



Susan Battye is the Programme Manager for the Bachelor and Certificate of Maori Performing Arts at Te Wananga O Aotearoa in the School of Performing Arts and a former Head of Drama at an inner city girls' secondary school. She is an internationally published playwright and schools' resource writer. Susan is also a board member and resource writer for the Te Rakau Hua O Te Wao Tapu theatre company.

Her work over the past 20 years with Drama New Zealand, (formerly NZADIE) has led her to be the founding editor of this e-journal: Research in New Zealand Performing Arts: Nga Mahi a Rehia no Aotearoa.

Introduction

In 1990 New Zealand author, Alan Duff, wrote the novel, *Once Were Warriors*, (Duff, 1990) which “caused a sensation with its gritty, uncompromising and ultimately tragic portrayal of the plight of urban Maori.”[\[1\]](#)

The release of the film version in 1994[\[2\]](#) helped cement the identities of Jake the Muss, the noble Beth and doomed Grace as icons in the national consciousness. A Christchurch businessman and theatre producer, Anthony Runacres, developed the concept of stage version of *Once Were Warriors* based on the original novel. Under the banner of his theatre company, ARTCO[\[3\]](#), he brought together a number of people including production manager, Alan Silcock, and Maori theatre director, Jim Moriarty[\[4\]](#) to realise a stage production.

Runacres clearly saw that whereas the film version depicted “a strong, disturbing depiction of violence, where aggression almost destroys a family but ultimately helps in its redemption”, a stage version alternatively presented an opportunity to depict another side of the story, “a story of passion – for love, for belonging, for a cultural identity”. (Battye, 2004a)

In an email interview I conducted with Runacres he made it clear where he stands as a Pakeha in relation to with the world of the musical drama. ‘Te Ao Maori is a central part of the work. After all, Duff’s novel was written surrounding a Maori family who, in their heredity were warriors. However, the story of family violence, alcohol, incest, rape and suicide has no racial barriers. I believe that the hereditary cycle of family violence can be stopped. We all have a responsibility for this.’ (Battye, 2004a)

Jim Moriarty; the founding director of the Wellington based theatre company and charitable trust, Te Rakau Hua O Te Wao Tapu, (Battye 2004b) was invited in 2003 by Runacres to direct the musical drama in which more attention would be

paid to the characters of Beth Heke, her daughter Grace and son Boogie, rather than their father, Jake the Muss. Playwright, Riwia Brown, was given the task of focusing on the journey of those characters in order to “redress the balance of the story”. (Battye 2004a)

For Moriarty creating one of the largest Maori pieces of theatre ever assembled represented a huge task. His long term commitment to working with young people who are in the care of the Children and Young Persons Service, (CYFS) led him to assemble a cast consisting not only of professionals but also theatrical novices. This in itself made the production unique. As artistic director he had the difficult task of creating a fully functioning professional touring company within the space of two months. For the actors and crew this was a theatre marae situation with a difference; they were required to come to grips with their own production tasks and to individually mentor a young person so that the production process could gel.

Moriarty saw the production as a means of heightening the New Zealand public’s awareness of the campaign to amend Section 59 of the Crimes Act^[5] 1961 to outlaw the hitting of children. At the same time both he and Runacres wanted the production to be ultimately ‘uplifting’ for the audience; an idea that represented a contradiction in terms to many people. In a television interview I conducted in November 2003 for the CD-ROM, *Once Were Warriors On Stage*, (Battye 2004a) Moriarty said,

“Ultimately [the] concept for [Once Were Warriors the Musical drama] will be one that will hopefully, when you walk out of there as a person in the audience, you feel uplifted, you will feel empowered. You will feel, ¿Good on you Beth! Good on you for moving away from that massive dysfunction saying, No more!”

“It’s a concept to do with hope, joy, (and) a positive outcome. But at the same time, not shying away from those incredibly important issues that have led her family to this ... where their passive participation in allowing the ‘ruler’ of the whanau (extended family) to have his way, has in fact cost one of their members her life – ultimately it’s about restoration.”

My Involvement in the Project

My own involvement with this production came about by way of invitation from Alan Silcock, to create a resource for schools. I proposed that instead of this being a print resource that it should in fact be a CD-Rom format which would allow for us to print a limitless amount of text and a number of video clips. My role primarily was that of a producer, director, conceptual designer, compiler, editor and writer of educational material including assessment tasks. It was my experience of working in a very IT literate environment in an inner city girls school that made me believe that students would respond well to the CD-ROM technology.

I was selected because of my continuous association since 1991 with Te Rakau Hua O Te Wao Tapu. I have worked variously for Te Rakau as the writer of its teaching resources, the schools' performance workshop designer and trainer and as a trustee of the organisation.^[6] Although I am pakeha, Caucasian by birth I have an affinity for Maori concepts and ideas.

I am in effect both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' researcher with regards to this project. In relation to the production of *Once Were Warriors*, I put forward the concept of creating a CD-ROM that would meet the immediate and long term needs of secondary school classroom teachers across a range of subjects and to enable schools to meet their Treaty of Waitangi obligations in relation to their school charters.

Subsequently, Moriarty and I met with my friend and colleague, web CD ROM and intranet designer, Ian Alan, to discuss the exact focus of the work. Together, we came up with the concept of creating an interactive CD-ROM which would focus on unpacking the creation processes of a particular scene; Act II Scene 2 in the Musical drama which would enable young people to approach the Musical drama from the viewpoint of variety of subject areas including; Dance, Drama, Music, English, Nga Toi - Nga Mahi O Te Rehia, Nga Toi – Toi Ataata Te Reo Rangitira, Health and Technology. The resource had to work to some extent independently of the production so that it would be of benefit regardless of whether or not a student had seen the production. Participation in the creation of the resource on the part of the cast and crew was an expectation included in the contracts and arrangements made by ARTCO the production company.

With regards to the creation of activities and assessment tasks, I made a conscious decision to provide materials that would relate directly to the New Zealand Curriculum^[7] National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)^[8] standards and to establish for the sake of academic veracity, hotlinks to the internet which would enable the teacher to explore the status of the standards beyond the immediate publication date. Hot links also widen the world of the resource in order to enable student research to take place beyond the world of the musical drama.

Constructing the CD-ROM

The overall educational focus of the CD-ROM was to track the construction of a scene from its inception as text to its full realisation on stage. I wanted students to understand not only the artistic decisions that are made in staging a production but also the historical, social, and political considerations that inform the creation of the work. In my opinion all theatre is political and for this reason it is often considered to be in the 'too hard basket' when it comes to the classroom. I wanted this material, therefore, to be as accessible as possible to young people and teachers alike, regardless of race, cultural background or social class. It is my hope

that the work will ‘speak for itself’ through this CD-ROM in terms of demonstrating what commitment can do to lift the aspirations and confidence of a group of young people for whom success and trust was previously a rare commodity in their lives.

My first task in constructing the CD-ROM was to decide on the exact focus that would serve the educational, cultural and social needs of all of the parties involved. We selected Act II Scene 2 that is set in a Youth Justice Residential Home. The reasons for selecting this particular scene were because the scene:

- Focuses on the work of the younger members of the cast,
- Involves conflict and resolution,
- Portrays significant aspects of tikanga Maori related to the acquisition of traditional knowledge and skill,
- Allows both young men and women to shine equally as actors,
- Demands that the young actors attain a high degree of skill, control and group awareness,
- Highlights aspects of the New Zealand Youth Justice system that could be seen as either positive or negative from a Maori perspective,
- Is visually and aurally engaging,
- Provides examples of stylised combat rather than violence against women
- Presented some challenges to the technical crew and the production team especially the choreographer, Susan Graham and the Kaitiaki Tikanga Maori Lionel Toa Waaka,
- Mirrored to some extent the lives of the young performers, some of whom had spent time in a Youth Justice Residential Centre, either for their own protection or because they had committed an offence,
- Was very familiar territory to the director who had staged productions inside such facilities.

The action of the scene focuses on the character of Mark Heke known as Boogie, (Beth’s son) who is sent to the Residential Home. He is among a group of rangitahi who are preparing for a visit from their whanau. Moriarty’s experience of working with his theatre of healing in such centres and his work as a psychiatric nurse has led him to understand the tensions that exist in such institutions between the requirements of the state authority with its acts and procedures and the desires and wishes of the Maori community and the young people themselves.

In the scene the young offenders prepare to receive their visitors with a haka powhiri and they are put through their paces by the social worker, Bennett (played by Moriarty in the stage production). In the scene the students are seen using rakau and patu. In an article contained in the resource Graham and Waaka write:

‘In this production, Mark (Boogie) Heke is shown in Act II Scene 2 at the Residential Home learning for the first time about his Maori heritage and traditions. We see Mark (Boogie) learning Kapa Haka and Rakau (traditional Maori weaponry); he is reclaiming Jake’s family’s lost connection to Maori traditions and culture. This event is significant in the life of Mark and his time at the Residential Home will provide him with access to his genealogy, traditions and options that he may not have otherwise had. His awakening to his cultural traditions coincides closely with the awakening of Beth Heke to the realities of her life and the choices before her.’ (Graham & Waaka 2004)

For Graham and Waaka the Dance work performed in Act II Scene 2 is not just a dance work. They write:

‘This work is composed of an integration of dance, movement, singing, music, voice and breath percussion (including bird whistles), dramatic gesture and weaponry (Rakau and Patu) elements. Understanding of this work requires a holistic examination of all the elements as they have been integrated within and via a Maori cosmology (worldview).’ (Graham & Waaka 2004)

Establishing the Interactive Component of the CD-ROM

In order to empower students to unpack all aspects of this production we decided to engage an actor and television photographer and editor, Tama Smith to shoot footage under my direction of various aspects of the production and to gather still photographs of the cast and crew. The photographs of the cast became model characters, which can be placed on the stage model and moved around in response to a reading of the text in order to provide an individual interpretation of the scene.

Establishing the Whakapapa of the Scene

The video clips of the rehearsal process and interviews with individual members of the cast and crew gathered during the ‘boot camp’ held in North Canterbury, provide a record of the journey of the production and snapshots of the thinking at the time. It will be apparent that every creative person and cast member uses Riwia Brown’s script as his or her starting point. This may come as a surprise to some young people as the status of play scripts in general and the study of contemporary New Zealand play scripts in particular has ironically diminished with the introduction of the Drama Curriculum and NCEA. However, the tikanga component of the musical drama was created on the floor with due attention being paid to the strengths of individuals.

The email interviews that I conducted at the beginning of the rehearsal period with the individual members of the production team helped to give an insight into the particular journey each person takes when considering how to break a scene down into its constituent parts. These interviews are included in the work and my students commented that this gave them a much clearer understanding of what it took to be a costume designer or sound designer and so on.

Launching the Waka

Much of the communication surrounding the creation of the work was done through electronic means assistance of email. I had the assistance and input of my colleagues in the Maori, Music, Health and Technology departments at Auckland's Epsom Girls' Grammar School and Ian Allan made it possible to trial the work with a range of classes via the school intranet. We ensured that the CD-ROM would work on either Apple Macintosh computers or Microsoft Personal Computers and that it could be loaded onto directory in under twenty minutes.

Following the production the CD-ROM as advertised and then ARTCO made a decision to provide the work to Contemporary Arts Media in Western Australia for distribution.[\[9\]](#)

Ethical Considerations

As a former student of Dorothy Heathcote I certainly understand the power of drama to create empathy through the creation of roles which work 'at distance' from the real event or circumstances. The metaphor engenders reflection on the true circumstance and in the reflection comes learning. *Once Were Warriors* is a fiction but for many New Zealanders it was and still is too close to the bone. I wondered at the time of the production if it could assist at all in developing conflict resolution processes by analogy. In New Zealand schools students will say, "It was a *Once Were Warriors* at my house last night!" as a way of communicating the fact that they have been beaten up by a family member or witnessed domestic violence the night before. This expression has become part of the New Zealand vernacular.

Before I took my students to see the stage production at Auckland's St James Theatre I ensured that they knew as much as possible about its content. I did however have a number of ethical considerations. Would any of them be traumatised by it in any way I wondered? The only metaphors at work here were embedded in the songs, the movement, sound and lighting; the action and the dialogue was, however, naturalistic by way of contrast.

The production was staged during a school holiday period in Auckland, which has the biggest Maori population of any urban centres, which made it difficult to ensure that all of the students who studied drama would attend. How about the drama students who did not see the production – were they running away from it

for various reasons of pakeha prejudice or because as Maori they didn't want to be associated with the content? Why did some students leave at interval? Was it because they thought the production wasn't 'up to scratch' or because they felt the socio-cultural- political content was at odds with their beliefs about what a theatre arts course should promote? Or conversely they didn't want to acknowledge their own feelings about the content? Was it my job as teacher to probe these things or to 'let sleeping dogs lie'?

In the end I discovered through formal and informal discussions and theatrical reviews in their journals that the majority of my students were deeply moved by the production. The CD-ROM resource allowed for further exploration and they were able to respond to the production not only as drama students but also as 'civically-minded' citizens in their class work preparation for external examinations.

Reflection

When I look back on my motivation for involving myself in this project, which resulted in the creation of more than two hours of video clips and numerous print based articles, I find Anne Berkley's comments in her article, *Phronesis or techne? Theatre studies as moral agency* (Berkley, 2005) to be resonant with regards to the creation of the CD-ROM. Berkley writes:

"I propose that we reconstruct theatre studies as *civically-oriented* curriculum, contextualised in students' aesthetic, cultural and social interests."....

.... "The curriculum as such would shift its interest from the *forma* study of aesthetics to an exploration of the art of theatre as a channel for participation in public life..." (Berkley, 2005 p.215)

From there Berkley goes on to have what she describes as an 'interpretive encounter with Aristotle to provoke *phronesis*, or practical reason, to articulate the character of , and criteria for, a morally engaged pedagogy as civic discourse.' (Berkley, 2005 p.216)

She proposes that theatre studies as a site of phronesis, therefore, "must recognise that we live amidst a multiplicity of truths, identities, and aesthetic and performative traditions." (Berkley, 2005 p.220)

I find myself in total agreement with this concept. The straight-jacket of the New Zealand NCEA assessment system does not, however, give teachers either the time or the confidence to explore with their students as a rule what this might mean. I hope that *Once Were Warriors On Stage* (Battye 2005a) provides a window of opportunity for students to explore at one and the same moment their own and

others ‘truths, identities, aesthetic and performative traditions’ within a safe environment.

I believe that if our New Zealand students are to develop a real notion of citizenship then they need to be prepared to examine and dialogue about the role each and every one of them has to play in ensuring the underlying issues of *Once Were Warriors* are laid to rest within their lifetime. They must develop the skill of empathising if for no other reason than for their own survival and drama and theatre has the power to engender that feeling in all of us.

One of the difficulties of constructing the CD-ROM for me was the actual process of assembling the material, ‘sight unseen’. Largely because of my own work commitments and financial constraints I had no opportunity to work directly with Tama Smith in terms of editing the video clips and our communications were intermittent. ARTCO generously funded the development in terms of paying for the time needed for the filming of interviews and the editing of the video clips. The company also took care of issues surrounding intellectual property and design of the cover slick – all of which take time and money. In addition only a small amount of funding was made available for the actual design of the CD-ROM and for my involvement in the project.

Response to the CD-ROM

One reviewer, Verity Davidson writing in the Drama New Zealand 2005 Conference Journal has commented,

“This CD Rom documents the process of Jim Moriarty’s stage production of Alan Duff’s iconic NZ novel, *Once Were Warriors*. It provides key insights through interviews, video clips, photo galleries, biographies, synopsis, press releases, a musical score, script excerpts and web links.

I found this cd very easy to navigate and it is full of interesting information. You will

need Quicktime to run the video clips but that is easy to download from the web if you don’t already have it. I found that my ministry-supplied laptop already had

Quicktime installed so there was no hassle. Having gone through the cd, (sic) I have

plans to use it in several ways in my teaching. The interviews with Jim are great in

terms of developing a production concept for Level 2 and 3 NCEA; the design information and drawing are useful for stagecraft and production concepts at NCEA

Level 1-3; the 'Life of a Scene' has many possibilities for students preparing to interpret a script.

There are so few resources of real life New Zealand stage productions available that

I would highly recommend this one. It has many applications and should be an interesting addition to the resources in any Drama department."[\[10\]](#)

Conclusion

Looking back on the production of the CD-ROM my hope is that it will be seen that ethical considerations were to the fore in the production of the work. The production of the CD-ROM involved both indigenous and non-indigenous people and at every step of the way I made every effort to accurately record and acknowledge that involvement. The contracts were handled by ARTCO. The product is available for use internationally by whanau, hapu, iwi, schools and universities for a modest sum of money.[\[11\]](#)

The whakatauki that we chose for the resource in consultation with Sam Murphy Maori language teacher from Epsom Girls Grammar School is:

‘Tungi te ururua ka tipu whakaritorito te tipu e te harakeke’ (Clear the undergrowth so that the new shoots of the flax will grow)

It is my hope that the production of the CD-ROM *Once Were Warriors On Stage* will make it possible for an exploration of some of the themes contained in the musical drama to be productively explored in order to ‘clear away the undergrowth’. The accompanying video clips give, I hope, a sense of the flavour of the work and its breadth and depth.

References

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[1] Alan Duff - a Warrior's Journey in *Once Were Warriors On Stage*

[2] *Once Were Warriors*, dir. By Lee Tamahori Film

[3] ARTCO <http://www.runacres.co.nz>

[4] Jim Moriarty may be contacted by email: terakau@xtra.co.nz

[5] The purpose of this Bill is to stop force, and associated violence being inflicted on children in the context of correction or discipline. Presently, section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 acts as a justification, excuse or defence for parents and guardians using force against their children where they are doing so for the purposes of correction and the force used is reasonable in the circumstances. The Bill will repeal that provision. –

Source: <http://www.greens.org.nz/searchdocs/other8780.html> (12 December 2005)

[6] The secondary school focussed plays and workshops for which I have provided teachers' resource kits include: *The Battalion* (2005), *Te Timatanga Hou*, (2003) *Nga Kaitiaki* (2001) *Busted* (1998) *Taiki E!* (1996) *Mana* (1994) *Frankie and Hone* (1993) *Nga Puke* (1992)

[7] <http://www.tki.org.nz>

[8] The National Certificate of Educational Achievement and the unit standards and achievement standards contained in the CD-ROM resource can be found on <http://www.nzqa.org.nz>

[9] <http://www.hushvideos.com>

[10] *Drama New Zealand Conference Journal* (2005) Vol 29 Number 1 p 109

[11] The CD-ROM *Once Were Warriors On Stage* is sold through Contemporary Arts Media in Western Australia, <http://www.hushvideos.com>