

PROGRAM & EDUCATION NOTES

The Village has been created specifically with secondary students in mind, but everyone is welcome at The Village to enjoy this collaborative theatre project.

La Boite & MDA Ltd present

THE VILLAGE

Ordinary people in extraordinary situations



#LBTheVillage

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ABOUT

Education notes compiled by Claire Christian

A collaboration with refugee resettlement agency MDA Ltd, *The Village* immerses the audience in the real stories of refugees and people seeking asylum who have made Australia their home.

The Village showcases the cultural diversity of Australia and honours the courage, strength and determination of the women, men and children who have made this country their new home.

The Village uses the verbatim stories of refugees and people seeking asylum to guide audiences on an experiential journey.

Witness how ordinary people have found themselves in extraordinary situations and persevered to tell their life-changing stories. Audiences will engage with these stories first hand through an interactive performance experience.

The Village has been created specifically with secondary students in mind, but everyone is welcome at *The Village* to enjoy this collaborative theatre project.

“It felt really real, authentic. Being immersed into it, you can appreciate the stories more and actually feel part of that journey.” – Teacher

ESTIMATED RUNNING TIME

90 minutes

PURPOSE, CONTEXT & THEMES

Purpose: To challenge. To educate. To inform. To encourage conversation.

Context: Dramatic, sociological, cultural, historical, political, and geographical.

Themes: Family, belonging, hope, fear, culture, identity and home.

FORM STYLE & CURRICULUM LINKS

Suitable for students in Grades 7-12 content applicable to DRAMA, ENGLISH and HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES subjects.

- Verbatim Theatre
- Promenade Theatre
- Immigration
- Social Change
- Government and Policy
- Storytelling
- Refugee and Asylum Seeker Policy
- Specific historical and global contexts such as: African Refugee camps and wars, Vietnam War, Afghani Nation conflict, Syrian conflict, The United Nations, UNHCR policy and action, specific definition of terms.
- Social Environments
- Human Rights

WARNINGS

(Please note these will be confirmed closer to the production):

- Content used in stories will be verbatim and will include details of war, fear and fleeing.
- Please be aware of the possible trigger points for students in your classes who may come from refugee or asylum seeker experiences.
- Please be aware that one of the sets, the boat, moves and requires audiences to inhabit a small space. If audience members experience motion sickness or are claustrophobic – it is recommended that do not enter the boat.

THE VILLAGE

STORY TELLERS

MUHAMMAD AKRAM

Akram fled Pakistan with the help of people smugglers. He travelled through Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. He travelled by boat to Australia and arrived on Christmas Island. He spent 4 months in Australian Immigration Detention Centres. He has lived in Australia since 2012.

CIEAVASH AREAN

Escaped from Iran in 1987 with the help of people smugglers. He crossed the border to get to United Nation office in Pakistan and accepted as a political refugee. He was interviewed by Australian Commissioners in 1988 in Pakistan and granted Refugee visa.

SILVA ASAL

Silva was born in Iraq. He grew up in Saudi Arabia. Silva has travelled to seven different countries in his search for knowledge in the arts. He studied in Australia at Griffith University.

JOYCE TAYLOR

Travelled with her Mum and two brothers from Liberia to a Guinean refugee camp. She lived there from 1993 – 2002. She was 23 when she came to Australia. She has two sons who were born in Australia.

LILI SANCHEZ

Lili and her Mother, Father and two brother left Santiago, Chile in 1988. She was four years old. They first arrived in Sydney, travelled to Melbourne by bus and lived there for eight years.

NGOC PHAN

Ngoc's Mother, Father and older sister travelled from Vietnam by boat. They stayed in a refugee camp in Malaysia before they were approved to come to Australia. They travelled to Darwin, then onto Alice Springs in 1980. They were one of the first four Vietnamese families to be settled in Alice Springs. Ngoc was born in 1980 in Alice Springs; she was the first Vietnamese baby to born there.



Images by Stephanie Pickett

CAST & CREATIVES



TODD MACDONALD

Director

Artistic Director and CEO of La Boite Theatre Company, Todd completed acting training at NIDA in 1994 and has worked extensively across the theatre, film, television and voice over industries. Todd was the Artistic Associate at QTC from 2011-2014 and has worked as associate producer and company member with David Pledgers' company NYID, touring internationally. In 1999 he co-founded the award winning venue and production company The Store Room Theatre in Melbourne. He maintains a performance practice as a director, deviser and performer.

Theatre credits include: *The Tragedy of King Richard III* by Marcel Dorney & Daniel Evans (Performer- La Boite 2016), *Prize Fighter* by Future Fidel (Dir- La Boite/Brisbane Festival 2015), *Medea* Adapted by Suzie Miller (Dir-La Boite 2015), *The Mountaintop* (Dir-QTC 2014), *Kelly* by Matthew Ryan (Dir-QTC 2012/15), *The C Word* by David Burton and Claire Christian (Dir-Metro Arts), *The Button Event* devised with Bagryana Popov (Performer-QTC 2014), *Vanya at Avoca* by Chekhov devised by Bagryana Popov (Performer-Castlemaine Festival/La Mamma 2015), *Venus in Fur* (Performer-QTC 2013), *Bare Witness* (Performer-La Mama National Tour), *Progress and Melancholy* (Performer-45downsatirs), *Blowback*, *Training Squad* and *Strangeland* by David Pledger (Performer-NYID).



AYEESHA ASH

Assistant Director

Ayeesha was born in St. George's, Grenada to parents of Caribbean and Maori heritage. Raised in Queensland, Ayeesha trained extensively in singing and dance before being accepted into the Queensland Academy for Creative Industries, where she majored in acting. In 2011 Ayeesha moved from Queensland to Perth to continue her acting studies at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. Since graduating Ayeesha has appeared in plays in Queensland and Sydney including *The Players* (Bell Shakespeare), *The Seagull* (Now Look Here Theatre Co.), *Rent* (Hayes Theatre Co.) and *Drift* (Two Peas). In late 2015 Ayeesha and Emele Ugavule created *Black Birds*. *Black Birds* is an all female co-operative led by core members, Ayeesha & Emele Ugavule. With each project, creatives are invited to collaborate on works that dissect the Black and Brown diasporic experience in Australia through art and performance in a variety of mediums and spaces - theatrical and non-theatrical.

In September, *Black Birds* produced a short film (*Counter Face*) and visual art works (*Soul Food & Anti Throne*) featured at 'Capiche' held at aMBUSH Gallery (Central Park, Sydney) & *Still Nomads: Blunted On Reality* (Footscray Community Arts Centre, Melbourne). In October 2016, *Black Birds* was a part of the inaugural Women In Theatre & Screen (WITS) Festival *Fatale*. Performed at The Eternity Playhouse, this original work was created with a focus on exploring poetry and spoken word in a theatrical setting. In 2016, *Black Birds* was given the opportunity to develop new work at The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, Penrith, as part of Q Lab. This development resulted in a full length theatrical version of a new *Black Birds* work performed at The Joan in March/April 2017. Ayeesha loves to learn and is currently studying a Bachelor of Communications (Social & Political Studies) at UTS.



SILVA A SAL

Assistant Director / Storyteller

Silva A Sal is an emerging director, writer and performer. He has worked across the middle east on multiple productions prior to relocating in Australia, starting his university theatre education. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Contemporary and Applied Theatre (2015), Silva began his quest to create his own theatre company, through which he has produced and directed shows of numerous thematic varieties.

Silva's work and educational experience includes physical, oriental and contemporary theatre.

His theatre credits include *Wonders of a Godless World* (2012), *The Vagina Monologues* (2014), *Shout the Legend of Johnny O'Keefe* (2016) and many more.

Silva's life experiences of travel, war and continuous uncertainty has moulded his unique understanding of infinite risk taking. Over the next year Silva wishes to use western pop-culture to discourse of his middle eastern cultural background through verbatim theatre. The theatre world has given Silva a forum for expression and freedom of speech, which in itself was never possible prior to living in arriving to Australia. This is Silva's first experience with La Boite theatre and he looks forward to many more.



MOE ASSAAD

Set and Costume Designer

Moe Assaad is a passionate Scenographer and Interior Architect. He was born in Beirut during the civil war period, which had a lasting impact on his career trajectory. Spending hours on end in underground shelters, the sounds of bombing and shelling has ignited his imagination and creativity to an imagined reality that is different from the one outside the

shelter.

During his teenage years, he strengthened this creativity by volunteering his Scenography ideas and design sketches to various social and cultural institutions during special events while constructing sets himself during exhibitions. Although scenography was not available as a separate field of study during his undergraduate school years, a strong foundation in Architecture is needed for every Scenographer.

Moe Assaad graduated with a Bachelors and Masters degree in Interior Architecture from the Lebanese University before pursuing his second Masters in Scenography when the program first opened in 2009. He was one of ten graduates representing the first cohort of Scenographers in Lebanon. He then moved to the United States where he designed sets for classic and contemporary plays for proscenium, thrust and theatre-in-the-round stages. Some of the productions he worked on for the 2nd Story Theatre and Brown University Theatre Department include, *Twelfth Night*, *Amadeus*, *Le Dindon or the Dupe*, and *Sons of the Prophet* among others.

In August 2015 Moe moved to Australia and started working for La Boite Theatre Company shortly thereafter. He is the Scenographer for *The Village* and *Single Asian Female* 2017 productions. Beyond theatre, Moe Assaad is interested in TV, Opera and Film productions.



WIL HUGHES

Sound Designer

Wil's credits as a composer, songwriter and sound designer for theatre have ranged from contemporary ballet to musicals, and include *The Theory of Everything* (Brisbane Festival/Metro Arts); *Dust Covered Butterfly* (Metro Arts); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Wind in the Willows* (La Boite Theatre Company); *Tiptoe* (Pentimento Productions); *Sweet Meniscus* (Anywhere Theatre Festival); *Legends* (Storyshare International Ltd.); *Unnatural Selection*, *Allan* (The Arts Centre Gold Coast/Awkward Productions); *Blak Electric* (Aboriginal Centre of Performing Arts) and *Caligula* (The Danger Ensemble/Judith Wright Centre).

His compositional work for film includes *Viral* (dir. Sam Van Grinsven), an official selection for the Cinequest Film Festival in California and the Down Under Film Festival in Berlin, as well as the upcoming feature, *Hold On*.

As a freelance theatre professional he has worked extensively with companies including La Boite Theatre Company, Queensland Ballet, Queensland Theatre and the Queensland Performing Arts Centre. Companies who have utilised Wil's facilities as an audio engineer, music editor and QLab programmer include Global Creatures, Queensland Ballet, Expressions Dance Company, Bay Street Productions, La Boite Theatre Company and more.

In 2016 he was honoured with a nomination at the Australian Songwriting Awards for his work with choral writer, Donna Dyson.



PETER SUTHERLAND

Stage Manager

Pete Sutherland has had a career in Stage Management that spans over two decades. He has stage managed for most of the significant theatre companies in Australia and he has also worked internationally.

Single Asian Female is Pete's first show with La Boite Theatre Company.

The directors Pete has stage managed for include Todd MacDonald, Kate Cherry, John Bell, Wesley Enoch, Robyn Nevin, Neil Armfield, Michael Gow, Stephen Page, Andrea Moor, Jason Klarwein, Judy Davis, Simon Phillips, Richard Wherrett, Peter Evans, Debbie Allan and Garry McDonald.

Some highlights of Pete's career include stage managing John Bell's final show as Artistic Director of the Bell Shakespeare Company *The Tempest* 2015 and the tenth anniversary revival of David Page's award winning one-man-show *Page 8* for Bangarra Dance Theatre.



NGOC PHAN

Storyteller

Ngoc is a performer and playwright based in Brisbane. Her theatre credits include A Streetcar named Desire (La Boite Theatre Company); Splendour (Now Look Here) The Motion of Light in Water and After all this (Elbow Room); Hedonism's Second Album (La Boite indie); Speaking in Tongues (Antix productions) and Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes (Canute productions).

Her screen credits include Australia Day (Hoodlum/Foxtel); QLD Government Road Safety Speeding Commercial (Two little Indians); Pawno (Toothless pictures); Schapelle (Fremantle Media); At World's End (New Holland Pictures); Sea Patrol (Nine Network); Terra Nova and Secrets and Lies (Network Ten) and the AFI award winning film The Black Balloon.

She was an Artist-in Residence at La Boite Theatre Company (2016) and was an Associate Artist at Queensland Theatre Company (2014). Currently Ngoc is one of the participants in the Lotus First Draft Program supported by Playwriting Australia and Contemporary Asian Australian Performance (CAAP).

Ngoc Phan graduated from the WAAPA Acting program in 2004 and studied at the Atlantic Acting School in New York 2007 doing the Practical Aesthetics Summer Intensive.

Ngoc is currently a tutor for the NIDA Open Program and has also taught in the Directing and Acting Department at Griffith Film School.



LILI SANCHEZ

Storyteller

Lili's usually prefers the comfort of being behind the scenes as she enjoys creative writing and writes professionally for a blog. Lili is also currently finishing a degree in Anthropology and Philosophy, she enjoys reading the greats in her down time but is also largely passionate about studying and understanding different cultures. Lili is also a proud mother of a beautiful half Jamaican half Chilean 11 year old boy. It is important for Lili to tell her family's story but most important to her is that her son is able to learn from this story.

Lili and her family have been in Australia for 26 years in total, and Arrived here on a Humanitarian Visa. She has lived 17 of these here in Brisbane. Her favourite place to sit down and write is at the top of a hill close to home, where she gets a beautiful view of the city.

Lili has experience telling her story since she was young commonly showcased in Latin American events in Melbourne.

More recently Lili has been telling her story as a community educator for MDA (Multicultural Development Australia), Lili has been with MDA since November 2015, she has stood in front of a variety of audiences who have come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, some of these education sessions have included speaking at ISQ Early Childhood Forum and at an ECA (Executive Challenge Academy) leadership and development session. Her current roles with MDA include working as a Skill up facilitator for young refugees and also working for one of MDAs newest programs, Welcome Residential.



JOYCE TAYLOR

Storyteller

Joyce Jattu Taylor was born in Monrovia, Liberia and is the mother of two wonderful, half Aboriginal boys. Due to the civil War, left for Guinea in 1992 where she lived until 2002. Joyce arrived in Brisbane, Australia in 2002 on the ‘women at risk Visa’. Since arriving in Australia Joyce has worked as a Community Development worker for MDA (Multicultural Development Australia) from 2005 to present. In this role she has played an active part in supporting newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers through their resettlement process as they call Australia home.

Joyce has also volunteered as the Women’s Leader for LUWQ – Liberian United Women of Qld from 2004 – 2013, where this group created a safe space for the Liberian women to connect, share their knowledge, support each other, celebrate, learn from one another and have fun. Today, we have great women who are contributing immensely to the Australian community. Joyce has also worked alongside LAQ (Liberian Association of Qld), supporting the Liberian Community in Australia. Joyce has been amazed and humbled by the opportunity to share her story through a creative process, and with this hopefully making a difference in our community.



CIEAVASH AREAN

Storyteller

Cieavash has dedicated his life to music for more than forty years. The instruments that he performs include - Barbat (Oud), Kamanche, Nay, Tar, Divan, Flute, Accordion, Daff, Zorna... Born in Tehran, Iran he plays traditional Middle Eastern music. These include - Turkish, Persian, Arabic and Armenian. He is self taught and plays by ear. Cieavash’s most recent performances have been in Woodford Folk Festival, QPAC, Customs and Government house (playing with James Morrison), Brisbane Multicultural Festival, Brisbane Festival, Brisbane Powerhouse, Bundaberg Multicultural Festival.

He did the music for theatrical plays “Vikram and The Vampire” and A Beautiful Life” - composed and played music for a short film called Fearless - and also played music for “1001 Nights” by Queensland Theatre Company and Queensland Music Festival.



MUHAMMAD AKRAM

Storyteller

Muhammad Akram was born in Quetta, Pakistan. He is from the Hazara people. He completed his university education and was working as an ESL teacher in Quetta. The situation in his home country became very dangerous for Hazaras which forced him to flee. In 2012, he arrived in Australia to seek asylum. He is a passionate young man, always inspired by helping others. During his time in Australian detention centres, he volunteered by teaching English to his fellow asylum seekers. He is settled into his new life in Brisbane and he worked at MDA (Multicultural Development Australia) from 2013-2017.

As part of MDA’s community education program, he has shared his personal story of survival, resilience and seeking asylum on various platforms. He believes through storytelling we can change the conversation about refugees and asylum seekers in our society. In 2016, he was offered a scholarship by the University of Adelaide where he is currently studying Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Corporate Finance). He is very grateful to Australia. He is doing his best and looking forward to give back to the community.

THINGS TO PONDER

- Research Verbatim Theatre and Promenade Theatre as theatrical forms. Find examples. Interview classmates about specific events and share stories as monologues in class.
- Discuss what the tagline ORDINARY PEOPLE IN EXTRAORDINARY SITUATIONS might mean.

- **Asylum Seeker and Refugee Stories**

What is the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker?

Research asylum seeker and refugee policy in different countries.

Find local stories of Refugee and Asylum Seekers and explore techniques like thought alley, or hot-seat to look at the perspectives of the people in the story.

- **Belonging**

What does it mean to be Australian?

- **Diversity**

What does diversity mean? What does it look like on stage, in TV & Film, in our communities?

- **Global Citizenship**

What does it mean to be a global citizen? What are the qualities of a global citizen?

Look at the United Nations Millennial Development Goals and the new Sustainable goals. How do these relate to Asylum Seekers and Refugees?

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>

Fear

noun: **fear**; plural noun: **fears**

1. (Noun) an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm.
2. (Verb) be afraid of (someone or something) as likely to be dangerous, painful, or harmful.

Look at the definition of fear, discuss as a group. What do you fear? How does fear make you feel? You could use these discussions to create mood boards, using images that represent feelings. You could create movement pieces that reflect these images or feelings. You could also create characters, discuss their fears, and write monologues from their perspectives. It could be interesting to look at well-known characters from TV shows, films or plays previously studied.

- **Home**

Home is not a place, it's a feeling.

What does it feel like? Describe. Find songs or poems about home or the feeling of home. Use this content to create physical pieces, new scenes or monologues about what 'home' means to different people.

Home by e.h

You're packing up your sleeping bag,
your lantern and your tent.
And you're off to find the life you lost,
but you're not sure where it went.
And I hope those mountains teach you
how to stand both tall and proud,
that you see your life much clearer
with your head above the cloud.
I hope you swim through rivers
with their currents swift and fast,
that they show you must be careful
when you wash away your past.
I hope that you are humbled
by the vastness of the sea,
that the eagles high above you
make you feel like you are free.
I hope when night has fallen
and your fire's just a spark,
that the stars shine to remind you
that there's beauty in the dark.
But most of all I'm hoping

that you're learning while you roam,
that no matter the distance,
you can always come back home.

You may like to read about Mojan Shamsalipoor a local Brisbane girl who is navigating a very public battle with her visa and her right to stay in Brisbane.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-13/iranian-asylum-seeker-mojan-shamsalipoor-in-limbo/8321256>

There are also two Australian Story episodes that follow Mojan's story.
<http://www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2016/s4632711.htm>

PRIVILEGE WALK

The Privilege walk is an activity designed to get groups of people to discuss the complicated intersections of privileges and marginalizations in a less confrontational and more reflective way.

Here is a great link to a lesson plan, and the questions.

<https://peacelearner.org/2016/03/14/privilege-walk-lesson-plan/>

A video of people completing the privilege walk.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ>

ELEMENTS OF DRAMA DISCUSSION POINTS

ELEMENT OF DRAMA	QUESTION
PLACE & SPACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>How did the sets inform the stories?</i>– <i>Did the places created through sets and space impact the audience? How?</i>– <i>Think about how place and space impacted other elements like focus and tension. E.g.</i> <i>What happens inside the boat</i>
MOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>How was music and sound used to impact mood?</i>– <i>What else creates mood in this piece? What role do the story tellers play?</i>
TENSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>What were the different kinds of tension used in each different space? Did each story have its own unique tension? How did this impact the performance overall?</i>– <i>Discuss the tension created for the audience knowing the stories you are hearing are real.</i>– <i>How is tension of the task used to drive the story in-between stories?</i>
SYMBOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Discuss how objects, props, and icons were used to symbolise places, times and moments.</i>– <i>What objects now have deeper meaning because you understand their story?</i>

ASSESSMENT

Possible Quotes from Saying it Right: Creating Ethical Verbatim Theatre By Janet Gibson

Source: http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/documents/hdr_journal_neo/neoJanet2011_2.pdf

These quotes could be used to discuss the unique way The Village used verbatim content theatrically for a particular purpose.

Father Roger Schmidt: *“And I will speak with you, I trust that if you write a play of this, that you say it right. You need to do your best to say it correct.”* Moines Kaufman and Tectonic Theater Project, 2001, *The Laramie Project*, (New York: Vintage) p.100.

“Working verbatim is not an easy task. It is challenging not least because there are palpable tensions between the ethical challenges of dealing with people’s stories and the aesthetic challenges of creating interesting theatre from them. As Julie Salverson asks “How do theatre workers negotiate the multiple responsibilities of integrity, imagination, inspiration and craft?” (2008).”

“In the re-telling of people’s lives, in the use of their experiences, understandings and words can lay tremendous political potential for change. But along with this comes ethical responsibilities, some way of “saying it right” based on an ethics of responsibility and interdependence that is transacted in each particular situation but which also rests on the foundational acceptance of theatre as a collaborative practice.”

You could also discuss:

- Diverse Actors and stories on stage
- The work as an example of contemporary political theatre.
- Non-Realistic Form and styles as ways of telling stories and creating meaning for an audience.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS

Good introductory questions to ask the group are:

- What is the furthest distance you've ever travelled?
- What the longest time you've spent travelling?
- What makes you jump?
- What scares you?
- What reminds you of home?
- If you were going to a sleepover what would you take with you?
- If you were going camping what would you take with you?
- If you were going overseas for one year what would you take you?
- If you were leaving home and not coming back what would you take with you?

Use this content to develop scenes or monologues.

RESEARCH

There are some fantastic exercises and resources around the verbatim process as well as activities linked to considering refugee experiences and the notion of home in this book. See pages 108-119.

Drama Schemes, Themes & Dreams: How to Plan, Structure, and Assess Classroom events that engage all learners. By Larry Swartz and Debbie Nyman

https://books.google.com.au/books?id=Y08IAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA108&lpg=PA108&d-q=conducting+amazing+interviews+%2B+verbatim+theatre&source=bl&ots=dXan-0wL7vj&sig=fnFd4xMKjD4y34UoLI5PMXQzlec&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjO_vj7x-NfTAhVKKJQKHUTBCVcQ6AEIOTAE#v=onepage&q=conducting%20amazing%20interviews%20%2B%20verbatim%20theatre&f=false

Research the conflict, historical, refugee and/or asylum seeker situations in:

- Vietnam War; re-education camps, the fall of Saigon and the mass exodus of Vietnamese people from Vietnam in the late 1970's and 1980's and Australia's involvement in re-settling Vietnamese refugees and asylum seekers.
- Persecution of Hazara people in Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Saudi Arabia and the extreme implementation of Sharia Law
- The Liberian Civil War in the early 1990's.
- September 11, 1973 in Chile – and the dictatorship that followed.
- Khomeini coming into power in Iran in 1979.

Learning Verbatim

Get students into pairs. Decide who is A & B. A is to tell B a story about the best holiday they've ever been on. B is to remember as much detail as possible about A's story. Swap. Come back into the class. Sit in a circle and share stories with the group, only A is to share B's story and B is to share A's story. The story teller is to share the story as though it was their own. Discuss what it was like hearing someone else tell your story, or use your words. Discuss what it felt like to 'own' someone else's story. Discuss if the storyteller got details wrong etc.

Explore Verbatim texts

<https://australianplays.org/category/verbatim> **Verbatim exercise**

Source: <http://www.outofjoint.co.uk/education/verbatim-theatre.html>

In this exercise, the group will create a short ensemble piece of verbatim theatre. Work in groups of four or five. The first task is for the group to find someone to interview. Find someone in the vicinity who is not known well to the actors: perhaps a theatre technician or, in a school, a teacher or caretaker or other member of staff.

Set a chair for the interviewee facing the interviewers. The group spends ten minutes asking this person any questions they would like to, listening carefully and trying to remember as much detail as possible. Pay attention to the interviewee's mannerisms, posture and tones of voice too. Once the time is up, thank the interviewee and let them go.

Now the group will recreate the interview. One player remains as an interviewer to ask questions. The remainder communally play the interviewee. They can respond together to questions where appropriate, or chip details individually as they are remembered. Replicate the gestures and tones of voice too.

Notice how some elements will have been particularly memorable, and everyone will be able to take part in recreating those moments, giving extra volume to reflect their significance. By responding as a group the actors can paint a full a picture of the interviewee. It is also an interesting way to look at how each of us notices different aspects of a persona.

Once you have completed this exercise, think about what kind of details you found most interesting and why. Often, small details will stand out: we relate to the minutiae of stories and remember them. This is a useful way of giving colour when you are devising a text.

KEY FEATURES OF VERBATIM THEATRE

Source: Interview with Paul Makeham original cast member of Aftershocks, published in Stinson & Wall's (2005) Dramactive Book 2, Ryde, McGraw Hill.

Located: <http://cccddrama.weebly.com/verbatim-theatre.html>

1. Purpose or intention of verbatim theatre pieces

- Empowering marginalized groups and communities by staging their stories, enabling them to make their experiences visible / performative
- Political purposes –unveiling the non-publicised story, the alternative story to a well known event or issue so that audiences can rethink their own politics or views.
- Excavating the story of a localised event or issue so others can understand, communicating the extraordinary in ordinary stories and worlds
- Exploring histories and ‘her’ stories that do not normally get aired or shared
- Reporting on how communities respond to and make sense of disasters or difficult events

2. Approach to dialogue and action

Actors treat the characters in a Brechtian sense, they are presented as witnesses to the street scene.

Dialogue is selected for its potency and relevance to furthering the play's narrative. It is layered rather than chronological in its treatment.

There is little collaborative stage action. Often actors sit on stage or speak directly to the audience, but they may react to each other and work together to create motifs in the space.

3. Approach to dramatic structure

Uses interviews, transcripts and material is distilled and selected, then layered or woven across broader themes or motifs or steps in the event being represented. The process of structuring the drama is often a collaborative process with the subjects giving feedback at critical phases in the development of the work. Brechtian elements are used to weave the piece together, such as narration, imagery, song, addressing the audience, re-enactment.

4. Notion of the subject and personal testimony

Uses the drama form to capture events through the stories of those who experienced them or who were affected by them. Verbatim Theatre uses theatre to capture multiple realities, multiple voices in a dynamic, complex relation.

Verbatim theatre works on the basis of trust and responsibility as writers and theatre workers record and interview real people about their lived experiences. What does it mean to excavate and perform other people's stories. What protocols need to be in place? How do we listen and record? What are the obligations and responsibilities of theatre workers in verbatim theatre? What does it mean to bear witness?

Direct language and testimony is used as dialogue, however what is said and when it occurs structurally to create particular meanings; all this is crafted and structured by the playwright. Some verbatim plays are more truthful than others to the original materials other verbatim plays have to be considerably 'massaged' (Valentine) because of their sensitive content or the need to collapse and condense a series of narratives.

5. Relationship with audience

Positioning the audience as witnesses, watchers and listeners, privy to confidential personal reactions and stories.

Audience gains understanding by seeing all the contradictions and complexities as stories are juxtaposed and arranged for them to compare.

Conventions used in verbatim theatre (drawn from Brechtian theatre):

- Text is delivered in the past tense interspersed with occasional present tense / 'now'
- Moments to recall the action
- Actors visible and onstage throughout the whole performance, participating in and also observing the action
- Actors speaking in direct address to the audience, making direct eye contact with audience
- Titles of scenes visible in terms of signs or projected titles at the back of the stage.
- Sometimes actors would announce the title of the scene.
- Actor approaches the character in terms of lightly sketching or 'showing' them in action 'rather than going for a full-on characterization.
- Text needs to drive the action and speak for itself
- Use of narration to introduce characters or action
- There's an immediate responsibility to the owners of the stories. Actors act as 'temporary custodians' of the person's story. There should be processes and ways of member checking as the piece takes shape.
- Discuss the conventions used in The Village Particularly as the storytellers are telling their own stories how does this impact the performance overall?

POST SHOW ACTIVITIES

- It would be good to discuss thoughts and ideas about refugee and asylum seekers before the show compared to after the show – have your opinions, ideas or knowledge changed? How?
- Create a table in your books or use large pieces of paper and stick to the wall with the storyteller's names across the top. Discuss the details you remember from their stories, the way they made you feel, discuss what you are still curious about or what you'd like to know more about. Conduct any necessary research.

If you want to help change the conversation check out MDA Ltd. Their website includes information about all of the work they do as well as the events, workshops and campaigns they run.

<https://mdaltd.org.au/>

Including Luminous Lantern Parade

<https://mdaltd.org.au/luminous/>

And the #createwelcome campaign

<http://www.createwelcome.com/cwweek/>

Refugee Week – June 2017

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/>

Queensland Multicultural Month – August 2017

<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/queensland-multicultural-month>

- Discuss global citizenship and what active things everyone can do to positively impact refugee or asylum seeker experiences.
- Discuss the impact of the storytellers telling their own stories
- Discuss what would've happened if their stories were told by actors.

What can you do?

- Be welcoming
- Smile – it can mean a lot
- Show respect and dignity for all people
- Attend multicultural events, celebrate diversity
- Say No to Racism
- Educate yourself about the real stories of refugees
- Make friends across diversity

What is the difference between a migrant, refugee and an asylum seeker?

Migrants	A Migrant is someone who chooses to leave their country of origin for personal or economic reasons.
Refugees	A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution , war or violence. They have sought asylum and after processing have been assessed as having a genuine need for protection The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
Asylum Seekers	An asylum seeker is someone seeking protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed

Migrants

- Arrived with most of their belongings
- Usually have funds to sustain them for a few years
- Are able to say goodbye to family and friends
- Can return home

Refugees:

Protecting refugees is UNHCR's core mandate. Refugees have to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom. They have no protection from their own state - in fact, it is often their own government that is threatening to persecute them.

Asylum Seekers:

There is confusion as to the difference. AS & refugees often have parallel journeys & experiences but their status here in Australia hasn't been assessed or confirmed yet.

Experiences of Refugees & Asylum Seekers

- Forced to leave home
- Usually fleeing from their country of origin by way of other countries
- Arrive with very little documentation
- Loss of home and possessions
- Loss of family and friends
- Limited sources of social support
- Loss of physical and emotional safety
- Arrive with very little or no funds
- Disrupted schooling
- Poor health
- Cannot return home
- Political harassment
- May have experienced or witnessed torture and rape

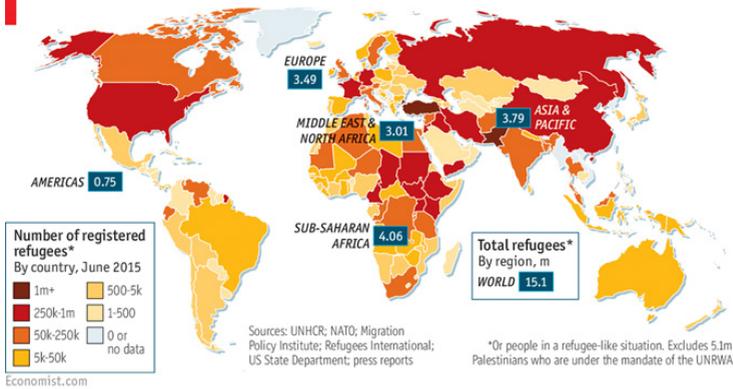
The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers bare many similarities, however every journey is unique to the individual regarding the country from which they've come, the journey they have taken and the number of places they have stayed along the way, as well as their final steps to protection in Australia.

Many refugees and asylum seekers don't even have time to pack. They often leave behind:

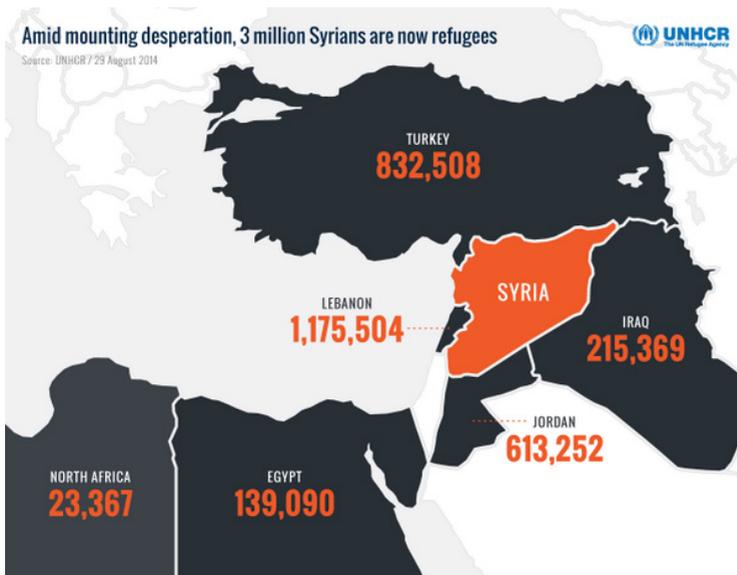
- Important Papers
- Special possessions
- Household goods
- Clothing
- Family and friends

Many people fleeing violence never get out of their countries and remain Internally Displaced Persons within their country. This means that they cannot return home and have sought refuge in another part of their country. How do you think this is different to the experience of migrants?

A World View



http://cdn.static-economist.com/sites/default/files/images/2016/05/articles/body/20160528_SRM976_0.png



<http://www.higheradvantage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/syria-map-21.png>

These maps reflect the wars & disruption we've seen & heard about in the news. It's important to understand the refugee journey so we can understand why people leave and what they have been through to get to Australia.

It can be difficult to know where people originate from, some people will literally take the question 'where are you from' to mean where they directly travelled from, so some Afghans may say Pakistan as that is where they have grown up. This is why knowing what languages people speak is more important than where they are from.

Some young people may have a certain heritage but have never been to that country & were born in a refugee camp so don't have a solid understanding of the language and culture of what is supposed to be their mother tongue. This is a difficult area of identity for young people who find themselves between worlds– settling into adolescence in a new country with a new language, yet still a part of a bigger community. An additional challenge comes for those young people who have travelled alone without family.

MDA works with people in many different situations and to be able to best support them it's important to know what they've seen, what they've been exposed to and what they've experienced so they can be feel welcome in their new home.

TEACHING VERBATIM THEATRE

CCC HSC Drama 2013

<http://cccdrama.weebly.com/verbatim-theatre.html>

Theatre folk Blog: Classroom Exercise: Verbatim Theatre

<https://www.theatrefolk.com/blog/classroom-exercise-verbatim-theatre/>

Verbatim Theatre

<http://www.outofjoint.co.uk/education/verbatim-theatre.html>

Verbatim Theatre by Tim Farrer

<https://prezi.com/nd2-ywzdnzxq/copy-of-verbatim-theatre/>

The Council of Ontario drama and dance educators website page unpacking Verbatim Theatre.

<http://code.on.ca/resource/verbatim-theatre>

Drama Resources

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/curriculum/creative-arts/s4-5/drama-resources>

CREATING VERBATIM THEATRE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

From: <http://www.outofjoint.co.uk/education/verbatim-theatre.html>

Choose a topic

It is not about deciding on characters or a plot, but about agreeing on an area of interest. Perhaps you are drawn to a particular location (a park, a care home, a shopping centre); a way of life (an occupation, an obsession or a lifestyle); an event (a riot, a county show, a sports event). It could even be something more abstract like an emotion.

Preparation

Make a list of people who might inform the subject from as many areas and viewpoints as possible. So think both about people who are central to the idea or issue, and people who are on the edge. For example, if your topic was a rave then you might need to talk to local residents, police and parents as well as people who would attend the rave, and the rave organisers.

Think about how you will contact the people on the list and, when you have some agreed participants, decide who interview whom. You may find it useful to practice interviewing each other before going into the field (see interview skills below).

Schedule a time when the interviewers

will report back to the group – try to make this as soon after the interview as possible so that the details are still fresh in your mind.

Interviews

Interviews are often best conducted in small groups of two or three. As a small group you will benefit from sharing observations about the interview, as each person may recall different elements. Interviewing with a companion or two can also give you confidence and a sense of security.

Interview skills

Make a list of key questions that you feel you need to ask. This helps to direct the interview and keep it on track. But be flexible and responsive, and ready to follow a course of questions that you may not have anticipated.

Be polite, and don't be judgemental. Somebody has given up their time to talk to you, and your interviewees will respond best if they feel able to talk openly without criticism.

Be honest. Explain why you want to talk to them and what the project is about. Be clear about whether the interview will be or can be anonymous: in 22 some cases you may be interviewing someone whose identity is key to the project, or somebody well known; in many cases, the specific identity is not important, so consider how that anonymity might be preserved.

It is helpful to make written notes, or

alternatively to record an interview, to remind yourself of details later. Ask permission from the interviewee and again be clear what the notes or recording will be for. As an interviewer your job is to initiate questions, and prompt when necessary. It is a conversation but it is not a discussion. Don't be drawn into a debate or argument. Your own views aren't the subject here, and you will get the best material by not alienating your interviewee.

Let them talk. Bring an interview back on track if required, and pursue further details, but no one likes to be constantly interrupted. Often, great material and details will emerge once the interviewee has warmed up and talked for a while. It's obvious, but really listen.

Mentally record the person's physical and emotional demeanour. Try to remember particular gestures or phrases, as these will help you when it comes to relating the interview back to the group.

Reporting back

Report back from your interview to the rest of the company. A good way of doing this is the "hot seat". Instead of merely relating what you've learnt, you "become" the interviewee that you met, and the rest of the group ask you questions.

Reporting back skills

Before starting the 'hot seat' interview, set the scene for the rest of the group. Where did the interview take place? What did the person look like? And tell the group some of the questions that they need to ask, in order to share the answers that you were given.

Try to adopt the manner of the person. The way they sat, the tone of their voice, gestures that they used. It's not about the quality of your acting but about trying to give an impression of the person you interviewed. Have your notes of the interview ready to refer to, but try not to depend on them too much.

Sometimes it may be easier for two people to role-play together, so that they can both draw from their memories and notes. This can also increase the energy level of the role-play.

It is the responsibility of the rest of the group to 'keep the ball in the air'. If there is a silence, they should ask another question.

If a question is asked that was not covered in the original interview then improvise a response, but keep this to a minimum.

At the end of the hot seat, tell the group anything that was not covered but that you feel is important. And if you had to improvise any responses, make clear what these were.

Style and structure of the play

Once you have collected a number of characters (you may decide you need to interview someone again), the next stage is to decide whose stories and accounts to include in the play. Think about what stories represent the idea of the play, that tell you something about the subject. You might need to say goodbye to characters and stories even though they're interesting, and indeed to characters that you might like to play as an actor. You might decide to hear each story in

isolation – a series of monologues. But you don't need to deliver each story in one go. You can break them into installments and overlap them with other characters' stories, perhaps choosing each segment by theme to give different perspectives on one part of the subject of the play, or grouping your characters by real or thematic relationships between them. Breaking down the text into short phrases can create a montage effect.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- Doors open 20 minutes prior to performance.
- Please brief your students about appropriate theatre etiquette before seeing the play. Due to the nature of the theatre configuration the students can be seen and heard by both the actors and fellow audience members.
- Photography and filming of the production is strictly prohibited due to copyright. Please ask your students to switch off their mobile phones inside the theatre. We also ask that all patrons refrain from taking food and drink into the theatre.
- Please do not bring school bags into the foyer and theatre.
- Please arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the show starting. If you are running late please call Box Office on 3007 8600 and let them know.

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LA BOITE BOARD

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Australian Government



La Boite Theatre Company is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its funding and advisory body

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