

**BREATHING SPACE: CROSS-COMMUNITY PROFESSIONAL THEATRE AS
A MEANS OF DISSOLVING FIXED GEOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPES**

**A MINOR DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE)**

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper, I investigate the idea of cross-community professional theatre as a means of dissolving fixed geographical landscapes. Key to this is the synergy between mainstream and community theatre, out of which this idea emerges. I explore how theatre facilitates conversations across differences. 'Differences' encompass questions of geographical, class and racial divides as well as the ideological differences between mainstream and community theatre. Cross-community professional theatre involves working with people from different communities around specific issues. Professional actors work alongside non-professional actors from communities to create a piece of theatre. Community members are involved in the process as well as in the performance. Cross-community refers not only to the exchange between professional actors and non-professional actors, but also to the idea of theatre providing a framework for conversations between different communities.

I unpack the notion of landscape in relation to memory and story, with particular reference to how landscape and memory can be transformed through story. Key to this is the idea of external and internal spaces of geographical and psycho-emotional landscapes.

Pivotal to this investigation is my thesis production, *Breathing Space*, a production that took place in the West Coast Town of Darling and explored women's stories in domestic spaces. The production addressed the process of translating lived experience into a theatrical performance that serviced the needs of the performers (made up of both non-professional and professional actors) and the audience.

My choice to work with women is underpinned by my desire to consciously explore the role theatre can play in challenging the marginalisation and silencing of women in language, discourse, society and culture. It is my belief that the embodied nature of theatre provides an appropriate space for women to 're-member', recover and reclaim silenced aspects of themselves.

I have drawn largely from the theories of Michel De Certeau (1984: 115) and Paul Ricouer (1996:6). De Certeau's notion of stories as spatial trajectories that traverse and organise places inform my investigation into how landscape and memory can be transformed through story. Ricouer's explorations into the

exchange of cultural memories and narratives underpins my practical investigation into how theatre as stories articulated in action, facilitates conversations across differences.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Preface	1
PART ONE:	
Introduction	2
Landscapes	2
Memory-Story-Theatre	9
Cross-Community Professional Theatre	13
PART TWO:	
Introduction	17
Darling in Context	17
The Voorkamerfest	18
Recruitment and Casting	19
The Company	21
Workshops / Conversations	22
Working in Residence	28
The Scenes	29
Performances	35
Future Plans	38
Conclusion	39
Bibliography	41
APPENDICES	
A: Programme	43
B: Script	44
C: Photographs	63

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Preface	1
PART ONE:	
Introduction	2
Landscapes	2
Memory-Story-Theatre	9
Cross-Community Professional Theatre	13
PART TWO:	
Introduction	17
Darling in Context	17
The Voorkamerfest	18
Recruitment and Casting	19
The Company	21
Workshops / Conversations	22
Working in Residence	28
The Scenes	29
Performances	35
Future Plans	38
Conclusion	39
Bibliography	41
APPENDICES	
A: Programme	43
B: Script	44
C: Photographs	63

PREFACE

I have divided this written explication into two parts. The first part deals with the theoretical foundations of my thesis production and the second with my reflections on the production.

The language and style of the two sections differ considerably. The reflection is written in a more conversational, narrative style while the theory section uses standard academic discourse. I attribute the narrative tone of the reflection to the nature of the production, which was centered on notions of multiple conversations. It therefore seemed appropriate to continue this conversational style into the written reflection. The multiplicity of the term 'conversations' refers to a range of conversations from casual social chats, through heart to heart conversations between people, to conceptual discussions around artistic choices as well as between different artistic disciplines. I use the term interchangeably in the reflection section to refer to the many kinds of conversations that theatre facilitates. Key to this is theatre's capacity to facilitate conversations across differences.

Each section has its own introduction, which will outline more specifically what the section deals with.

PART ONE

Introduction

'What the map cuts up, the story cuts across' (De Certeau 1984:129).

This section explores and develops the theoretical framework that laid the foundations for my thesis production. By investigating the relationship between space, place, memory and story, I have attempted to uncover a way of transforming space and memory through story. Central to this exploration is the notion of cross-community professional theatre, a model that arises out of a synergy between community and mainstream theatre. My research provided a theoretical starting point for my proposed thesis production, which took place in the West Coast town of Darling. The production set out to explore women's stories in domestic spaces and located in three homes as sites of performance.

Landscapes

Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits; they are the 'metaphorai' (De Certeau 1984:129).

I am particularly concerned with how landscape and memory can be transformed through story. Key to my investigation of the term landscape is the idea of external and internal spaces of geographical and psycho-emotional landscapes. The geographical landscape of the majority of small South African towns comprises bricks, mortar and metal. For example, in Darling a railway line acts as a solid boundary between the two main communities that comprise the town. Psycho-emotional landscapes, by contrast, are to do with people, i.e. residents of different communities that constitute a town.

I associate two distinctive and oppositional sets of concepts with geographical and psycho-emotional landscapes in this paper. Geographical landscape houses concepts such as master narrative, collective past/official memory, town, house and work/economic space. Psycho-emotional landscapes are home to concepts such as conversations, personal stories/embodied memories, communities, home and domestic spaces.

For the purpose of this explication I will discuss the concepts from each landscape in relation to the other. By 'master narrative' I am suggesting that a single narrative informs the structure of the town. It permeates the geographic memory of the place.

'Conversations' on the other hand, suggests the exchange of multiple experiences, memories and stories between and within different communities. The potential for dissolving the fixed geographic boundaries that are perpetuated by a master narrative, is realised through conversations. Apartheid is the master narrative here that has left traces of its existence not only in the structural makeup of the town, but also in the psyches of the people of the town, where there is evidence of the persistence and pervasiveness of collective or official memory. By engaging communities in conversations and exchanges, embodied memories and personal stories are able to emerge and begin dissolving collective or official memory.

In Darling, as in most small South African towns, segregation and zoning of the town was a direct result of apartheid planning. This has impacted on the language and narratives of the place. Ingrid de Kok attests to this:

[t]he segregation of space determined not only the unequal distribution of land and resources, but the unequal development of a hermetic set of narratives, and a rigidly closed civic language in South Africa (1998: 68).

It is precisely the notion of 'hermetic narratives' that prevents conversations from occurring between different communities in such small towns. Each community remains tightly sealed within their geographically segregated landscapes. Traces of apartheid narrative remain embedded in geographical landscapes and provide little room for personal memories to emerge and find expressions outside their designated zone. The civic language associated with this master narrative has yet to find a way out of its tightly structured geographic landscape, for, as De Kok notes:

[r]emoving the physical 'marks' has proved fairly easy. But the consequences of such physical marking are much more difficult to erase, for segregation has become the spatial imprint of our cities and the deep structure of our imaginations and memories (1998: 70).

In Darling there may be individuals within the communities who show that they have begun to 'remove these physical marks' and to dissolve these barriers by initiating conversations and exchanges with other individuals from other communities. I do not believe however that there is enough evidence to show that people in this divided town have begun to deconstruct and ultimately transform the collective official memory of

apartheid into memories that encompass personal stories and embodied memories. When I visit Darling, my foremost impression and later, memory, is of a town that is clearly divided by a railway line. There seems to be little overlap between different communities. The 'spatial imprint' De Kok refers to remains in both the geographical and emotional landscapes of the town's peoples.

The linearity of the master narrative of apartheid that is embedded in the physical geographical landscape of the town does not easily allow for what Walter Benjamin terms 'memory moments' (Malkin 1999: 27) to emerge and converse. The idea of 'memory-moments' that are, according to Benjamin, 'inspired by the needs of the present' (27) suggests that individual experiences and personal memories come together in an exchange of ideas. This, I argue, will lead to an enhanced capacity among the inhabitants to piece together these stories, so that the deeply structured and embedded imaginations and memories that De Kok speaks of find expression. In finding expression these 'memory-moments' which are determined by '...the needs of the present', may override the master narrative of apartheid segregation that has '... become the spatial imprint of.... our imaginations and memories'. (De Kok 1998: 70). The expression of these moments provides a container for the expression of conversations, which previously had no place in the segregated linearity of apartheid narrative. The question is how one goes about finding ways for people of the town to express these 'memory-moments' in a geographical landscape that is so entrenched in the narrative of segregation. I argue that such conversations need to be facilitated and catalysed by something, and I am arguing that cross-community professional theatre may be such a catalyst. Cross-community professional theatre provides the framework within which these conversations can be facilitated and catalysed into action. It allows for 'memory-moments' to emerge, reflecting and enacting multi-dimensional experiences that are experienced collectively in the different communities that comprise the town.

The notion of town, as opposed to the idea of communities further refracts differences between the two landscapes. 'Town' implies a structured, singular geographical landscape that has been designed and planned by town planners and architects who have, in the case of Darling, carefully segregated the town into various economic and racial zones. A railway line quite literally divides the town racially. One side of the railway line has been designed for the economically and materially advantaged

community. The roads are wider, the houses larger and more stately and in closer proximity to all amenities than the Coloured and African zone on the other side of the railway line. This zone extends into the land surrounding the town in the form of farms; thus it occupies more space than the Coloured zone. There is however little recognition of these different zones as communities. They remain architectural zones that make up the singular identity of Darling as a town, an identity usually associated with the economic dominance of the zone, for example, dairy farming on farms owned by farmers, flower shows organised by women and Evita se Perron developed and owned by well-known theatre personality, Pieter Dirk Uys.

The word 'communities', on the other hand, is an indicator of the psycho-emotional landscapes of the individuals that comprise the various communities. It suggests more complex and less racially uniform sets of identities. Within each of the major communities, there are sub-communities. The Coloured and African side of the railway line is divided economically between middle and working class. The former group occupies larger, more established structures and the latter, smaller one-roomed RDP structures as well as temporary shack structures. The White side of the railway line is subdivided into town people and farm people.

These different communities have arisen out of the town planning and architecture. But the individuals within the communities have shaped the features and characteristics of the communities. Personal stories and individual experiences inform the texture of the communities, thus giving them each different identities within each grouping. When I visit Darling I get the sense that it is a town made up of varied communities that each have dynamic, multi-dimensional individualised identities, in contrast to the notion of a single racially dominant identity.

Interaction between these communities is largely defined by economic interactions, not in terms of personal relationships. For example, people in Coloured communities work customarily (though not exclusively) for people in White communities. People rarely exchange personal stories and memories across community divides. If they do, these would be framed by economic interactions and would take place either in neutral territory (the town centre) or in homes. I use the word neutral cautiously, because White people own the majority of businesses in the town centre. This renders the term neutral suspect.

When Coloured people go to town they are still entering owned territory even though it economically serves all communities. People from White communities seldom visit homes in Coloured communities. If people from Coloured communities visit homes, it is more likely to be in the capacity of an employee or to conduct some sort of economic or business exchange.

I need to unpack the differences between 'house' and 'home' as well. I use 'house' here as connected to geographical landscape, as a physical space that is made up of walls, floors and a roof; i.e. the bricks and mortar of a site. A 'house' becomes a 'home' when it is transformed into a place occupied by people; that is, when it encompasses psycho-emotional landscapes. The energy of people invests the physical space with emotional and psychological meaning, transforming it into a place that is filled with stories and memories that give the space social and personal meaning. Architect Juhani Pallasmaa's view that: '...buildings are devoid of emotion; a work of architecture obliges us... to lend our emotions and place them in it' (2000:1) supports this distinction.

Every time someone new moves into a home it becomes a different home, filled with new stories and memories. Some of the old memories and stories may remain and these in turn affect the stories and memories of the new inhabitants. Memories and stories can be as tangible as traces of previous lived moments such as markings on cupboards or walls. The new occupants have the choice to change the structure and interior design of their home, e.g. they can paint over the markings on the walls or cupboards. But they cannot necessarily change the memories of lived experience in the home, such as memories that are held by neighbours or the immediate community which are imparted through stories and conversations. The walls, floors and ceiling of a home 'absorb' inner conversations and personal expressions of its inhabitants. The bricks and mortar of the house become encrusted with past experiences and memories, which ultimately impact on the experiences of people entering that space, through what Marvin Carlson (2003) terms 'bleeding through' (133). Ongoing memories contained in stories and conversations of the surrounding community contribute to this process of 'bleeding through'. Carlson also notes that 'fundamental to modern semiotics is the insight that any part of our perceived world... is inevitably layered with meanings' (2003:133). If one considers the house as part of 'our perceived world' and the memories layering it with meanings, one begins to engage with what Carlson means when he says: '...how

the “something else” that the space was before...has the potential...of “bleeding through”...’ (133).

Juhani Pallasmaa talks about ‘experiencing a space ... [as] a dialogue, a kind of exchange - I place myself in the space and the space settles in me’ (2000: 1). The notion of dialogue implies that the home contains memories that new inhabitants encounter and kinetically ‘dialogue’ with. I use the term kinetic because they do not necessarily verbally engage in dialogue or conversation with the house. The experiences of the past inhabitants ‘bleed through’ the walls, floors and ceilings and seep into the experiences of the new inhabitants, either consciously or not. These experiences, then ‘settle’ in the new inhabitants and become a part of their lived experience of the place they make their home, i.e. houses become homes through the experiences and activities of people and their immediate physical surroundings.

The choice to use homes as sites of performance engages me in questions of how lived experience can inform a site and how this in turn impacts on the performed story, as well as on the memories of performers and audience. The production set out to explore what Cathy Turner refers to when she talks of Mike Pearson’s work as ‘site-specific performance ... [as] an archaeological investigation of place’ (Turner 2004:376). Homes are filled with memories, traces of past lived experiences. The home encapsulates these memories in its structure. It is precisely the notion of memory traces that makes theatre performance an archaeological investigation of the site of the performance. For, as Turner observes, ‘[s]ince site is always a material trace of the past events, all site work is potentially archaeological’ (376). Performance in these homes adds another layer. For, as Pearson notes, when

the latest occupation of a place where previous occupations are still apparent and cognitively active [occurs], the friction of what is of the place and what is brought to the place’ (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 111)

is always in play.

Interrogating the difference between geographical and psycho-emotional landscapes also involves distinctions between ‘domestic space’ and ‘workspace’. Workspace locates in geographical landscape. It is governed by economics, which in turn has effects on the kinds of conversations and relationships that are formed in these spaces. These are mainly centred around business transactions, though they may include

gossip, particularly in a small town like Darling. But gossip doesn't necessarily take on the same kind of intimacy and ease that it has in a domestic space, in a home. Workspace is public space, in contrast to the private space of a domestic home. Freedom to gossip is more constrained in the workspace than in a domestic space. Time also contributes to this. Time in a workspace is governed by work output and economic returns, whereas time in a domestic space is governed by personal relationships and domestic interactions such as mealtimes, leisure times and domestic activities. The kinds of stories and ultimately the memories that are formed in these two spaces are therefore different. Workspaces produce a particular kind of economic narrative, whereas domestic spaces produce personal stories. If one looks at the gendering of the two spaces, workspaces are governed by male principles and domestic spaces by female principles. And here I am not referring to the myth that a woman's place is in the home (although that myth is quite strongly perpetuated in a small town such as Darling) and a man is perceived as the breadwinner, regardless of actual practice. I am rather referring to the archetypal principles of male and female that are present in both men and women. What Jungian analyst, Marion Woodman refers to as '...a very active, analytical, logical energy symbolized by the sun and a synthesizing, relating energy symbolized by the moon' (Online Interview with Marion Woodman 2005). Woodman goes on to say:

The words that I would associate with the feminine energy are "presence"—being able to live right here, in the here and now; "paradox"—being able to accept what appears to be contradictory as two parts of the same thing; "process"—valuing process as opposed to putting all the value on the product; "receptivity" and "resonance" in the body... The masculine—to contrast it with the feminine images that I've used—tends to leap ahead to the future, to some idealized future. It tends to make things into black or white; it tends to look at life as an either/or situation instead of being able to hold a paradox.

It is precisely notions of 'presence', 'paradox', 'process', 'receptivity' and 'resonance' that have inspired me to explore psycho-emotional landscapes in processes of theatre-making. By choosing to use homes as theatre spaces, my starting point was the psycho-emotional landscapes characterised by conversations, personal stories/embodied memories, communities, home and domestic spaces.

Memory-Story-Theatre

Stories....traverse and organise places; they select and link them together...they are the spatial trajectories (De Certeau 1984:115).

In my thesis production I engaged the communities of Darling in the creation of a piece of theatre that sought to dissolve the divide between community and professional theatre as well as the divide between these communities that has been created by fixed geographic landscape.

Central to this is the notion of story. In Andre Brink's view

[s]tory... [is] the outcome of a process of internalisation and personalisation; story as the construction of a version of the world; and story as the embodiment of an imagining or a complex of imaginings... Story explores a situation from the inside... Story constitutes a reality not necessarily commensurate with what is consensually approved as real... The focus is personal (Brink, Andre 1998: 38).

This captures precisely how I perceive story works to dissolve the divides I have described. 'A process of internalisation and personalisation' is what happens in the psycho-emotional landscape when one explores personal, individual alternatives and responses to the collective or official memory of the geographical landscape. The reality it constitutes is real to the person constituting it and does not necessarily reflect the grand narrative of the geographical landscape. The 'embodiment of... a complex of imaginings' alludes to the multiplicity of experiences and personal interpretations of events, history, encounters, etc that are expressed through engaging with personal stories. This contrasts with the one-dimensional linear construct of a master narrative that leaves out the expression of personal response and lived experience, where, as apartheid South Africa attests to, experience becomes collective and is spoken for by the dominant economic and political discourse.

The abolition of apartheid encouraged the emergence of personal stories. However, the persistence of apartheid geographical landscapes does not allow these stories to be shared across communities; they tend to remain within their respective communities. The cross-community professional theatre that I propose provides a framework for these stories to be shared and experienced without having to structurally alter the geographical landscape, because of its emphasis on conversations and shared experiences. But the

psycho-emotional landscapes of people, I believe, are altered by the experience of theatre. The experience and sharing of stories is central to promoting such alterations.

Story acts as a catalyst for dissolving the fixed geographical landscape; it initiates and enables conversations to occur between the different communities; '...it opens up a legitimate *theatre* for practical *actions*...' (De Certeau 1984: 125). 'Practical *actions*' define the role theatre has to play in dissolving the geographical boundaries between communities. It provides a juncture for stories, which are articulated in action. I believe that this action creates a ripple effect amongst those involved in creating the theatre performance, and among audience members in that it inspires action in the form of further conversations and sharing of experiences among the different communities. Experiencing possibilities within the frame of theatre may create opportunities in social situations for similar explorations beyond the theatrical.

This echoes Boal's (1979) notion of theatre as 'a rehearsal for life' (141-142). De Certeau offers further insights when he talks of stories as bridges:

The story privileges a "logic of ambiguity" through its accounts of interaction. It "turns" the frontier into a crossing, and the river into a bridge. It recounts inversions and displacements: the door that closes is precisely what may be opened; the river is what makes it possible; the tree is what marks the stages of advance....The *bridge* is ambiguous everywhere: it alternately welds together and opposes insularities. It distinguishes them and threatens them. It liberates from enclosure and destroys autonomy (128).

This notion of story privileging a 'logic of ambiguity' resonates with the notion of cross-community professional theatre as a means of dissolving fixed geographical boundaries. Story is the heart of cross-community professional theatre. It strives to make the seemingly impossible possible. The action of story welding together and opposing insularities is precisely what I set out to achieve. By liberating people from the enclosures of the geographical landscape, I wanted to destroy autonomy and create a shared experience; a 'communitas of connection' (Conversation with Jay Pather 2005). I hoped that this process would invoke an awareness of '[b]oundaries...[as] transportable limits...' (De Certeau 1984: 129).

Key to the notion of story is the notion of memory in a theatrical event, where memory transforms into story. Story is a way of making meaning out of memory. I would argue that theatre processes not only organise and make meaning out of memory, but also

trigger memories. De Certeau attests to this when he says: '...memory is played by circumstances, just as a piano is played by a musician and music emerges from it when its keys are touched by the hands' (1984: 88). In my view, the collaborative processes involved in theatre-making are the hands that touch the piano keys.

I am interested too in Joseph Dunne's notion of life 'as a story waiting to be told' (1996: 150). It's almost as if stories are held suspended in the body, as memory, waiting to be told. The expressions of these memories, in the form of stories, are triggered by events and experiences. These events and experiences may not necessarily be directly connected to the person who owns the story for, as Dunne notes,

...a person is implicated not only in one but in several stories – which, moreover, are not self-enclosed, since each may interlock with other stories belonging to one's own life or to the lives of others (150).

The idea of interlocking stories and 'stories belonging to...the lives of others' is crucial to the role theatre plays in dissolving boundaries between communities. It blurs the binary perception of 'us and them'. Paul Ricoeur endorses Dunne's view when he notes

...the story of my life is a segment of the story of your life; of the story of my parents, of my friends, of my enemies, and of countless strangers. We are literally 'entangled in stories' (Ricoeur, Paul 1996: 6).

Engaging people from one town divided by fixed geographic boundaries in the process of making a piece of theatre, facilitates a practical recognition that people are 'implicated...in several stories' for performers and audiences. The act of experiencing oneself reflected and represented in a story that is supposedly 'other' to you, is what begins to open up the possibility of more exchange and sharing in other extra-theatrical contexts, thereby dissolving the impermeable quality of these fixed boundaries on the psycho-emotional landscapes of the people from the town. The persistence of fixed geographic boundaries entrenches the notion of the 'other' by keeping communities within their geographical boundaries; and, further, becomes entrenched in the psyches of the different communities. The process of seeing oneself reflected in the story of the supposed 'other' starts to erode such imposed boundaries. People may initially feel uneasy or uncomfortable, but such theatrical intervention can sow the seed for exploring alternative ways of being.

The process of exchanging stories across geographic boundaries involves exchanging memories between communities. Geographical boundaries in South Africa are linked to

our national history. Recounting and coming to terms with our national history, in order to heal and transform our society, is implicitly linked to the notion of memory exchange across communities and cultures. As Paul Ricoeur asserts

This ability to recount the founding events of our national history in different ways is reinforced by the exchange of cultural memories... In this exchange of memories it is a matter not only of subjecting the founding events of both cultures to a crossed reading, but of helping one another to set free that part of life and of renewal which is found captive in rigid, embalmed and dead traditions (8).

Our fixed geographic boundaries are 'rigid, embalmed' and belong to a dead tradition; unless the exchange of 'cultural memories' through the exchange of stories occurs in South Africa, apartheid will remain embalmed in rigid geographic and psycho-emotional landscapes.

Ricoeur continues:

Indeed, the past is not only what is bygone – that which has taken place and can no longer be changed – it also lives in the memory thanks to arrows of futurity which have not been fired or whose trajectory has been interrupted... The liberation of this unfulfilled future of the past is the major benefit that we can expect from the crossing of memories and the exchange of narratives (8).

Thus recounting and exchanging memories through story can facilitate the healing of the past. It is precisely this that holds the potential for liberation from the bounds of seemingly unyielding geographic landscapes.

Memory and story also play a role in mediating spatial transformation; i.e. how a house in one community comes to signify a home in another community, even if it is not part of that geographically constructed zone. The concept of 'house' is connected to the geographical landscape of a town, while 'home' refers to the psycho-emotional landscapes of people. I have argued that conversations and exchanges occur in the psycho-emotional landscapes of people. Shifts in psycho-emotional landscapes facilitate transformations of geographical landscapes. Geographic landscapes do not necessarily need to be physically transformed. Conversations between psycho-emotional landscapes open up possibilities for transforming people's perceptions of their geographic landscapes. Equally, conversations that happen across geographic zones, can alter psycho-emotional landscapes and diminish the impact of geographical boundaries on relationships between people. Relationships can become more fluid and thus changeable. Zones can become co-existing communities who share and exchange ideas, memories and stories. The exchange of stories through theatre will, I hope, set in

motion other exchanges that occur in daily living. Theatre, because it involves simultaneous private and public exchanges, provides a powerful meeting ground to effect transformations of the geographical landscape. In this way, theatre provides a space for communities to prepare for everyday life.

Cross-Community Professional Theatre

Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice...[stories] make the journey before or during the time the feet perform it (De Certeau 1984: 115-116).

I have adapted this term from Jan Cohen-Cruz's (2001) term 'cross-community professional art' (22). Cross-community professional theatre involves working with people from different communities around specific issues. Professional actors work alongside non-professional actors from communities to create a piece of theatre. Community members are involved in the process as well as in the performance, and not only as actors.

The rationale behind involving community members in the process and performance is to engage community members with issues *they* identify. By engaging community members from the beginning of the process, the issues are identified by them so that they have a sense of ownership of the process and performance.

I am interested in what happens when memories contained within physical spaces and structures encounter external memories within particular spaces, for example, when memories of neighbours from surrounding homes converge with memories contained in the performed story. Njabulo Ndebele offers a telling example of such convergence:

The ordinary Afrikaner family, lost in the illusion of the historic heroism of the group, has to find its moral identity within a national community which it is freed from the burden of being special.... Somewhere the story of the agony of the contemporary Afrikaner family will converge with the stories of millions of those recently emerged from oppression. That point of convergence may very well be the point at which ordinary Afrikaners recognise, through confronting their own histories, the enormity of the horror that was done on their behalf, and which, as willing agents, they helped bring about (Ndebele 1998: 24-25).

I believe that theatre promotes this kind of convergence by enacting cross-cultural communication in transforming memories and place, by providing a means of experiencing and viewing a place through different lenses. Such site-specific theatre, by

enabling this convergence, enables people to 're-invent themselves through narrative' (Ndebele 1998: 27).

Theatre practice is notoriously plagued by hierarchical schisms, chief among which is the differentiation between 'mainstream' and 'community' forms of theatre. In popular perceptions, theatre has little material importance and community theatre is even more marginal. In professional theatre the role of actors in relation to their audience is clearly defined: actors hold power over their audience. Community theatre, on the other hand, often encourages active physical audience engagement. The power relationships between actors and audience are therefore more fluid and interchangeable. Mainstream theatre, primarily emphasises the role of the individual actor, the playwright and the director, in contrast to community theatre's emphasis on creative collaborators.

By seeking to blur the divide between community and mainstream, cross-community professional theatre opens up possibilities for challenging these divisive terms. I agree with Little's (2004) advocacy of a continuum approach to the relationship between them. 'A binary approach, to this paradigm', he asserts,

[p]osits that these parallel set of values can co-exist, but only as expressed in separate practices. A continuum argument argues that they must co-exist. They are the central values informing the processes of 'production' and the products of 'consumption', respectively. The continuum approach insists that cultural democracy and the democratisation of culture be recognised as interdependent, complementary parts of a vigorous, inclusive vision of theatre and cultural life. This offers a veritable Kama Sutra of aesthetic alternatives to the commonly prescribed missionary position, in which 'amateur and professional' or ... '[community] and mainstream' theatres are seen as competing and mutually exclusive (4).

So in my work I consciously blur this divisive distinction between professional and community practices, in order to develop a practice that draws both professional and community theatre under one theatrical umbrella. Thus mainstream theatre provides the aesthetic, structures and theatrical skills for the performance, while communities provide the stories and lived experiences, i.e. the material, as well as performance forms derived from their specific cultural knowledge. It is this synergy that characterises cross-community professional theatre. Further, I believe that theatre practitioners benefit more from communities than communities do from theatre practitioners from such interactions and am in agreement with Jan Cohen-Cruz when she contends that

[c]lose contact with communities offers artists the opportunity to expand and grow humanly, keeping the horizons of their world broader than their former circle of

acquaintances...Community connections provide outlets for artists' political and social visions too... (2001: 214)

But the two-way process also challenges professional theatre practitioners, however appealing it may seem. Cohen-Cruz points to these challenges when she asks:

[h]aving introduced art to a community, what happens when the artist leaves? How do artists balance facilitating the artistic expression of others with their own personal creative desires? How do artists negotiate professional standards with the radically democratic spirit of community art? And what about the artist's public identity, given the tendency for community work to be seen as amateurish (214).

The kinds of theatre-making processes I engage with are collaborative in nature. I would argue that the process of a two-way exchange between professional theatre practitioners and communities is about identifying what each has to offer. Facilitating such exchanges is crucial, so that communities can be guided through a process of discovering theatrical ways of expressing their stories, rather than be told what to do and how to do it. Their stories and experiences in turn guide and facilitate the mainstream theatre-making process and ultimately, product. Synergy happens through facilitated exchanges. As a theatre-maker I am not interested in coercing anyone into doing what they don't feel comfortable doing it. Similarly with the expression of their stories: if community members do not feel comfortable with the way in which their stories are being expressed, we need collaboratively to find a new way of expression that works for all involved.

There has been a considerable body of community theatre in South Africa that was driven by 'social action' (Little 2004:1). But there has not been much attention given to what Edward Little terms 'aesthetic accomplishment' (2004: 1). This is reflective of the division between community theatre and mainstream theatre, because for practitioners and audiences 'aesthetic accomplishment and social efficacy are characterised as competing, or mutually exclusive' (Little 2004: 1).

Little concurs (as I do) with Catherine Graham who believes that 'the separation of artistic form and social utility is a false dichotomy (Little 2004:2). He goes on to quote Graham: thus:

'[It]...is precisely theatre's formal qualities that allow for reflection about the social life out of which the theatre comes' (2). The 'formal qualities' of theatre that Graham

speaks of connect with my understanding of theatre as an act of representation; representations that are in turn acted on within the theatrical framework. I would take Graham's quote further to incorporate taking action, i.e. 'reflection' leading to action.

I concur with Little that

As creators of ...[community] theatre, I believe, we are charged with the responsibility of discovering ways in which the ideologies, intentions, and values of our projects may be expressed as an aesthetic weave and a social weft in the creation of an artistic fabric (4).

I would argue that cross-community professional theatre is precisely about realising the 'aesthetic weave' and 'social weft' Little talks of. It embraces both notions of 'social action' and 'aesthetic accomplishment' and in so doing, it can uphold both professional and social developmental criteria.

PART TWO

Introduction

My decision to locate my thesis production within the framework of the Voorkamerfest, came out of an initial idea to create a piece of theatre that explored women's stories in domestic spaces. I wanted to take the site-specific aspect of my medium project further as well as the notion of a traveling audience, by using homes as sites of performance. The audience would travel from home to home in minibus taxis.

In September 2004 my theatre company, Mothertongue, was invited to perform at the first Voorkamer Festival in Darling. The organisers of the festival, Wim Visser and Inge Bos, had been inspired to create a festival, in order to get people moving among the different communities in Darling by watching a variety of performances. They had recently bought a house in Darling, where they spend half the year (the other half is spent in Holland), and were shocked by the huge divisions they perceived among the communities in Darling. They felt that theatre was the ideal vehicle to bridge these divides. This resonated strongly with me, as I am an ardent advocate of theatre's capacity to facilitate conversations across differences.

Darling in Context

Darling is a small town situated along the west coast of the Western Cape, approximately 75 kilometers from Cape Town. Prior to the Group Areas Act, Coloured families lived in the main residential area of the town. The Group Areas Act forced these families to move to an area that was initially called *Nuwedorp*. A railway line divided *Nuwedorp* from the main residential area, which was occupied by Whites. With time *Nuwedorp* became known as the *Onderdorp* and the White area became known as the *Bôdorp*. The *Bôdorp* is literally situated up on a hill, with the *Onderdorp* down below. The geographical implications of *Bô* and *Onder*, I would argue, impact on the psycho-emotional landscapes of the inhabitants. *Bô* implies that something is located above, (and thus, in terms of value, 'better'), while *onder* suggests a low position (or 'less important'). It is my impression that the White community see themselves as being

above and better, whereas the Coloured community place themselves in the role of lower and less important.

In 1996 *Asla*, the Reconstruction and Development Plan housing settlement was constructed. *Asla* was the name of the contractor who won the tender to build the houses. Now more and more African families are moving into *Asla* as there are numerous farms on the outskirts of the town that employ African men and women. Prior to 1994, these men would probably have lived on the farms as contract labourers and their wives would have lived in the then homelands. The arrival of African families into Darling has introduced yet another division into the communities of the town. A road, recently named Evita Bezuidenhout Boulevard, divides the more established area of the *Onderdorp* from *Asla*. No African families live in the established area. *Asla* is seen by the people who live on the established side of the road to be the 'bad' part of the *Onderdorp* that houses the drug merchants and tavern owners. The Coloured people who live in the more established *Onderdorp* see the people who live in *Asla* as poorer and therefore less fortunate. Interestingly enough both Coloureds and Africans live in *Asla*, which suggests that class implications inform these perceptions.

The Voorkamerfest

My experience of the 2004 Voorkamerfest left me feeling that the performance presence of the Darling residents themselves was absent. If I were to explore the power of theatre as a bridging agent, then the people of Darling needed to be involved in creating and performing in the theatre festival. Local home-owners were involved in the festival as *theatre managers* who welcomed audience members into their homes and introduced the artists who were performing in their homes. But I had hoped to encounter people from Darling performing in the pieces as well. This made me think about my own practice as a theatre-maker. In the past I had worked with groups of non-professional women actors as part of my theatre-making. I would take these groups through processes that would enable them to access their personal stories and find ways of creatively expressing these stories. These workshop processes would usually take place over six two-hour sessions and would culminate in the women creating site-specific, travelling performances wherever the workshops were located. The company of

professional actors and myself would facilitate these processes, which would ultimately inspire the professional production that we created at a later stage. The Darling experience made me realise the potential to involve the *owners* of the source stories in the production that we as a company would make. They could create and perform together with the professional actors. These events, discoveries and realisations helped shape my academic enquiry. So I approached the organisers of the festival about the possibility of making a production for the festival with a group of women from Darling. They were excited by the idea and gave me their permission.

The Voorkamerfest is structured so that there are six routes each with three different performances that take place in three different homes on each route. Audience members buy a ticket and are assigned a route randomly. Each route generally consists of three different performance genres, i.e. they could experience a cello player in one home, a stand-up comic in another and a storyteller in the third. There is no structured connection between the three performances.

When I submitted my proposal to the organisers I indicated that to fully realise my thesis enquiry, I needed to be assigned one route where the three performances could link thematically to one another. They initially agreed to this, but at a later meeting told me they felt that each of my performance pieces needed to be attached to a different route, in keeping with the rest of the festival. It took roughly four weeks of emailing and telephone conversations to convince them that we needed one route. This however, had implications that I will talk about later.

Recruitment and Casting

Nine months later, after it had been confirmed that we would be part of the festival, I had a meeting with the organisers of the Voorkamerfest to discuss potential recruitment tactics. The local social worker attended this meeting as the organisers felt that she would have access to women from the Coloured community. The meeting culminated in our decision to hold a recruitment workshop, to which some of the main mobilisers of the town would be invited. A date was set for 16 July. I drew up an advertisement in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa and gave it to the festival manager, to put up in strategic

places in the town. The festival manager undertook to contact White women and the social worker, Coloured women. It was agreed that the woman who runs-Evita se Perron's Beading Project would recruit African women involved in her beading project.

I began firming up casting decisions. I had approached four performers in March to gauge their interest in working on the project. I thought very carefully about who I wanted, as they would need to be able to take on the roles of actor-facilitators. They needed to be professional actors who were able to work with non-professional actors. They had to be open to the synergy I was proposing between community and mainstream theatre, i.e. they had to be prepared to blur the traditional divide. These professional actors needed to be open to learning from the community members they would be working with.

All of them were very excited by the idea and were prepared to take the project on despite the fact that funding had not yet been secured. They felt that the nature of the work and what they could gain as actors was worth far more than the financial gain. I took this as an indicator that I had chosen well. It was agreed that the professional actors, (except one who was in Australia at the time), would plan and co-facilitate the recruitment workshop with me. This set the trend for all our workshop planning sessions. This collaborative way of working informs my practice as a theatre-maker and opens up spaces for conversations that are at the heart of the work I make.

We spent two hours planning on the Friday prior to the recruitment workshop, The workshop was divided into two parts. We started with a name game, after which I introduced the project and what it would entail. The second part focused on practical exercises on the floor, and each of the actor-facilitators had a chance to facilitate an exercise. Co-facilitating fosters a sense of inclusiveness and dispels the hierarchical notion of the director as sole authority.

Fourteen women came to the workshop. The proposal that was put to the women was that the Cape Town group (four actors and myself, later to be joined by a designer) would run five weekly Saturday workshop sessions in Darling from 10h00 to 17h00. It was agreed that the last two weeks would be more intense, with the Cape Town group working in residence in Darling. This would mean daily rehearsals for all in the two

weeks prior to the festival. We also had to make it clear that performances would take place on Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the Festival weekend. Most of the women are devout Christians, which meant that if they wanted to participate, they would have to be prepared to perform on a Sunday.

Most of the women said they were interested, but requested two Saturday workshops to decide if they wanted to be involved in the project. Some of the women were unable to participate due to work obligations, but promised to tell other possible participants about the project. There was only one White woman at this workshop. She however couldn't do it because she was already involved in another children's project for the festival. I became acutely aware at this point of the need to put extra energy into recruiting the White women of Darling. The festival manager and I had a conversation and she assured me she would continue trying to get White women involved.

During the physical activities of the workshop, the women were initially very tentative, but after the first exercise they began opening up. I was struck by their willingness and openness to play. On the way home, the Cape Town actors commented on how valuable the experience was, in that it made them realise how fortunate we as trained performers are to have access to the skills and knowledge we have, and how we take our craft so for granted. Having worked extensively over the years with untrained performers, this has always been my observation. It was very affirming to hear their responses. I felt that the mutually beneficial process had begun. The Darling women, too, had visibly had a good time. There had been a lot of laughter and warmth. The mood had shifted considerably from when we began the workshop.

The Company

The Cape Town performers were Jill Levenberg, Mbali Kgosidintsi, and Alex Halligey (2004 Drama graduates) and Chuma Sopotela (a third year drama student).

The Darling performers were Ivy Johnson, a nurse at the local clinic; Sary Vlotman, a retrenched worker from Textiles, now a housewife; Patience Ngqeyi, a member of Evita se Perron's Beading Project who operates a spaza shop from home; Anna Williams, also retrenched from Textiles, now a housewife; Sylvia Jack, from Evita se Perron's Beading

Project; Cathy Adams another retrenched worker from Textiles, now a housewife; Veronica Sinqayi, from Evita se Perron's Beading Project; Diane October, a nurse at the local old age home; and Jasmine Ezziden, a grade 8 school-goer. We were a team of fifteen women, including the designer and myself, ranging between the ages of fourteen and sixty-five.

Workshops / Conversations

The Saturday workshops spanned five weeks, with the workshop days divided into two parts. The first part of the workshop typically involved games and focus exercises to loosen participants up and develop skills. For example, we began by teaching them a name song, which grew into an opening ritual at every workshop. Once again, I was struck by the willingness to play. Perhaps this has something to do with the age group we were working with. They were mostly older women who, I think, had no need to prove anything to anybody. I had recently come out of a project with teenage girls, where I constantly had to coax them out of themselves. The openness of the Darling women was a sharp contrast to this.

The second part of the day would characteristically focus on creating scenes inspired by different objects or materials as stimuli. For example we made collages about 'Me in My Home'. We then took four images from the collages and interpreted them in body images. After exploring these four images we went back to our original groups and combined the images to create an ensemble piece to which we added sound. These pieces were then shared with the larger group. The actor-facilitators participated and created collages with the women. I was amazed by the focus and clarity of intention these women had. The pieces they created were very moving and my sense was that the process of identifying stories to take into performance had begun. The synergy between professionals and non-professionals also started to emerge. The Cape Town actors were able to find a balance between collaborating and facilitating without imposing their ideas. There was a buzz of enthusiasm in the room while they were putting their pieces together. The sharing of scenes was also met with sensitivity and respect from all who watched. It was clear that a safe space had been very quickly created where people felt they could speak their stories, however painful they were.

In another session newspaper was used as the stimulus. I gave them the choice of locating their scene in the lounge/voorkamer, kitchen, bedroom or yard. Each group chose a different space. They made objects out of newspapers for their particular spaces and then created scenes inspired by the objects.

Each workshop session ended with a talking circle, where anyone could offer a personal object to the circle. The object was transformed into a talking stick, which was passed around the circle. The rules of the talking circle are such that you may only talk when you have the stick; then you may say anything you wish to in relation to the day. If you don't feel like talking you pass it on to the next person. Everybody in the talking circle commented on the warmth they had encountered. One woman was amazed that people from such diverse backgrounds, ages and races could work together in the manner in which we had. All of them said they would definitely come back the following week and that they would bring more women with them. One of the women said that initially she was not too sure about these crazy 'girls' from Cape Town, but by the end of the day she had grown fond of these crazy 'girls'. Another woman said that it had always been her dream to act and that now God had given her that chance. The Cape Town actors were very motivated by the experience. They all talked about how much they had learnt as performers and women. They were clear about their dual roles as young women who had much to learn from these older women, as well as young women who had theatrical skills to share. They all expressed the need to honour the stories that were shared. The conversations had clearly begun. In retrospect, if I had been aware of what would be required to achieve all that I wanted during this project, I probably would have been too daunted by the logistics to undertake it! But I followed the steps as the pathway led me, without thinking too much about the logistics. And after the first workshop session, I drove back to Cape Town with a real sense that it could work, that it was possible.

We still hadn't found a White woman by the end of the second workshop session and I was becoming a little desperate, as the presence of a White woman was key to my concept of theatre conversations across geographical boundaries, as well as to the transformative effects on emotional landscapes of such theatrical conversations.

Initially I had had the idea that some women would be involved in performing and some in design and making. At the end of third workshop session we asked who would be

interested in performing and who would like to design and make. Everyone said they wanted to do everything and so that's how it was. I found this very encouraging. It also meant that everyone would be involved in all aspects of making the production. In a way, it provided space for more conversations to occur, particularly the conversations between design, making and performing. If we had followed my original idea of dividing the women up into designers and performers, we might have run the risk of creating divisions within the group.

A major part of the third Saturday workshop was taken up with publicity photographs. We traveled on foot to two houses, one in the more established *Onderdorp* and the other in *Asla*. Walking from house to house, crossing the geographical divides and entering people's homes made me aware of how far we had come towards fostering a sense of *communitas* among these women, and among ourselves. We all walked, singing and laughing. For some it was the first time they had entered a home on the other side of the road. When I initially conceptualised the project as located in Darling, I was chiefly concerned with the divide between the *Onderdorp* and the *Bôdorp*, and the railway line that divides the two. Ironically, this particular boundary crossing didn't happen on our traveling photo shoot, because we had no White woman whose home we could use for photographs. However, the divide between African and Coloured zones certainly began to be crossed. A vivid memory I have is of everyone buying *Fling* chips from Patience Ngqeyi's *spaza* shop and sitting down in the shop and outside on benches chatting with the children and other people who share her space. It was as if they were discovering an aspect of each other's identity that they would not necessarily have found if it were not for the theatre processes we had engaged in.

On the fourth Saturday, Kali van der Merwe, our designer (who had joined us for the second and third workshop sessions) presented her design ideas to the group. Her observations of the previous sessions inspired the idea of creating installations out of suitcases. Small groups deriving from the three house scenes and the taxi guides each collectively created suitcases that reflected their stories. They decided on a material to line the inside of the suitcase. One group, for example, chose to use earth, while another used washing powder boxes and beer bottle tops. Each character then chose and created an object that reflected that character's personal story. They wrote the story

on a label and attached it to the object that was then placed in the suitcase. The characters' dreams were written in glitter on the outside of the suitcases.

We also went to see our performance spaces on the fourth Saturday workshop and the performers in the *As/a* scene immediately started working in their space. *As/a* was a particularly challenging space to rehearse in because there was a tavern next door to the home we performed in. Recreational activities on Saturdays and Sundays in *As/a* tend to revolve around taverns, *smokelhuise* and *tik* houses. This means that a large number of the people in *As/a* are drunk. Any foreign presence, particularly a White foreign presence, attracts a huge interest. This meant we had hordes of audience members giving advice, getting involved in the scene and generally being quite disruptive. This was very difficult for the actors, but I believe it fed the unpredictability of the scene.

When I was conceptualising the production, I was very clear that I wanted to create an installation in the RDP house in *As/a* and that I wanted the actual performance to take place in the yard. The idea was that the suitcases would be the primary feature of the installation, supported by slide projections and a video installation. Kali and I had not been too sure what the video installation would be about. I had an idea that I wanted it to revolve around the railway line, as this is such a prominent dividing feature in Darling. This Saturday, however, the material for the installation became insistently apparent.

We still had not found a White woman to be involved in the production. I decided at this point that that's what our installation video needed to be about, i.e. the absent yet dominant image of a White woman, whose presence was clearly not physical but was nevertheless certainly felt in the *Onderdorp* homes, as a kind of pervasive onlooker from the *Bôdorp*. By this stage, I felt I could not spend any more energy on trying to involve a White woman and that the failure to get one involved was in itself a critical indicator of the embedded presence of the master narrative of apartheid that I identified in the first part of this explication. This absence clearly made it difficult for the full range of Benjamin's 'memory-moments' (Malkin 1999: 27) to emerge and converse. I had to accept the fact that the closest I would get to any kind of exchange between the *Onderdorp* and the *Bôdorp* would be through audience members experiencing the performances. But it has strengthened my resolve to continue the project in next year's

festival and to actively recruit a local of a White woman (or more than one) for this production.

From the onset I had thought that two of the local women needed to be 'taxi guides' on the taxi journeys. I wanted them to tell the history of Darling through personal stories. During the workshops we identified two women who would take on the roles. We decided to use landmarks within the geographical landscape as pointers for the stories they told. The railway line became a key landmark, given that each audience had to cross it twice during the course of the production. The women both recognised the enormity of the physical divide the railway line represents and how it has permeated the geographic memory of Darling and in turn impacted on the psycho-emotional landscapes of the people. The absence of White people in the *Onderdorp* bears testimony to this. One of the women recounted how as a child her father worked for the railways, which meant they lived in a house in the *Bôdorp* side of the track. During the 1960s, however, they had to move to the *Onderdorp* because of the Group Areas Act. The other taxi guide expressed her wish for the railway line to be dismantled because it was such an imposing memory of the divisions between the *Bôdorp* and the *Onderdorp*. Both spoke about their experience of the 'Healing of Memories Project' that had been started by their church a few years ago, and how that had provided them with a space to share stories and begin the process of healing the divides between the communities. They however, felt that a lot more work was needed, particularly since there was not only a divide between White and Coloured communities, but that divides between African and Coloured people were becoming increasingly prevalent. I asked them if they felt the kind of work we were doing with theatre would assist this process and they both strongly believed that it would. On reflection, I would argue that the impact of the terms *Onder* and *Bô* on the psycho-emotional landscapes of people in Darling had something to do with not being able to get a White woman involved. My sense is that the majority of White women in Darling are unwilling to join a project that is located primarily in and involves women from the *Onderdorp*, possibly because they are fearful of the unfamiliar area and its inhabitants, or perceive that they will be involved in a 'charitable' project and that their involvement would mean 'helping out' rather than 'participating *with*'. I encountered this patronising attitude from a number of White women I spoke to in Darling. All of these women expressed their gratitude for the 'wonderful' work we were doing in the *Onderdorp* and how much it was 'needed'.

Separate rehearsals began with the Cape Town group on Monday following the second workshop in Darling. The shape and pace of these rehearsals was slightly more vigorous than the workshops. An opening and closing ritual framed each rehearsal and the opening ritual was followed by a thorough physical and vocal warm up. The pattern the week day rehearsals in Cape Town took was that the first half of the week focused specifically on the Cape Town group's perceptions of and reflections on the previous Saturday's workshops in Darling. The second half would focus on developing material to feed back into the following Saturday workshop. We did this through activities such as image work, free writing, object work, movement and singing, which fed into improvised scenes located in the specific spaces, i.e. kitchen, lounge/voorkamer, bedroom or yard. This interweaving approach to the work underpins my notion of conversations across varied communities, in this case across the professional and non-professional divides. The impetus for the scenes came from the women of Darling and was developed further by the Cape Town performers in rehearsal. In this process, the professional actors interpreted and added their personal resonances to the scenes. As Jill Levenberg notes: 'I learnt about other people's lives which forced me to look at my own life because we were working on such an honest level' (Conversation with Jill Levenberg 2005). She discovered aspects of Sary Votman's stories that resonated with her own life and this, she believes, fed the creation of the scene. Conceptual and social conversations between her and her fellow performers from Darling allowed this to happen. The notion of other people's stories being reflected in our own stories links to Dunne and Ricoeur's sense that people are implicated and reflected in each others' stories.

We worked as a whole group for the first week of rehearsals. During that week we viewed the video footage from the Saturday workshops and came up with possible scenes. We also did a provisional casting for each of the scenes. The rest of the weekday rehearsals were focused on finalising the scenes and typing up the scripts

I had decided from the outset that at least one of the actors from Cape Town would be in each scene. This decision was based primarily on the time factor. Our time in Darling was limited in comparison with the relative abundance of time I had with the actors from Cape Town away from Darling.

Working in Residence

In the final phase of rehearsals, the Cape Town group spent the last two weeks in residence in Darling. We lived in the local primary school hostel and worked at the Fokus Community Hall. I have always found working in residence appealing, in that it gives the work a texture that is shaped by personal relationships that develop outside the rehearsal space. This is not to say that personal relationships do not develop outside conventional rehearsal spaces where people go home to their own homes after rehearsal. But sharing sleeping space (we lived in communal hostel dormitories) and a kitchen goes beyond sharing a drink after rehearsals; you get to know each other on a more personal level. There is something quite special about working together and going home to cook together; and this certainly enriches the working process. Apart from the sense of *communitas* working in a residence context cultivates, it also provides space for focused work-time where the production work is the sole focus of everyone's time and attention with no distractions. The energy becomes more focused on the task at hand.

Working in residence also embedded our presence in Darling more strongly. The staff at the local supermarket and bakery, for example, started greeting us with familiarity after the first couple of days. Our position shifted temporarily for those two weeks from 'outsiders' to honorary *Darlingers*. The local women participants and their friends who weren't involved in the process cooked meals and baked biscuits for us. This acceptance went as far as the local shopping area and the *Onderdorp*, the areas I refer to as 'workspace' in Part One. The residents of the *Bôdorp* however were not, I think, particularly aware of our presence perhaps because of the location of our rehearsal spaces predominantly in the *Onderdorp*. But I would also argue that the *Bôdorp* is far more insular than the *Onderdorp*. There is less sense of community. But the people whose home we worked in in the *Bôdorp* were very accommodating and happy with our coming in every day to rehearse for two hours in their kitchen. They left us to our own devices and didn't interfere much. This was in sharp contrast to the experience of rehearsing in *Asla*, where the community was very involved in the rehearsals.

The residency was structured along conventional rehearsal lines, where I drew up rehearsal schedules and performers were called at different times of the day to rehearse their scenes. The first week of the residency also allowed time for the company to finish

making their suitcases for the installation. We also used this time to film the video installation, which finally was a close up image of a White woman that interchanged with images of African, White and Coloured feet crossing the railway line in different directions. The feet were superimposed onto the face and eventually dissolved into the face. The company was involved in the filming of the feet crossing the railway. Walking over sharp stones with bare feet was a painful experience but I was impressed by the group's willingness to endure this. As with most filming sessions, we had to do countless takes. We sang songs and physically supported one another when the pain was unbearable. This spirit of doing things for the good of the production and the company as a whole was a core element that fed the overall ethos of the process, particularly the two-week residency. On a number of occasions someone said, 'we don't want to let Sara and the rest of the group down. So we must work hard'. As a theatre-maker, I found this sense of commitment to each other and to the process very moving. I have seldom encountered this degree of selflessness in the world of theatre.

Rehearsals started at 10h00 and ended at 18h00 to accommodate those that joined us after work. The mornings would invariably start with me driving the taxi guides on their various routes around Darling. We found it helped if we physically went on the journey. The visibility of landmarks sparked off stories of growing up and living in Darling. The rest of the day would typically be spent rehearsing the different scenes in the respective houses. At the end of the process, almost all the women recounted how the structure of the process, particularly the last two weeks, had given their lives a real sense of purpose. They all mentioned that it was something they would definitely miss. It was interesting to notice how some of the women would come to rehearsals even if they had not been called, just to be with us to help out wherever they could. It gave me insight into the positive space this project had grown to occupy in their lives.

The Scenes

Susan Marais and the art of flower arranging

This scene took place in a *Bôdorj* kitchen and features Susan Marais, her younger sister Lyn who is visiting for the weekend and Mary, the woman who works for Susan three times a week. The scene deals with the politics of divisions and differences

between the *Onderdorp* and the *Bôdorp*. Susan's perceptions are clearly shaped by her White middle class Afrikaans sensibilities. She views the *Onderdorp* as *other* and therefore dangerous – a place where *bad* things happen, such as drugs and alcoholism. Her sister Lyn's apparent ease in making connections across the railway line are extremely threatening to Susan. The anxiety and fear suppressed beneath her overbearing liberalness is revealed in her responses to Lyn's 'escapades' into the *Onderdorp*. The relationship between Susan and Mary is clearly strained. Lyn and Mary, on the other hand, share a more relaxed relationship, suggesting that the generational gap between the two sisters contributes to the tensions.

Alex Halligey, the Cape Town actor in the scene, drew from her observations of White women in the town (because we didn't have a White woman involved in the process) coupled with the perceptions of the Coloured and African women in the company. So her character, Susan Marais, was in some ways constructed as a stock character. I was happy with this choice, as it marked the effects of the absence of a local White woman in the project. I also felt I needed to respect the perceptions of the women who were actively involved in the process. Yet in spite of this, the owner of the house we performed in, told Alex that she felt there was so much of herself in the character of Susan Marais! Another White woman audience member also felt that Susan Marais typified the average White woman in Darling.

Dotty van Niekerk, Aunty Lulu and Hlekiwe find their tummies

This scene took place in the lounge/voorkamer of a house in the more established side of the *Onderdorp*. The house belongs to Ivy Johnson who performed in the scene that took place in *Asla*. The scene primarily reveals the individual secrets that Dotty van Niekerk, Aunty Lulu and Hlekiwe have kept for many years. It deals with what other people say about you behind your back. During the workshop phase of the process, the experience of being labeled by what others say about you in a small town, came up frequently. All three characters have secrets, which are revealed during the course of the scene. The audience is treated as a confidante. We hear about Dotty's *tik*-addict son, Ryan and how Ryan's father, the White man whose house she worked in as a domestic, raped her. Aunty Lulu, her late mother's best friend, speaks about her husband who is having an affair with a younger woman in the village. We learn that

Hlekiwe is in actual fact Dotty's half sister, an illegitimate child Dotty's mother had with an African man when she was at college in Cape Town.

They do not resolve their problems in the scene, but it does however enable them to find connections with one another by discovering each others' 'tummies', and in this way they find the comfort and support that enables them to claim identities beyond the labels conferred on them by the rest of the town.

This scene was probably the most successful in terms of story making meaning out of memory. The characters intimately recount and try to make sense of past events; in so doing they create identities for themselves that lead to shared trust and pleasure in their relationship. Their psycho-emotional landscapes are altered, thus allowing them to find these connections. They are implicated in each others' stories: Aunty Lulu is Dotty's mother's contemporary and Hlekiwe, who lives in *Asla*, is Dotty's half-sister. Theatre, as the formal structure for stories articulated in action, provides the container for shared experiences and enacts the transformation from one state to another. The fact that they are implicated in each others' stories enables the boundaries of age, race and class to be dissolved.

Soap in RDP

This scene took place in the compound of an RDP house in the *Asla* side of the *Onderdorp*. We had decided to turn this house into an installation space. The scene itself takes place around the entrance to the house, the washing line in the compound and the fence between the house and the next-door neighbour's house, which is also used as a washing line. Ma Dlamini is the matriarchal authority of the house, although she is not physically present throughout the scene, The two younger women, Zuke and Ntombi, carry a deep respect for Ma Dlamini although they are extremely outspoken and often insulting to one another. Ntombi is Ma Dlamini's daughter and lives with her; Zuke is her friend who owns the tavern next door. Aunt Mary, the next door neighbour, has a daughter who is HIV positive. She is tired of all the noise next door and feels the young women need to respect her sick daughter. This scene, like the previous one, deals with the different faces we put on for others. All sorts of secrets are revealed around the washing line; the dirty laundry is literally and figuratively brought out into the open for all to see. The love-hate relationship between the two younger women is revealed. The two

older women, Ma Dlamini and Aunt Mary are able to come together, regardless of race and language differences, to instill some sort of respect in the younger women.

At the end of the scene, Ma Dlamini invites the audience into her house. At the entrance, Aunt Mary gives them torches and asks them to explore the suitcases in pairs while the video installation plays and Ma Dlamini sits on a chair changing projected slides with a remote control. The slides are various lines from poems we created during the process. The installation space contained the experiences and memories of the characters from each of the spaces in all three houses. The experience of the installation was in stark contrast to the scene outside. There was a tangible silence inside that contrasted with the noisy activities outside. The purpose was for audience members to excavate the past experiences of the characters and to discover all that had been covered up by the brashness of the scene outside. The installation revealed the hidden stories of all the characters in all three scenes and integrated both private and public conversations between audiences and characters. I hoped that it would effect a transformation of both the geographical and psycho-emotional landscapes of the audience members themselves.

What I find attractive about working in specific sites is that the sites themselves hold stories and memories that inevitably impact on the work that is created and how it is experienced in that space. This echoes Juhani Pallasmaa's theoretical observations about encountering a space as a conversation between lived experience, memories and what the performers, in this case, bring to the space. I would argue that the traces of past lived experience as well as the lived experience of the rehearsal process in *Asla*, created the piece that was performed at the festival. It was what Mike Pearson (Turner 2004:376) refers to as an archeological investigation of the site through performance. One of the women in this scene, Ivy Johnson, works for the local clinic and is very well known in the community, both in the established side of the *Onderdorp* and in *Asla*. Her presence immediately engaged the community. The character she played had an HIV positive daughter, but the rehearsal audience found it difficult to differentiate between her character and herself as community worker. One of the audience members shouted out: "Ooh aunty Ivy, we didn't know your daughter was sick!" I was a bit perturbed by this at first, as I didn't want a rumour to start that her daughter was sick. I spoke with her about it and she didn't seem disturbed by this. She felt they would eventually

understand that she was playing a character, which is precisely what happened. On another occasion, during the rehearsal, a very drunk rehearsal audience member got involved in the action. Before we knew it one of the actors was sprawled on the ground with this woman on top of her. She clearly got carried away by the action of the scene and felt the need to intervene, becoming herself a social performer in the moment. These kinds of experiences certainly fed the energy of the piece.

I would argue that the soap scene definitely left its traces in the psycho-emotional landscapes of the people who live in the immediate neighbourhood. The community members became actively involved in the rehearsal process. The children would perform the scene in the street outside the house as we were packing up to leave after rehearsals and performances. Apparently, they were still performing a week after we had left Darling. To date, every time they see Ivy Johnson, the nurse at the local clinic, they start shouting lines from the scene.

The challenge for me as a theatre-maker lay in rendering the thematic and structural connections between the various scenes and sites emotionally and visibly apparent to an audience. The taxi guides linked the short physical journeys to the different houses. We also asked audience members to carry things from one house to the next. They carried *vetkoek* from Susan Marais' house to Dotty van Niekerk's house, which they ate once they got there; washing powder and sunlight soap from Dotty van Niekerk's house to Ma Dlamini's house, which was used in the scene; and Arum Lilies from Ma Dlamini's house to Susan Marais' house, which were used in the flower arrangement. Each of the scenes referred to at least one person from another scene as well. Dotty van Niekerk, particularly became a strong narrative link between the scenes. Susan Marais spoke about her when expressing her apprehension about Lyn spending time with Mary's son, who's friendly with Ryan, Dotty van Niekerk's *tik*-addict son. Zuke and Ntombi refer to her in a more favourable light when they mention that she is always giving them things. This link was not planned in advance but developed as we worked. In retrospect I realized too that Dotty van Niekerk's house is geographically positioned between the house in the *Bôdorp* and the house in *Asla*.

Each of the scenes had moments of stylistic disruptions of the flow of the narrative by interpolating visual images at key moments. Some of the features of the style I used for

these moments were large gestures, extended movements, slow motion, surreal actions and a bold comedic style. I consciously chose to work against the realism that the intimacy of the spaces lent themselves to. There were several reasons for this; the primary one was that as a theatre-maker I have reservations about the effectiveness of realism; the second, that I wanted these heightened theatrical moments to comment on and provide a visual text that revealed the internal emotional states of the characters and, in the case of the *As/a* scene, to juxtapose the sensitive issues the scene enacts, with a bold social comedic style.

The quirky, surreal moments in Susan Marais' kitchen scene were intended to reflect her internal sense of hysteria, bordering on madness that grew as the scene progressed. An example of this is when she picks up a straw and drinks the dyed red water from the vase. This bizarre action that is carried out as if it were completely normal, gives the audience a sense that this woman is not as in control of the situation as she makes out to be. The final image of her on top of the kitchen table, tells us that this woman is clearly not coping with what is going on around her. Her conservative, rigid socialisation cannot manage her desperate need to be liberal and open, in order to fit in in South African post-1994. This causes an internal conflict that I chose to reveal through surreal moments.

Dotty van Niekerk, Aunty Lulu and Hlekiwe find each other's tummies in a movement piece that begins with their drinking a few tots of Old Brown Sherry together. The women start to sing Mafikizolo's *Hamba Nawe* and to dance. While this happens, Dotty puts the cd on to play Annie Lennox's song, *A Thousand Beautiful Things*, which is in sharp rhythmic and melodic contrast to *Hamba Nawe*. The women continue to dance to the rhythm of *Hamba Nawe*. Then, and one at a time, they discover aspects of themselves through movement that extends into slow motion and follows the rhythm of *A Thousand Beautiful Things*. Dotty discovers her hands and her face in the mirror. Aunty Lulu discovers her whole body and extends the movement so that it feels as if she's flying. Hlekiwe discovers her tummy and this leads them into discovering each others' tummies until they end up laughing and hugging each another on the couch. Most audience members found this moment to be very moving; some were brought to tears. The language of movement, I believe, spoke more than words could have in that moment.

For the scene in *Asla*, I chose to work with a comedic style, bordering on *commedia del arte* with text, to reflect the brashness of the environment. The style was in sharp contrast to the spoken narrative that dealt with abuse, infidelity as well as the stigma connected to HIV /Aids. Zuke has proclaimed that she doesn't need men in her life and that she can take care of herself and her children because she is a 'modern independent woman' and that men are a nuisance anyway. Ntombi grabs a pair of blue men's underpants out of Zuke's hands and jeers at Zuke's claim. A chase ensues around the garden that ends up in a highly stylised and technically intricate tussle over the underpants. This suggests that Zuke is far from her dream of being a 'modern independent woman' who doesn't need men in her life. The scene also reflects the social noise surrounding of people's lives in *Asla* that contrasts strongly with the intensity of betrayal and pain that many people experience there on a daily basis.

Performances

Performances took place on Friday, Saturday (two performances) and Sunday, with a total of four performances. Audience members were divided into three groups of roughly twenty. Each group would start at a different house and rotate. This meant that each scene needed to be performed three times in each performance. Thus the experiences of the audience members differed according to the order in which they visited the houses. For example, starting with Susan Marais' house and ending with Ma Dlamini's house would have been very different from starting with Dotty van Niekerk's house and ending at Susan Marais' house.

A week prior to the performance, the organisers contacted me telling me that they felt ticket prices for our route should be R50 rather than the standard R80 because our route involved non-professional actors and audience members would therefore expect to pay less. I was unhappy with this, as it confirmed my own experience (and my theoretical sources) of the pervasiveness of negative perceptions about community theatre. The decision, however, lay with the organisers and there was nothing I could do, apart from express my dismay. This also meant that it would have to be marketed as a 'special route' (it was advertised as such on the website and in the press) that people had to

book for separately. In other words, we did not fall into the 'luck of the draw' category for all the other performers. People had to know about our route in order to book for it, whereas with the other routes, all they needed to know about was the Voorkamerfest. The women from Darling got to hear about this and felt that the organisers did not trust their abilities. This also defeated my intention of creating a synergy between community and mainstream theatre in order to come up with a new form that was free of all the prejudices associated with community theatre in South Africa.

Significantly, however, the feedback I received after the festival was that our route was by far the best route. One of the women who worked in the administrative office told me that the decision to reduce the price was taken on the basis that the organisers didn't know what to expect. They felt they were taking a gamble. She assured me that next time it would be different because we had 'proven ourselves'.

On the Friday night after our first performance, a special showcase performance was held at Evita se Perron, where the participating artists in the festival could perform a five minute extract from their act. Two of our actors from Dotty van Niekerk's house performed an extract. Initially the Cape Town actor didn't want to do it. I managed to convince her, telling her that we had to do it for the Darling women participants. It was the least we could offer them. They were all there, ready and waiting, and would have been extremely disappointed if they were not represented that night. Afterwards, the actor came up to me and thanked me for 'pushing' her to do it. The response was overwhelming and the sense of pride the women felt was tangible. They had proved to the organisers that they could do it, regardless of the fact that they were non-professionals.

On Sunday evening, there was a final open free performance on the square in *As/a* on a tractor trailer. We performed an extract from Ma Dlamini's scene and again the response was very enthusiastic. Their willingness to perform in front of a huge crowd, I believe, bears testimony to the courage this process has given these women. I also have a sense that this courage has spilled over into their personal lives. One of the women has a particularly difficult husband who apparently was giving her trouble about spending too much time on the play. She decided to stand up to him and he backed off. Another woman told me that she would not have done this prior to the project.

After the final open performance on Sunday we all gathered at Evita se Perron. Serendipitously we found ourselves in the same space we used for the recruitment workshop. The purpose of this gathering was to do one final talking circle before we departed for Cape Town. We also presented the Darling women with certificates and gifted them with vouchers from Shoprite. The feedback and observations were very moving. Everyone spoke of how much the project had given them and how they hoped that this was only the beginning.

I would like briefly to record some selective examples of what participants said at this meeting. Patience Ngqeyi said that prior to this project she wouldn't have even looked at the Coloured women who were sitting around the circle if she had walked past them in the street. But now, even though they cannot understand each others' languages, at least they can say hello and give one another a hug. This for me was the greatest affirmation. I realised as I sat there, with tears welling up in my eyes, that what I had set out to do was well on its way to being realised. Ivy Johnson spoke of her first meeting with us and how we referred to her as 'Aunty Ivy'. This, for her, was a sign of deep respect and from that day on she knew she would like these crazy 'girls' from Cape Town. Diane October spoke about the balance between respect and taking the lead that she felt all of us from Cape Town managed to achieve. The Cape Town performers all spoke about how much they had learned. The whole process of being able to give and gain at the same time was a unique experience for all of them. Many of us, including myself, found this final talking circle very emotional. I believe that this is testimony to the powerful process we all willingly embarked on and gave so generously to.

Alex Halligey and I went back to Darling the following Friday to collect the last of the properties and furniture. I also used the time to conduct one last interview with one of the women. We also visited two of the women who were collecting tickets for the tractor rides at the annual Flower Show. All three of the women we met spoke about how they felt there was a big gap in their lives and that they had felt a bit lost, not knowing what to do with their days. They all spoke about continuing with the work and definitely performing at next year's festival. Ivy Johnson told me she had spoken with the African nurse at the clinic who said she would be keen to get involved. She would be a huge

asset to the group as she speaks Xhosa, English and Afrikaans. This would mean the women could hold regular sessions without our having to be there to translate.

We arranged a gathering two weeks after our final performance. One of the women organised a *braai* at her friend's home in Yzerfontein. We used a R100 donation that an audience member had given us to buy chicken and people were asked to bring drinks. We all piled into my *bakkie* and Alex's car and drove to Yzerfontein. We sat around the pool, chatted and went for a long walk on the beach after lunch. This gathering provided important reflective time, where we could look back at what we had done without the immediate euphoria of performance clouding our perceptions. Everyone was still very clear about wanting to continue the work and to create something for next year's festival.

Future plans

Wim Visser and Inge Bos, the Dutch organisers of the festival spoke with me about the possibility of getting the Darling women to form a regular performance group. I agreed it was important and would be willing to facilitate this. Wim and Inge felt that the women should come up with a plan which they could present to us in November this year and that we could plan from there. The idea would be for them to meet and create performances throughout the year as well as for the annual Voorkamer Festival. We spoke with the women, who were all very keen. I have left them with the task of putting down their ideas on paper and will set up a meeting with them in late October to see how far they have got before we meet with Wim and Inge in November. I feel it is very important that the work continues. At the same time I am aware that I need to set things in place that will allow the women to eventually take the project on themselves without my intervention. I am mindful that this may take time, but feel that it is achievable, given the tenacity, staying power and generosity of spirit of all of the women we worked with.

Conclusion

...the entanglement of life stories gives occasion for a revision which is neither solitary nor introspective of its own past, but rather a mutual revision in which we are able to see the most valuable yield of the exchange of memories (Ricoeur 1996:9).

I set out to do my Masters in Theatre and Performance at the beginning of 2004 with the intention of reflecting on the last five years of work as a theatre-maker with Mothertongue, a women's theatre collective I co-founded in 2000. I also wanted to use the time to find a way forward for myself and the collective. In a way I wanted to discover something that would characterise my work with Mothertongue as a theatre-maker in South Africa. The past two years has afforded me the luxury of achieving what I set out to achieve. I have been able to critically reflect and theorise on the work of the collective and *Breathing Space* has enabled me to discover a way of enacting my critical reflection in production.

My work as a theatre-maker in the past has always involved engaging non-professional actors (women) in theatre-making processes. This however has not extended into involving them in mainstream performances before. Their stories inspired the creation of productions with professional actors. Discovering the term 'cross-community professional art' got me thinking about the synergy between mainstream and community theatre and the possibilities of involving non-professional actors in performances alongside professional actors. It seemed to be the next logical step to take. I decided to change Cohen-Cruz's term to 'cross-community professional theatre' because I believe theatre is what embraces the potential for conversations across differences between mainstream and community and across professional and non-professional.

At the heart of cross-community theatre are notions of conversation and memory. Conversations in theatre incorporate an exchange of memories through story, as well as an exchange of images, ideas and vision. They involve processes of talking, listening and maybe even doing together. Dan Friedman, the dramaturg at the Castillo Theatre in New York explains it in this way:

... conversation is not necessarily (or even primarily) the exchange of words between individuals. It is a broader creative activity involving the exchange of ideas, images, experiences between two or more individuals or groups in which the various parties build on what the other has contributed....Performance and

conversation are related activities and... theatre can play a crucial role in the emergence of impactful social and political conversation (2000:1)

He adds:

...theatre, as an institution, does not lend itself readily to conversation. For while the stage is full of pre-scripted dialogue, the social activity of the theatre for over two millennium has been essentially a monologue. The playwright and director, through the performances of the actors, have spoken to the public. The traditional role of the audience has been that of the listener, the receiver of endless variations on society's grand narratives enacted (and reaffirmed) on stage (1).

I would agree with Friedman's observation that mainstream theatre has traditionally opted for the one-way approach he talks about.

I would however argue that community theatre in South Africa has traditionally encouraged audience members to become active participants in the experience. This is particularly true of community theatre at the height of apartheid, which encouraged political conversation and action. Theatre was used to encourage audience members to become active social agents for change in the struggle for freedom. The same can be said for present day community theatre that deals with pressing issues such as HIV and Aids, amongst others.

Synergy between community theatre and mainstream theatre involves conversations among traditions prevalent in community theatre as well as among aesthetic forms, structures and theatrical skills prevalent in mainstream theatre

I believe that discovering and exploring cross-community professional theatre has given me the direction that will anchor my work for some time to come.

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Discover
Breathing Space
at the
Voorkamerfest

Presented by
Mothertongue in association with UCT Drama Department

Devised and inspired by
Women from Darling, the cast and director

Conceptualised & Directed by
Sara Matchett

Designed by
Kali van der Merwe in collaboration with the cast and director

Cast in order of appearance
Taxi Guides – Anna Williams & Diane October
Kitchen - Alex Halligey, Yasmin Ezziden & Cathy Adams
Voorkamer - Jill Levenberg, Sary Vlotman & Sylvia Jack / Vemonica Singqayi
Washing Line – Patience Ngqeyi, Mbali Kgosidintsi, Chuma Sopotela, Ivy Johnson & Sue Flight as 'the woman in the video'

Directors note:

Inspired by last year's Festival, *Breathing Space* has been specially created for this year's Festival. The production focuses on women from Darling's stories in domestic spaces and involves four professional performers working alongside women from Darling. Having engaged them over a period of six weeks in the creation process, we are now ready to perform together! I believe that *Breathing Space* begins to realise the potential theatre holds for initiating conversations across fixed geographical boundaries and in so doing it starts to dissolve these boundaries. In a town that is racially divided by a railway line and a solid tarred road, my intention to use a house in each of the areas, was inspired by the desire to initiate conversations through the arts between different communities. The past six weeks has been incredibly inspiring and has actualised my intention to create a synergy between mainstream and community theatre in order to realise a new form - what I have termed *cross-community professional theatre*. The generosity of spirit and willingness to give and commit to the process from all who have been involved in it has been mind-blowing. I could not have wished for a better group of women to work with. We have laughed, we have cried, gotten angry, shared meals, shared stories and most of all shared love. I hope you enjoy *Breathing Space* as much as I have enjoyed the creation process.

Special thanks to

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All the darlings from Darling who shared their stories and gave so generously over the past six weeks
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Sue Flight for playing the woman in the video
Awino Okech for her constant support
The Little Theatre Staff
The Darling Fokus for rehearsal space

Check out Mothertongue on www.mothertongue.co.za or contact us on 072 183 7866 / 021 4477 080

 **mothertongue**
a collective of women artists



APPENDIX B

SCRIPT

Please note that the scripts, in keeping with the notion of 'conversations' that informed the process, were changed considerably in the last two weeks of rehearsals and in performance,

Susan Marais and the art of Flower Arranging

SUSAN: Hello, hello. I'm so glad you're here. I've been stressing so much. Thanks for bringing the flowers. Come in, come in. Sit for a bit, please, to give me moral support. I tell you I'm so stressed, I've got so much to do: there's the flowers for tonight. And you know I won last time. First place. So I've got a reputation to uphold, you know, not that I want to win this time but I just want my arrangement to live up to the last one I did and you know I'm one of the youngest in the club. And I can just feel all the tannies watching me to see if I'm really any good, if I've got staying power. Sjoie, but I'm talking so much I haven't even introduced myself. I'm Susan Marais. I run the Orchid Inn in town; we sell pottery, sculpture, orchids. Oh, and lovely traditional jams and preserves. So are you from Darling? Have you come up for the Voorkamerfest or are you just here on holiday?

Oh, for the festival. That's nice. Isn't Darling cute?

So my fiancé, Peter's coming tonight. And I'm nervous for that. It's the first time his coming to a flower show. *[Stops for a moment]* Shame, he's going to be so bored *[moves again]* but I just want to impress him. My oulike English fiancé. *[turns to sink to pour water into vase as Lynne, her younger sister, enters from bedroom and walks across the kitchen table to the fridge, takes out an apple and walks back over the table to her room. Susan, with her back to the table, hasn't noticed and keeps on talking.]*

Anyway, then I've also got the vetkoek to make for the tea tonight. And Lynne's with me this weekend. Shame you know she boards in Malmesbury and most weekends she's with my parents on the farm but then she comes to stay with me every now and then. Darling's a little more exciting than the farm, you know. Anyway so I've got her here and I just want to make some soup for us. And I was late coming from the shop. Some people on a daytrip from Cape Town came in at twenty five past four and then they wanted to look at some of the strawberry pots I had in the storeroom and of course my ceramic arum lilies. Shame and I don't really mind but you know I just kept thinking about how much I had to do when I got home and they kept me for half an hour. They bought some namaqualand daisy coasters in the end. Isn't this maiden fern stunning? I love it. It's my favourite foliage. So delicate, like lace. Ja, so I've got the vetkoek and the soup and these flowers all to be done by six. And Mary's late. She doesn't usually come in on Fridays. Mary's my

wonderful lady who comes to help me with the house on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. And she's by Mrs van Wyk's on Thursdays and Fridays. Shame, and you know I never swear but that woman is bitch. A bitch. She works Mary so hard and always keeps her late. And you know she only pays Mary R60 a day. And look, I know I only give her R20 more but still that R20 makes a difference when you're living in those small houses there in the Onderdorp. You know on the other side of the railways? You go that side too, don't you?

Now, I've driven Mary home a couple of times but she lives more in the coloured area and there they at least have different rooms in the house. But the RDP area, they call it Asla, I think, I've never actually been that side. There they apparently have one room for the bedroom, the voorkamer, the kitchen. Everything in the one tiny little room. Some of them even have a spaza shop in the same room. Have you been there yet? Have you seen?

And a lot of those women there are from the Transkei, you know because their husbands come here to work on the farms. And they do lovely beadwork for the shop there by Evita se Perron. And it earns them some extra money and keeps them busy while the men are on the farm. Because you know, while the men are on the farm they have to stay there for the whole month; they can't stay with their wives. Sjoe but they do lovely bead work. Have you been to the Perron? Did you go inside the shop. It's great, hey? They're our competition but it's lovely.

Now I was telling you about Mary. Oh yes, and Mrs van Wyk. You know she hasn't signed her up for UIF or drawn up a contract. And you know that was the first thing I did when that legislation was passed. Look maybe that's because I understand how important contracts and agreements are but you know still, she's not adhering to the law. Anyway but I've asked Mary to come in specially this afternoon after Mrs van Wyk's because I knew I'd need a hand before the show tonight. *(Lynne's music blares loudly)* Lynne, turn that music down, skat, I'm having a conversation here. Oh, I love these Arum Lilies. Mmm, there so big and bold.

Ja, so Mary's late and now she'll say that it's Mrs van Wyk that's kept her late. But you know she does walk slowly and it's Friday afternoon and everyone finishes early and they're all standing on the street corners and shame she's got such a bubbly personality Mary, she's always stopping to chat. And now the vetkoek oil has been ready for ages. I've had to do the first batch myself. You know how horrible the smell of oil is when it starts to burn in the pot.

Mary knocks on the door. As Susan lets her in:

Mary, my darling, you're here, oh gedorrre. Come in, now we must start immediately on the vetkoek for the tea for the show tonight. The oil's nice and hot.

MARY: Hello. Ooh, hierdie olie brand, Dit ruik nie lelik nie.

SUSAN: I know, Mary. It's been waiting for you. We've got so much to do: the vetkoek and Lynne's here from boarding school so we must make some nice vegetable soup. And I've got to finish my flowers. My friends here are just giving me some moral support. No, no, no Mary, don't make them so big. Just little one's, like this, we've got to make a lot for all the people. And it's not a meal; just a snack to go with their tea. Ok, there we go. Right now I'm going to get the veg out for the soup. Mary won't you go to the shop to get some veg stock and while you at it get some herbs from the garden for the soup, just a nice mix. *Mary moves to leave*) Thanks, Mary. *(As she exits)* But no mint, hey?

Shame, Lynne's friends with Neville, Mary's son. They're the same age. Now, I don't mind but you know now Lynne wants to go to the Onderdorp at night. And look it's one thing driving there during the day but I don't feel happy about her going there at night. You know it's just not safe. And then Mary eldest's son, he's friends with Ryan, Dotty van Niekerk's son. Now Dotty van Niekerk is this woman who there's all this gossip about because the boy is illegitimate and no-one knows who the father is and they say she was having affairs with various men. Anyway I mean I don't really listen to the gossip – I'm not interested – but now Ryan is addicted to this TIK drug. Have you heard about it? A friend of mine from Stellenbosch who studied anthropology she's working with communities in Cape Town to deal with this issue. Now it's crystal meth amphetamine? Amphetamine? Ja, amphetamine. And you know it makes them lose their memory and they loose so much weight; it's got terrible side effects. It's such a problem with the coloured community in the Western Cape and even here in Darling. It's like the alcoholism and the gangsterism, it's so sad. I wonder why it happens? Anyway, so I worry about Lynne being friends with this Neville because of his older brother. And you know I don't want to offend Mary or anything but how do I now what to I say to prevent Lynne from going there? I mean what would you say?

And my parents would not approve you know and I just don't think it's fair of me to encourage an association they would have difficulties with. I mean I don't mind, but they're of a different generation, you know, and you just can't expect them to change. Ten years after a lifetime of thinking a certain way is just not long enough. Ag, my parents. You know this is their house; it's been in the family for fifty years now. You know when I finished my degree they wanted to renovate it and they needed someone to run the shop in town, where they used to sell my mother's orchids and her jams and preserves. You know, wanted to expand it a bit. So I decided to come back to Darling and, as you know, I've now included a pottery and sculpture section and then I've been living here and renovating this beautiful old house. And I love it: the wooden floors, the big rooms, the broekie lace. But shame my father comes to visit and he nearly has a hernia at all the changes I'm making. He says I'm modernising it so much that I'm destroying it. But they're very sweet really and you know when the shop has a bad month they help me out a

bit and really I think they're very grateful to have me here. Sjoe, but the shop is doing better, you know; Darling's tourist industry is just booming. It's become so cosmopolitan, people from all over the world are living here now that I don't wish I was living in Cape Town or any other city, you know.

[Mary enters with herbs. She starts to help Susan with sorting out the flowers]

No, no, you stay there with the vetkoek, Mary. *[Lynne's starts throwing things out of her room into the passageway. The sound can be heard in the kitchen. Susan goes out to investigate].* What's going on here? Lynne, come here now, what's all this stuff doing on the floor? *[Lynne comes out of room. They stand in the passageway].* Come tidy this up: there's a laundry basket and there's a dustbin. Sort all this out. And say hello to Mary. And you haven't greeted our guests. Where are your manners? Now where's my dye for the water? *[mumbling]* I'm sure you've moved it Lynne. *[Goes out into the house to look for it as Mary and Lynne hug one another]*

LYNNE: How are you, Mary? It's so cool to see you again.

MARY: Goed, goed, dankie en jy?

LYNNE: I'm good, thanks. How's Neville?

MARY: Hy's goed. Hy hou vanaand partytjie by onse huis. Jy moet kom. Hy sien uit daarna om jou te sien. Jy moet hom nie teleurstel nie.

LYNNE: Oh, great, I'd love to come. And how's Sonja? How's it going with the hairdressing?

MARY: Dit gaan baie goed met Sonja. Sy werk nou. Sonja is meer van die tyd in die Kaap. En jy weet mos die Kaapse mense hou van geld, dik beursies en sonbrille. Sy is gesond en alles. Sy kom af en toe huis toe. Sy sorg vir my ook. Ja, sy geniet dit.

LYNNE: And how's Oom Jan? Howzit going on the farm?

MARY: Nee, my man het mos a hoër pos oppie plaas gekry. Hy ry nou trekker. Jan's nou die trekker driver. Nou's dit darem R400 'n maand. Sjoe, dis nou baie geld. Nou kan ons allerhande lekker dinge bekostig. Maar hoe gaan dit by die skool?

LYNNE: Ag, it's alright. Actually, I hate it. Most of the people drive me mad. And there are so many stupid rules about millions of things but then when something serious happens, like people fighting, the teachers do nothing.

MARY: Ek's jammer om dit te hoor. Maar wat van jou nuwe kameraatjie? Hou jy van haar?

LYNNE: She's fine. We get on really well. Ja, I'd say she's probably my best friend at school.

MARY: That's something. Bly sy in Darling? Jy moet haar nooi na die party toe.

LYNNE: No, she lives in Cape Town on the weekends so she wouldn't be able to make it, but thanks, Mary.

MARY: En hoe gaan dit met julle twee? [*Gestures with her head towards the rest of the house*]

LYNNE: She's always moaning at me about everything I do. Or don't do. she's obsessed with her stupid flowers.

MARY: Ja, en kyk hoe lyk dit? Sy kan mos my gevra het om dit te doen. Sy wil te veel alles doen. Sy wil so voorgee vir die mense sy's daai girl; maar sy is nie.

LYNNE: And she's so boring. Now she's got this fiancé. He's the most boring man you'll ever meet.

MARY: Dan pas hulle by mekaar. Gaan sy volgende naweek Kaap toe?

LYNNE: Ja, she's going to meet his parents.

SUSAN [*from the passageway*]: Lynne, you still haven't tidied up this stuff. Come here and sort it out now.

LYNNE [*sighs*]: I'm going to a party Neville's having at Mary's tonight. [*Susan in doorway*]

SUSAN: No, Lynne, I've got the flower show tonight; I don't want you to go out. I think you must just stay at home this evening.

LYNNE: No, why? Can't I go after the flower show? This is so unfair.

SUSAN: We'll discuss it later. Now pick up your stuff. [*Lynne picks up her various items and distributes them between the bin and the laundry basket.*] I'm just going to finish of these flowers. [*Lynne takes a vetkoek and walks out the backdoor, slamming it as she goes*]. Did she just take a vetkoek? [*Marches out of backdoor to fetch her, muttering.*]

[*Susan and Lynne back in. Susan has Lynne by the arm and marches her across the kitchen to the bedroom, smiling at Mary.* Alright there, Mary? [*Shuts the door and she is heard shouting at Lynne*]

SUSAN: I am so disappointed. You would never behave like this at ma and pas'. You are rude and messy. You've been sulky since you arrived.

MARY: [*To audience*] Dis 'n false vrou. Sy hou vir haar wat sy nie is nie. Sy was so fals toe ek laat was.

SUSAN: Mary and I are slaving away and you haven't offered to help once.

MARY: Mary en ek! Sy weet nie Lynne vertel my alles nie. Agter af sê sy lelike dinge van my; wat vooraf sy't net wit tande vir my. Sy's eintlik 'n heks. Kyk hoe lyk die rangskiking. Ek kon dit mos beter gedoen, maar sy will alles uit 'n mens se hande uitvat.

SUSAN: You know I have the show tonight; you know I'm out of my mind with the million things I have to do.

MARY: Werk en werk en werk. Sy gee nie op nie. Verstaan nie as 'n mens moeg is nie. Niks meer as veertig Rand nie en jou pakkie gefriesde kos wat jy kry. Sy sou nie dink om meer as daai te gee nie, daarom steel Lynne sommer die goed om vir my te gee. Sy's tog te oulik. Sy's versot op my vetkoek.

SUSAN: And you're not going to that party. You know what my feelings are on that subject. *[pause]* And it's not you and Neville I don't trust; it's the friends. I can't have that on my conscience sending you there. And now you're going to come help in the kitchen.

MARY: Maar sy sal nooit vir ons verstaan nie.

SUSAN: *[Susan steering Lynne back into the kitchen].* Right now you're going to stand there and fry the vetkoek and Mary's going to come help me with the veg for the soup. Ok, Mary you start with the onions. And then move on to the carrots.

[Rhythmic chopping and pot banging episode].

Right the veg is chopped, we can get that on. Mary put the kettle on. Lynne is the vetkoek nearly done there? *(Puts soup on the boil).* Ok, there we go. Right we're done. Excellent. Ok, Mary let me get you your money. And here's some frozen leftovers for you.

LYNNE: Won't you stay for dinner, Mary?

[Table sequence. Lynne watches. Mary in cupboard. Lynne at pot in gesture of extreme irritation. Susan on top of table. Back to normal.]

MARY: Nee, dankie, ek moes huis toe gaan. My gesin wag vir my.

SUSAN: Alright. Thanks so much Mary, my darling. I'll see you on Monday then. Ok, bye.

LYNNE: I'm going to the party. *(Exits slamming bedroom door.)*

SUSAN: *(On top of table)* I'm so sorry about Lynne. You know, she was a laatlammetjie and my mother let's her get away with murder. And you know how it is with teenagers. *[off table, bordering on hysteria].* Okay,

now it's the same way out. Just down the passage. That's right. Ok bye. Won't you take the vetkoek with you? Ok, bye.

Dotty van Niekek, Aunty Lulu and Helkiwe discover their tummies

[DOTTY VAN NIEKERK opens door, gasps (rollers in hair), straightens apron and self. She is clearly embarrassed and pulls rollers out of hair while speaking but forgets one roller in her hair]

DOTTY: Haai my jene. Jy is darem vroeg vandag... of is dit nou ek wat laat is?! Kom maar in! Sorry man, sorry for my place. You know I haven't even had a chance yet to springclean, haai ek skaam nou so vir my! Oh my word you brought my favourite...vetkoek. I can't believe it. Is this for me? Baie dankie. Ek het nou nie eers koeldrank hier vir julle nie, en ek wil nog winkel toe gegaan het want ek het dan nou net twee teesakkies oor. You know ek was so besig gewees, dis hoekom my plek so bietjie deurmekaar is want Mevrouw Daniels se dogter het mos verjaar. Her baby daughter turned 21. Ooh and she gave her two parties! One for the friends and one for the big people and she gave me so many orders to bake. Sorry for my English, hey they said there's a lot of people that is speaking English that is coming here so I'm only trying hey. Maar, dit het net so gegaan hier by my! Jam tarts, doughnuts, 5 milktarts; 5 appletarts, lemon meringues, mix biscuits, scones... almal daai goetes. Sorry man ek gan al weer an en an but where was I? Oh, No, I was invited... hulle het vir my genooi but I don't like to go out here you know. People talk here. But she did come and show me her outfit and oh sy't darem so pragtig gelyk, man jene ma. Maar anyway. Haai die tape is nog aan. Ek is mos nou besig om Xhosa te leer, mense. Hey, but it's difficult. If you think English is difficult, ooh mense! Who of you can speak Xhosa here? Anybody, kom moenie skaam wees nie! *[Audience interaction]*. Ooh but I'm going on and on and you came to talk to me about my life in Darling. I have a son, Ryan and he also lives here but at the moment he's not really living here. He's mos on this tic tic tac..wat is dit nou weer... die tik drugs and now everyone is talking about us. Ja almal skinner nou oor ons. Saying I didn't bring him up properly and it's because Dotty Van Niekerk, that's now me, never told him who his father is because she doesn't know herself who the father is. All that. But the only one who really knows what's really going on is my Aunty Lulu. She was my mother's best friend before my mother passed away. And now she's also my best friend. Talking about mamma, I really miss her, haar snaakse lag, haar skel, she liked to moan, ooh and tell spook stories. Anyway Aunty Lulu knows about my problems with Ryan. I must even hide my money that I make from baking away from him. The last time he was here, hey, I locked myself in the bedroom en my hart gaan net so... and I listened till it's still toe ek uitkom is my microwave weg en al daai nuwe amway products wat ek op skuld gekoop het en nou nog sukkel om aftebetaal.. Maar nou't ek mos 'n nuwe plekkie vir my geld. *[Pause, look around]* Nou vat ek die tee houertjie, sien julle dan vat ek al

die teesakkies uit en dan bere ek al my ou geldjies daar in en dan stiek ekkit weg in die display cabinet. Die ou dink hy's slim maar hy't noggie daarin gekyk.

Aunty Lulu, ne , shame ek wonner waar is sy... she's the only one who believes me. Everybody in this town is mos talking about me. You most probably did also hear stuff about me. Ne How I had lots of men and how Ryan's father was mos jolling with me behind the madam's back. But let me tell you the real story. Because I'm sick and sat van die mense se skinnery en groot bekke. Ek is siek en sat from them talking about me when they don't even know what really happened. I'm really sorry now for getting excited and sorry I'm talking so much but you understand hey... I mos used to work for a rich family up there in the Bodorp. A rich family. En eerste was hulle goed vir my gewees. Very good to me especially the madam. Daai vrou het rerig 'n hart van goud gehad. And one Friday, it was hot, hot, hot en die madam se sy moet Kaap toe ry om daar haar shopping te gaan doen. I still had to wash the windows. So now it was just me and the meneer alone mos in the house. . Ok now I finished the kitchen, alles klaar mooi netjies en toe. Moet ek mos nou die slaapkamer skoonmaak. So I went into the bedroom still busy with the duvet and the next thing the meneer was also in the bedroom. *[Silence]* I I should've known when the meneer is there I musn't go into his room to clean I must stay in the kitchen want dis mos sy kamer. But I was so young. Nobody did teach me this things. I was 14 when I started to work for them....and now how can I tell my son that that man is his father. Haai en weet julle daai meneer het nog twee maande later hier kom klop after I stopped working there, with a lot of money telling me I must keep quiet. What could I do, I was so young and me and my mother and father needed the money. My Pa wil my mos uit die huis uitgesmyt het. At least I could give my father the money to finish this house. Only me and my mother did know, my father would've killed that man if he had to know what he did so we never told him who it was and what exactly happened. Toe'sie ou vrou tjoepstil...jy ken mos die ou mense as dit kom by issues. Dan is hulle mos klaar gepraat. Nee, dan praat hulle mossie meer nie.

[There's an impatient knock on the door. Dotty excuses herself]

Ai wie kan dit dan nou wees. Ekskuus ek verwagie eintlik iemand nie.

[Opens door].

[Laughs] Hello Aunty Lulu. What a nice surprise. Ek het net nou van Aunty Lulu gepraat. Kom in. Everybody this is my Aunty Lulu I was talking about.

LULU: Hello my kind. Hello mense. Hello almal. Ek pop maar net in. Ek is eintlik oppad huistoe van die hairdresser af toe dink ek toe, wag laat ek 'n draai hier kom loop.

DOTTY: Sit gerus Aunty Lu. Aunty Lu is mos uitgevat. Lyk beautiful.

LULU: Ja dankie my kind. Ek moet mos my beste lyk, jy ken mos jou uncle Thomas. Hy lyk ek moet op my beste lyk at all times. *[To audience]* En vanaand besonders want ons gaan mos so bietjie onse lywe skud

vanaand. So bietjie party hou vanaand. En die ou comment mos nou altyd oor my outfit, so ek moet mos vir my posh maak. En ek wil vir my geniet vanaand.

[Looks past dotty's head to the wall behind her, then looks at the walls around the lounge].

Dotty hoekom lyk jou mure dan so vaal, is dit skimmel? Jy moet jou mure was my kind of paint dit dan issit sommer klaar vir Krismis. Dit lykkie reggie. Jy weet jou mamma sou dit nooit toegelaat het dat die huis onnergan nie. *[To audience]* Haar ma het altyd seker gemaak die huis is perfek... *[To dotty]* Jy moenie laat sy in haar graf draai nie.

DOTTY: Ja Auntie Lu ek weet maar Aunty Lu weet mos hoe dit gaan. The baking doesn't bring in a lot of money and I also don't have a husband that can help me and don't even talk about that son of mine.

LULU: Ja maar alles kan jy as jy wil en ek ken nie vir jou so nie. En kyk hoe lyk daai hare van jou. Dis Saterdag vandag. Jy kan ten minste dit 'geblowdryet' of 'gesnyet' of iets. Dit lyk so treurig, en dit laat vir jou ook treurig lyk. Ek is ouer as jy maar ek pas nog altyd my voorkoms op. Jy sal jousef so agteruit laat gaan. *[To audience]* Dis hoekom mense ook nie vir haar nooi na hulle parties toe nie.

DOTTY: Dis nie waar nie. Mevrou Daniels did invite me to her daughter's twenty-first.

LULU: But you didn't go.

DOTTY: But Auntie Lu knows I don't go out here and I did roll in my hair and Aunty Lu is forgetting everything costs money.

LULU: Maar daar's iets verkeerd saam met jou, kyk hier's daar nog een roller in jou hare. Jy raak al nou nalatig ook. Een van die dae gaan jy ook nog vergeet om jou hare te kam. En die vet rolletjies. Wat gaan hier an? Nee my vader Dotty, so kan jy nie aan gaan nie. Jy moet jou maag intrek. Trek hom in. Of gaan op 'n diet of iets. *[To audience]* n Vrou het nie meer 'n ekskuus nie, daars soviel pille en dinge vat jy kan vat. *[To Dotty]* Jy moet vir jou daai shake koop wat ek drink. Dit werk soos 'n bom. 'n Vrou moet agter haarself kyk. *[To audience]* As haar ma die gesien het sou sy haar vel van haar gesig afgeskaam het. Daai vrou draai rerig om in haar graf.

[Dotty has gone silent and is fighting tears. Lulu notices. There is an uncomfortable silence. After a while lulu speaks].

LULU: Maar anyway, die party gaan die... *[Dotty interrupts].*

DOTTY: Eksuus Aunty lulu, ek moet net gou toilet toe gaan. *[Dotty runs out].*

LULU: Ag miskien was ek nou 'n bietjie te hard met haar. But It's only because I care about her. Ek het haar ma 'n belofte gemaak dat ek agter haar sou kyk as iets saam met haar ma moes gebeur het. Julle weet mos ek en

haar ma was goeie vriende gewees. Ons was saam op nursing college en ons het die Kaap op horings geneem. Ja en toe ontmoet ek mos vir Thomas, my man en sy ontmoet toe die swart man. Ek was in die begin nie so gelukkig nie, maar sy wou nie gehoor het nie. Toe kom daar mos 'n babbatjie en ons was nog albei so jonk. Toe dink ons altwee oor wat ons nou oor die baby moet maak. Sy besluit toe om die baba weg te stuur, na die man se familie toe in Transkei. Sy en die man is toe uitmekaar uit, en hy's ook terug na sy familie toe. Sy't vir my laat sweer om die geheim te bewaar totdat sy dood is. Niemand in darling nie, nie eers Dotty het geweet sy't 'n swart suster nie. Nou ja, haar ma het drie maande gelede gesterwe en ek het vir Dotty vertel, en intussen het ek die swart kind opgesoek want ek het net gevoel sy moet weet haar ma word begrawe en toe besluit sy, sy wil ook daar wees. Maar ek se vir jou, dit was swaar om haar op te spoor en dis ver want haar bus het lank gery. Nou ja sy't gekom en vir Dotty leer ken. Ek weet nie of sy ooit weer huistoe gaan nie want sy's dan nog altyd hier. Maar sy't glo 'n auntie wat in Asla bly... Madla, midi, mina, man iets soos dit, wat se man oppie plaas werk. So miskien sal sy daar bly, ek weet nie.

[Dotty comes back from the bathroom.]

DOTTY: Het aunty Lulu gehoor van Ougat Witbooi? *[Both of them laugh].*
[They share a joke about Ougat and laugh until Lily walks by selling spices].
ooh! Ekskuus gou Aunty Lulu daar gaan Lily van die spices nou verby en ek het niks masala meer nie. *[Dotty gets up and runs out].*

[Lulu transforms into a sad, silent figure staring blankly at the floor. Dotty comes running back still laughing about Ougat.]

DOTTY: Ja daai Ougat Witbooi. Aunty Lulu, wat is dan nou verkeerd?

LULU: Weet jy wie daai klimeid is?

DOTTY: Daai's mos Lily.

LULU: Die teef! Die hoer wat sy is!

DOTTY: Haai hoe praat Aunty Lulu dan nou?

LULU: Daai is mos die jong meisie waarmee my man deurmekaar is.

DAAR. *[To audience]* Ek het dit nou gese. Daar's dit nou uit.

DOTTY: Kom nou weer.

LULU: My, man, Uncle Thomas is mos nou besig saam met haar. Ja die vark jol mos in die ronte. Die kinnners het vir my kom se. Verbeel jou, die kinnners! Hy vat mos aan haar boude in die straat voor die kinnners, niks skaamte nie. En sy is so 'n straatsmeid! Toe sien ek dit ook met my eie oe. Ek

skaam my dood en sy koop nog spices by haar. *[Dotty tries to hide the spices in the tee houertjie].*

DOTTY: Ek is jammer Aunty Lulu, ek het nie dit geweet nie. I mean I never expected anything like that from Uncle Thomas.

LULU: Ja dis waar. Miskien moet ek vir jou 'n geheimpie vertel my kind. My huwelik is glad nie so gelukkig soos wat ek voorgee nie. Ek het maar nog al die jare probeer om te maak as of alles goed gaan maar nou het hy vir my gese hy soek 'n jong vrou.
Ek is nou te oud en te lelik vir hom. En hy bly vir my kritiseer oor my liggaam. Maar dis 'n ou ding. Oor die jare het dit maar so gegaan, van een vrou tot die anner vrou. En terwile van die kinnere het ek net alles so aanvaar. *[To audience]* En alles moet altyd vir hom perfek wees. Ek is nou te oud en te lelik. Ek kannie eers in my eie sitkamer sit nie. Maar ek is nou sat van oor die sorry sot te praat. *[To Dotty]* Het jy nie miskien iets anders daar nie?

DOTTY: Ek het gedink Aunty Lu gaan nooit vra nie!
[They drink a few drinks of sherry.]

LULU: Ek gaan nie nou na daai stupid party toe nie. Ek gaan liewers hier by jou bly my kind. Laat hy maar vir Lily saam vat.

DOTTY: Lily of the valley! *[Both laugh]*

LULU: Ek is mos nie n jaloers bokkie nie! *[Dotty starts to sing "Jaloers Bokkie" and Lulu joins her]*

[There's a knock at the back door. Dotty excuses herself and opens back door]

DOTTY: Molo sisi , Kunjani?

HLEKIWE: Molo. Ndiphilile. Unjani wena?

DOTTY: Ndiphilile. Kom in.

HLEKIWE: Haai, Haai. Kukho abantu ngaphakathi.

DOTTY: Ag, Abantu. Nee man, the people won't do anything to you, they are nice people.

HLEKIWE: Haai Kulungile. Singa Thetha nalapha ngaphandle.

DOTTY: Come inside, Aunty Lulu is also there.

LULU: *[From the living room]:* Is daai Hlekiwe. Hlekiwe kom binne my kind. Moenie skaam wees nie. Die mense sal niks vir jou maak nie.

[Hlekiwe and dotty walk to lounge.]

DOTTY: Aunty Lulu moet vra Kunjani. That means how are you.

LULU: Kunjani?

HLEKIWE: Ndisuka ekiniki bendiyele isifuba. Abanesi bandinike ipilisi ezirongo, ndiyazazi ezi pilisi zezehigh blood. (khohlela) isifuba.isifuba

DOTTY: Ekiniki. Daai's mos die Kliniek. Maar wat is fuba. Fuba, (Hlekiwe points to chest)

[Dotty reads pill packet. .

Die is pille vir high blood, but she is coughing *[Tries to gesture to explain 'high blood']*.

HLEKIWE: Kaloku abanesi abasiva isiXhosa bathetha I-Afrikaans.

DOTTY: Iva Xhosa. Thetha Afrikaans. To Lulu: She's talking Xhosa and they talking Afrikaans, so hulle het nie vir mekaar verstaan nie. Ok, I understand. Wrong pills, verkeerd! Ek gaan vir haar se ek gaan more met haar na die Kliniek toe. Mna, tomorrow, gomsa, ikliniek vir fuba hamba wena. Hambawena.

DOTTY: *[To hlekiwe]* Drink so bietjie iets vir jou fuba.

HLEKIWE: Haai!

LULU: Dis goed fir Fuba. *[They convince Hlekiwe to drink the sherry]*.

LULU Fill it up darling

DOTTY: Haai wena Lulu thetha iEnglish!

HLEKIWE: Ek praat net Afrikaans. Nie meer thetha isiXhosa.

DOTTY: Ek thetha net isiXhosa.

LULU: Hlekiwe, ek is nie n jaloers bokkie nie. *[Dotty starts to sing and they all get up to dance]*

HLEKIWE: Haai man. Nie sing Afrikaans. Sing isiXhosa. *[She starts to sing 'Hamba Nawe']*

DOTTY: What does that mean?

HLEKIWE: Ons loop saam!

[They sing and dotty puts on Annie Lennox's song "A Thousand Beautiful Things" She goes to the mirror and starts to discover her hands and

face. Lulu and Hlekiwe continue dancing to the rhythm of "Hamba Nawe". Lulu starts extending her movement, almost like she's flying in motion and Hlekiwe discovers her tummy. This prompts them all to discover their own and each others' tummies. They end up on the couch laughing and hugging one another. Song ends]

DOTTY: I almost forgot! *[To audience]* You must take this washing powder to Ma Dlamini's house. She's waiting for you. Okay? Bye. *[She goes to the door opens it and hands washing powder and sunlight soap to the audience as they exit. All three women stand at the door and wave goodbye to the audience]*

Soap in RDP

[As audience enters, Ma Dlamini is seated outside her house singing. Once all the audience have gathered she tells them how she came to Darling. In the middle of a sentence, Ntombi and Zuke burst out of the door of the house, shouting at each other]

NTOMBI: That is the first thing you say to me *makhi*. Ake *makhi* you might as well forget it I also don't have soap.

ZUKE: How can you not have soap *akere* you're doing washing *makhi* how long have you known me? And you don't want to borrow me soap, *makhi intsepo*.

NTOMBI: Do you know what borrow means it means you will bring back tomorrow so when will you give back my soap? Anyway *makhi*, I have lots of washing I don't have enough soap to do your washing, my washing, everyone's washing

ZUKE: Oh so you do have soap. *Mamela makhi*, I am going to get my washing and I'll see *makhi* if you are going to do your washing right in front of me and not give me any soap. Oh *makhi uya xoga*. *[To audience]* I know she has soap. She always does washing on Saturdays and she always has soap I'm going to take all my dirty laundry out.

[Ntombi goes to audience to get soap and talks to Zuke who fetching water behind the house]

NTOMBI: Anyway why do you not have soap where is the money from your tavern where all the men of this town come and drink?

ZUKE: He?

NTOMBI: You heard me, where is the money from the tavern?

ZUKE: Eh *makhi* I can't hear you man.

NTOMBI: *[To audience]* She always does this. She pretends as if she cannot hear me when she does! I'm not going to give her. *[To Zuke]* Why don't you just use sunlight?

ZUKE: Sunlight? He? do you want me to get arthritis?

NTOMBI: Athritis?

ZUKE: Ja arthritis and then you are going to have to look for transport to take me to Cape Town because you know there aren't any hospitals here and then when you get there you are going to have to bite your tongue trying to speak that big English.

NTOMBI: Okay Ina ina Ina. Here's the soap. Let do my washing in peace tu!

ZUKE: Yes Makhi...and what where you saying about my tavern?

NTOMBI: Oh so you heard me?

ZUKE: Listen here makhi I don't call the men of this place to come and drink, they come with their own free will

NTOMBI: Yes but can you not see that this tavern of yours is causing trouble for us? Look at Sylvia's husband he is always comes back drunk from your tavern

ZUKE: That is not my problem. I do not cause their throats to be dry. Do I go into their pockets? No, I work to put food on the table. Sylvia works for her husband to put beer on the table.

NTOMBI: That is why she is owing everyone in this town. She still owes me money for the meat that she cooked on Monday for that very husband.

ZUKE: And where have you seen people eating meat during the week except for Sylvia and her husband?

NTOMBI: Ehe makhi!

[Zuke sees a bruise on ntombi's leg]

ZUKE: In any case makhi why are we talking about other peoples business when we know your story?

NTOMBI: You seem to know everyone's story. Tell me my story, makhi?

ZUKE: You think we don't know about that husband of yours who doesn't come home for two months and when he does come home all of a sudden makhi is not coming out of the house and you're wearing layers of clothes?

NTOMBI: What layer's of clothes?

ZUKE: We know what you are hiding, makhi. Your husband is abusive. Uya kubetha.

NTOMBI: Makhi you just like to talk talk talk. No-one knows what you are talking about!

ZUKE: No one knows no? Ubhonte-bhonte zizivubeko.

NTOMBI: At least I have a husband. What do you know about being a wife? Do you even know who the fathers of your children are? You have all the tribes in your house... a rainbow nation!

ZUKE: What tribes? I know who the father's of my children are!

NTOMBI: Who?

ZUKE: It's Vuyo

NTOMBI: Where are they?

ZUKE: Hey where are they? He makhi are you asking me where are they? Ag man do I keep track of them hmm? In any case, I don't need them in my life. In fact I don't need any man in my life. I can take care of myself and my children. I'm a modern independent woman. Men are a nuisance. Uyazi, who needs a man [*Zuke starts to wash her washing with her feet*]

NTOMBI: Makhi what are you doing?

ZUKE: I own a business. I feed my own children. I take them to school, makhi and makhi and...

NTOMBI: I don't mean that makhi. I mean what are you doing now?

ZUKE: I'm doing my washing ganti unjani.

NTOMBI: With your feet? That is why you use so much soap he? How do you get the clothes to be clean when you do it like that?

ZUKE: Hey this is how my grandmother did her washing and she taught my mother and my mother taught it to me. Don't you dare tell me how to do my washing. You first tried to tell me how to run my business. You think you're clever makhi.

NTOMBI: Hawu, I thought you were a modern independent woman? Then you must do like on TV: take a little bit of soap and xigixa imunyula mafura imunyula ditsela. Like me makhi.

ZUKE: Imunyu munyu! Look at my hands makhi and look at yours, izilonda makhi. Look at mine makhi and look at yours. What is the difference makhi, what is the difference makhi?...Ja exactly

NTOMBI: **What the difference is makhi, is that I thought you don't have a husband makhi, so where does this come from?**

ZUKE: **Eh Makhi musa ukudlala ka kube.**

NTOMBI: **I am an independent woman. Men are trouble, you don't need men, so binnebroek e e tswa kae, ke eng se makhi, he modern woman makhi**

[Aunt Mary enters shouting from next door]

MARY: **Hoekom raas julle so. Ek het n siek kind. Kan julle nie die musiek sagter speel nie?!**

[Zuke and Ntombi look at each other in knowing silence]

ZUKE: **Do you know the story about that one?**

NTOMBI: **What is the story makhi?**

ZUKE: **Her daughter, she is sick makhi.**

NTOMBI: **Sick?**

ZUKE: **Yes, Sick makhi.**

NTOMBI: **Makhi, sick?**

ZUKE: **Yes, sick.**

NTOMBI: **SICK?**

ZUKE: **Shhhhhh, sick, makhi. She is dying**

NTOMBI: **Dying? I was wondering where her daughter was?**

ZUKE: **That daughter, she used to come to my tavern and leave with a different man every night, makhi. That is why she is sick. Shh, but you didn't hear it from me, makhi.**

NTOMBI: **Makhi how do you know?**

ZUKE: **She came to my house one night. I was closing up the tavern and she said she needed my help. Her daughter had fallen off the bed and she came to ask me to help her**

NTOMBI: **What did you do makhi?**

ZUKE: **Hmm, I said I'm very busy, makhi. Ngiyaphat nga yeka and she stood looking at me and when I turned around she was gone. Eke makhi I will never help her. Just think makhi if I had gone to her house? Hee, that**

thing is everywhere in the house, makhi. *Even in those clothes [points to the clothes on the fence between the two houses].* They look like a disease. Can you see those spots?

NTOMBI: Makhi, I see the spots, makhi! How you can you wash something and it still has spots? You're right, makhi, it's the disease!

ZUKE: Now just imagine if the wind blows from her clothes to our clothes

NTOMBI: Don't say that makhi! Makhi, our clothes? But what if what if she wants to borrow soap makhi

ZUKE: Mna, I don't give her anything.

NTOMBI: Nothing, Makhi?

ZUKE: NOTHING!

NTOMBI: You just say no, makhi?

ZUKE: I say No, I do not have!

NTOMBI: Hawu, but makhi you always say that to me!

ZUKE: Makhi I've never said that to you, makhi and I do go to your house and look, we're doing washing together.

NTOMBI: Makhi you only come to my house when I've cooked and we did our washing together because you needed soap. You only come when you want something!

ZUKE: You also come to my house when you want something!

NTOMBI: Yes makhi I do and all these years that I've known you, you've never given me anything.

ZUKE: How can you say never, makhi?

NTOMBI: Never makhi! You never give anyone anything!

ZUKE: Hayi! What about this shirt makhi? I gave you this shirt.

NTOMBI: You sold it to me plus ten percent.

ZUKE: Esi skirt?

NTOMBI: I had this skirt long before you came to Darling

ZUKE: That's not true makhi. What do you take me for?

NTOMBI: You're stingy makhi, that is why you charge ten per cent on a skoloto in your tavern makhi!

ZUKE: Makhi that is just business. We are friends. I give you stories. Who told you about Sylvia and her alcoholic husband who makes her owe everyone?

SYLVIA: Molweni Bafazi

Z & T: Sis Sylvia

[Ntombi and Zuke look at each other]

SYLVIA: Ben thetha ngam?

ZUKE: Yes we were saying you had a visitor who said he's coming back

NTOMBI: Here's the mashonisa
[Sylvia goes behind and the clothes and hides and Zuke and Ntombi start laughing]

ZUKE: Ja, you'll stop borrowing money from people and not bringing it back. Awuzibhatali izikweleti.

NTOMBI: Ja and it's all because of that good for nothing husband of yours who always wants to eat meat and drink beer. Why don't you tell him to go and look for a job? Phela, his not the only one who lost his job when the factory died and others have survived.

SILVIA: Hush mame. Who are you to talk about my husband like that when we know what is going on with your husband? Okokuqala. Do you know that your husband is back in town?

NTOMBI: What?

SILVIA: Heke, you didn't know that your husband is roaming around town with a sixteen year old?

NTOMBI: That's a lie! Uyaxoka! My husband would never do that.

SILVIA: Awundikholelwa. You think I'm lying, don't you? Ucingandiyaxoka. Well, ask you dear friend here, because your husband was seen with the sixteen year old in her tarven izolo oku.

NTOMBI: Makhi?

SILVIA: Do you see all the trouble that your tavern is causing? It has become a meeting place for our men and these titikilanes. You see makhi, it's better that I told you about it.

NTOMBI: It's better it's better? Why are you in my business when your husband spends all his days in the tavern spending all the money that you make from that bead work that you do? Yazi makhi uyandicaphukisa udom?

[Silvia starts taking washing out of the baths and a tussle ensues. Aunt Mary climbs over the fence shouting]

MARY: Hou op raas. Ek het nou genoeg geaad. Waar's Ma Dlamini. Ek gaan vir Ma Dlamini se. *[Zuke and Ntombi try and stop her with a sheet from entering the house to speak with Ma Dlamini. Eventually she manages to enter. Silvia sits on a bucket and laughs at them]*

MA DLAMNI: *[Comes to the door. In Xhosa]*. I have had enough of you two and your fighting. Where's your respect. *[To Aunty Mary, indicating to the audience]*. Tell these people they must come into my house.

MARY: *[To audience]*. Ma Dlamini invites you into her house. *[To Zuke and Ntombi]* And you two, must stay outside and hang up my washing!

[Audience enters house to explore the installation].

MARY: *[Once audience have exited]*. Please take these to Susan Marais *[hands an audience member a bunch of lilies]*

**Appendix C: Photographs
of the process and
performance**



Chuma and Sary making collages



Ivy and Mbali make images



Sary and Cathy make images



Sylvia and Mbali make objects



Patience uses her object in rehearsal



Patience uses her object in performance



Filming feet crossing the railway line



Patience and Sary support each other



Anna shares the outside of her suitcase



Cathy, Alex and Yasmin share the inside of their suitcase



Washing powder and bottle tops



Sary shares the inside of her suitcase



Susan Marais with a pot on her head



Susan Marias at the end of her tether



Ntombi and Zuke bring out their dirty laundry



Aunt Mary's had enough of the noise