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The Desiring Performer
Searching for Something Performable

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The Desiring Performer: Searching for Something Performable

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Abstract: After completing a study about adapting novels for live performance, the author contemplated on how she desired to perform, and even though this was not the main enquiry of the research, several of the participating theatre artists in the study expressed similar desires. This article aims to illuminate the desires theatre artists have to perform by reflecting on the author’s experiences and those of other theatre artists. During the qualitative study, Australian and American theatre artists who had written and produced adaptations of novels were interviewed, and several of them articulated their inspirations in regard to material adaptable for performance, and discussed their motivations. The deeper reflections of Moustakas’ concepts in heuristic research are considered in relation to these desires by the author, and the other theatre artists, to create work. The article exemplifies the value of theatre artists taking time to reflect on their work and working practices. Theatre artists, whether employed by theatre companies or working independently, have a desire to create theatre and look for appropriate material. For actors and directors in their middle years and beyond it is often difficult to find good performance material, and for the author, the process of adapting a novel or other literature was a good solution to an immediate problem.

Keywords: Performing Arts, Reflective Practice, Performance Material, Heuristic Concepts

Introduction

In the past year, there have been declarations by famous older performers that they desire to perform and are willing to find works that suit them and will appeal to an audience. Well-known actor Dustin Hoffman has found his choices diminishing as he ages and channeled his desire to continue working into the film direction of Quartet, which provided an avenue for performance for several other older performing artists (Germain, 2013). English soprano Lesley Garrett, in an interview for the BBC complained there were so few roles for women of her age, and that now with longevity of performers’ careers more roles should be written and composed for older women (Lang, 2013). Garrett was born in 1955, the year in which I was born, and I am acutely aware of this dilemma wanting to continue to perform and needing interesting and appropriate performance material. I am a performer and creator of live theatre and it is apparent to me, when seeking plays to perform, that many of the roles are for younger performers coming out of Performing Arts faculties and schools.

And what is the elusive motivation and inspiration to act, direct, or create theatre regardless of one’s age? It remains very difficult to describe or explain the impulse to want to create work to present to others for criticism. Theatre director, Zelda Fichandler, asks, “...is one life enough? I think the sense of the possibilities of other lives within us propels some of us to want to be part of the maddening, glorious world of theatre (2003).” Those working in the theatre are often there because they have an internal motivation to create work that will be satisfying to perform as well as create interest in an audience.

My work as a creator and participant in theatre performances has developed from past projects working with several others, to presently creating more personal and solo works to be performed in unusual places, not always theatre spaces. I have often used literature as the basis for performance—legislation, historical documents, poetry, and current news articles—as well playscripts written by playwrights. These different types of literature were chosen to suit the body of the performer if not myself, and were motivated by the message and meaning the audience would witness. This use of small pieces of literature for performance escalated to a desire to adapt a larger piece of literature, a novel, for live performance, which then led to a study that asked other theatre artists how they went about adapting novels for theatre. Adapting
literature for film is very common practice, and although adaptation is not as common in theatre arts, adaptation of literature for live performance was a key solution in providing good performance material for the theatre artists interviewed in the study.

Although theatre artists desire to perform, playscripts are not always available with characters or topics that excite or interest them. As stated above, this is particularly the case for actors or directors in their middle and later years, which is my case—but other theatre artists who were interviewed in the study also stated their dismay at a general lack of material that excited them, and indicated they sometimes needed to look elsewhere for appropriate performable texts, other than playscripts. This article looks at what has inspired me to understand the performability of texts for basic material in my own performances, as well as the inspirations and solutions of other theatre artists interviewed in a study on adapting literature for the stage. In particular it reflects on the suitability of one novel, *Vita Brevis* by Jostein Gaarder, which was adapted as a playscript for a solo female performer.

**Performability in Current Methods**

In looking for a lens through which to reflect on the term performability I first looked to the field of Performance Studies, since it encompasses an ever-widening field of possibilities in its definitions of performance. However, events and performances discussed and interrogated through these new theories already exist, or are in the process of being observed. Also, these events could be any social behaviour as well as theatre (McAuley, 2006). In this body of literature it was difficult to find writing about what sparks the idea for a playscript for a theatre creator to be motivated to create a performance.

I turned then, to the parallel field of Theatricality, wondering whether any of the elements determined to form a theatrical event could be discussed as starting points for creating theatre. Once again, much of the discussion was about events, styles and forms already in existence. However, I came closer in this field where known theatre creators had written on the theatricality of certain forms and then used the elements discerned to become part of a work they subsequently created. For example, in a chapter discussing the theatricality in classical Chinese drama, Haiping Yan begins by describing the reactions of Bertolt Brecht to Peking Opera, and then later observes:

> While fascinated by “the theatrical” aspects of Chinese acting, Brecht reduced them to a singular concept: a “transportable piece of technique” which could be “prised loose from” a culture whose “idea of society is rigid and wrong-headed.” (Willett, 1964, 95; cited in Yan, 2003, 67)

Was this an inspiring element that Brecht recognized as a performable aspect for a future work? Musician, Michael Hirsch, also explains a performable element in his own work—“it therefore suggested itself that I should write pieces which unite these activities with my compositional work,” —this when referring to a personal preoccupation with particular speech patterns (2012, 126). The “it” being an aspect of theatricality or performability in his compositions that led him to create composed theatre works.

Performance as Research (PaR) is another field in which the creation of performance is investigated, and is distinguished from Performance Studies and Theatricality, although it shares many common characteristics due to its broad nature. South African playwright and academic, Temple Hauptfleisch, describes four approaches to PaR: “Arts research as the study OF the arts… Arts research as a study undertaken THROUGH/BY MEANS OF the arts… Arts research as the DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TECHNIQUES AND PROCESSES for making art… Arts research as the development of NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND INSTRUMENTS for use by artists (2009, 44).” Whilst my thinking in relation to possible outcomes of the desire to perform
fits with Hauptfleish’s second approach of PaR since it considers starting points, but it differs because those starting inspirations may eventuate into performances that explore and expand them, but not necessarily into an entirely new work—a needed criterion to be designated PaR.

Ultimately, in undertaking a reflective approach, it became useful to use the heuristic concepts proposed by Clark Moustakis (1988) as a means and framework through which to explain the outcomes of desires to adapt *Vita Brevis*, other works, and those novels adapted by some of theatre artists in the study.

**The Case for “Desiring” To Create Performance**

What was it that inspired theatre artists to identify potential performability? This question became an object of self-reflection for me, in order to heighten my awareness for material that would be appropriate in the future. Figure 1 below outlines the engagement process taken in this article to explore a theatrical approach in regard to adapting novels for live performance.

In talking to other theatre artists, it appeared that the spark of an idea for material to be “performable” came in different ways but sometimes began with a mental image of the way something might look on stage. The adaptation of a novel for a stage performance can often be a very long process from idea to realization. In an interview with the author, Australian theatre director, Chris Drummond, explained how he “saw” an image when he read the blurb on the back of the book, *Night Letters*:

> There is nothing overtly theatrical about the blurb but I immediately ‘saw’ that Venetian hotel room as a theatrical space with the figure of a dying man in exile surrounded by his ghosts and demons—a magically metaphorical space… I felt I knew what such a theatre show could be—it was a kind of epiphany… (2005)

Another form of inspiration for performability was the appeal of the language in a novel. In an interview with the author, Wynn Handman, Executive Director of American Place Theatre in New York, said he sensed the possibility of actors presenting something already inside themselves that would carry the drama when he heard or read the language in a novel. His company dedicate themselves to bringing adaptations of novels to the stage.

Theatre director, Chris Drummond, when discussing his choice of the novel *Night Letters* by Robert Desaix for adaptation, talked about his desire for the audience to have a transformative experience:

> As an audience member I want to laugh and cry and scream and be delighted and disturbed, whatever it takes to really feel alive. I want it acknowledged that I am present there, that I have a brain and life experience and a whole lot of other baggage as well… (2005)

This desire to affect the audience has also been articulated by Stephen Sewell, one of Australia’s most well known and successful playwrights of original plays:
...I want people to, in some kind of way, feel more compassion for one another. And one of the wonderful things when it works is to see an audience coming out of one of the plays holding one another, or being careful of one another. (Gifford, 2005, 7)

The words of these directors and playwrights resonate with me. *Vita Brevis*, by Jostein Gaarder, is a novel that gave me an image of a person on the stage, and a way to affect an audience and illuminate an aspect of history. There was a quality about Gaarder’s protagonist, Floria, which stimulated and inspired me to adapt the novel for live performance. The novel consists of fictional letters from a woman in Roman Africa to St. Augustine disagreeing on several points in the *Confessions*.

Actor, Michael Kearns, says that one should not commit to a work unless you feel specially drawn to it (2005, x). Kearns has written about his experiences of creating solo performances of the size and type that I strive to produce. “It either speaks to me or it doesn’t (and if it doesn’t, I would never consider signing on as a director)... I couldn’t attach my name as director unless there was a level of passion.”

The spark of the idea that material could be “performable” came in several forms for *Vita Brevis*—it was the idea of saying something about Augustine’s effect on society, and from a woman’s point of view. In the journal I wrote to accompany the study, I noted the desires I had for Floria and the audience: “I think she is ‘everywoman’ and her story could be any woman’s. I want the audience to understand how she feels and be compassionate (8 November 2004).”

The language Gaarder gives to Floria in *Vita Brevis* felt right for my body to communicate ideas that could make an audience think more about issues of a woman deserted; social mores; and the delights of the senses. Book reviewer, Allen Gaborro, in a review of *That Same Flower*, the North American title of *Vita Brevis*, says:

Her distress and indignation is far more convincing than anything Augustine has to offer, and what she writes is enough to compel the reader to identify with her suffering, to feel her pain in the name of pity and compassion. As the victim in this affair of the heart and soul, Aemilia expresses her pain eloquently as the words inscribed in the Codex Floriae become a cathartic salve for her heartbreak: "In your heart you cleaved to me, and your heart was wounded so that it bled. My heart suffered the same hurt...for we were two souls torn from each other...because you loved the salvation of your own soul more than you loved me". (2010)

This comment from the reviewer describes the emotional content of the author’s writing for the character of Floria, and the excerpt he quotes from the novel shows how clearly Gaarder expresses the intimate memories of a woman abandoned. Gaarder manages a balance between contemporary speech and stylistic rhetoric from the period. At another point in the journal, I noted:

In my head she begins to ‘tell a story’, she begins to take on the type of argument that Augustine would have used as an orator—colourful language painting pictures for the audience, beginning to create a good argument that will win the debate by putting forward a number of indisputable points. (28 September 2006)

**Through An Heuristic Lens**

The following paragraphs of reflection use the “heuristic concepts” of Clark Moustakas (1988) as a framework to understand and articulate my desire as a performer and director to undertake an adaptation of *Vita Brevis*. In an introduction to Moustakas’ heuristic approach Gerard Kenny reminds us that this is a useful process requiring “a personal experience that has left the enquirer with a desire to understand the experience more fully (2012, 7).”
The concepts and phases of heuristic research are considered a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others “aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences (Moustakas, 1990, 15). The concepts were a useful lens with which to consider my own and other theatre artists’ reasoning, and elements of process, in adapting a work they desired to perform. I will briefly discuss each concept in relation to the study on adapting novels for live performance, and what I, and other theatre artists, have noted about the performability of a text. Figure 2 below shows each of the Moustakas’ concepts, each contributing to the performability of a text for performance. Each will be discussed, beginning with Identifying with the Focus of Inquiry, and moving in a clockwise direction around the figure.

![Figure 2: Considering Performability through Moustakas’ Heuristic Concepts](image)

**Identifying with the Focus of Inquiry**

Moustakas talks about imagining himself as the subject of his scientific research to gain a sense of the action or engagement in order to construct or reconstruct activity (1990, 15). Because I desire to perform or direct the character I am adapting, this type of imaginary preparatory work is essential, including: visualising what Floria, from Gaarder’s *Vita Brevis*, feels like when she encounters Augustine’s writing; thinking what kind of character she might be; imagining or remembering wives or partners of other Great Men. All these thoughts go into imagining the world of the play and the character of Floria. This preliminary work needs to happen whenever a novel or piece of writing is identified as “performable”; for me, it is the very first step in knowing the potential of a performance piece.

**Self-Dialogue**

Moustakas comments, “one may enter into dialogue with the phenomenon, allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one’s own experience, to be questioned by it (1990, 16)”. This comment fits very accurately with a process I learned and adopted when working with Mike Alfreds at the Australian International Workshop Festival in 2000. Alfreds gave the workshop participants some exercises with which to interrogate a text and begin the process of characterisation:
List what you and the character have in common, biographically, culturally, physically, psychologically. The last two take a lot of objectivity about yourself—but if you don’t know yourself, you will limit your means of expression. (2000, 1)

According to Moustakas, self-dialogue is the time to “face oneself” and to be honest. Part of Alfreds’ process is to scour the text and list the facts given by the playwright about the character, which gives the actor a base from which to begin “facing oneself”. There are some similarities between the character, Floria, and me: she refuses to be baptised—I have spiritual ideas that do not fit with traditional Christian views; she lived faithfully with Augustine for more than 12 years—I also recognise many of Floria’s revelations from leading a single-parent life when a partner-relationship was abandoned; she had no fortune—the necessity for Floria to give lessons in the classics is similar to the need a single-parent has to provide an income for their children. There are other similarities; and there are many differences. Alfreds’ advice is to “learn to be as objective as possible about yourself otherwise you can’t play truthfully”.

**Tacit Knowing**

The implied—known but unstated—includes all the prior experiences from previous theatre projects and performance works that waited behind me, ready for the moment when I needed to draw an idea forward to make it manifest in the working of the adaptation. Even though Moustakas discusses various kinds of tacit knowing, his final example is the pertinent one to this article. He refers to “speculative skills” and gives the example of a chess player who uses this knowledge to make the next move (1990, 22). As the desiring performer, I am not always explicitly aware of what I know until I use the knowledge to effect the creation. In an article on theorizing from practice, Jan Fook offers the alternative names of “practice wisdom” and “life experience” for this concept, which resonate well with theatre performance (2002, 93). Something like the “next move” of a chess player in the case of the desiring performer can be exemplified by my discovery of *Vita Brevis*, and another text I am keen to adapt, *A Very Easy Death*, by Simone de Bouvoir, and the implicit understanding that these are uniquely appropriate raw performance material for my body to perform.

**Intuition**

Moustakas describes the bridge between tacit knowing and explicit knowledge as intuition. In intuition, he explains, “we perceive something, observe it, and look and look again from clue to clue until we surmise the truth” (1990, 23). Each of the theatre artists talked about their intuitive processes. While these are very difficult to describe or grasp Moustakas advises that they guide “the researcher in [the] discovery of patterns and meanings that will lead to enhanced meanings, and deepened and extended knowledge” (1990, 24). Indeed, the overarching themes I identified from the theatre artists’ motivations, detailed in an earlier article—popularity of the story, characters, or cultural aspects; exploration of social or psychological fear; and, the taking up of large themes that challenge audiences—were the basis from which I assembled common ideas and reasons from the first review of literature and interviews of the theatre artists (Munday, 2007). This has now led to a more sophisticated “knowing” as I proceed through this reflective process.

**Indwelling**

The concept of indwelling is an internal process that is reflected in two ways within this research. As a step beyond intuition, it reinforces the commitment in desiring to communicate something worthy to your prospective audience members. Secondly, it is about identifying those aspects within yourself that can be drawn upon as a performer working to create a character or vehicle of
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performance. Moustakas explains, “indwelling requires practice to enable the researcher to tap into intuitive awakenings and tacit mysteries as well as the explicit dimensions which can be observed, reported, and described” (1990, 24). Wynn Handman asked his actors to engage in such an exercise when working on a character. It was part of considering whether his desire for a performance text was worthy to pursue into adaptation and production. Sections of text that he felt had the potential to inspire were given to students to work on and “marinate”. Again, in the journal, I reflected on whether I could adopt this practice myself:

I’ve been thinking about Wynn’s way of working with the actors in order to get an authentic performance from them. His method is his way, but other great directors get great results too…

(11 April 2005)

For me, working alone—I have to probably follow the Mike Alfreds process until I’m up and working the material. Then I can ‘marinate in the character’…

(11 April 2005)

**Focusing**

The adaptation of *Vita Brevis* was the subject of a study where, at various points in the adaptation process, critical colleagues were invited to provide their views on the merits of the drafts. At each point of criticism the responses were mixed. My desire to persist with *Vita Brevis* as the vehicle for adaptation, made me “focus” on possible solutions to the problems raised by some of the critics. The main negative points on an early draft of the adaptation were that the novel:

- consisted of (imaginary) letters that included much reflection and memory;
- was centred on the feelings and ideas of a woman; and,
- contained little or no ‘action’.

A critic deemed the novel un-performable due to these attributes. Moustakas says, “focusing enables one to see something as it is and to make whatever shifts are necessary to remove clutter and make contact with necessary awarenesses and insights into one’s experiences” (1990, 25). Focusing on what other experts had said about this type of literature and analysing my thoughts about its suitability enabled me to have the following insights in order to appropriately adapt the text to represent the way I desired to present the performance to an audience:

- The intersection of Floria’s words with excerpts from Seneca’s *Medea*;
- The inclusion of “physical” performance, and elements of technology to translate key ideas within the adapted text; and,
- The production of the work in an intimate setting.

The theatrical device of demonstrating Floria’s inner feelings through weaving excerpts from Seneca’s Medea character into the text was one way of presenting the desired idea, or message, to the audience. American academic and playwright Pamela Sterling said she purposefully used theatrical devices in her adaptations in order to extend or reinforce the advantages that theatre can bring to the written word in communicating ideas to an audience (2005). Examples of devices that she said she liked to use were: direct address; choral speaking; music; and in one performance a “Brechtian” approach. Australian playwright, John Romeril, also used theatrical devices to give meaning to his adapted work. *Miss Tanaka* was one of several short stories by Xavier Herbert that were based on Herbert’s own working life in Darwin, and it was the potential for theatricality that appealed to Romeril in his desire to adapt a story into a play:
It took my fancy because it’s a bit of a cross-dressing story. It’s already got a built-in theatrical premise. People putting on costume, and playing at someone other than who they are… (2005)

The Internal Frame of Reference

In the study, the internal frame of reference occurred when I truly understood I was ready to begin the adaptation of Vita Brevis. I could reflect on the previous concepts within my own experiences that Moustakis delineated. I could look at my earlier perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and senses—I had talked directly to others in order to understand their experiences; and, I had the desire to create a performance that would communicate and have meaning. Moustakis summarises and explains:

[the] heuristic processes relate back to the internal frame of reference. Whether the knowledge derived is attained through tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena—whether the knowledge is deepened and extended through indwelling, focusing, self-searching, or dialogue with others—its medium or base is the internal frame of reference.’ (Moustakas 1990, 26)

The adaptation of Vita Brevis began as an inkling that the material would provide good performance material in my desire to perform. The process of adapting a novel began as a mystery I felt I could not fathom. However, through the processes of reflection and through the interviews with other expert theatre artists, I was able to reach the point of an “internal frame of reference”. Ultimately, I proceeded in a way that began an adapting of the novel into a playscript. The beginning of the process was a result of all those initiating concepts Moustakas refers to; all contributed to my own internal frame of reference and the confidence to make my desire to perform manifest.

Applying the “Desires” to Vita Brevis

As mentioned previously, when I initially started to think about adapting Vita Brevis for performance, I had no thoughts that Seneca’s Medea could be woven through it. The idea arose as I worked through analysis of the text and researching the world of the play—I needed to be open to the possibilities the research might bring. These possibilities led to the “performability” of the work; the suitability of the material to the body; and, the capacity of the material to be communicated to an audience.

There were other elements I discovered in reading about the “world” of Vita Brevis that assisted in adapting Gaarder’s writing into something performable: I was concerned that the voice Gaarder had given Floria was too contemporary—more like a 20th or 21st century voice—and whilst I wanted to make many of the points Gaarder’s Floria does in the novel, I also wanted to be sure her historical situation was credible. Gaarder makes her a student of rhetoric, as Augustine was in his late teens when he was studying in Carthage, around the time he and Floria would have met. Indeed, historians have emphasised Augustine’s reveling in the senses during this period of his life and his passion for the stage is documented in his Confessions. Gaarder’s Floria uses Augustine’s own style of language in refuting The Confessions, which suggests he believes she was intelligent and free-thinking: an appropriate mate for a man of high intellect. In the adaptation I take this further by proposing she could either be a performer, an occupation that was beginning to be acceptable for a woman in Roman Africa, or a teacher of the classics, and hence very familiar with Seneca’s Medea, a play contemporary with the period.

The idea of using excerpts of Medea within the adaptation of Vita Brevis came from two places. The first was the search for literature about Augustine; and the second from the brief
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mention of Seneca in Gaarder’s novel. In the search for literature I found a chapter called “The Singing Actors of Antiquity”, where the author, Edith Hall, describes Augustine himself participating in performance, and performing a song named *The Flying Medea*:

Augustine’s supposedly shameful passion for vocal music had been fed by his successful participation, as a young pagan, in theatrical singing competitions (*Conf.4.2*). He recalls a solo he used to sing entitled *The Flying Medea*. The tragic theme implies that Augustine performed in costume and with gestures as a *tragoedus* or *tragicus cantor* (a ‘tragic singer’). We do not know whether this aria was composed in the first person, requiring the singer to impersonate Medea as she flew, but it was certainly much performed. Augustine’s testimony opens a fascinating window on the late Roman theatre, where famous songs on mythical themes were still being sung by expert singers, more than eight centuries since the first actor to impersonate Euripides’ Medea had flown off to Athens in the chariot borrowed from the Sun. (2002, 3)

As early as November 2004, I noted in the journal that the mention of Medea gave me cause for further investigation into a myth with which I wasn’t very familiar, in order to explore the “performability” of integrating two stories: one being told through the intellectual means of rhetoric and logic, and the other through heightened drama:

I want to represent Floria as a woman from her time—on the other hand she could be ‘everywoman’, she might be me. Somehow, I want to tell a parallel story. I know that Augustine used to perform a song called *The Flying Medea*—is the story of Medea the one that interweaves? Could Floria’s story be a retelling of *Medea* through the Gaarder story? Will Floria be an actor preparing to play Medea? What about a Goddess myth? I need to revisit the pagan goddess that was used on the coins in North Africa at the time—perhaps Floria has an altar set to this goddess—is this a retelling? Is this a chasm that separates these two lovers (as Augustine embraced Manicheism and then Christianity), which precipitates their departure from each other? (4 November 2004)

This passage is a key extract from the journal. It represents the articulation of many thoughts and ideas and avenues for research that might be possible when engaging with texts, and such a process constitutes my first stage of working to create performance with any literature, whether a playscript or other material requiring adaptation.

Australian theatre director and playwright, Greg Lissaman, talked about his way of enriching the performance with new and possible ideas. Lissaman is the previous director of Jigsaw Theatre, and in this role he talked about creating “vertical stories” for the characters in his adapted works. Since he was working with young people’s fiction, he often had very spare lines of text to work with, but enjoyed embellishing what might be suggested by the illustrations in the books. The following quote is part of his description of the process of adapting Sean Tan’s *The Lost Thing*:

So we went “right, well what’s in the visuals that we want to draw on”—the idea that Pete is an artist. He is actually trading art that goes all over the city and gets put everywhere. “We’ll expand that”—and because we were working in the National Gallery, we said, “well what artworks are similar to Pete’s here?” So we chose John Olsen’s *Sydney Sun* and said “well, right, let’s this be an exploration of his art, let’s get the moment where we see in his world that someone actually loves art and someone is just fascinated by what it looks like and what it makes you feel.” (2005)

I am interested in Lissaman emphasising the desire to make the audience “feel” what is going on. The interest in using the Medea myth interspersed with Floria’s reflections is,
similarly, to give the audience a chance to “feel” what the words of Seneca’s Medea mean to Floria, and how they might understand how she “feels” in this situation.

Final Thoughts

What moves a theatre artist to identify material that has potential performability is hard to describe and may be something different each time it happens. It’s not until the end of a journey that there is an opportunity to reflect on the documentation of a process, and consider the changed person from the beginning of the journey. In this article a reflection on the desire to continue performing persisted until the story that belongs before it, and during it, between the words and lines of text was set down. It has been a time for re-reflection before moving to the next desired work.

Several of the theatre artists interviewed in the study were working within the confines of a theatre company. However, most of them were, like me, independent—searching for good material with which to approach a company, or independently produce their work. The desire to create work meant they were always looking for material with dramatic potential.

The desire itself remains a curiosity and needs broader investigation. There is no doubt it exists, since theatre artists continue to state they have it. The term desire might be seen to align with motivation where psychology or brain research could further illumine the subject from a more scientific viewpoint.

The use of Moustakis’ heuristic concepts of identifying with the focus of inquiry; self-dialogue; tacit knowing; intuition; indwelling; focusing; and, the internal frame of reference, proved useful as a reflective process validating and explaining the intentions for my choice of a novel to be adapted for live performance. Understanding the integral nature of each concept and applying meaning to a step in preparing an adaptation, alongside re-considering the words of theatre artists as they were reflecting on their own choices, assisted and affirmed the appropriateness of one particular novel as having ‘performability’ for me.

That the reflective process validated my choice of a novel is not the main issue. The process enabled reflection and analysis of material for performance, a useful process to be undertaken again with another text, whether for adaptation from literature, interpreting an existing playscript, or initiating an original work. This discipline of thinking through each of the concepts in relation to ideas that present themselves as possibilities and desires for performing can ground the theatre artist and elucidate what might otherwise be attributes appearing impossible or implausible.

A penultimate word from a theatre artist agreeing that a fragment of life might kindle the desire to create a piece of theatre comes from Mark Long, an experimental English theatre performer and creator:

Sometimes the starting point… is a set, a book, a picture; sometimes it’s just a sentence or a line. It has once been a poster. It varies enormously. The initial parameter can be very small or fairly large… (cited in Oddey. 2013, 31)

And the final words come from Isabella Rossellini who, in her 60s is travelling the world with her monologue productions created from her passion for conservation and animal behaviour, marrying her University studies and her experiences as an entertainer—she has adapted her knowledge of animals in collaboration with film-makers from the Sundance Channel, an American digital cable and satellite television network. This is material truly created to suit her desire to communicate and perform:

I am now in my 60s… making these little films, and I just did it for fun really. It was really an experiment that we’re doing with the Sundance Channel and now they’ve turned out to be successful and its opened up a whole new career for me… (2014)
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The International Journal of Social, Political, and Community Agendas in the Arts is one of four thematically focused journals in the collection of journals that support the Arts and Society knowledge community—its journals, book series, conference and online community.

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As well as papers of a traditional scholarly type, this journal invites presentations of practice—including experimental forms of documentation and exegeses that can with equal validity be interrogated through a process of academic peer review. This, for instance, might take the form of a series of images representing artistic practice, together with explanatory notes that articulate this practice with other, significantly similar or different and explicitly referenced practices.

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