

Finding *Home* / Finding Resilience in-between the Writer / Director / Actor / Audience relationships

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Leah Mercer is a Senior Lecturer in Theatre Arts at Curtin University. In 2015 she directed/co-devised *Home* for QTC in a co-production with Force of Circumstance. With her company *The Nest Ensemble* she: directed/co-wrote *Joey: the Mechanical Boy* at Perth's Blue Room Theatre (Winner, Best Director: Performing Arts WA, 2014); in 2012 she directed/co-devised *Eve* at the Blue Room Theatre & Metro Arts Theatre (Brisbane) (Winner, Blue Room Members Choice for Best Production); and *Home* for La Boite Theatre's Indie season. She directed/co-wrote *The Knowing of Mary Poppins*, for Darlinghurst Theatre (Sydney, 2009), Adelaide Fringe Festival (2008) and the Brisbane Powerhouse (2005, 2006) (Winner, Silver Matilda Award for Directing, 2007). *The Knowing of Mary Poppins* was published by Playlab Press in an anthology entitled *Independent Brisbane: Four Plays* (2008). She wrote/performed *A Mouthful of Pins* at the Brisbane Powerhouse (2008) and directed/co-wrote *The Physics Project* as part of her practice-led PhD at QUT (2006), (Winner, Philip Parsons Prize for Performance as Research, 2008). Other directing credits include: *The Hardest Way to Make an Omelette* written/performed by Jessica Harlond-Kenny in partnership with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre at the Fremantle Festival (2013) and; Stace Callaghan's *between heaven & earth (one hand clapping)*, Brisbane Powerhouse, 2006).

A woman is crying.

A woman is crying in front of an audience.

A man in the audience feels tear well up in his eyes.

The woman on stage describes the moment she released the ashes of her mother into the sea.

The man in the audience remembers his own mother's death.

Tears run down both their faces.

The woman looks at the man and says: "...but you're still here."

She moves from the stage to the audience, grabs his hand and pulls him into the play.

This moment occurred in the 2015 season of *Home* performed at the Queensland Theatre Company. This production, that I directed and co-devised with writer/performers Margi Brown Ash and Travis Ash, has been performed in Brisbane, Chicago and Mexico and published by Playlab Press.¹ The following reflection traces the influence of Social Constructionism, Narrative Therapy and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO)² on the process of creating, rehearsing and performing *Home* and discusses the ways in which this performance explored and modeled processes for the practice and advancement of personal resilience in the ensemble and in the audience.

Since the 1970s resilience research in the fields of psychology, counselling and social work has created a suite of resilience theories that are associated with an increased emphasis on strengths and "...a reduction in emphasis on pathology..."³ Strengths-based approaches are "...primarily dependent upon positive attitudes about people's dignity, capacities, rights, uniqueness and commonalities."⁴ They align with the overall findings of both the positive psychology movement and Resilience Theory that, even in cases of adversity, resilience "...appears to be a common phenomenon..."⁵ The starting premise for *Home* came from ideas advocated by Kenneth J. Gergen,⁶ a theorist and psychologist working in Social Constructionism, a field aligned with resilience theory. Gergen seeks to disrupt the notion of a singular 'bounded self' and replace it with a 'relational being'. According to Gergen "...'self' is a noun and thus suggests a static and enduring entity." Whereas 'relational being' "...ambiguously poised as participle, noun, and gerund, subverts the image of a bounded unit. In being, we are in motion, carrying with us a past as we move through the present into a becoming."⁷ This notion of the mutable self is also central to the work of director and social activist Augusto Boal who applies this understanding via two key concepts. The first of these, the 'spect-actor', is his term for a spectator who is "...transformed into a protagonist in the action..."⁸ The second of these, 'metaxis', translated from the Greek *metaxu*, "...means 'between + in' – in other words, betwixt and between, among, a middle way..."⁹ According to Boal: "Theatre is born when the human being discovers that it can observe itself; when it discovers that...it can see itself seeing."¹⁰ This in-between state is metaxis. Devised as a performance about belonging, *Home* advocated the idea of embodying the 'in-between' as a resilience-building practice. In *Home* the 'in-between' existed in three aspects of the work. In

practice these overlap so that “...multiple circles of metaxis interact,”¹¹ but for the purposes of this discussion I have separated them out into:

1. The collaborative relationship and process that developed the work
2. The form and content of the work
3. The actor / audience relationship.

Background

Before I detail *Home's* development it is necessary to provide some background to the collaborative relationship and processes behind it. Since 2004, director/writer/actor Margi Brown Ash¹² and I have worked together as the core pair of an otherwise changing ensemble called *The Nest Ensemble*. Alongside other collaborators, we've co-created five shows together.¹³ Our creative process marries our individual and shared performance trainings that can be encapsulated as a combination of psychological realism and embodied performance.¹⁴ These performance-based methods have been augmented by Margi's training as a Narrative Therapist.¹⁵ This combination of psycho-physical and therapeutic techniques underpin everything we do in the rehearsal process. It should also be noted that while I am listed as the sole writer of this article we are the co-writers of this research.

Narrative Therapy, grounded in Social Constructionism and Resilience Theory, is a therapeutic “...process of deconstructing...” the client/patient's “...problem-saturated story and constructing an alternative solution-saturated story...”.¹⁶ One of the key premises of Narrative Therapy maintains that the stories that make up our lives - our interpretation of our experiences - are susceptible to the same vagaries and rules of engagement of any other narrative. Accordingly, they can be re-told from other perspectives, rearranged, reinterpreted and ultimately put to a different use in the day-to-day practice of living. The aim is to pass these skills of re-interpretation or ‘re-storying’ onto the client thereby taking the therapeutic reins away from the therapist and putting them into the hands of the client. Using the tools of Narrative Therapy the client is empowered to see their lives and experiences from perspectives other than the ones that do them harm. The intention is that by reinterpreting the recurring themes, motifs and inciting incidents of their own lives the client is able to open

up new and more positive possibilities and future actions. In the process the client is also developing their expertise for ongoing self-care rather than having to continually rely on an expert therapist to solve their problems.

The genesis for *Home* sprang from this Narrative Therapy practice of 're-storying'. Using Margi and her son Travis' autobiographical stories of belonging and not-belonging, *Home* interweaves the stories of their personal, historical, social and artistic selves across multiple times and spaces in conjunction with a key mythic story. In this way *Home* considers how the past continues to imprint upon our present and future selves. The inclusion of the key mythic story of the Egyptian Gods Isis, Osiris & Seth was designed to extend the reach of the personal narratives, to connect with the genre of storytelling itself and in the case of this particular myth, to make literal the idea of re-connection.¹⁷ While the actors rarely speak to one another, *Home* is a dialogical play in a monological form as during the course of the performance, audience members are gently tempted into the playing space to play roles prescribed by the performer. For example, audience members play Margi at other ages or take on the roles of significant people in her life. This transition is achieved playfully, with the maximum ease of the audience/participant in mind. The intention is to demonstrate and stimulate autobiographical exploration and activation within the spectator so that the work moves beyond a performance witnessed by a passive audience to become a stimulus that awakens stories about belonging and creativity within the spectators. Transforming some of the spectators into 'spect-actors' is one way to achieve this. Another way is by the actor's use of personal stories as content. In the play she describes this as: "I will perform for you so that the extraordinariness of an ordinary life can be laid bare."¹⁸ In so doing Margi models both the Narrative Therapist and the personal storyteller for whom "...everyone is an expert on his or her own life."¹⁹

1. The collaborative relationship and process

Following Margi's lead, we have researched, developed and practiced ways of working in the rehearsal room that are based on the therapeutic principles of Narrative Therapy. This methodology asserts that "by incorporating postmodern constructs borrowed from the

therapy room” to “create a constructionist/collaborative theatre-making process” it is possible to extend the experience of the creative team. This enriches “...their process, their performance and their collaborative relationship [and]...can result in longevity of practice, while at the same time embracing *best practice* for their outgoing creativity.”²⁰ For *Home* our devising process went something like this:

1. With music playing Margi and I begin with her Relational Impulse Cultural Training (RIC) ²¹ (sprinkled with elements of Anne Bogart’s Viewpoints²² and Gabrielle Roth’s 5 Rhythms²³). The point of the RIC training is to move directly into doing, to access the physical channel, its impulses and its intuitions. This interplay between instinct and movement is our access point; our way in. As director I move in and out of the ensuing action, both in it and outside of it, providing verbal instructions, stimulus or props. At some point, Margi/the actor’s impulsive movements begin to take on physical shapes that point towards or stem from our research into character and content. Gradually, the physical embodiment of the character/s begin to manifest and shapes are created. This work generates a number of key images, ideas and physical scores for the character/s that become stimulants for the next part of the process.
2. In discussion/reflection after this exercise we decide which of these key images and ideas to develop and then take these ideas into collage work. Margi describes this process, inspired by her work with collage artist Madonna Staunton and subsequently developed by her as a tool in therapy and the rehearsal/devising room, as: “You rip and stick images from a pile of sources, you place them alongside each other on the page quickly, the aim is to try and bypass the cognitive.”²⁴
3. After we have each made a collage we step back into cognitive mode. Describing the other’s collage, we itemize the placement of the images, their juxtapositions. From there we move into interpreting the vibrations and collisions between the images in each collage and then between each collage. Multiple stories emerge from these sessions – or as Margi says: “What I don’t know I know is revealed.”²⁵

4. From these stories we write essence statements that capture the core of what has emerged, then we transform these statements into actions or instructions that will contribute to the creation of a choreography.²⁶

5. So we return to the floor, back to the impulse work, but now with the additional layers of choreographic instructions to generate movement scores.

6. Later, we write. To begin we use a stream-of-consciousness-pen-on-paper-automatic-writing-approach I first encountered in a workshop I did with the feminist performance company Split Britches in Los Angeles in the late 1990s.²⁷ In the case of *Home*, Margi wrote and I provided dramaturgical prompts and edits.

Once we have text to work with the process begins again on the floor, in the body with impulse movement, with the addition of movement scores and text for the actor to speak, or for the director to use as verbal stimulus to the actor; side coaching. The aim is to keep the actor out of her thinking channel for as long as possible, not to deny the important role of the cognitive but to deepen the embodied ways of knowing and to be in-between the doing and the thinking. At times it is difficult to say where the action starts and the instruction ends or with whom. Afterwards, in reflection, we both report a strong sense of interconnection, Margi as actor did not feel 'other', as she explains it to me: "As your instructions were called from the side, it was as though my body responded in the space between, it was an experience of flow and empathy."²⁸

Boal also evokes this sense of connectivity when he compares the difference in understanding that occurs when you hear a word versus when you place your finger on an un-insulated wire. Upon hearing a word it takes "...time to comprehend its meaning..." whereas the electric shock you receive from touching the wire requires no such moment of translation - you scream.²⁹ With this example Boal clearly articulates the immediacy of the senses. When I am watching the actor work on the floor the sharp relief or imprint of the physical images she creates are clear. The moving images give me – the watcher/director – immediate access into the experience of the character. Her physical choices put my finger right on the wire and it is 'as if' my body screams in recognition. Like a semaphore the actor demonstrates the powerful potential of the physical image to directly communicate to an audience. These bodily

elements include: changing rhythms and facial expressions; different textual qualities to movement sequences and transitions; but primarily there are the granite-like imprints of the physical image. Working in such a relational way creates a less hierarchical rehearsal environment, and prompting the actor with images rather than verbalized objectives makes space for more embodied and expressionistic responses.

2. Form and content

This relational space employed in the creation of *Home* is also depicted in the work itself, thus the process, the content and the form are inter-related. Using Gergen's idea of the 'bounded self' versus the 'relational being' as the key thematic arc, *Home* depicts a central character at different ages and places in her life who ultimately moves from a 'bounded self' to a 'relational being'. Taking our lead from Gergen's discussion of the traditional construction of the self as bounded, separate and isolated *Home* sought ways to instead depict people as "...embedded within multiple relationships." We sought to demonstrate that who and what we are "...is constituted quite differently in many of these relationships."³⁰ Accordingly, Margi's roles in *Home* are three-fold; she moves seamlessly between character/s, a narrator and a facilitator. She embodies the emotional life of the character/s and then steps outside them to comment on that character's choices. Thus she becomes a sort of omniscient narrator of her own narrative, an interpreter of its causes and effects and a writer of its other possible storylines. As a facilitator she takes on a director-like role as she side coaches the audience 'spect-actors', using her active instructions and their bodies to get them out of thinking and into doing mode. This embodied collaboration between actor and audience mirrors the actor/director relationship that generated the work. As the actor moves from story to story, across time and space, and from character/s to narrator to facilitator – the key word is 'moves' because this transformation is achieved as an embodied performance witnessed by, and sometimes in relationship with, the audience. So the experience of transformation itself passes into the bodies of the audience in a more direct and profound way than could perhaps be achieved by a monologue or even a conversation. Bypassing the audience's thinking mode and offering an embodied perspective is a kind of synesthesia where Margi's multiple roles and changing shapes are transformed into embodied meanings

in the bodies of the 'spect-actors'. Even those audience members who remain seated, experience this potential, as they witness their fellow audience members transform from passive to active.

Central to Boal's work are the techniques he offers the audience to "...reassume their protagonistic function in the theater and in society."³¹ Building on and adapting Boal's concepts *Home* seeks a similar engagement with its audience. Boal recognized that this sort of engagement is best experienced when the spectator embodies the action of the performance. For Boal, "...the first word of the theatrical vocabulary is the human body..." since it is the "...main source of sound and movement." Accordingly, "...to control the means of theatrical production..." the spectator must first learn to "...control..." and "...know..." their own bodies in order to free themselves of the "...condition of spectator and [take]...on that of actor..." moving from object to subject, "...from witness into protagonist."³² One of Boal's key projects for this to occur is Forum Theatre in which the spectators "...intervene decisively in the dramatic action and change it." Key to Forum Theatre is that solutions are proposed "...on the stage, working, acting, doing things, and not from the comfort of his [sic] seat."³³ For Boal this theatrical form was "...a *rehearsal of revolution*." The "...spectator-actor practices a real act..." even though they do it in a fictional manner. "[T]he experience is a concrete one..." and so "...the rehearsal stimulates the practice of the act in reality."³⁴

In her article on how TO uses storytelling Jan Cohen-Cruz³⁵ employs Drama Therapist Robert J. Landy's definition of the ideal storytelling state as one of "...aesthetic distance..." in which the storyteller "...retains a piece of the overdistanced, cognitive observer and a piece of the underdistanced, affective actor."³⁶ Since Margi, the actor/character/narrator, moved between telling her own stories, commenting on them and also observing the contributions of the 'spect-actors', she perfectly embodied this 'aesthetic distance' or what Boal called 'metaxis':

The state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image. The participant shares and belongs to these two autonomous worlds; their reality and the image of their reality which she herself has created.³⁷

In their article “A Paradigm for Performance Studies”, Ronald J. Pelias and James VanOosting describe varying levels of audience participation “...on a continuum from inactive to proactive.”³⁸ *Home* sits at “...the far end of the continuum...” somewhere between interactive and proactive.³⁹ At the interactive level, “...both performers and audience are seen as coproducers, each contributing to the artistic event [able to]...codetermine possible directions for the theatrical event.”⁴⁰ At the proactive level “...the status of performer is conferred on all participants.”⁴¹ In a study designed to assess the impact of Boal’s work, José I. Rodríguez et al., analyse the ways in which a performance with a proactive audience was more effective than a didactic lecture “...at inducing a willingness to comfort potentially distressed sexual assault survivors.”⁴² Rodríguez’ study demonstrates that performances that foster a proactive audience “...invite audience members to take agency in their own learning...”.⁴³ “The notion of embodiment is central to understanding this in-between state because meaning emerges through our bodies acting in a metaxic space.”⁴⁴ Allowing for the physical presence and contributions of audience members acknowledged that “...identities are always multiple, overlapping ensembles of real and possible selves who enact themselves in direct relation to the context and communities in which they perform.”⁴⁵ This was reinforced in *Home* by the fact that it was also the subject matter of our work.

The storytelling form and autobiographical content of *Home* was also reminiscent of Boal’s TO “...in which the sharing of personal stories is the point of departure for collective problem-solving around oppression.”⁴⁶ While our purpose was more psychological than ideological, *Home*, like Boal and Narrative Therapy, used personal storytelling to diffuse hierarchy, “...to be in relationship to others”, to make “...knowledge through group interaction around hitherto private experiences” and to “...move towards subjecthood, towards agency...”.⁴⁷

3. Actor/Audience relationship

So how did our intentions with *Home* work with an actual audience? While I have not empirically measured resilience in our ensemble or audience, anecdotal responses, from ensemble and audience alike, suggest that playing in the ‘in-between’ operated as a rehearsal for personal transformation. As an audience member I saw the role of Margi’s husband played

variously by an elderly man, a schoolboy and a homosexual man. All three played potential versions of themselves – what resonated in these performances was not the differences between the ‘spect-actor’ and the role they were playing, but the commonalities and just how easy it was to shift in and out of roles, in and out of selves. Using autobiographical story, without attention to chronology or adherence to one perspective encouraged a sense in the audience that this could also be their story, not the exact details perhaps, but the experiences of belonging and not-belonging that the stories referred to and the use of imagination and transformation that could be employed to move from a sense of not belonging to a sense of belonging. In the season at La Boite Theatre in 2012, the elderly man Margi selected to play her husband during a scene set in Egypt told us after the show that he had married his wife in Egypt over fifty years before. A year later after his death, his granddaughter contacted Margi to tell her that after that performance he had told the whole family the story of their wedding, a story he had never told them before. So the play had worked to reawaken his stories and then to create new memories with his family through his act of re-telling them.

The scene I described in the opening paragraph of Margi (both as character and actual daughter) grieving the loss of her mother and selecting an audience member who was also in tears, occurred on several occasions across the seasons. Post-show audience members described how in that moment they were reminded of a loss of their own. They described the loss of their own mother or the loss of a partner. One woman recounted the loss of a still-born baby. The combination of the audience witnessing Margi performing her ‘selves’ and their fellow audience members being physically pulled into those roles, heightened the audiences’ experiences of their own losses and the potential to be emotionally pulled into the play was enhanced, similar to the experience of bearing witness at a funeral of someone to whom one is not personally grieving. In those in-between moments as they moved from witness to participant, from memory to action, from spectator to actor, a transformation occurred. In the play’s opening moment Margi says:

...aren’t I a work-in-progress?
 Aren’t I all of my past and
 all of my future?

Aren't I every person I've ever met,
 Every story I've ever dreamed?
 every place and time I've ever been.
 My map is huge.⁴⁸

This idea is then re-imagined in the final moments of the performance. After the 'spect-actors' and the performers form a semi-circle that spans across the stage from one corner of the audience to the other, Margi's final lines return her to a slightly reworked version of that opening idea:

Aren't we all are a work-in-progress?
 We're every myth we've ever heard
 Every story we've ever dreamed
 Every place and time we've ever been
 Our maps are huge.⁴⁹

And so she has transformed, just as the 'spect-actors' have played one of her, she has become one of them, there is no 'one' self, there are many selves and they all take a bow together. Similar to story circles used in "workshopping and playbuilding in community-based performance" where the circle is used to symbolize "the non-hierarchical relationships to which such work strives", by the end of *Home* the actor/facilitator has become "...an equally vulnerable member of the group."⁵⁰

We have performed three creative development showings of *Home* and two professional productions. The post-show conversations, written feedback and reviews consistently comment on the work's transformational quality. Our first creative development showing occurred at the *Play with Purpose* seminar hosted by the Galveston Institute in the Gulf of Mexico in 2011. Afterwards Dian Marie Hosking, one of the original researchers in the field of relational Social Constructionism wrote:

It was both your story and mine...one person's story and everyone's...some-
 one's and every-ones...in time & timeless...for me: it did multiple, ongoing,
 relational selves...with only arbitrary beginnings & endings, where past and

futures are in the present and made our ancestors & children present...it was not talking about but doing (it)...for me 'I' (as daughter...) was participating (audience and participant) self. [*Home*] metaphorized relationality superbly.⁵¹

For the La Boite Theatre season in 2012 reviewers noted the work's innate ability to generate a sense of connection and empathy:

It's a wonderful thing that awakens something deep and forgotten in an audience members psyche [sic], something from the past, the sense of a bedtime story or a story being told as the voices of the real world become irrevocably entangled with our own, imagined internal world, our memories and inner-monologues become fleshed and fused as we constantly shift shapes and forms in our own mind.⁵²

A rare and refreshing theatrical work that connects the whole audience.⁵³

And again in response to the Queensland Theatre Company season in 2015:

...the public exchanging of these intimate revelations constitutes acts of bravery, acts of vulnerability and exposure that remind us how human and eternal we are.⁵⁴

Home is a unique and special experience that connects artist and audience...The true power of *Home* lays in its ability to awaken individual stories so that it is almost impossible to talk about this performance without talking about one's own sense of home.⁵⁵

Conclusion

With *Home* we sought to create theatre that requires an embodied collaboration not only between the body and the mind of the actor, but also between the actor/director and the actor, and her audience in order to reach its full potential. By holding firmly to the idea that we are always in process - "...[o]ur personality is what it is, but it is also what it is becoming"⁵⁶

- *Home* also provided opportunities for audience members to re-story their own lives, a vital step in the process towards resilience.

NOTES

¹ *Home* by Margi Brown Ash, with monologues by Travis Ash and extracts sourced by Micaela Ash was co-created and directed by Leah Mercer. Different stages of *Home* have been performed in 2011 at the *Play with Purpose* seminar hosted by the Taos Institute in the Gulf of Mexico, the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in Chicago and the FreeRange Festival at Metro Arts Theatre in Brisbane; in 2012 as part of La Boite Theatre's Indie Season; and in 2015 as part of the Queensland Theatre's Company's DIVA season, produced with Force of Circumstance Collective. The La Boite season script was published in an online version, see: Brown Ash, Margi. *Home*. Brisbane: Playlab Press, 2012. A hardcopy of the 2015 version was also published by Playlab.

² Augusto Boal (1931 – 2009) was a Brazilian theatre director, dramatist, theorist, writer and teacher who created the Theatre of the Oppressed, a theoretical and practical application of theatre as a vehicle for social and personal change. He wrote many books, some of which are referenced throughout this article.

³ Adrian D. Van Breda, 'Resilience theory: A literature review', (Pretoria: South African Military Health Service, 2001): 1.

⁴ Wayne McCashen, *The Strengths Approach: A strengths-based resource for sharing power and creating change* (Bendigo: St Luke's Innovative Resources, 2005): v.

⁵ Ann S. Masten, 'Ordinary Magic: Resilience processes in development', *American Psychologist* 56.3 (2001): 234.

⁶ Kenneth J. Gergen (1935 -) is an American psychologist and professor at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. Of his many books, *An Invitation to Social Construction*, recently re-published in a third edition, provides an introduction to his theories and practice.

⁷ Kenneth J. Gergen, *Relational Being: Beyond self and community* (Oxford UP, 2009): xxvi.

⁸ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. Adrian Jackson, trans. (London: Routledge, 1992): 17.

⁹ Warren Linds, 'A Journey in Metaxis: Theatre of the Oppressed as Enactivist Praxis', *NADIE Journal* 22.2 (1998): 74.

¹⁰ Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire. The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. Adrian Jackson, trans. (London: Routledge, 1995): 13.

¹¹ Warren Linds, 'Metaxis: Dancing (in) the in-between', in Jan Cohn-Cruz and Mady Schutzman, ed., *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on theatre and cultural politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006): 114.

¹² Margi Brown Ash has been an actor for 40 years. Also trained as a counselor in Narrative Therapy, she has completed an MA that straddles the fields of Counseling and Performance Studies, worked as a lecturer in the Psychology and Counseling School at QUT and is currently completing her Phd in

Performance at Griffith University. As a psychotherapist with her own creative arts therapy studio in Brisbane, she regularly works with artists, community workers and corporations. In this work she employs a narrative frame aimed at helping people to re-script their lives/organizations.

¹³ *The Knowing of Mary Poppins* at Brisbane Powerhouse 2005 and 2006, Adelaide Fringe 2008, Darlinghurst Theatre, Sydney 2009; *A Mouthful of Pins* at Brisbane Powerhouse 2008; *Home* (see above for production details); *Eve* at Metro Arts Theatre, Brisbane and the Blue Room Theatre, Perth 2012; and *Joey: the Mechanical Boy* at the Blue Room Theatre, Perth 2014.

¹⁴ Margi has a long history of training in Stanislavski-based psychological realism with Hayes Gordon in Sydney and Stella Adler in New York. Her other training includes Polish Mime with Stefan Niedziakowski and movement with choreographer Gerard Sibbritt. She has also developed her own ImpulseTraining which builds on Deborah Hay's belief in the body's capacity "to think, rather than the mind doing it all" (Brown Ash, 'A Mouthful', 41). My training is primarily informed by Anne Bogart's Viewpoints and, together with Margi, the Suzuki actor training system with Brisbane's Frank Theatre Company, Michael Chekhov's psycho-physical technique with Per Brahe in New York and Bali and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques and practices. The other more recent training Margi and I share and have adapted is Gabrielle Roth's 5 Rhythms.

¹⁵ This methodology was the subject of her 2009 Masters research at QUT.

¹⁶ Van Breda, 'Resilience Theory', 212.

¹⁷ For a more detailed discussion of this myth see Normandi Ellis' book *Awakening Osiris: The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Newburyport: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2009. This myth was particularly evocative for our purposes given Ellis' interpretation of Osiris as a representation in psychological terms of "the recollecting of the diverse aspects of oneself into a unified whole" (Ellis 22).

¹⁸ Margi Brown Ash, *Home* Unpublished Rehearsal Script (Brisbane: Queensland Theatre Company, 2015): 1.

¹⁹ Jan Cohen-Cruz, 'Redefining the private: From personal storytelling to political act', in Jan Cohn-Cruz and Mady Schutzman, ed., *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on theatre and cultural politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006): 103.

²⁰ Margi Brown Ash, 'A Mouthful of Pins: questioning constructionist therapy frameworks in theatre-making' (Master of Arts Dissertation, QUT, 2009). Online: http://eprints.qut.edu.au/40278/1/Margi_Brown_Ash_Thesis.pdf Viewed 19 October 2011: iii.

²¹ While it may seem oxymoronic to describe a process of training your impulses, Margi has found that by collaboratively honing both the individual and shared impulses of an actor in an ensemble, the "impulses become more refined, with a developed ability to respond in the moment, building on the offers from other actors in extraordinary and surprising ways" (Brown Ash, 'A Mouthful', 42). At the time of writing her Masters dissertation in 2009 Margi was using the term ImpulseTraining, she has since developed and expanded her work and now calls it Relational Impulse Cultural (RIC) Training. A discussion of this work can also be found at her website: <http://www.4change.com.au/what-we-do/impulsetraining-for-actors-and-acting-ensembles/>.

²² Anne Bogart (1951 -) is an American theatre director and theorist who has developed Viewpoints (originally conceived by choreographer Mary Overlie) as an actor training method. She is the author of: *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*; *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Compositions* (written with Tina Landau); *And Then, You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World*; *Conversations with Anne* and; *What's the Story: Essays about art, theatre and storytelling*.

²³ Gabrielle Roth (1941 – 2012) was an American theatre director and dance teacher who developed a movement practice called 5Rhythms. She is the author of: *Maps to Ecstasy; Sweat your Prayers: The Five Rhythms of the Soul* and; *Connections: The 5 Threads of Intuitive Wisdom*.

²⁴ Margi Brown Ash, in rehearsal discussion, 2012.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁶ To use Deborah Hay's terminology. For more information see: Hay, Deborah. *Lamb at the Altar: The Story of a Dance*. Duke UP, 1994.

²⁷ For a discussion of this process see Sabrina Hamilton's article "Split Britches and the *Alcestis* Lesson: ("What Is This Albatross?")" in *Upstaging Big Daddy*, edited by Ellen Donkin and Susan Clement, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993.

²⁸ Brown Ash, in rehearsal discussion, 2012.

²⁹ Augusto Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. Trans. Adrian Jackson, trans. (London: Routledge, 2006): 15.

³⁰ Gergen, *Relational Being*, xxv.

³¹ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride, trans. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985): 119.

³² *Ibid* 125-26.

³³ *Ibid* 139.

³⁴ *Ibid* 141-42.

³⁵ Jan Cohen-Cruz is a professor at Syracuse University who regularly produces community-based art projects.

³⁶ Cohen-Cruz, 'Redefining the Private', 105.

³⁷ Boal, *Rainbow of Desire*, 43.

³⁸ Ronald J. Pelias and James VanOosting, 'A Paradigm for Performance Studies', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73.2 (1987): 226.

³⁹ *Ibid* 227.

⁴⁰ *Ibid* 226-27.

⁴¹ *Ibid* 227.

⁴² José I. Rodríguez, Marc D. Rich, Rachel Hastings and Jennifer L. Page, 'Assessing the Impact of Augusto Boal's "Proactive Performance": An Embodied Approach for Cultivating Prosocial Responses to Sexual Assault', *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26.3 (2006): 231.

⁴³ Rodríguez et al, 'Assessing the Impact' 231.

⁴⁴ Linds, 'Metaxis' 114.

⁴⁵ Elyse Lamm Pineau, 'Teaching Is Performance: Reconceptualizing a Problematic Metaphor', *American Educational Research Journal* 31.1 (1994): 15.

⁴⁶ Cohen-Cruz, 'Redefining the Private', 103.

⁴⁷ *Ibid* 104.

⁴⁸ Brown Ash, *Home*, 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* 37.

⁵⁰ Cohen-Cruz, 'Redefining the Private', 104.

⁵¹ Dian Marie Hosking, written audience feedback, *Play with Purpose* seminar, Taos Institute, Gulf of Mexico. February 2011.

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⁵³ Sally Peters, 'Home' (*artsHub*, 24 July 2012). Online: <http://www.artshub.com.au/news-article/reviews/performing-arts/home-190664> Viewed 15 August 2012.

⁵⁴ Stephen Carleton, 'Domestic Bliss', *RealTime* 128 (Aug-Sep 2015): 41.

⁵⁵ Katelyn Panagiris, 'Home' (*XS Entertainment*, 17 July 2015). Online: <https://xsentertainme.wordpress.com/2015/07/17/home-2/> Viewed 19 September 2015.

⁵⁶ Boal, *Rainbow of Desire*, 39.