We’re not going anywhere, we can’t. *(BEAT)* Even if we could. He’ll meet someone some girl or boy or whatever they meet these days and he’ll piss off. He’ll leave you. They all do. *(BEAT)* You’ll be all alone again. Besides, I can’t keep all this up much longer. Me stress levels and you don’t help. You push and push and push me. Make me do things I regret Bevy. You’re pushing me now. *(BEAT)* Look Bevy. It’s not like you meant to have him.

BEV: How can you say that? I love Ben. He’s mine. He’s mine and I love him.

MICK: How can you love something you never planned, you never bloody wanted?

*(PAUSE)*

BEV: I love you.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Mick picks up the bag and drops it at her feet.

MICK: You wanna stop Barry’s screaming. Or you want Ben to join the choir? You know how long it takes for meat to rot don’t you? You got a week.
STAGE DIRECTIONS: Tea Lady packs up the trolley, loads the dancers onto it and wheels them off the stage, down the aisle and out of the theatre. Mick walks backwards and sits on the lounge. Bev rocks on stage.

MICK: Bevy? Be a good girl and go down to the Mall and get me something to drink, will you love?

BEV: But it’s pouring out there.

MICK: You can’t expect me to go. The game’s not finished. My jacket’s in the cupboard. You can borrow it. See I’m always thinking of yah Bevy. You’ll be right. Need the exercise. Getting a bit dumpy. Lucky you got me. I’ll be here when yah get back. Be here waiting for you. And get some more of that chocolate. Hey Bev. Hear that storm Bevy. That could be you. Don’t forget your bag tomorrow, love. Take it with you on the train. You could ride the crack of thunder. And when the storm blows over, make everything’s clean again.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev steps over the bag, puts on the jacket and buttons it up. Mick fades out. Wind starts to blow and blows the washing off the line. Washer Woman crawls back on stage, grabs the washing and puts it in the basket.

BEV: A crack of thunder.

MICK (VOICE): That’s right Bevy. You could be the storm, you blow away everything. Make it all fresh and clean again. It’ll be me and you again Bevy, me and you.

BEV: Riding a crack of thunder.

AUDIO: door swings open, storm, thunder cracks.

BLACK-OUT.
ACT I SCENE 3 Tunnel Vision


AUDIO: train.

DIGITAL FILM: people on the train as blurred image.

BEV CON: In the darkness of your mind, the light streams forward bringing the new day. Ever noticed the sky, how it is, before a storm? One minute it’s blue. Then those lines of grey start tumbling towards you. You never hear them. The distance mutes their chatter. Never see them travelling. They just. Arrive. Like me on the train. Somehow I just. Arrived.

DIGITAL IMAGE: blurred image focuses to the inside of the train carriage with people at the far end of Bev.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: lights stream down the centre aisle of the theatre from behind the audience to the stage creating a capsule of light that represents the train. The audience is given the impression that they are on the train.

SOUNDSCAPE: When Freedom Kissed Her

STAGE DIRECTIONS: three dancers act as passengers, move through the capsule of light towards Bev’s carriage.

DIGITAL FILM: people dancing on the train.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Charlene and Rodney board the train at the rear of the audience and move down the capsule of light towards the stage. The capsule of light flutters.

SOUNDSCAPE: When Freedom Kissed Her fades out

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Charlene and Rodney hassle passengers (audience) on their way to Bev’s carriage.

CHARLENE: Hey Rodney. Check it out.
RODNEY: Settle down Charlene will yah. Down the back.

CHARLENE: Come on Rodney, keep focused.

RODNEY: Got any change mate? Spare some change? Lost my ticket changing lines.

CHARLENE: Got any change. Haven’t eaten a descent meal, forever. Don’t worry about it. (mutters) Selfish prick.

RODNEY: Mate can you spare some change. Someone stole me wallet. Lost all my credit cards. Pickpocket can you believe it?

CHARLENE: What are you looking at? Hey girlfriend is that so. When was the last time you looked in the mirror. (BEAT) If I had a head like yours I’d get up in the morning and put make up on me bum and.

RODNEY: Come on Charlene. Leave it.

CHARLENE: Yeah, yeah. You and me.

RODNEY: Leave it Charlene.

CHARLENE: Yeah, is that right?

RODNEY: Me girlfriend’s pregnant. Gotta get some tests. Got no cover. Haven’t got any change have yah?

CHARLENE: What’d mean get off? Why should I? I’ve a right to ride this train as much as you have! (BEAT) We can’t all be living in your fabulous home darling and change the décor every other day. Oh I hear blue is the next black and brown was the next green. (BEAT) You bored out of brains doing breakfast and the tradesman? Such a struggle darling. (BEAT) Guess what? Your hubby’s already done them. And he doesn’t have to do them in the dark like he does with you. (BEAT) Don’t I know? (BEAT) It’s my poverty that keeps you rich darling! (BEAT) What you need love is a brain reno. So they can gut all the crap outa yah.

RODNEY: Haven’t got any spare change have you. Me girlfriend’s gone mental and we haven’t got no money for her medication. (BEAT) Charlene. How do you expect to get anywhere in life abusing your clients? Come on. There’s a few spare seats up further where some nutter’s gripping a bag.

**AUDIO:** train rushes through a tunnel.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Charlene and Rodney sit across from Bev. Three dancers sit behind Bev.
CHARLENE: Hey got any spare change. Me dog’s in the pound and I gotta get him out.

BEV: Sure dear. There you go.

CHARLENE: Thanks. I mean. Gees. It’s not like we wake up in the morning and go “hooray hooray lets go out and beg today”. It’s not a living, it’s a lifestyle. Think their world is everyone’s world. No way. There’s hundreds of worlds out there and this planet it’s a bee hive with a coupla a queen bees and privileged few slothing the honey off the worker bees. No wonder everyone’s stinging. My dog really is in the pound. God I miss him. Lil’ jack rus. Francis. Named him after that Italian Monk. They wanna put him down.

BEV: Would you put him down yourself?

CHARLENE: Francis?

BEV: If someone was gonna hurt him. You know? Really, really hurt him. If he was destined to die anyway. And you knew they’d make him suffer. I mean can you really save anyone? As his mother would you?

CHARLENE: Dunno. I’m not doing this forever. I’m on a program. Rodney here. He’s me life coach.

BEV: Life coach?

CHARLENE: That’s what he puts on his forms. He used to be a swimming coach. Got his bronze. Had his own business. Till one of the kids. Never died or nothing like that. It wasn’t his fault. Once you get report well, well that’s it. Marked for life. No one wants yah. Like no one on the planet’s made a mistake before. And if you haven’t got no money to hide it. I mean you can’t have an accident, but you can murder someone. Hide the body. People getting shot everyday and its on the news like a weather. Means nothing. And you flick the channel over and it makes it go away. That’s OK. If you got money or know someone. You try watching thirty kids in a pool with their mothers all hassling at the same time. Poor bastard. Never got over it. Not freaking you out am I? In America everyone’s got at least twenty-five guns per person. That’s what I heard. They’re the most heavily armed nation in the world. Guns in the schools. Guns in the shops. Like mobile phones. Everyone’s gotta have ‘em. Probably make mobile phones with guns in them soon, you know like some sorta laser gun. Engaged. Bang! Please hold. Bang! Sorry wrong number. Bang! You’ve just been placed in a queue. Bang! Bang!
Bang! Your call is important to us. Bang! You alright? Hold that bag any tighter and.

**AUDIO:** train jams on breaks.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** passengers jerk forward. Bev drops the bag. Charlene leans down to pick up the bag. The gun rolls out. Charlene picks it up, aims it at Bev then hands it to Bev who puts it back into the bag.

**DIGITAL FILM:** images of the gun dropping from all angles again and again. Gun images dissolve.

CHARLENE: You want your change back?

BEV: No. You keep it darling for when the storms come.

CHARLENE: Maybe you should talk to Rodney.

BEV: It’s for my son.

CHARLENE: Oh. Had a fight?

BEV: No. No. I. He’s. He’s like Francis.

CHARLENE: Is he a dog?

BEV: No. He’s. Different. You’re not going to.

CHARLENE: No. No.

(PAUSE)

CHARLENE: Thanks for the change. Rodney our stops coming up. King Street.

RODNEY: Thought we were going to the mall?

CHARLENE: You thought wrong didn’t yah?

RODNEY: This is two stop’s before.

CHARLENE: You need the exercise.

RODNEY: No I don’t.

CHARLENE: Move Rodney.
**AUDIO:** train slows down. Announcement: Next stop King Street. Please stand back from the door. (door opening) King Street.

**CHARLENE:** We’re alright getting off aren’t we? Not all the animals at the pound end up sick and. (BEAT) Some of them are worth saving. (BEAT) There’s always hope. (BEAT) Even for the worst of us.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Charlene and Rodney exit.

**AUDIO:** trains doors close. Train speeds up.

**DIGITAL FILM:** street scenes.

**BLACK-OUT.**
ACT I

SCENE 4

_Mirror Of My Man Mick_

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev sits on the train. Three dancers move her. Washer Woman sits on the scooter on the train folding her washing and knitting. A pool of water shimmers. Hills Hoist spins slowly.

**DIGITAL FILM:** people shuffling through carriages behind Bev.

**BEV CON:** Ever noticed the sky when the lightning strikes. How it is, before the thunder? One minute the sky is smudged with rain, the next it’s pierced by the white bones of lightning as they shatter to the earth, then the thud of thunder when those skeletons land and are buried into darkness. You know you’re in a storm. The bones spear down. But no matter what happens, how familiar the smell, you never know whose bones are falling or why the darkness needs to swallow them. Like me on the train, hiding the bones that fell from my past.

**AUDIO:** train goes through a tunnel.

**DIGITAL FILM:** shadow of Bradley moving through train towards Bev.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** lights flicker. Bradley sits on the end of Bev’s seat.

**BRADLEY:** Mind if I sit here? Too late.

**BEV:** Look there’s room up the front.

**BRADLEY:** Well off you go then.

**BEV:** I. I was here first.

**BRADLEY:** I can’t see the stops from back there. Might miss it.

**BEV:** Miss what?

**BRADLEY:** My stop. Might miss my stop.

**BEV:** It’s not a bus you know. You. You don’t ring the bell.

**BRADLEY:** Really? Where you goin’? Work? (BEAT) All dressed up. You don’t look too well to go to work. Bit pasty round the gills. Sunken eyes. Bet yah flesh doesn’t spring back when you poke it.
BEV: It’s hot in here.


BEV: Don’t be ridiculous. Will you please move? You’re leaning into me. Haven’t you ever heard of personal space?

BRADLEY: Personal space?

BEV: Yeah, that bit’s yours and this bit’s mine.

BRADLEY: Can I share your bits?

BEV: No.

BRADLEY: Go on.

BEV: No.

BRADLEY: Come on.

BEV: Stop it.

BRADLEY: If we join them together.

BEV: Look. We’re not joining anything together!

(PAUSE)

BRADLEY: You can have some of mine.

BEV: I don’t want any.

BRADLEY: Don’t be like that. Where you off to then?

BEV: What? Don’t talk to me.

BEV: Nothing personal. I’m not speaking to anyone. OK?

BRADLEY: Yes you are. You just did. You said something.

BEV: Nothing.

BRADLEY: You did it again. Don’t you know when your own mouth’s moving?

(PAUSE)

Not like sharks. Ever seen sharks’ eyes? That’s what drowns people, not the bite. It’s the fear. Those black eyes coming to get yah.

BEV: I heard you.

BRADLEY: Was only paying you a compliment, can’t a man pay a woman a compliment these days? Attractive, single, mature, lonely woman on a train.

BEV: I’m not.

BRADLEY: Not what?

BEV: I have a. He’s. He’s getting on in a few stops so you better move.

BRADLEY: Well he can sit on my lap when he gets on can’t he? All dressed up with yah face on. Bit o’ fishing on the side eh? Chuckin’ in yah line are yah? (BEAT) All the bloody same. Change of life. Out to pick up some young stud at the height of his sperm count. It’s all those tadpoles swimming around. They reckon it’s got something to do with a man’s sweat.

BEV: I’m sure it does. When’s your stop?

BRADLEY: Only want us for one thing. You know what. My mum stayed with my father for thirty-four years. How’s that eh? She’d stay home and he never went fishing for no one.

BEV: Something wrong with his rod?

BRADLEY: Huh?

BEV: Good on ‘em. Yeah that’s terrific, fan-bloody-tastic, now if you don’t mind.

BRADLEY: I’m sure the temptation was there. He was a good-looking man. Very desirable. Sexy DNA. Especially when he was my age. Very desirable to older women. (BEAT) When everyone was off getting into someone else into the free love thing in the sixties, seventies or eighties or whatever before the AIDS thing, mum used to say. Well she still does.

BEV: You better watch for your stop, you’ll miss it.

BRADLEY: She used to say Bradley. Or BB she used to call me BB. Wanna know why? Yeah (BEAT) Big (BEAT) Big Beaming. Bulky. Brave. Booming. Bending slightly to the left but never had a complaint thus far, Bradley. I used to ask how come she’d been with dad so long, and she’d say.
BENTLEY STREET’S COMING UP, THAT YOUR STOP?

BEV: She’s say why go out to a restaurant when you got food at home in the fridge? (laughs) (BEAT) Don’t you get it? Stay at home. Something in the fridge? You know? Didn’t need anything else. Even if they got sick of the food, or it went off a little bit, even if there was a power failure and.

BRADLEY: Get out of my face. (BEAT) Fine. I’ll move. I have to meet someone.

BEV: But you’ve just met me.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bradley blocks Bev from moving. Dancers restrain Bev to the seat.

BEV: I didn’t want to meet you.

BRADLEY: But you already have. You must like me. You’ve been talking me ear off since I got on the train. All dressed up. What’s wrong with me? Come on. Aren’t gonna let me down are yah?

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Beverley trembles. Bradley touches Bev’s face and licks her on the cheek.

DIGITAL FILM: extreme close up of Bradley licking Bev’s face in black and white then fades out.

BRADLEY: Mick was right. You taste of tar. Don’t take much to get you going does it Bev. These days there’s someone always watching, always listening. They can photograph your nasal hairs from satellites in space. They can record every breath you take, including your last. Making sure everyone’s doing what they’re told to do. And whatever yah doing. However yah do it. You gotta do it on time Bevy babe. Gotta ride that crack’o thunder on time. What’s that under yah feet?

BEV: My shoes.

BRADLEY: No, the bag?

BEV: Yes, it’s a bag.

BRADLEY: A big bag looks heavy.

BEV: It’s just a bag. And.

BRADLEY: And.
BEV: And that’s all.
BRADLEY: Wouldn’t be planning to skip through would you Bevy?
BEV: I’ll need to get off soon. Please.
BRADLEY: All dressed up with this big bag. Mick is expecting you home tonight isn’t he?
BEV: What?
BRADLEY: The bag?
BRADLEY: What’s in it?
BEV: What are you talking about?
BRADLEY: What’s in it?
BEV: My stop. It’s coming it’s, Please! I need to get off now. Off this bloody train!
BRADLEY: No. It’s an express. You’re coming with me. You and me and the bag.
BEV: No. I know you. I know who you are. I’ve seen you in the house. You’ve come at me before. No. No. No!
BRADLEY: And keep your voice down. No more games. What’s in the bag? The bag. What’s in it? There’s no one out there Bevy. Hey, there’s nothing out there. We’re in a tunnel.
BEV: That’s where you’re wrong. We’re in a storm.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bradley is held back by the dancers.

BEV CON: And the lightning spears from the heavens through the winds and rain until it punctures the earth then blasts back up to the heavens.
BEV: I couldn’t think of.
DANCER ONE: How to shut him up and.
DANCER TWO: I was scared. He kept going on and on and on.
DANCER THREE: No one was gonna help me.
BEV: They all sat there reading their papers like nothing was happening. Like it was just another day. Cause they didn’t know me and. I didn’t know what else to do.

BEV CON: Riding a crack of thunder.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** dancers hold Bradley down while Bradley struggles. Bev stands, faces the audience, and mimes shooting Bradley who faces the audience. Gun explodes. Bradley grips his stomach. Beverley kisses Bradley on the lips. The dancers catch him and load him onto the washerwoman’s scooter. They dump him into the pool of water. The washerwoman rinses sheets in the pool and pegs them out on the line.

**DIGITAL FILM:** live camera angle from above of Bradley in the water. Bradley’s image in the water dissolves to the people on the train.

**AUDIO:** handwashing, splashing and rubbing. Railway voice through speaker off stage, “Due to track work all trains are terminating at Turner Street where passengers may board transit buses to continue onto their destinations by express, straight, down, the line”.

**BLACK-OUT.**
ACT I  SCENE 5  *Journey With Jacko*

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** taxi stand outside the railway station. Hills Hoist spins slowly on stage. Washer woman scoots out with washing basket, circles Bev and scoots off stage. Bev paces and talks to herself, bumping into dancers who pick her up and place her onto the taxi seat. Sound of traffic and footsteps

**BEV CON:**

When the storm breaks, the thunder shakes the earth. The Earth breathes out through the pores of the soil. The breath travels out to space reaching other Universes where a stranger tastes the scent of it. The stranger exhales and the breath travels far across the stars and rests in the heavens. The moments between each breath are fair weather. Can’t hold onto the breath forever, else suffer still life. Storms loom. When the thunder comes, it gathers up the breaths from the heavens and all of its memories and pounds it back down upon the Earth. No matter how vile the breath nor who has shared it, we swallow. Like me on the thunder riding the foul breath of repulsive emotions.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Old Woman appears at back of theatre walking towards Bev.

**BEV:**

I’m sorry Ben. You have to understand. Yes I know. No, no, no. You’re not listening to. He doesn’t ever listen. That’s part of the problem. I mean you come outa me, I made you so I have a right to. Mick’s right. You’d end up like. Sooner or later. No! You don’t deserve that. They all said you already died. Mick. He’s been a father to. Always encouraging in his own special way. Ben you never understood. Mick’s right, Mick said things have to change. Bevy, you could be the wind, blow in a storm and change everything in a day.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev sees the Old Woman approaching.

**BEV:**

Be careful. The road. There’s a truck. Please. Watch out. (BEAT) Me? Know you? (BEAT) You want to share the taxi?

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Old Woman steps on stage facing audience.

**OLD WOMAN:** Liberation.

**BEV:** Liberation?
OLD WOMAN: Liberation is yours. Liberation is yours. Liberation is yours. Libation. Liberation is yours. When the storm blows away, liberation.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: lights fade slowly on old woman who pours wine as an offering from a cask.

BEV: Where yah goin’?


BEN: (off stage) Mum you gonna marry this one?

BEV: No son, he’s just a friend. For tonight. Poor little Benny. Sometimes you’d be like an old man checking up on me. Watching me in the bedroom through the gap in the sliding door. You didn’t understand a woman’s needs, and any partner’s better than none. Right? I’m not gonna beat myself up about it. You can’t go back Bev, so, so, so don’t worry about it. I wanted Ben to have a good education you know? Streetwise. Kids gotta get through stuff. He had to know about drugs so he wouldn’t get into trouble. Get a habit. So we were open. And I knew I could guide him through it. Then you started doing some things that weren’t right. Smoking when I was out and leaving me nothing for after work. Buying stuff and ripping us off. And money started to go missing so I’d leave some change lying around. I’d leave extra around so Mick wouldn’t notice. So he wouldn’t come down hard on you. Sort you out. Peace at any price. But one time Mick did catch you. I wasn’t there but Mick told me everything and Ben you stopped talking to me for a while. I knew something had gone down. I got home that night. I had that churning feeling in me guts even before I got to the door. Mothers know these things. It was real quiet, too quiet. Mick was just sitting in front of the telly smoking as you do. The house looked the same. But when I went to the kitchen I found those broken beer bottles, a lil’ blood on the floor, not much. But enough to know it was serious and some tissues. Shit all over the place.

(PAUSE)

BEV: I came into the lounge. Mick didn’t say nothing. Neither did I. You was in bed. I went into your room. A couple of posters were ripped off the wall. The lamp was broken though it was never
really a good one. Ben you was asleep so I closed the door let you get over it. I came out. Had a bong with Mick and. The rest I can’t remember. Life’s like that. Every so often there’s a gap in the photo album. Gaps where you’ve torn out the pages and chucked them in the bin. It’s better that way. Benny. Who wants to do a jigsaw puzzle that’s already done? Not long now Benny. Gonna look after my boy like no one else can.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** the three dancers get into a car seats. Bev clutches her bag taxi engine starts up. Bev leans forward with a piece of paper and holds up the address.

**DIGITAL FILM:** Jacko’s face in the rear vision mirror. His back to Bev.

**AUDIO:** car driving.

BEV: Taxi! Yeah. The thing about taxis is there’s always some weirdo driving when you get in Benny. The sorta nutter that gets the early morning shift and screams around the back lanes looking for bodies to load up that collapsed from the night before. Ever since I saw that movie on the telly about that Taxi Driver lunatic with Al Picho when I was really young. You can’t be too careful. No never too careful Benny. Careful Benny. It was gonna be a big fare. Driver was as happy as. Actually he was too happy for my liking. He was one of those annoyingly happy people who could turn on a.

BEV CON: Doesn’t matter how young you are. You never forget. Always remember. They go a little grey around the gills. The hairs on the neck bristle. The skin turns into paste. Everything’s still. A terrifying stillness that makes you busy for the rest of your life.

BEV: Like your beret. Said like your beret. Phew. What’s that you got on mate? Two dollar shop cologne, give it up or use it on your hot chips. You got something food hanging off yah lip.

JACKO: Sunspot. I pick it. So where are we going?

BEV: The Cav.

JACKO: The Cavalier, on the water. Beautiful, beautiful, my cousin has salon near there.

BEV: No The Cav.

JACKO: The Cav? The Cavvy?

BEV: Near the race track. Look do you know it /or not?
JACKO: You sure you got the right one? You don’t wanna go there, it’s a bit rough. (BEAT) Well, you look like a nice lady. You sure you want to go there? It’s not a place for nice ladies. Or well. Maybe. Other things. A man’s pleasure. And ladies too. No discrimination. Anybody’s body welcome in the place and downstairs a bar with free pool and you can bet on the. (BEAT) Not that I would know anything about that. But my friend he tells me about. (BEAT) Look you look like a very nice lady. You got beautiful eyes anyone ever tell you that? Yes I’m sure they have everyday. But to go alone? Well I don’t know if you. (BEAT) I could take you. Just maybe you want to think about it. You know I’ve been driving this cab for eight years now. Can you believe it eight years? Feels like forever. I could drive it in my sleep. Ha. Don’t worry I’m not sleeping now. Ha. I make a joke. You get it? My friends say I’m very funny guy. I tell you I have seen a lot. I could take you anywhere. Anywhere you want to go. Anywhere. I’ll take you to the moon if you want. You like me to take you there perhaps. Ha? Better than the Cav. The moon is meant to be beautiful this time of year. Have you been?

BEV: He looked like he come from the moon. (BEAT) I kept looking at his cauliflower ears and the giant wart coming outa his left nostril. Betcha he’d been around too. I knew. The gaolbird tats on his calves. Been in for a few spells. Probably only unpaid fines but he’d talk it up in there. They all did. Then they come out and the shame drags them down again.

JACKO: I’m from Subiaco. Nice place.

BEV: Suba?

JACKO: Subiaco, it’s in W.A.

BEV: Must have left really early this morning? I make joke.

JACKO: What’s in the bag? You hold it like a baby.

BEV: Keep your eyes on the road.

JACKO: Come on, we’re going to the Cav. My friend he tells me when people.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Washer Woman appears on her scooter. Bend over the pool of water and wrings out blood stained sheets.

**AUDIO:** handwashing, splashing and rubbing.

BEV: Just keep driving, will yah, I can’t be late. Benny’s depending on me.
**AUDIO:** crack of thunder.

**DIGITAL FILM:** Jacko’s image into a negative then reverts back to positive image.

BEV: You hear that thunder?

JACKO: Forget the Cav.

BEV: And what? Spend my day driving around the burbs with Mr Bloody Potato Head! No thank you. I make joke.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Jacko spins the steering wheel. Bev and the dancers are tossed around the back of the car.

**AUDIO:** screeching brakes.

BEV: Look I’m sorry, slow down. Please! I was only joking! This is. I said slow down, you’re gonna have both of us bloody killed. Stop. Stop you bloody maniac, I’ll report you. What’s you’re number? Show me you’re number! Give me you’re number!

BEV: The bus! The bus! Watch out for the bus!

**BLACK OUT/ LIGHTS UP.**

**AUDIO:** car accident.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** flashing siren. Two dancers carry Jacko’s body away. One dancer takes a report of the accident from Bev.

BEV: I don’t really know what happened. It was like I was in a movie, but he wasn’t some hot sexy hunky megastar driving a Porches, it’s Mr Potato Head with the cauliflower ears and the wart hanging outa his nose in an old Commodore with re-treads and bodgey rego papers and God knows what’s in the back. I remember the car spinning. And it felt like it was going real slow, like the world was slowing down at the end of a ride when you’re a kid and you want to jump off but you’re too scared cos when you leap it’s gonna hit you in the back of the head. I felt my seatbelt rip into my chest. I couldn’t breathe. There was blood on the dash and dents on the bonnet where the world had smashed into it. I must have passed out.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev leans over Jacko and licks his face. The dancers put him into the pool of water.
BEV: Are you alright?

BEV CON: Then there was nothing except creaking, dripping, and grinding. Everything peeled away.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev sits back down on the car seat. The Washerwoman wraps Jacko’s body up in wet bloodied sheets.

**AUDIO:** voices approaching, sound of car door opening. Handwashing, splashing and rubbing.

**DIGITAL FILM:** image of another taxi driver’s face close up on rear vision mirror.

BEV: Did you see that woman over there. She said. She said to me. Liberation. She said. No I don’t, I don’t. I don’t know. I. The other taxi driver where is he? Where is he? Where is he? What? Is? He was. Going to. Trying to. I can’t come with you, don’t you understand, there’s been an accident, don’t you understand. That’s my bag. My bag. Don’t you touch it. You feel that. Do you feel that? It’s the breeze. It’s picking up. Hurry up! Don’t you understand? Mick said. He said to me. He said it to me. I could be riding it. Things gotta change. The Cav. Can you take me there? I got the right money.

**BLACK-OUT.**
ACT II  SCENE 1  Something About Mother

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Hills Hoist spins slowly. Ben enters on the Washer Woman’s scooter.

BEN: Mum’s special. I love her. As you do. Bev. Her friends say she’s always in a ditch. I clear away the rubble. It falls back in. She tries to climb out but it all seems too steep. Poor mum. She can’t stand up to anything. You gotta have faith. Any sort. Believe in something. Faith’s an amazing thing. Nan had it. She’d believe in anything and could knit the world back together again. Every time mum went off the rails Nan was there to clean up after the crash.

AUDIO: Nan’s voice humming.

BEN: At bedtime Nan would bring in a hot cuppa hot chocolate and she’d tuck me in and read to me. Stories. It was a window into another world. But even that world was too small. I never got why she stayed with Pop for so many years. He was a bastard. No other word to describe him. Cruel heartless prick. It must be a generational thing. Old people. They never know when to throw anything away. Their houses smell of clutter. Memories crammed into every corner sweating out their days. Maybe that’s why old people forget. Helps clear up the mess.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: three dancers appear behind Ben and lift him up onto a podium.

BEN: Pop was full of stories.

DANCER ONE: Impossible stories.

DANCER TWO: Silly stories.

DANCER THREE: Lies.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: dancers push Ben off the podium.

BEN: He’d sit in his chair with the paper and puff up like one of those puffer fish on a coral reef. We’d listen then zone out while he went on and on and on. Then he’d stop. Go quiet. Sometimes he wouldn’t come outa his room for days or hide in the old shed out the back. Pretend he was working on a project. I’d peek through the glass and he’d be on the bench top curled up for hours. I’d get caught by Nan, then I’d be packed up and sent back to mum’s. As if mum could handle me. As if she could handle anything. She was high risk. That’s what the doctors said. Mum
had to go. I mean. Where do you put people like that these days? All the clinics are closed down. So there were only three choices. One; say nothing, put up with it until her luck ran out. Or mine.

DANCER ONE: You can’t stay.

DANCER TWO: Impossible to stay.

DANCER THREE: She’ll send you mad. Mick. He’s up for a mauling.

BEN: Two; leave, but she’d track me down. She’d done it before. She got on a train all the way to Cairns one time. Didn’t bring a change of clothes or nothing. I’d gone up for the mango season. And there’s mum standing in the middle of the orchard staring at me. Terrified I’d fall off the ladder and break my neck. It only had four steps. She’d already told the boss I had to leave. I had to. She couldn’t get back on her own.

DANCER ONE: Never can get away.

DANCER TWO: Never too far away.

DANCER THREE: Where can you go?

BEN: Or number three.

ALL DANCERS: Kill her.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Washer Woman appears wringing out blood stained sheets in the pool of water.

AUDIO: handwashing, splashing and rubbing.

BEN: I mean let’s face it. You can do it to your pets.

ALL DANCERS: Kill her. Kill the killer that killed the kill.

BEN: Doesn’t mean you love them less. I mean it means you love them more. You can love them and when they’re really suffering.

ALL DANCERS: Kill her. Kill the killer that killed the kill.

BEN: You put them outa their misery. You make it painless.

ALL DANCERS: Kill her. Kill the killer that killed the kill.

BEN: Then slip away quietly. What future did she have anyway?
ALL DANCERS: Kill, kill, kill, kill, the killer, the killer, the killed, the killer, the kill, kill, killer, kill, the killed, the killer. (spoken and repeated underneath Ben’s next lines)

BEN: She was getting worse. Her mind was a minefield. Every three steps an explosion. Sooner or later she’d end up hurting herself or worse someone else. No doubting it. Running around on public transport with her imaginary friends. Nan and Pop were over it. Mick didn’t care so long as he had somewhere to crash and hide his stash. I needed someone who could help me with her. I needed someone who could help me. I needed someone. I needed someone. Someone I could trust. There were a thousand ideas rushing in and out of my head like the switching room at central station.

BEN: That’s when I met Rosie!

BLACK-OUT.
ACT II  SCENE 2  *Feral Dreaming*

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben is standing on the train platform. Three dancers are harassing him.

**AUDIO:** trains moving in and out of the station

**DIGITAL FILM:** people moving about the platform.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** lights stream down the centre aisle of the theatre to create a capsule of light representing the train. Rosie is moving down from the back of the theatre towards the stage through the capsule of light. She is wearing a chef’s uniform. Dancers see Rosie and attempt to block her way.

**BEN CON:** When the storm skims the valleys it is only a distant crackle. You can never imagine it will reach you. It has so far to go. The skies swell with swirling vapours that pave the way for the storm to travel. And who could imagine such harmless tiny little white clouds could be the seeds, those messengers of thunder.

**ROSIE:** Excuse me. Excuse me. Yeah this is my stop. Please I gotta squeeze through, can I? Yes. OK. Hey not so close. Yes I have to get to. Because it’s only stop I can get off. Yes the platform it’s too short. I have to. Only allowed off from the front carriage. Would you mind? I can’t hear you, sorry. No that’s my stop.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Rosie arrives and sees Ben fidgeting. She is excited but coy at first.

**ROSIE:** Ben? Ben. Rosie. You know?

**BEN:** Oh.

**ROSIE:** Rosalinda, Marco’s little.

**BEN:** Little sister.

**ROSIE:** Yeah that’s right.

**BEN:** You still at?

**ROSIE:** Charcoal Road. You know my family. Love to cook. It’s so great to see you Ben.

**BEN:** What’s Marco up to?
ROSIE: He’s gone over to Europe.

BEN: Work?

ROSIE: No, he’s visiting family. Keeps everyone happy. And he’s. He’s having a good time these days, Ben. He’s not so small anymore. He’s even playing football!

BEN: That’s great. No really. It’s. I’m happy for him.

ROSIE: You don’t look so good. I mean. You always look great. You going out with anyone now? Or. Suppose it’s a bit hard still. With your mum. You living with her? How is she? Still hard?

BEN: Same old same old.

ROSIE: Since leaving school I reckon the world’s not as big as everyone makes out. I mean. Tom went to Asia this year. He said it looks the same as parts of the city here. No different really. Same shops and cars and food and he said it was the same as the telly expect there were bits you’d cut out. And those bits were the same as here too.

BEN: That’s not true. What about the people?

ROSIE: We’re talking about Tom. Home, airport, taxi, hotel, beach, pub, markets, club, bar, club, pub, markets, beach, hotel, taxi, airport, home. (BEAT) Ben?

BEN: I feel the cold. Can you feel it? Thing’s gotta change Rosie. Everything else is changing. Everything else around me and I. Somewhere in this world there is a place to rest. I can feel it coming, coming towards me.

ROSIE: Hey. You wanna go for coffee. I don’t start till nine and you look like you need to. Ben?

BEN: I gotta.

ROSIE: What is it Ben?

BEN: Rosie I have to. I have to!

ROSIE: What is it?

BEN: It’s like some stupid senile animal’s trapped in a ditch and when you try to pull it up, it scratches you. And there’s its mate swooping down and attacking you from behind. This animal, it’s falling down and all you can do is watch and its slowly going insane.
Weaving Worlds
Act II Scene 2: Feral Dreaming

ROSIE: You need the RSPCA?
BEN: What?
ROSIE: R.S.P.C.A.
BEN: No. No. No.
ROSIE: Animal rescue.
BEN: No. It’s. It’s not that kind of animal.
ROSIE: What do you mean? Not domestic?
BEN: No no, it’s not wildlife. No. No. No. It’s.
ROSIE: Killing the wildlife?
BEN: Yeah?
ROSIE: Oh. Is it feral?
BEN: Yeah. Feral. Feral yes, yes, yes I suppose that’s a good word for it.
DANCER ONE: Feral.
DANCER TWO: Like a weed.
DANCER THREE: Doesn’t belong.
DANCER ONE AND TWO: Here.
DANCER THREE: Anywhere.
DANCER ONE: Smothering.
DANCER TWO: Sick.
DANCER THREE: Rambling. Wild.
DANCER TWO: Dangerous to others, diseased.
ALL DANCERS: Feral.
ROSIE: Like a rabid dog?
BEN: Yeah that’s it.

ROSIE: You can’t save a rabid dog. They go completely mad.

ROSIE AND ALL DANCERS: You gotta kill them.

BEN: That’s one option.

ROSIE AND THE DANCERS: It’s the only option.

ROSIE: Even if they are only a little mad. Ben. They get worse. I hate ferals. You know how many native animals we’re losing everyday? Like those dirty ugly filthy useless deadly rampant rooting cane toads. They’re everywhere. They even bonk the dead on the side on the road. It’s sick. They’re everywhere. Creeks, rivers, dams, toilets. Everywhere. I know one bloke who catches them and sticks them in his cupboard so they can eat all the cockroaches in his pantry. When he finds the toad droppings full of dead insect carcasses, the job’s done. He lets them out. At least he’s got them into the workforce. I hear they’re so tough they’re using them on the next space program. Can you see it? Toads in space. The toad jumped over the moon. The toad and the pussycat went to sea on a beautiful lantana bush boat. It’s perverted. They’re bloody dangerous too. You know how many car accidents have happened to innocent drivers swerving on wet roads trying to kill cane toads?

ROSIE AND THE DANCERS: Some things are too dangerous to have around.

BEN: You’re right! Too dangerous to be around. You must be close to finishing.

ROSIE: Three months. Then I can open my own patisserie just like my grandpa. I basically run the place anyway. Make all the gourmet pies. Got the keys. You hungry?

BEN: I’ve tried everything.

ROSIE: How about a burgundy beef special?

BEN: No, I mean.

ROSIE: Oh the ferals. (BEAT) Poison!

BEN: Poison?

ROSIE: Yeah. A bait.

BEN: Poison.
ROOSIE: Well not quite. There’s this drug. It numbs the nervous system. Like the vets use to put the old ones down. My uncle cleans the surgery and gets the samples and sells them for a price you know. A service to the environment when people are having problems with pests. Yeah. You put enough in. They go to sleep. That’s it. Sleepy time. Feral dreaming. Gone. Quiet peaceful. No fuss. First. You make friends with them. You know? Hand feed them. Get their trust up. Then. Come to mama. Too easy.

BEN: I don’t know if that’s really appropriate for this situation.

ROOSIE: (passionately) Of course it is. There’s war going on out there and the bush is the battlefront. And we have a responsibility as green guerrillas to do something. Who else is gonna do it? Think the government cares sitting in their suits till their super turns over? No Ben it’s up to people like you and me. It’s not a lifestyle. It’s survival. Ordinary folk doing super ordinary things for the planet.

ALL: Hey no one gets off this planet alive.

DANCER ONE: Except the cane toads.

ROOSIE: It’s speeding up a biological process. It’s God’s plan.

ROOSIE AND THE DANCERS: She made me do it.

BEN: She made me do it. Yes. Yes. I don’t know Rosie. That all sounds a bit harsh. This animal is.

ROOSIE: Tame? It’s a ploy. No sooner you turn your back they attack you. It’s in the feral handbook. Why do you think the rest of the natives are disappearing? Not as nasty.

BEN: Not as nasty?

ROOSIE: Look Ben. Come to mama. If you come around tomorrow morning early. I mean early before the boss gets in. I’ll bake you a pie. Take it into the war zone. Find a neutral space. Hand feed it. Piece by piece. It’s not a bad way to go. Let’s face it there’s people out there planting land mines all you’re doing is putting the enemy to sleep.

BEN: Like dreaming when you’re awake. Mirrors with no reflections.

ROOSIE: Whatever. It’ll have that much stuff in it. It’ll take out any feral. Cats, dogs, camels.

BEN: I’m not talking about camels.
ROSIE: Goats, pigs, foxes, rabbits.

BEN: You sure it’s painless and fast?

ROSIE: Buffalo, rats, mice, then there’s all those flying rats.

BEN: Flying rats?

ROSIE: Indian minor birds now they’re real bastards. Look at the time. Look outside the four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie R Squared you live in Ben. I’ll see you tomorrow morning. Be early.

**BLACK-OUT.**
ACT II  SCENE 3  *Family Snaps*

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben arrives early morning at the bakery. Rosie appears distressed.

**BEN CON:** When the storm bleeds into the rivers. There is a surge of the tides. A king tide can rush through you and drench away your foundations. There is no stopping it. It will eat out every barrier before it. When it drags out to sea, it’s the undertow that tempts your resistance. So you flow with it else drown in struggle. There I was caught in the rip so fixed on the storm out to sea I never considered swimming back to the shore.

**ROSIE:** Ben, Ben. Come here. Please come here! I picked up some samples from my uncle. I came in early and slipped it into the pie. It was perfect. Crisp brown. I got carried away. Put my signature pastry mouse on top you know? So I could tell it apart from the rest of them. Edges were evenly pinched. A light dusting of flour. The fragrance of rosemary, thyme and a hint of garlic floating in claret. I swear it was so perfect.

**BEN:** Wouldn’t expect anything less from you Rosie.

**ROSIE:** It was so perfect the boss who never notices nothing or even bothers to come out the back looks across the cooling trays and grabs it off the shelf. Bastard! Sniffs it and boxed it up, wrapped a ribbon around it and took off with it before the shop opened! You’ve got to get it back. You’ve got to. I tried to. I said it’s a special order and he says. You know what he says to me. Make another. Make another. Another killer fucking pie. You gotta get it back before.

**BEN:** The fat fool’s probably already eaten it.

**ROSIE:** No way, he’s taken it off to his cousin’s shop. Costa Cakes down at King Street so he can bullshit about what a great pastry chef he is. Look, listen to me. If you go now you can catch them before he sells it or gives it to his cousin and if that happens. God I don’t even wanna think about that one. Seen the size of the guy. Oh maybe that’s a good thing. That's a very good thing. Maybe it won’t be enough to kill him. Yeah maybe he’ll just throw up and, and think it was the meat. Or, no the wine, yeah the wine. He won’t say anything, not gonna say anything about his cousin’s pies. No matter how sick. But if they take him to the hospital. Oh my God! They’ll do tests. Oh Ben. They’ll wanna know why. Then Costa will tell them. Tell them. He’ll tell them everything. Then they’ll know it was me. I’ll be locked up. Never finish my training. Never get my own business. I’ll have a record. Make the news. Be on sixty minutes. Current affair will...
hound me and my family and show horrible pictures of me at school. Then a mug shot. “The Infamous Pie Murderess from Mornington” or “the Mornington Pastry Killings”. All I’ll ever get to cook is peas and chips and chops and three veg in the prison kitchen and I’ll have to cook with canola oil! My family will be humiliated. My father’s gonna kill me. I’d be better off eating the pie myself! Ben! All for a few ferals in a park full of lantana and camphor laurel trees and a couple of lizards and few galahs. Everyone craps on about the environment and some rare endangered species that no one has ever seen. A tiger! In Tasmania! A bloody urban myth! I hate the bush. I get itchy! Bull ants and snakes. And it’s too bloody hot. The flowers are fucking boring. You can’t find anything. It was a way to meet boys in the park at night without arousing suspicion! Gees Ben, Get the bloody pie back!

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** lights fade out on Rosie. Charlie appears under a street light.

**BEN:** Charlie? That you.


**BEN:** I can’t. I can’t pay you.

**CHARLIE:** Whaddah mean you can’t?

**DANCERS AND CHARLIE:** No such thing as can’t.

**BEN:** I can’t.

**CHARLIE:** Don’t be so negative. That’s your problem, Ben. Always so bloody negative.

**BEN:** I’ve gotta go, Charlie, I’m chasing a parcel.

**CHARLIE:** A parcel? Whose parcel? Look, you can’t hang around here. Seen all the bloody cameras?

**BEN:** I haven’t done anything.

**CHARLIE:** Doesn’t matter. With your complexion they’ll nail yah anyway. Come back to my place. Have a couple. Chill out.

**BEN:** I have to go. Besides
CHARLIE: Hey you’ll be right. We can talk. Maybe you can do me a few favours. Work off your debts. Hey we might be able to renegotiate. You know. Rework your finances. Plan for the future and lift your credit ratings. Ben are you listening? Can you smell it? Here smell that. Feel how sticky it is. It’s really good. Yeah. Smell it mate. Yeah. How good is that?


BEN: I hate this game. I’m giving it up. No one plays fair.

CHARLIE: Ben? Hey how’s yah psycho mum and sicko Mick going. Heard he’s been cheating. Got a stick to the rules of the game or someone will take you out. Tackle you from behind and these days, it’s bloody fatal. What do you mean you’re giving it up.

BEN: Rule number one. He has the first then packs me one. And I think about the alien bacteria and phlegm and blood particles and mucus and saliva and STDs and viruses mutating in the soup at the bottom of a bong that hasn’t been cleaned since his 1999 retro New Year’s Eve Party a billion years ago.

ALL DANCERS: He never inhaled.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Ben breaks free with the ball.

BEN: I remember him blaring out his sexy love symbol CD while the some of the party was totally motionless. Too stoned to lift their skulls. All greening out while the rest of them had so many “E”s they were dancing on the medium strip thinking the passing headlights was a rave. No idea what planet they were on. Or off. Next day at the recovery party they all crapped on about how erotic the evening was. Meantime Charlie is chatting up his own reflection in the mirror. Yeah if your sense of erotica is speechless, paralysed, and pasted on the lounge like road kill for a night.


CHARLIE: Rule number two. Win at all costs. Keep the bank safe.
CHARLIE AND DANCERS: (Chanting) Mate, mate, mate, mate, mate, mate, mate, mate!

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Tea lady blows the whistle. Dancers lift up Charlie who raises up his arms. Washer Woman on scooter zooms out and mops up. Charlie leans over Ben and drops some pills on his chest.

CHARLIE: Rule number three. You can never quit the game unless you get send off. Hey you got to pay up next week or do me some favours alright?

(PAUSE)

BEN: When you’re an addict. You have to look past all of that. Can’t beat yourself up. Think about where it takes you in that tiny pin prick moment before the walls of the surrounding moments cave in on you. I knew even before I took it. I’d lose the focus on the pie and Rosie and mum and my path but I thought.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Washer Woman loads the balls and coats and whistle and dancers onto the scooter and leaves. Dancers swing on Hills Hoist. Rosie appears covered in flour.

EVERYONE: Fuck it.

BLACK-OUT.
BEN CON: When the storm swirls out on the ocean it seems so far from shore and there is a beauty in its distance and a belief that all dangers are confined to the horizon. When the storm turns suddenly and sweeps into the harbour chaos washes over the edge. Boats smash into rocks. Waves strike out like cobras onto the shore and the relentless wind tears the limbs from the trees. All that is left to do is batten down.

DIGITAL FILM: storm images fade out.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Ben staggers around the shopping plaza. Dancer One sits in a shopping trolley, Dancer Two stands at the rear of the trolley, Dancer Three pushes them around the shops. Ben is tripping on hallucinogenics. Washer Woman scoots out. More dancers enter from rear of theatre marching up aisle with shopping trolleys and baskets and join Ben on stage. Ben collapses.

SOUNDSCAPE: Donkeyboy

DIGITAL FILM: images of manic shopping scenes and shopping malls, advertising, legal and illegal addictions.

DIGITAL FILM: fade out.

SOUNDSCAPE: fade out.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev and Mick swing across the stage on ropes over Ben, swooping down like birds pecking at his head.

BEN: Mum thinks everything was fine. It was like watching a home movie.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Tea Lady with her trolley, sets up a camera on a tripod. Mick and Bev walk onto stage from opposite ends and face out to the audience, posing for a photo shoot. Dancers join them. Cast sways from side to side. Washer Woman scoots out and joins them.

AUDIO: old movie reel.
**DIGITAL FILM:** old film rolls onto their bodies.

**BEN:** Mum in the leading role and all her lovers. A new one for every scene. The fighting. The crime. Hocking all our stuff. All I could do was watch and wait till the film ended. But it never did. So I. I joined the cast.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben steps up to pose for a family photograph. Tea Lady snaps the photograph then rolls her trolley off stage and back along the centre aisle taking orders for prints from the audience.

**BEN:** I don’t like the plot but it’s the only one I know. They didn’t tell me.

**ALL:** The truth.

**BEV (off stage):** Lost somewhere on that train.

**BEN:** Addiction. The lies you tell yourself. And the pack of morons you end up with as friends.

**DIGITAL FILM:** film strip ends.

**AUDIO:** film strip running off the reel.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** lights fade out on Mick and Bev. Dancers rush back to their trolleys and continue shopping. Washer Woman packs up her basket and scoots off stage. Lights on Sarah behind the cake stall counter of Costa Roma’s Cake Shop.

**DIGITAL FILM:** Costa Roma Cake Shop boss, Malcolm appears with his back to camera cooking.

**SARAH:** Yeah?

**BEN:** This Roma’s?

**SARAH:** Can’t you read?

**BEN:** Costa Roma Cakes?

**SARAH:** What’d you want?

**BEN:** You got pies?
SARAH: No, it’s a shoe store! What size you are after?

BEN: Size?

SARAH: Don’t worry. You want something else?

BEN: That pie on the shelf. Out the back. How much?

SARAH: It’s only the stuff out here. All that’s special orders. What do you want?

BEN: The pie out the back there with the mouse. Come on, how much? I’ll give you twenty dollars. That’s heaps more than it’s worth. A little extra for your co-operation? Tell your boss you dropped it or something.

MALCOLM: You heard her. Just pick something out the front. Plenty of things. Plenty to choose from.

SARAH: It’s not for sale. (BEAT) Look. Just pick something else will yah. Don’t get him worked up.

BEN: But I want that one.

SARAH: I told you, you can’t have it. It’s a special order.

MALCOLM: A special order. You OK Sarah? You OK?

BEN: I’m special.

SARAH: I’m fine Malcolm. Yeah you probably are. Very, very special. Now you can have one of these very, very, special sausage rolls.

BEN: Give it to me.

MALCOLM: Sarah? You Alright.

SARAH: Yeah Malcolm.

BEN: Hand it over.

SARAH: What?

BEN: I said hand it over.

**DIGITAL FILM:** Malcom turns around slowly and walks towards the counter watching Ben and Sarah.

MALCOLM: Get out of my shop! Go on. Go on. I’m warning you.
SARAH: We haven’t even made fifty dollars today. I swear there’s nothing in the till.

BEN: Not the till! The pie!

SARAH: The pie?

BEN: The pie!

SARAH: Malcolm!

BEN: Give me the pie will yah! That one. Give it to me now. I want it. I want it. I want it. Hand it over!

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:/DIGITAL FILM:**
Malcolm “breaks skin” (virtual character runs towards the camera at that moment live actor leaps over the counter and tackles Ben). Ben is dragged away by the three Dancers who load Ben into the shopping trolley. The Old Lady enters the shop and puts the pie in the brown paper bag.

BEN: I don’t really know what happened. I remember the tumbling. And it felt like everything was going real slow, like the world was slowing down at the end of a ride when you’re a kid and you want to jump off but you’re too scared cos when you leap it’s gonna hit you in the back of the head. I felt my head smash onto the floor. I couldn’t breath, I was gasping. There was blood running down my face. And a gash on my head where the world had smashed into it.

BEN CON: Then there was nothing except creaking of my bones and dripping, and thumping of my heart. Everything peeled away.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Dancers lift Ben out of the trolley and crop him onto a podium. Ben is lifted into the air and suspended. The Washer Woman wrings blood out of the sheets over the pool of water. Tea lady appears with pop corn and sweets. Old Woman appears on another level on the stage and leans over to watch Ben swinging.

**AUDIO:** handwashing, splashing and rubbing.

BEN: That woman over there. With the. She had the brown paper bag. She said. She said to me. She said something! No I don’t, I don’t. I don’t know I can’t come with you there’s been an accident don’t you understand. My head. My. You feel that. Do you feel
that? It’s the breeze. It’s picking up. Time to go. Don’t you understand? Things gotta change. Gotta get outa the. The breeze.

OLD LADY: On the edge of life there is peace.

BEN: Peace. Peace. There has never been peace. Only moments.

OLD LADY: Only moments? Then what is life Ben? If it is anything. It is moments. Strung together like beads on a necklace. On the edge of life there is peace.

BEN: Where am I?

OLD LADY: On the edge of life, Ben. Here with your ancestors. You see once and in a while the rope holding you up seems to break, but really it’s just a slip knot loosening its grip on your reality.

BEN: This is not my reality.


BEN: I. I can’t breathe.

OLD LADY: That’s because you’ve stopped breathing. It’s not that you can’t. It’s that you won’t.

BEN: No!

OLD LADY: To breathe is to feel Ben. Ever swallowed up so much emotion you feel like your drowning? All you need to do is tread water until the next moment arrives. Nothing more.

BEN: Why am I so cold?

OLD LADY: You can feel the currents? They run deep into your past. They are the movements of your ancestors watching, guiding, urging and purging out the darkness that settles inside of you. All life flows through you. The feeling of living is immense because we feel it through you. Your journey is our journey. Nothing is new. Only forgotten. Every drop of water that falls from the sky has been lurking in the bones of dinosaurs. It’s still a primitive world Ben. These urges are not your own. They are ours. Aye’. Untie your fate Ben. Free us. We are woven into your strands of rope that bind you. Free us.

SOUNDCAPE: ‘Paintings Speak’
STAGE DIRECTIONS: Ben is slowly lowered to the ground. The Tea Lady places tea cosies around his ankles and wrists. Ben is carried by the Dancers to the pool of water and washed by the Washer Woman.

AUDIO: handwashing, splashing and rubbing.

SOUNDSCAPE: fades out.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Ben’s body is raised up again. Lights fade on Ben suspended.

DIGITAL FILM: Ben on a bus.

BEN CON: When I came to. I ran. I had no idea what happened. I didn’t wanna know. But when I left. I felt like I wasn’t alone. Like a whole tribe of people were behind me. Then I did what every other useless prick does. Jumped on a bus and headed for the pub to score. Sat down and stared out the window out of the bus into my world. I heard arguments in the traffic that floated down those rivers of tar washing into the highway. I watched children playing on bitumen. But mostly I saw people hanging out. People like me. Like mum. Like Rosie. Like everyone I knew and everyone I never met. People waiting like vultures for the killing of another day. I got a flash of home. Mick’s face. Him raving on and on and on. “You’re a failure. When yah gonna leave?” I got off at Clifton Street and started walking.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Ben stands on a podium. Old Lady, Tea Lady, and Washer Woman stand around him.

DIGITAL FILM: fades out.

BEN: Then I stop in the middle of the street, just stop. Get this amazing feeling. I am totally straight by now, but still this feeling. I knew I was OK. I remembered what Nan used to say to me. Got nothing to fear boy.

ALL: No one gets off this planet alive.

BEN: No one gets off this planet alive. This feeling. One hollow endless moment. The weave opened up! The threads of my life unravelled. I was home. I felt it in here. Home. It’s not location, location, location. You can’t recognise it. You feel it. You really do. On the edge of life there is peace.
STAGE DIRECTIONS: lights fade out on everyone except Ben and Old Woman who is slowly pouring wine over him.

AUDIO: storm.

OLD LADY: Liberation is yours. Liberation is yours Liberation is yours, liberation, libation.

BEN: Might be a storm today. I can hear the thunder coming my way.

BLACK-OUT
Weaving Worlds

DIGITAL FILM: storm scenes. Jacko’s eyes in the rear vision mirror intersect with images of Bev and Ben’s journey.


AUDIO: storm, lightning, trains, handwashing, splashing and rubbing, traffic sounds.

BEV CON: Listen. You can hear it. You can’t deny it. It’s here.

WASHERWOMAN: It’s the storm dragging those sheets of shadows across the belly of the earth.

BEN CON: And the thunder is a chariot in the heavens.

OLD WOMAN: It’s the ancient ones casting out their nets.

BEV CON: Can you feel it? The trembling. Always the trembling beneath my feet.

BEN CON: Somewhere amongst this trembling earth there is a place to rest.

OLD LADY: This is the place where we surrender to the breeze.

DANCER ONE: Surrender to the rain bleeding from the skies.

DANCER TWO: Surrender the murmurs in the heavens.

DANCER THREE: Surrender to every moment that they ever feared.

BEV CON: There is nothing to stop it. Resistance is a dam that is doomed to burst.

DANCER ONE: And it only takes a trickle.

DANCER TWO: Seeping through until it swells into a flow.
DANCER THREE: Constant stream.
DANCER ONE: Quiet.
DANCER TWO: Hungry river.
BEV CON: Then busting through the cracks.
ALL DANCERS: Surrender.
WASHERWOMAN: Bathe in the waters.
ALL DANCERS: Surrender.
WASHERWOMAN: Every one of your stains are washing away. Beyond this turmoil of clouds and thunder.
OLD WOMAN: There is an ocean of space with its depth and currents reaching far, far, away and away and away. Past every dream you will ever have. Rising and rising and rising above those ruins of imagination.
ALL DANCERS: Surrender.
ALL: Liberation is yours.
ALL DANCERS: Surrender.
BEN CON: Stillness is coming. A peace that has never been kissed by the faintest noise.
OLD LADY: Nor heard in the echoes from our past.
WASHER WOMAN: Nor found in places forgotten.
BEV CON: A silence that is as pure as your first breath of life.
OLD WOMAN: Do you remember?
ALL: Listen.
OLD WOMAN: Beyond the silence our memory waits for you in a clear pool with no emotion to taint it.
ALL: Listen.
BEV CON: The first to touch, to want you.
DANCERS: A silence.
OLD WOMAN: That breathes between the pulses of life. We are there waiting for you.

DANCER ONE: Everything in this moment.

DANCER TWO: Is the same as any other moment.

DANCER THREE: And every moment to come.

OLD WOMAN: Time is your invention. Your separation from us.

ALL: We can wait forever.

OLD WOMAN: When there is no time.

ALL: We can wait forever.

BEV CON: One moment away from your heart.

OLD WOMAN: Liberation is yours.

**DIGITAL FILM:** distant storm

BEV: Ben. Mind if I join you? How are you? (BEAT) Lovely to see you here.

BEV: Gees, Ben look at your hair. Been a rough day? Come here. You smell a bit. Ben gotta change your aftershave forget the two-dollar shop. Terrible stuff. Forget I. Forget I said that. Don’t worry Mick’s not coming. He’s. He’s. At home. Working all week doing his odd jobs. Lucky we got him eh? I mean he’s a good provider. (BEAT) Couldn’t do it on my own could I?(BEAT) So. (BEAT) Thought you might be down here. Mother’s intuition. Remember when we’d come down here after school? Get you a packet of chips and pink lemonade? Yeah. You were so cute. Who’s the little darkie? They’d say. Mine! Of course he is. I’d say. He’s my boy.

MICK: He’s not my boy. Wouldn’t even pass for my boy would he?

CHARLIE: Doesn’t matter. With your complexion they’ll nail yah anyway.

BEV: You’d have your school books on the floor. I’d tuck you in the bed out the back while I. Remember when I used to work upstairs? I only worked in the office answering the phone. That’s all it was. And the girls they loved you. Wonder if any of them are still here? Remember Jodie? She always made you a batch of home made scones. Such a sweetie. Like your second home really. Can’t do that these days. These days you have a kid and
Weaving Worlds

Act III Scene 1: Weaving Worlds

the bloody law owns them. You don’t own nothing. They can take it all away. Everything. Leave you nothing. On the streets. The government’s taken over everything. Even if you made it yourself. In your own body. (BEAT) I made you. (BEAT) I brought you into this world.

MICK: Then you’ve got more right to do it than anyone. You sort it out your way, or I’ll sort it out mine.

BEV: I made you. In here. I gave you life.

(PAUSE)

BEV: The bistro open? Always do a good lunch don’t they? Benny? The lamb roast. Is that what your having? My treat. The lamb roast, what’d reckon?

BEN: What are you doing here mum?

BEV: Stay Ben. Come on. I said I’d buy you lunch. Lunch with your mum. Not gonna be ‘round forever are we?

BEN: Not if we can help it.


BEN: Disturb him? Disturb him? Ha! He’s already disturbed.

BEV: Don’t say that.

BEN: What are you talking about?

BEV: He means well.

BEN: Is that what you call it?

MICK: Get me something to drink will yah? I’m dying here. Gees this place stinks, don’t you ever clean it. I’m out scrouring around for every last dollar and I come home to this shit hole. Like living in a bloody humpy.

BEV: He’s. He’s just stressed you know? He’s under a lot of pressure. Men. They. They get like that.

BEN: My father never did!

BEV: Your father couldn’t stick it!
(PAUSE)

BEV: Your father was. Was different Benny. He didn’t understand the culture. Only his own.

BEN: You can’t understand something you are never allowed to get into. Every door slammed into your face.

BEV: He didn’t fit in. That’s all. Couldn’t even follow the game. Wasn’t even interested. No Ben. He just didn’t fit in.

BEN: Into what? Into this? Since when is difference a crime!

MICK: Poses the question doesn’t it? Where is his father? Belongs in one of those detention centres.

BEV: Mick loves the game.

BEN: You’re not listening!

BEV: They lost the last three games. Probably won’t make the final. Mood he’s in when they don’t come through. Can’t blame him really.

MICK: Come on, off side. Oh you stupid bastard, why didn’t you run wide? Get him off, off him. Up the sideline, come on, come on. Come on! Oh you useless prick. Send him back to where he came from. See that Bevy? He was off side.

BEN: Can’t really blame him? No. No you can’t. (BEAT) I’m not that hungry. Might head home. Don’t worry about the football. He can watch it on his own. I’ll even buy him his favourite bloody chocolates. See yah.


BEN: I’ll go through the back. He won’t even know I’m home.

BEV: No he’s. He was a bit agitated when I left. Why don’t you please your mum? Come on. We haven’t done this for ages have we?

BEN: What?

BEV: Lunch. I’ll even get you a desert. How’s that?

BEN: I got my own money.

MICK: Bevy he’s not the golden child. He’s been stealing, and if any of the others find out.
BEV: How could they?
MICK: If the others find out!
BEV: How could they?
MICK: I’m just saying. If they find out. We’re all gone.
BEV: All cashed up mate. I mean.
BEN: I know what you mean.
BEV: You haven’t been to Charlie’s again have you? Look all I’m saying is?
BEN: Why you so concerned all of a sudden? Hey?
BEV: The roast looks good. You want the roast? You can have my potatoes wedges.
BEN: So want something to drink?
BEV: Bit early isn’t it?
BEN: Since when have you be so concerned?
BEV: How about a pie and chips. Too hot for a roast isn’t it. You always loved the pie and chips. You used to peel off the top and dip the chips into it like a spoon. You’d do that for hours.
(PAUSE)
BEV: Don’t look at me like that. You look just like your father when you do that.
(PAUSE)
BEN: I’m surprised you could even remember.
BEV: That’s not fair. He shot through. He left me. And you. He shot through. He promised he was gonna take us with him. He promised!
BEN: Bullshit. Your father told him to piss off because he didn’t want any migrants in the family. You know something? Dad was alright. Dad loved you. He really did.
BEV: And he left me. (BEAT) Come on Ben. I don’t wanna go over it again and again and again. Please. Can we get something to eat? You’ll feel better after you eat.
**Weaving Worlds**

Act III Scene 1: 

**Weaving Worlds**

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**BEN:** I’m not hungry. I’m going home.

**BEV:** You can’t! Can’t go home. Not now. Not just yet.

**BEN:** I’m going.

**BEV:** Sit down! No! Can’t go, you can’t go home. We haven’t finished our conversation. Wait. Just sit. Sit. Please sit down. You’re making me nervous. Look, don’t upset me. I’m your mother!

**BEN:** You’re already upset. You were born upset!

**BEV:** I’ve had a hell of a day! (BEAT) Ben promise me! (BEAT) Pace yourself. That’s all. (BEAT) You don’t look so well. You shouldn’t let your sugar levels drop so low. Here. I’ve got a pie in my bag. Look it’s got a guardian angel on top.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev pulls out a pie with a mouse in a brown paper bag and breaks it into pieces and starts eating.

**BEN:** That’s a mouse. Where did you get it? Give me a look. It’s Saint Rhonda patron Saint of rodents and all suffering ferals. Belongs in the park mum. It’s a holy offering. Not meant to be eaten. It’s Saint Rhonda day. You shouldn’t eat it. It’s for. It’s symbolic. Like breaking bread. That’s all. Like four and twenty black birds. Leave it. Don’t know where it’s been. Put all sorts of crap in them. Leave it! Leave it! Just leave it alone.

**ROSIE:** You can’t save a rabid dog. They go completely mad. Ordinary folk doing super ordinary things for the planet. Hey no one gets off this planet alive.

**BEV:** That’s a lovely story Benny. Do you want some? Here.

**ROSIE:** Ben it’s up to people like you and me. It’s not a lifestyle. It’s survival.

**BEN:** Leave it! Please.

**BEV:** Settle yourself down. No need to cause a scene. I won’t eat it all at once. Anyway. Gotta watch my figure.

**BEN:** Yes. Watch your figure. (BEAT) You gotta new bag?

**BEV:** Bag?

**BEN:** That one. On the floor.

**BEV:** Oh it’s nothing. Was a present.
BEN: From Mick?

BEV: Yeah. How did you know?

BEN: Still got the magnetic tag on it.

(PAUSE)

BEV: I can’t do this! You. You already died.

BEN: What? What are you talking about mum?

MICK: You know you have to do this. Remember what they did to Barry, yeah, you remember, in the end it was a relief, all held him down, ugly, ugly Bev, you don’t want that do you? No, you don’t want that? You’re always saying, fate, it’s all fate, well, here it is. You can be the hand of fate.

BEN: So what’s in the bag? It’s a bit big to be carting around isn’t it? Come on let’s have a look.

BEV: No leave it, leave it alone.

BEN: Come on.

BEV: Leave it alone Benny.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben opens the bag, takes out the gun, and puts it on the table.

BEN: What’s this? What are you doing with it.(BEAT) Take it home! Take it home. If you don’t, I will.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben and Bev struggle for the gun.

BEV: No!

BEN: Give it to me.

BEV: No Benny please, please no, you can’t take it home.

BEN: Give it to me.

BEV: No, I need it.

BEN: Take it home. Take it home now.

BEV: No. I need it.

BEN: What the fuck are you doing?
BEV: I need to Benny I.

BEN: What! Whose it for!

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev picks up the gun and aims it at Ben’s head.

BEV: It’s. It’s for you.

(PAUSE)

BEV: So I never have to look into your face and ever see your father again!

(PAUSE)

BEV: I made you. I can break you. You can’t leave if your all broken.

(PAUSE)

BEV: Mick’s gonna leave me if I don’t sort things out.

BEN: Sort things out? You call this sorting things out?

BEV: Yes. Sort things out. It’s the kindest thing to do. They said you were already dead. Either way you were gone. Ugly, Ugly. They said it was gonna be ugly. I’m doing this for you. You don’t understand do you?


BEV: I don’t want. I have to. Benny. I don’t want to. Mick. He said stuff Benny.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Mick gets up from the sofa walks over and fondles Bev while she holds the gun.

MICK: I’d have to go.

BEV: Mick said. I don’t want him to.

MICK: I couldn’t stay here with you. I mean. You want me to be here with you baby, don’t you? Who else would have you?

BEV: To leave me.

MICK: Your background.
BEV: To leave me.

MICK: I mean you’re getting on. Filling out. I don’t mind. Something to hold onto.

BEV: I’m really sorry. But he said, things, things. He said things. Have to change. I could be the wind. I’m sorry, See me riding a crack of thunder.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Mick slumps back on the lounge rubbing his crouch with one hand and flicking channels of the television with the remote in the other hand.

BEN: You don’t have to do this. I can leave. It’ll be just you and Mick.

BEV: No. No you can’t go. Your father left. He never came back for me.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben grabs the gun and aims it at Bev. Washer Woman manically scrubs the sheets in the pool of water.

BEN: How could he? How could he? Your father threatened to kill him. Or did he? Did he? Did he? I remember Nan washing the sheets out the back. Streams of blood dripping off the line. I never said nothing. I was six years old.

BEV: That’s not how it was. It wasn’t true. She never.

BEN: She never? What about Pop? He couldn’t. Do anything. Lurking in that old shed all day and her watching through the glass window to see if he knifed himself. No wonder. He did didn’t he. He killed my father.

BEV: No Benny he. Your father was different. He just left us.

MICK: Poses the question doesn’t it?

BEN: No you. All of you. You killed him. I saw the sheets. I remember the blood. And her manically washing everything everyday after day. She. She never stopped. Why didn’t she stop? Why didn’t she stop? (BEAT) You all killed him.

BEV: No Benny she used to wash the butcher’s aprons. That's all dear. Was an extra job. No one else would do it.

BEN: You’re a liar. I saw them. They weren’t aprons. No way. I was there.
BEV: No he left. He walked out. That’s all. You were a little boy. You can’t remember things so well. You. Believe. It’s like a puzzle and you got the wrong pieces in the wrong place that’s all. That’s all darling. Old aprons blue and white stripes.

BEN: There were no blue and white stripes.

BEV: You don’t remember.

BEN: There were no blue and white stripes. No stripes. There were no stripes. That’s not how it was.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben puts the gun on the table. Bev picks it up and eats the pie. Bev throws up. Mick stands up on the sofa. Everyone else surrounds Bev and Ben.

BEV: One bolt of lighting. Riding the storm. Changing everything. Don’t you see Ben it’s time to change everything. Make everything fresh and new again. Go down to the sea after the storm blows.

MICK: And what? Watch the tide go out? Guess what? It comes back in again doesn’t it? Doesn’t it?

BRADLEY: Mick was right. You taste of tar. Don’t take much to get you going does it Bev. That’s right pretty eyes.

MICK: Yeah, ok, now you’re starting to understand. We’re not going anywhere, we can’t.

BRADLEY: These days there’s someone always watching, always listening. Making sure everyone’s doing what they’re told to do.

MICK: He’ll meet someone and piss off. He’ll leave you. They all do. You’ll be all alone again.

CHARLENE: You alright? Hold it any tighter and.

MICK: Besides, I can’t keep all this up much longer. Me stress levels and you don’t help.

BRADLEY: You gotta do it on time Bevy babe. Gotta ride that crack’o thunder on time.

MICK: You push and push and push me, make me do things I regret.

BEV: I don’t wanna do anything I regret Ben. I don’t.
CHARLENE: Once you get a report well. Well that’s it. Marked for life. No one wants yah. Like no one on the planets made a mistake before.

BRADLEY: Yah taste of tar.

JACKO: OK so where are we going?

BEV: Home! We’re all going home.

JACKO: You sure you go the right one? You don’t wanna go there, it’s a bit rough.

BEV: Home. Please! Everyone’s go home!

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev pushes everyone away from her and reaches out to Ben.


BEN: You gonna do it? Murder your own son mum?

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Bev collapses into Ben’s arms still clutching the gun.

BEN CON: Her eyes. The lines across her face had always drawn me away from them. Deep green like the southern ocean biting the coastline. Never still. How could they be? Those voices, niggling lies, mining out what might have been and those little secrets she netted and hauled away from me.

BEV CON: I really didn’t wanna kill him. I just wanted to kill a part of him. The memory of his father. Him and I together. Or remember much we really were in love. How my father bashed me when he found out I was pregnant.

ALL DANCERS: Mick was gonna kill him anyway.

BEV CON: I was the wind, a gentle breeze, kind, gentle and.

ALL DANCERS: Mick was the storm.

BEV CON: He’d show no mercy. The whole thing was such a fucking mess. No wonder Ben was such a mess. I was shit scared, and pulling the trigger seemed to be the only way to get out of it.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** Ben picks up Bev, throws her over his shoulder and turns to leave. The gun fires two times.
BLACK OUT / LIGHTS UP.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev and Ben have collapsed in pool of water. Ben and Bev’s bodies rise up and are elevated in the air. Washer Woman cleans up the spills.

DIGITAL FILM: moments of Ben and Bev’s life fade to white out.

BEV: When the gun exploded I wasn’t there, I’d already gone. It was Ben pulling the trigger inside of me. We collapsed. Fell in a heap and our blood pooled. Our blood hadn’t mixed since the day he left my womb. In birth and in battle bloods pours freely marbling life together.

BEN: When the gun exploded the last thing I saw was the blackboard menu. Today’s special Church Fete Pies. All lined up on the counter with little pastry mice on them. A plague of mockery. Faith’s an amazing thing. I felt nothing. I wasn’t there. My flight was instant. Her head fell into my arms. I didn’t want her to bang it. My body folded into the concrete and then I saw her smile as my blood leached into her hair matting every auburn lock together. The wind was still. I was spared the storm and the breeze lifted me to a new place. No one gets off this planet alive.

(PAUSE)

BEN: Like I said no one gets off this planet alive. Some say there are no accidents in life. And others say that’s all there is. Some say the path is scripted and we walk the Sanskrit. Others say we write each line as the ink dries. Either way we make so much of it. I saw a tiny blue light flickering on a beach somewhere and watched the waves swallowing footprints on the sand. Everyone was fighting to save them. All obsessed with their mark in the sand. And above a glorious sky and the infinite beauty of an endless ocean. I saw mum chugging along the beach towards me smiling and the deep southern ocean glistening in her eyes.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: cast moves into choreographic piece.

SOUNDSCAPE: Hindsight

STAGE DIRECTIONS: Bev and Ben are lowered back onto the stage.

BEN: As I said faith. It’s an amazing thing, and it’s amazing we both survived the accident. We decided it was an accident. But it’s no
accident really. Even if it was. It doesn’t matter. Strangest thing was being jolted back into our bodies. It’s bazaar how small those vessels really are. I suppose it’s all that extra baggage we all carry around. Spiritual beings in the human experience. It’s a tight fit. No wonder we forget where we come from. Mum’s still catching trains only now she’s travelling alone. Mick. Well he shot through with the last of mum’s savings. Thinking neither of us would survive. Mum moved to the sea where she belongs. Oh and Rosie, well I took her out a few times. She ended up meeting someone else and anyway I couldn’t stand the smell of pastry on her uniform. As for me, I moved to the south coast where I can walk the beach every night. Every step is precious. Come on mum, it’s almost dark, let’s go down to watch those clouds change.

BLACK-OUT.

CURTAIN
Case Study: Weaving Worlds

Introduction

In writing *Weaving Worlds* I tested the spatial implications of designing and devising a theatre piece using multimedia elements. From this experience I argue that the playwright who uses multimedia elements needs to understand the technology in order to create virtual characters that function in multimedia portals in the theatre space. In particular, the playwright needs to be aware of the options of physical locations of multimedia elements and the effect of the scale of the digital images when placed in the same space as live actors. The playwright also needs to develop criteria to apply to multimedia elements before including the multimedia elements into the space. The playwright can use the multimedia elements (including digital images and sound) as either, agents for narrative, or to succinctly present back stories of characters of the play. The multimedia format can either present live interaction with performers, or present pre-recorded images and sounds. Since touch is not possible between live actors and virtual characters, the playwright must devise other ways of representing intimacy between these elements of the play otherwise all characters that need to be physically intimate must be live actors. Collaboration with other theatre practitioners who are not familiar with multimedia elements requires the playwright to provide preliminary presentations such as set design sketches and samples of digital films in order to effectively communicate the ideas of multimedia portals to others. While touch is not possible, improvisation with multimedia elements in the theatre space is possible. The notion of live performance is challenged by the ability of multimedia to be interactive and reactive to performers’ movements and voices. The playwright can therefore script the play to include improvisation, thus creating a unique performance with every production. While it is difficult to assess the audience’s understanding and reading of multimedia elements in the theatre space, the playwright who uses multimedia can attract a contemporary audience because that audience is exposed to multimedia technologies in their
daily lives in which brings some level of understanding multimedia as agents of narrative.

**Story and Character Development in *Weaving Worlds***

One way of describing the playwright’s craft is that it is to conjure up a narrative that gives life to characters, meaning to story, and presents an argument embedded in the story. Since narrative and development of characters are the foundations of the playwrighting craft, these must be developed before the multimedia elements. My immediate tasks with *Weaving Worlds* were to develop the characters and their stories, write the narrative, and thus create the world of the play. Bev is a single mother who lives with her lover, Mick, who is a petty criminal, and her son, Ben, who is a troubled youth yearning to escape the drudgery of his life. Mick has been accused by his gang of stealing their stash and has blamed Ben. Mick sees this situation as a chance to murder Ben. Mick manipulates Bev into believing that she must murder her son, otherwise either Ben will be tortured and slain by the gang, or Ben will leave home and develop mental illness. Bev is convinced that she has no option other than to kill her son. Mick hands Bev a gun and sends her out to track down Ben. Meanwhile, Ben has decided that his mother is going crazy and that he must poison her to end her mental anguish. He decides to poison his mother with a pie. Both main characters believe their destinies are bound by fate and that they are unable to make changes. There are also minor characters: the street kids, Charlene and Rodney; Rosie the pastry chef apprentice; Bradley the train passenger; Sarah the cake shop assistant; Charlie the dealer.

Also there are characters that exist in another realm in the world of the play and are unseen by the main characters. These hidden characters are three dancers who represent fear, a tea lady who is the manifestation of apathy, a woman on a scooter who represents the guilt and repressed feelings of the main characters, and an old woman who is an ancestral spirit. The style of the play is Brechtian, absurdist surrealism. The higher consciousness of Ben and Bev, being their present state of mind, narrate the journey of Bev and Ben. These higher consciousness characters are called Ben Con and Bev Con and are represented as virtual characters.
constructed as multimedia elements and contained in the multimedia portals. Minor virtual characters are Jacko the taxi driver and Malcolm the pastry cook.

The world of the play is set in an augmented reality\(^{22}\) where the narrative jumps forward and back in time. This augmented reality is made possible through multimedia portals which display metaphorical fragments of memory and the present tense while the actors perform in scenes that are set in the past and present. This made writing more complex because the world of the play simultaneously includes different schemes in the same theatre space.

**Using Multimedia in *Weaving Worlds***

After drafting the script, I developed the concepts for the film-based and sound-based multimedia. The inclusion of multimedia elements required additional stage actions in the draft script in order to effectively communicate the ideas to other theatre practitioners. During this time, I shared my ideas about using multimedia elements in *Weaving Worlds* with other playwrights, and found that some of my peers could neither understand the technology nor could they imagine the multimedia elements in the theatre space. This hurdle was overcome by presenting my peers with computer generated set design sketches during the on-campus reading workshop at Queensland University of Technology in August, 2005. I concluded from this experience that when presenting multimedia ideas to theatre practitioner/theorists, providing some additional audio-visual displays\(^{23}\) and samples of mixed media portals in digital film formats helps to communicate the potential of multimedia elements. These tasks increase the workload for the playwright.

Following the development of set designs, I considered the implications of the multimedia in the theatre space, defined the style of the play, and planned the interaction of multimedia elements in the theatre space. During this conceptual stage of developing multimedia in the theatre space, I concluded that playwrights

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\(^{22}\)I imagine memory to be an augmented reality because memory is a collection of fragmented moments that do not necessarily flow in neither chronological order nor link to the same incident. Memories, for me, weave into one another creating a surreal world.

\(^{23}\) See Appendix N: set design presentation in Microsoft PowerPoint format.
need to understand how the spatial implications of multimedia elements will impact on their script when they, “begin to pen their own conceptions of the role media will play in their script” (Mason 1995, cited in Istel 1995, 58). This led me to realize that multimedia elements in the theatre space must have a narrative or thematic function, otherwise they become either “an attention grabbing effect that might detract from the story rather than to serve it” (Nance 2001, p. 45) or “a little-understood genre, which all too often ends up as pretentious babble with bad music and video images attached” (Immergut 1999, A. 28).

Overcoming these issues was accomplished by setting up criteria for multimedia elements. This ensures that using them in the theatre space contributed to the world of the play, thus becoming valid additions to the production. The criteria I used for multimedia elements were that they must be agents for narrative in some way, or that they represent in some way either the themes or back stories of the play, or that they interact with live actors as virtual characters thus creating possibilities for improvisation. They also had to be correctly scaled and positioned in the theatre space so as not to detract from the live actors and styled to suit the overall set design. If the criteria could be met, I concluded that the audience might accept multimedia portals as elements of live performance.

One example of multimedia fulfilling one of my criteria can be found Act 1, Scene 3 *Tunnel Vision*, where, in the rapid movements of the multimedia elements of the train in motion contrasts with Bev’s inability to change her predicament. This underpins one of the central themes of the play being resistant to change. Here, an otherwise passive theatre space, being the central aisle of the theatre was transformed into a thematic fictional space by a capsule of light and sound that moved with Charlene and Rodney towards the stage. Another example of multimedia elements fulfilling criteria can be found at the beginning of Act III, Scene 1 *Weaving Worlds*, where multimedia portals display Bev and Ben’s journey to reach the Cav in the form of audio-visual metaphorical representations. Here, the multimedia portals become agents of narrative.
Virtual Characters

With the criteria setting up the framework for multimedia elements, and the narrative and characters developed, I began selecting some characters to be represented as virtual characters. In writing the script, the virtual characters became part of the ensemble. These were created in the same way as traditional characters (that is, characters played by live actors) only the virtual characters were designed to appear in a multimedia portal via digital projections. When working out the logistics of this decision, the playwright has to deal with a complexified space in theatre because the space is shared by both live actors and multimedia components in the world of the play.

Choosing multimedia presentational options for particular characters is dependent on how best those characters in the play are served by the medium. This choice is influenced by technical considerations, the limitations of touch (which is examined in the following section), and the physical interactions deemed essential by the playwright in the narrative of the play. These considerations became my criteria for virtual characters and helped to guide me through the process of allocation.

I realised that I had to develop a method of creating virtual characters so that I could explain my ideas on how to produce these virtual characters in the theatre space to prospective theatre companies so that they might consider taking on a production with multimedia. I devised two techniques\(^{24}\) of creating the

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\(^{24}\) The first method is real time live projections of an actor off stage where the actor’s performance is streamed into the multimedia portals. A live actor located in another performance space is filmed acting the part of the virtual character during the performance. This footage is streamed via digital data cables and projected into the multimedia portal in the theatre space during the staging of the theatre production. A digital video camera films the on stage actions happening in real time and streams these images back to the off stage actor via a monitor so that the actor can watch and hear the stage actions and perform in time with the on stage elements and performances. This technique relies on technical skills, additional equipment, and additional space designated off stage. However, the actor who plays the virtual character gives a unique performance with every staging of the play. Since the streaming of the performance is not limited by distance, but by the technology’s ability to stream the information from one place to another, the live actor can be filmed anywhere the technology can capture the image (including either interstate or overseas). The second technique is pre-recorded footage that is edited to cues. The actor playing the virtual character is filmed prior to the performance of the production on stage. This film is edited into scenes and displayed in the multimedia portals during the live performance of the play. This pre-recorded film system makes the footage available via a data projector for both rehearsals and the
virtual characters for the play. The process of devising techniques for creating virtual characters also required me to script the play to enable the cast of live actors to interact with the virtual characters. These virtual characters are needed to be seen by the audience in the multimedia portals using a data projector.

Accessing the vertical planes expands the performance space in the theatre.\(^{25}\) When projecting the virtual character into the theatre space, their images can dominate the theatre space because of the scale of projection set against the live actors standing on stage.\(^{26}\) This can be resolved by setting smaller projections (by tightening the focus with the data projector) to balance the scale of the mise en scène and actors in the space.

The displays in the multimedia portals were a collage of images and voices jumbled together to form snippets of memory\(^{27}\) and served as biographical holograms of the characters’ lives. Multimedia portals containing virtual characters\(^{28}\) and used in this way are Bev Con and Ben Con who are represented as metaphorical images and sounds because this style captures the surreal qualities of memory. The placing of virtual characters into multimedia portals contains them and separates them physically from the live actors. This separation reflects the feeling of detachment and solitude experienced by Bev and Ben in the play. For example, the passengers on the train in Act I, Scene 3 Tunnel Vision, are virtual characters because these characters were on the peripheral of Bev’s journey in the world of the play. They were emotionally detached from Bev’s saga so they ignored her on the train. The membrane of space that separates the virtual character and live actor emphasises an underlying social comment in the play.

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25 For the placement of vertical displays see Appendix N: set design presentation in Microsoft PowerPoint format.

26 The actor’s stage presence might become insignificant because the audience’s attention might be drawn to the multimedia elements rather than the actor. These are choreographic and scale implication.

27 See Appendix: N.

28 See Appendices: C, E, F, G, H, I, J.
which is people share empirical space while remaining disconnected emotionally to buffer themselves from events that occur in their proximity.

The spatial membrane between the virtual character and the live actor can be broken. In writing Act II Scene 4, *Ben’s ‘Trip’ to the Plaza*, I transformed the virtual character, Malcolm, into a live actor on stage. I concluded that the effect can be achieved by locating the live actor behind the counter, cueing all the light and sound stage elements to create an illusion of the actor jumping out of the screen. I call this action *breaking skins*. In the play, Malcolm’s anger breaks him out of his location within the multimedia portal as a reaction to the unfolding events. The act of breaking skins complexifies the theatre space because it requires technical skills, set design, precise cueing, rehearsal and seemingly transforms the virtual character into a live actor. Determining how to create breaking skins is indicative of the issues that arise for the playwright when integrating multimedia elements into the theatre space.

**Touch and Multimedia**

Breaking skins is an attempt in some ways to resolve the problem of the lack of touch amongst virtual characters and live actors. When interactivity between live actors and virtual characters is not scripted for any physical touch, the playwright can opt to delegate a character as virtual. However, I realised that this is not always the preferred option for the treatment of a character.

An issue that surfaced during the writing of the play, *Weaving Worlds*, was the absence of touch between live actors and virtual characters (as previously mentioned). Regardless of the advances in interactive digital media, touch between the live actor and the virtual character is still not possible. I believe that touch is an expression of emotion, and signals the physical, sexual and emotional

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29 Achieving the break through from the virtual space to the physical space would require prior filming of this action and making the footage available for rehearsing of the scene. This helped me to understand one of the reasons why Robert Le Page, Canadian Playwright and Director, has all the theatrical elements available from the first rehearsal so that actors and technicians can collaborate to create the effect successfully on stage during the performance. This led me to realise that stage directions for multimedia can borrow from the language of film to describe the movements of the virtual characters and refer to the focus length and camera angles.
dynamics between characters to reveal the nature of their relationships. The limits of touch was at first problematic when writing the scenes in the play with multimedia elements. These could only be resolved by choosing to portray characters such as Bev and Mick as live actors so the intimacy and physicality of their relationship could be shown in the theatre space as an indicator of the abuse and power structure in their relationship.

Multimedia as a performer in the theatre space

Following the experience of experimenting with the development of virtual characters and multimedia portals for the play, *Weaving Worlds*, I believe that either an image or soundscape, or any combination of multimedia elements can be regarded as a performer because an audience can sometimes bond with an animation or an animated object that mimics human gestures. This is evident in the popularity of animated feature films and computer game characters. It is the treatment of the object through its choreographed movement or its voice that suggests it has a life.

Integrating multimedia elements into the theatre space in the script made me question the idea of live performance. Can multimedia elements be regarded as live performance elements if they are pre-recorded reproductions? Are not the rehearsed stage actions of live actors predetermined events and could these also be regarded as reproductions? Does streaming multimedia into the space decay the sense of live performance on the stage? I concluded that a performance is considered live if it is happening and that all the elements in the theatre space create a new experience for the audience. I settled on the idea that live performance is what the audience accepts as live and not necessarily is governed by traditional ideas in theatre. Since multimedia elements are able to interact with

30 I scripted Mick as a virtual character because his domination of Bev could have been represented by a large scale image of him contained in the multimedia portal. The image visually overpowered Bev in the theatre space. However, this choice limited my ability to portray the aggression underpinning their intimacy in their relationship because of the lack of touch between the multimedia element and the live actor. With this in mind, I changed Mick from a virtual character to a live actor on stage, which enabled him to push and grope Bev in the theatre space (as in Act 1, Scene 2, *Getza Beer Lovey*).
live actors, I concluded that my play offers a full experience of a live performance for an audience.

**Improvisation**

One measure of live performance is improvisation. Multimedia changes can be responsive in random ways to the voice and movements of the actors (via body heat sensors or microphones built into the actor’s costumes) because these stimuli can be programmed to trigger random changes in screen and sounds. The theatre space becomes a highly reactive interchange between actors and multimedia elements. Thus improvisation is possible.31 Dr David Saltz, is a specialist in the technical exploration of live performance and interactive media. The improvisation capabilities of multimedia elements are described by Saltz as media manipulation:

> Media manipulation. The most powerful feature of interactive media stems from our ability to write programs that manipulate digital information based on input. Consequently, a trigger need not have an invariable, one-to-one relation to the media it produces. I can program a computer to project a different sound or image depending on how closely two performers move together, or how loudly they speak, or what notes they sing, and I can make the output change over time or react to past events. Not only can the computer select pre-recorded media segments according to complex algorithms, it can generate its own media on the fly, creating entirely new sounds or images. One of the very earliest interactive installations, Myron Krueger’s *METAPLAY* (1970), vividly illustrated this potential by empowering participants to “paint” virtual images on a wall-sized video display by moving their arms in space (Saltz 2001, p. 108).

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From Saltz’s research, I conclude that the concept of acting with the object now extends to acting with the space because multimedia elements have the capacity to create reactive space in the theatre. This reactivity creates opportunities for improvisation, which is indicative to live performance in the theatre space. Thus multimedia can instigate and be considered to be live performance.

*Weaving Worlds* contains elements of dance improvisation. The choreography was scripted to be improvised in part because the dancers’ random movements triggered changes to the multimedia elements. I created improvisation in the theatre space in Act 1, Scene 3, *Tunnel Vision*, where a soundscape and lighting originated from the rear of the audience and moved to the front of the stage. This creates the capsule of light and sound that represented the moving train carriage boarded by Rodney, Charlie and the dancers as they set out on their pilgrimage to the stage. The procession of the live actors was to be directed by moving reactive multimedia portals and by panning the sound (to create the auditory illusion of movement of sound through space). The dancers’ movements from one space to another space was to be triggered changes by light and sound. This led me to become aware that multimedia elements could be located anywhere in the theatre space and be either fixed or moving through the theatre space.

**Audience and multimedia in theatre space**

Although writing *Weaving Worlds* gave rise to new ideas in the use of multimedia elements in the theatre space, the audience reaction to these experimental forms in the theatre space is difficult to predict. The audience’s attention drawn to specific theatre spaces cannot be guaranteed, however, the playwright attempts to draw attention to particular multimedia elements in the theatre space, each member of the audience is free to change their focus at any point in time to any event on stage. Who or what element gains the attention of the audience is difficult to assess because each member of the audience and cast will experience and focus on the performance space in different ways.
Conclusion

This research suggests that multimedia redefines space and adds to its complexity. Multimedia is not a new element in the theatrical space. It began as static vertical displays used by theatre practitioner/theorists such as Erwin Piscator, and Bertolt Brecht in Epic Theatre and later evolved in the arenas of experimental theatre and contemporary theatre into highly complex digital interactive multimedia elements.

When multimedia is taken up into the theatrical space, meaning is created in performance that might well contain digital, analogue and live acting. The space in the theatre becomes complex in function and complex to interpret. Playwrights who use multimedia elements have new forms of story telling including the creation of virtual characters. These virtual characters still require the same development treatment in the writing of the character as those characters performed by live actors. The playwright has to rethink the idea of characters in the space because virtual characters can be located anywhere in space, thus expanding the performance space. The stage actions can be scripted to allow the virtual characters to “break skin” through the use of multimedia portals on stage which seemingly transform them into live actors. These possibilities require the playwright to acquire additional skills and equipment to produce and present their ideas to other theatre practitioners.

For the playwright, writing scripts that include multimedia elements raises awareness of space in theatre. Including multimedia elements that have either no narrative or thematic function might be construed as a distraction by the audience. This means that the playwright needs to develop a framework and to apply some criteria to the application of multimedia in the theatre space as a way of verifying that it has achieved its initial functions because there are no current guidelines or industry standard practices devised for multimedia integration in the theatre space.

In particular, multimedia portals can become agents of narrative. The playwright is provided with new ways to present narrative and themes of the work through multimedia elements. Back-stories and holographic biographies can be represented in multimedia portals eliminating the need for expositional scenes or
chunks of text often used to inform the audience of the characters’ background. In developing the multimedia portals, the effects of the scale of the multimedia element must be balanced with all other stage elements including live actors, otherwise the scale of multimedia elements minimizes the impact of the live actors on stage. This integration can be either passive or dynamic depending on the playwright’s intention and application of multimedia elements in the theatre space.

When the integration of digital multimedia is dynamic, new junctions of performance emerge between virtual characters and live actors on stage providing performative interaction between elements on stage. The sense of live performance can still be unique when multimedia elements are integrated into the space because these elements can be interactive. The interactivity between digital multimedia and actors means that improvisation is made possible via interactive software, which can be triggered by either movement or sound emitting from the actors in the theatre space. This redefines live performance and creates variations of performance over the life of the production. The actors perform with the space as well as objects in the space. However, when virtual characters interact with live actors, the engagement lacks physical contact because the current construct of virtual characters is light and sound.

Although multimedia and its application in the theatre space creates simultaneous displays of narrative, new audiences often understand new works by innovative theatre practitioners like Robert Lepage’s *Ex-machina* and Elizabeth LeCompt’s *Wooster Group* who presents multimedia elements as a part of the mise en scène and narrative. This is because these contemporary audiences bring with them skills in reading simultaneous narratives from the Internet, film, commercials, software gaming and television programs. Audiences’ abilities to deal with collages of images and sounds, live performance of actors and dancers means that playwrights can experiment in using theatre space in new ways as the technology continues its evolution.
Appendices

Appendix A, Synopsis: *Weaving Worlds*
Appendices: B-N: multimedia CD Rom s for the play. *Weaving Worlds,* containing samples of multimedia portals, soundscapes and a set design concept PowerPoint presentation.

Appendix B: Act I Scene 1, soundscape in multimedia portal.
Appendix C: Act I Scene 3, Bev Con introduces the scene in a multimedia portal.
Appendix D: Act I Scene 3, soundscape in multimedia portal.
Appendix E: Act I Scene 4, Bev Con introduces the scene in multimedia portal.
Appendix F: Act I Scene 5, Bev Con introduces the scene in multimedia portal.
Appendix G: Act I Scene 5, Jacko as a virtual character in a multimedia portal.
Appendix H: Act II Scene 2, Ben Con introduces the scene in multimedia portal.
Appendix I: Act II Scene 3, Ben introduction to scene in multimedia portal.
Appendix J: Act II Scene 4, Ben introduces the scene in multimedia portal.
Appendix K: Act II Scene 4, soundscape A in multimedia portal.
Appendix L: Act II Scene 4, soundscape B in multimedia portal.
Appendix M: Act III Scene 1, soundscape in multimedia portal.
Appendix N: Set design presentation in Microsoft PowerPoint format.
Appendix A: Synopsis: Weaving Worlds

The play, Weaving Worlds, is a drama that explores the themes of fate, shared memories, conditions of control, and people’s belief in their ability to change their life. The world of the play is set in the memories where the past and present are fused together.

Ben is a troubled youth. His mother, Bev, is going through a nervous breakdown. Bev wants to move to the ocean to escape the violence in the home. Mick, Bev’s lover, who is a petty criminal, refuses to take on the sea change believing it is impossible to leave the neighbourhood without being punished by his local gang. Mick blames his relationship problems and the friction with the gang on Bev’s son, accusing him of for pilfering stolen goods stored in their house. He hands Bev a gun and convinces her that the gang is seeking revenge for the theft and they plan to torture and murder Ben. Bev reluctantly agrees to carry out a mercy killing on her son before the gang gets him. The gun is a symbol of Mick. Bev hides the gun because she is ashamed of her relationship. When the gun explodes, her relationship is transformed.

Ben believes his mother is going mad and is in danger of harming herself and others. He decides to poison her. Bev and Ben meet at their local pub, The Cav, where their past haunts their present, as they fight to confront their demons as they seek redemption.

Bev Con and Ben Con represent the current higher consciousness of the minds of Bev and Ben in an augmented reality. They are interior monologues set in the present tense. They analyse their journey as it unfolds before them. The three dancers represent the shadow aspects and the primal urges of humanity. The Old Woman is the memory of ancestors guiding Bev and Ben to their path of liberation. The Tea Lady is the manifestation of apathy in our society.

The play integrates the theatrical elements of dance, soundscapes, digital film and multimedia. The themes of the play are provocative. The style and presentation of the play is intended to be Brechtian, surreal, absurd and ritualistic. The language and subject matters are for a mature audience.
Works Cited


Works Consulted


