

Intergenerational Theatre in India: A Reflective
Practitioner Case Study on an Intercultural Theatre
Exchange between Canada and Rural Tamil Nadu

by

Matthew Joseph Gusul

B.A., Augustana University, 2004

M.A., University of Alberta, 2009

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Theatre

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Dr. Warwick Dobson, Supervisor
(Department of Theatre)

Dr. Allana Lindgren, Departmental Member
(Department of Theatre)

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ABSTRACT PAGE

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ABSTRACT

In 2004, a Tsunami had devastating effects on the province of Tamil Nadu, India. In the community's re-building process, many elders were forced to live in areas of the coastal region referred to as "Grannie Dumps," because their homes were destroyed. With the monetary help of HelpAge International and the guidance of Michael Etherton, these elders are now part of an active, healthy community named Tamaraikulam Elders Village (TEV) that wants to tell its story.

In March 2008, Michael Etherton attended a Workshop/Performance of GeriActors & Friends (G&F), an intergenerational theatre company from Edmonton, AB. I was G&F's Assistant Director. After this, Etherton connected me with HelpAge India and TEV, realizing that the methods used with G&F would benefit TEV. Starting in January 2013 and completing in June 2015, under my direction, the University of Victoria's Theatre Department assisted TEV in creating intergenerational theatre performance with various young people's charity groups throughout the Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry region.

The dissertation is structured as a reflective practitioner case study and is split into two sections. The first section of my work will communicate to the reader the events of the case study in India. The latter half of this work will be a collection of exegesis chapters reflecting upon the salient issues for the field of applied theatre research and practice which my research project brings up and how my reflections will affect my future practice while providing suggestions for how they could impact the entire field of applied theatre.

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I want to thank both Michael Etherton and David Barnet whose theatrical work influenced my research. Without these two men, their practices, and the wonderful communities they have worked with, my research would never have taken place.

I want to thank my family and friends. I have to further recognize my Mom and my former partner, Liz, who helped provide me with unparalleled support.

I want to dedicate this dissertation to my Father. I think he would be proud of this accomplishment.

Introduction

A paradoxical relationship exists in my attempted work in the theatre and, even more so, in my attempted work in writing this dissertation. My aim, above all others, is to allow space for the marginalized voices in society to perform the important stories from their lives in an endeavour to achieve social justice. But, in my work with these communities, I am most often in a leadership role which places me in the governance of any project I am involved with, meaning no matter the methods I take I will ultimately have power in any utterances created by the theatrical or written efforts. In theatrical work, I am either the playwright, director, or consultant and in my execution of this work I am the author. I point this out because I want any reader to know of my awareness of this paradox and I will seek to question any power dynamics which exist. I agree with Edward Said when in his *Orientalism* he declares, “It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric” (56). Although he states this in reference to 19th Century European academics, I would suggest my cultural position as a 21st Century Canadian from rural Alberta of European decent maintains many of these qualities. I know it may seem harsh to agree with Said’s words but this attitude has been important to my career and to this research project. I have tried to be constantly aware of my cultural position while working with communities and while writing. As aware as I am, I cannot change my gaze and the paradox of my aims versus my cultural position is persistently present. While taking this approach during this research project, I have found that leadership arises from unlikely places and a special power lies in the community.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Indian deconstructivist, feminist, Marxist, anti-imperialist theorist/ thinker, in her seminal article *Can the Subaltern Speak?*² ends the work by stating, “The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with ‘woman’ as a pious item. Representation has not withered away.



The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish” (309). I am a Western male intellectual who has taken up Spivak’s ‘task’ of finding a way for the subaltern to speak - to have voice. From my point of view



and through living my experiences, I gladly argue the subaltern can in fact have a voice but what is needed are particular circumstances. I have had failed attempts at representing the ‘other’s voice’ throughout previous theatrical projects but what I witnessed in the India project I will write about here was a moment where the subaltern’s voice rang loud. This is what I have been searching for throughout my career and I am happy to share it in this piece of writing. Power dynamics are certainly at work in regards to my position as a leader in the Indian theatre project but I will seek to scrutinize these dynamics with the purpose of analyzing if my assertion of the apparent ringing of the subaltern’s voice really did occur.

Now, my goal in this introduction is to guide any reader in exactly how this book will be written. An academic might ask: what is your methodology? I am terming my methodology reflective practitioner case study. This method enables my study to be split into two sections. The first section of my work will communicate to the reader the events of my case study. My case study involves the events surrounding the creation of an intergenerational theatre company in Tamil Nadu, India. This case study will be presented in the form of creative non-fiction. This a literary form which will allow me to present my experiences creatively in a journalistic form. In the late 70s/ early 80s literary scholars referred to this as new journalism. Creative non-fiction is a form which communicates a collection of factual events using literary techniques. Really, my inspiration for wanting to write in this way comes from Michael Etherton’s writing. In conversation with David Barnet, he pointed out to me what it is

that is wonderful about Etherton's writing. David said, "At the end of reading each chapter you are left with images of what it must have been like doing theatre work in these exotic locations and how wonderful of an experience it must be. Never are you left thinking about his methods or about how he created the theatre. Just images of what it must be like." I agree with this. I really enjoy how his writing is more a piece of literature than research writing. This aspect inspires me to write my case study as creative non-fiction.

In my execution of creative non-fiction, I will allow many schools of critical thought to guide my analysis and storytelling. I am driven not to land on answers for my inquiries. I am willing to embrace the paradoxical relationship my ethnic background may have with the power dynamics of projects I take on and with the intentions of my practical work. If I am constantly struggling within my body and mind on how to come to terms with the paradox it would be unfair of me to not share the struggle with my readers. This line of inquiry has roots in deconstructivist methodology such as in the works of Jacques Derrida and Spivak. I will seek to push my lines of inquiry in similar patterns as their work. I am also strongly pulled by Marxist methodology and many of the writers influenced by his methods. Most notable of the writers that pull me are Slavoj Zizek, Augusto Boal, and Paulo Freire. The unique feature I share with these three men are their belief that a better world is possible. Each has different means by which a better world can be achieved but each has faith in our communities' ability to collectively organize to improve from the current conditions. Other influences will become apparent throughout my attempts at writing creative non-fiction but it is these which I draw your attention to now.

The latter half of this work will be a collection of exegesis chapters reflecting upon the salient issues for the field of applied theatre research and practice which my research project in India brings up and how my reflections will affect my future practice while providing suggestions for how they could impact the entire field of applied theatre. Depending upon what reader you are you may either want to skip ahead to this section or not bother reading it at all. The creative non-fiction is meant to be read as a piece of literature to be enjoyed by any audience. The second section is where I will be writing for my colleagues in applied theatre.

* * *



Please read this work however you see fit. The project has left me with many questions but it has left me with a warm heart. I hope you find inspiration and relevant questions to help make this world a better place.

Send Directors, Spoons, and Beer: A Creative Non-Fiction Case Study by

Matthew “Gus” Gusul

Chapter One - The Beginnings

In my first meeting with Warwick Dobson, my PhD supervisor and noted applied theatre scholar, he looked at me and said, “Do you remember Michael Etherton and the Indian elders in Tamil Nadu, India? Would you want to re-visit that project?”

“Of course, I would” I replied while nearly falling out of the chair in his office in an emotional combination of shock and glee.

From December 2006 until June 2011, I worked with *GeriActors and Friends* at the University of Alberta, an intergenerational theatre company that participates in performances, workshops, and community events in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. At one community event in March, 2008, Michael Etherton, experienced theatre for development practitioner, was the keynote speaker. For the year 2008, Edmonton had been named the Cultural Capital of Canada and funding was allocated to host a two-day conference. *GeriActors and Friends* received some of the funds to help with our operations and we were invited to put on a workshop and perform at the event’s Saturday night gala. At the time, David Barnet was the director of the company and I was assistant director. During March, David directed an intense course that takes over his life and his students’ lives which is affectionately referred to as 457 by anyone who has done a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Alberta. Because of this, he was unable to take the lead on facilitating the workshop. This workshop fell on me. I facilitated the workshop with the help of my colleague Dhana Cartmell and all the GeriActors. Our workshops were always a mess of fun, laughter, and delight - the workshop on this day was no different. After the workshop a tall grey-haired man with glasses and a memorable smile approached me and said to me in what I thought was a British accent, “Gus - that was a fantastic workshop, very well facilitated.”

“Thank you. It is always great with the GeriActors,” I replied while most likely trying to figure out how to help pack-up.

“I think this work is unique and could have a place anywhere in the world,” he stated.

“That is great, thank you. I didn’t catch your name.”

“I am Michael Etherton.” He said and then walked away to talk with some of the GeriActors. After a few moments, I clued in and realized that I had just been speaking with the keynote speaker and someone who I had read and been taught about before. It shook me for a moment. I am glad he hadn’t come and spoke to me before I had facilitated the workshop. I may have been needlessly nervous otherwise. Michael had just returned from working in India with *HelpAge India* developing *Tamaraikulam Elders Village* and thought that the model of *GeriActors and Friends* would work excellently with their residents. Michael, David, Dhana, and I worked on trying to apply for funding to have Dhana and I travel to India but it ended up falling through. Now, in Victoria, this would be my PhD research project.

* * *

My interest in anything international or intercultural never took hold until I was in university. I spent nearly all my childhood and adolescent years in rural Central Alberta never setting foot on a plane until I was in the second year of my undergrad which was a flight from Grande Prairie to Edmonton. The only people I encountered on a regular basis that were from outside of Canada were the couple of Asian families in Camrose and the St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church priests Father Kragbe from Ghana and Father Nestor from the Philippines. In this time before university, I was raised in a polarized atmosphere. I was brought up Catholic with parents who instilled in me a strong moral compass rooted in the church’s teachings but on the other side, parts of my community were filled with almost every type of prejudice imaginable.

Augustana was a liberal arts university owned by the Lutheran Church that prides itself on graduates that are leaders with a diverse knowledge base. During my time at Augustana, I was required to take two religion courses. In first year, I took an eye-opening course that focused on a variety of religions from around the world – Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, First Nation Spirituality, Christianity, Islam, etc. – I remember Professor Jack Waschenfelder, a Lutheran Minister, saying, “I do not believe that there is one path to God but many. Like a mountain with different paths to be born into.” In second year, I was not as sure what class to take. I remember hearing about a course called Spirituality and Globalization taught by Dr. Dittmar Mundel, a German man, whose passion was a

lightning rod for inspiration, and I based my decision upon the buzz surrounding this course and nothing else. If I had known then what I know now, I would make damn sure to take Dittmar's class because it turned out to have a massive impact on my life.

Twice a week in winter semester 2002, I sat in the back of class and listened to Dittmar's lectures. I found myself being introduced to new ideas on a constant basis, consistently inspired to encounter different ways of thinking. One class, he brought in a man that grew up in Camrose and went on to live in Tibet to become a practising Buddhist Monk. This was mind blowing to me since he grew up only a few miles away from the acreage I grew up on. Another class, he lectured on how Westerners live life like a 'Cowboy in a Spaceship' using all of our environmental resources, while dividing and conquering cultures on our finite planet. On the required reading list was Naomi Klein's *No Logo*. Reading her book changed my outlook. Klein's book was my first exposure to the injustices caused by globalization and how my life was interconnected with the oppression. When I finished this course, I was motivated to act but I was not sure how.

During my final two years at Augustana, I both protested and engaged in development work.

Inspired by the final few chapters in *No Logo*, Kalle Lasn's *Adbusters*, and the rest of the anti-globalization movement, my friends and I found our way of contributing. An assignment in a 100 level Human Geography course taught by Dr. Glen Hvenegard was to involve ourselves in a project that contributed to sustainable development. My friends Oly, Andy, and I worked together. Our idea, to contribute to the Buy Nothing Day protest. Buy Nothing Day is a day of protest in North America shared with the American Black Friday holiday. The idea behind the protest is that people should buy nothing for the 24 hours while other people/consumers are lining up and fighting each other because stores start their holiday shopping season by offering deals to shoppers. Best case scenario for the protest, the stores would spend millions in advertising opening their doors on Friday morning to no shoppers. My friends and I gently vandalized our hometown the night before Buy Nothing Day. We put up posters on bank machines, fast food restaurants, and we spray painted a bed sheet with the words "Buy Nothing" and hung it up on a Tim Horton's billboard. Our social misconduct was a declawed attempt at protest and the disobedience made me uncomfortable. From

this assignment, I learned of my discomfort with protest and that I would be more comfortable working towards long term sustainable goals.

For the final year of my undergrad, I participated in the Rural Development Exchange a tri-lateral one year exchange program between Augustana, Universidad de Morelos, and Canada World Youth. Twenty students, ten Canadian and ten Mexican, spent four months living in Settler, AB, and four months in San Andres de la Cal, Morelos, Mexico. The goal of this exchange was to create cultural connections between Alberta and Morelos while studying sustainable development in agriculture and community development. The main professor of this exchange was Dittmar. I have a number of great outcomes from the time on this exchange. I have two life-long friends- Ivan and Alberto - in Morelos, I learned how to speak Spanish, and I learned the intricacies of working in intercultural environments and in international development.

A significant part of my Augustana experience was my role as being lead singer of *The Vinyl Experiment*. My friends, Jeremy Wideman (Guitar), Steve Hansen (Piano), and I made up the main core of the band and we had a group of other friends who stepped in to play drums, bass, or be a member of our choir. We had loved playing together and we really enjoyed writing music so we made the decision to try and become professional musicians. Our first step was to move to Edmonton, armed with our four song EP, ambition, and blind faith we would become the next *Tragically Hip*. Sadly, we never became professional musicians. We are still friends and will continue to reunite to



play the odd show and are hoping one day to record an LP. The move to Edmonton played significantly into my international development career.

In mid-July 2005, Jer, Steve, and I moved to Edmonton. We were in search of a new drummer and I was in search of employment. I applied for a number of different jobs – some work as a labourer and one job working with a charity called *Change for Children Association* (CFCA). On a Friday, I was emailed by both CFCA and a business specializing in doorframe delivery telling me that I was hired and each wanted an answer by Monday. That evening, Jer, Steve, and I were having a second jam with a new drummer preparing for an upcoming gig. After our jam, we went to Allendale Bar for some beer. I was tossing around the debate with the guys about which job I should take. On the one hand, the job with CFCA was what I went to school for but, on the other hand, the job as the doorframe deliverer would pay me \$25/hour full time plus opportunity for overtime – an old debate: money vs. passion. The new drummer and Steve had had enough beer, leaving Jer and I playing chess against each other. While we were playing, a man who was playing pool said he wanted to play the winner. I ended up beating Jer which meant it was me who would play the stranger. When the game started he introduced himself. To this day, I remember his name because it was the same as a famous character played by Mel Gibson. He was a dry-waller and was on his way home after work. He continued playing pool as he played chess against me. This gave Jer and me a chance to confer on the moves I was making. You know... cheat. Not that it mattered. He ended up winning the game in less than twenty moves while winning at pool.

“I couldn’t help but overhear your, ah, situation.”

I answered, “Oh yeah, and what do you think?”

“I think you’re nuts if you take that labour job. Don’t insult your parents. I bet both your mother and father have worked shitty jobs to put you through school. You take the job with the charity. If you are smart enough to go to school and get a job from it you owe it to yourself and your parents. Look at the job I work. Why do I do it? My kids... and my wife too I guess.”

Tough to argue with good advice.

The years that followed had me working contract positions with international development focused non-governmental organizations. As I stated before, my first job was with CFCA. My boss, who I met during the Mexico exchange, Fiona Cavanagh hired me to be the *Rural Roots* Coordinator. The *Rural Roots* project focused on getting students from rural Alberta to be active in their local community by educating others about global issues. While in this position, I helped to organize three tours of Alberta where I wrote a play based upon Augusto Boal's forum theatre techniques performed by high school students and I helped organize two conferences hosting 75-100 youth from around Alberta over a weekend, where they took workshops in everything from mural painting activism to how to fundraise to help build water wells in Nicaragua. After my time as *Rural Roots* coordinator, I became a board member at CFCA eventually serving a term as Vice-President in 2011. I am thankful for my time sitting on the CFCA board as it served to teach me the business of charities both in Canada and internationally. I look back at my time with CFCA with the utmost fondness.

While working at CFCA, I also held a position at *Canada World Youth* (CWY). My boss, Zane Hamm, who I also met while on the Mexican exchange, hired me to work at CWY without much of a job description to start. In her budget, she had funding that was some type of discretionary money that she could use to further her position's goals. I really cannot provide many more details because I wasn't aware of them. To start, I engaged former CWY participants in weekend retreats where I would plan theatre workshops where they would further their knowledge of global issues using forum theatre techniques. Eventually, we developed a name for my position - Global Education and Storytelling Coordinator. I led a number of workshops throughout Western/Northern Canada - Moosejaw, Hinton, Jasper, Edson, and Tuktoyuktuk - that were aimed to get youth telling their personal stories while fitting it into the larger global context. In this workshop series, I worked mostly with Indigenous youth and also taught at *Camp FYreFly*, a camp specifically geared to LGBT youth in Edmonton. In February 2006, CWY's Edmonton office was downsized from about twelve - fifteen employees to one and my job ended. Zane ended up going back to school to complete her PhD and I was inspired by her move to try the same. That is when I applied to enter the Master of Arts program at the University of Alberta and ended up working with David Barnet and the *GeriActors and Friends*.

My work with international development did not end upon entering my MA program. I continued sitting on the CFCA board during this time and while in this position a friend of mine, Anne Marie Jamin, had just returned from working in Guatemala. She worked as a fund development coordinator for an organization called *Primeros Pasos*, a clinic that provides free health care to anyone under 18 in an area of Guatemala deeply affected by Guatemala's civil war of the 1980s. Upon returning to Canada, she wanted to continue to raise funds for *Primeros Pasos*. With my involvement on CFCA's board, I suggested that she and I start a non-profit organization that would be under the umbrella of CFCA. CFCA, besides working to educate Albertans, also helped local Edmonton non-profits raise funds to help communities in Latin America. Anne and I worked out the details with CFCA, and then I left for a well-deserved vacation after finishing the first year of my MA to Victoria to visit my friends Cody and Geneviève.

While visiting Cody and Gen, I rented a bicycle. They were living in Victoria, a highly bike-friendly city, and they had just completed a bike trip from Montreal to Smithers, BC riding over 4000 km - so I needed a bike to get around with them. I was nervous about getting the bike. I had not cycled since I was a teenager but, oddly enough, "it was just like riding a bike". Cody and I cycled the whole Saanich Peninsula three or four times over putting on around 600 km on our bikes that week. Mid-way through one of our day's journey I looked at him and said, "I think I am getting the hang of this. Do you think I could do a bike trip?"

Cody replied, "Yeah, you might wanna train a bit more but... yeah."

"Wanna do a bike trip to Guatemala to raise money for a children's clinic?"

He immediately said yes and Gen said yes too. I then texted Anne.

"Hey, I just had a crazy thought to do with our non-profit."

She replied, "What is it?"

I repeated the question I asked Cody earlier that day, “Wanna do a bike trip from Edmonton to Primeros Pasos to raise money?”

She texted back, “Yes!!!!!!!!!!!!” and with that the four of us committed to a crazy idea.

As soon as I was back in Edmonton, Anne and I started working on our trip. We spread the word about our trip fast and hard. Anne worked in downtown Edmonton in a great pub called *Sherlock Holmes* which had a diverse clientele due to its location in the heart of Edmonton. Many of the business people working in the high-rises frequented the pub and it was the best place to drink for anyone staying in the fancy hotels. We met many people in the first days of our promoting this event but one of the first to offer us substantial support was a man named Dale Prouse. He gave us much help in the early stages of starting our non-profit. He helped us develop our name (*Pedal 4 Pasos*), our logo, and he encouraged us to attend other charity events to learn from their example. We knew we needed a website and he said he knew a web designer. He just needed us to pay him \$4000 dollars for the design of the website and some other expenses. After we paid him, he sent us the preliminary designs of the website and they did not look professional. It looked like a simple template. After this, we started talking with some other people at the pub who started business ventures with him and we came to the collective realization that he was a con-man. At first, we tried to get our money back but that proved to be impossible. At this moment, we could have given up on the trip but instead, what ended up happening was Anne and my friends were galvanized and came together to push the fundraising effort. Anne had a friend that helped us organize dinner events, she had another friend who made us a proper website, and I had a friend who helped us create some ‘youtube’ videos. All told, before we left on our trip we raised over \$20,000. In hindsight, Dale Prouse proved to be a blessing in disguise. Without him our community would have never come together as strongly as it did. Anne fronted most of the money lost in this venture and I will find a way to pay her back. Maybe I will buy her a vacation or fancy bottle of wine.

Now, upon completing the fundraising it was time to bike the over 6000 km to get to the clinic in Guatemala. The journey took us two months and two days to complete. We started in Edmonton, AB, cycled all the way to Montana, through Wyoming, then Colorado, three days-worth of riding through New Mexico, then on through Texas, down the coast of Mexico, and finally to our

destination in Northern Guatemala. We encountered much generosity on this trip. People would stop on the side of the road and ask us about our trip and they would give us money or pull out their smart phone and donate on our website. We also received media attention along the way. We were interviewed on several radio stations including the CBC that carried our story nationally as we phoned in to the studio while we were on the road and we were interviewed by a few dozen local newspapers along the way. People would see us on the side of road, talk to us, then call the paper, and we would be riding along to be interviewed on the side of the road.



Every day of this trip was an adventure. On a highway towards Ryegate, Montana, all four of us riders had ruined tires. Out of the eight tires only one was left that still could hold a tube without immediately popping it. Of course, this happened about 15 km from Ryegate, so we had to walk. On a hot day walking a bike of the side of an interstate highway is terrible. After hours we finally made it into town. All the town had was a general store and a bar. We went to the general store to buy some food and we inquired about the nearest bike store. The locals told us it was in Billings which was another 200 km down the road. No way we could walk that far with our bikes so, for the moment, we were screwed. The bar seemed like the most logical place for us. Cody, Gen, and I sat at the bar and ordered beer while Anne tried to find a phone book to find any way to catch a bus or something to help us. She worked for an hour or so trying everything while Cody, Gen and I chatted up the bartender, a moonlighting bull-rider, while drinking several bottles of Bud. We told him about our bike problems and how we walked our bikes into town. He was astonished that no one picked us up. Finally, Anne came and sat with us. She was at the end of her rope, frustrated since there was no way out for us and possibly by our drunkenness. The bartender was confident he could help. He said he would ask every patron that came into the bar if they could help us. The bar wasn't

exactly a busy place. An hour passed before a single person came in and the first person he asked said yes. They were two former alcoholic men who had recently “found Jesus” (their words not mine) and were support staff at a local ranch. They drove us the 200 km to Billings and took us all the way to the KOA campground. We were close to the bike shop. We bought new tires and were back on the road the next day. This is one of my lasting impressions of the trip. I could tell you countless stories of moments we were in trouble – the time my chain exploded in southern Wyoming, the time my rear sprocket stopped working in northern Texas, waiting out the countless terrifying thunder storms beneath underpasses with motorcyclists – but what sticks with me is the help people gave us along the way. No matter how bad things seemed we were always one kind stranger away from getting back on the path of cycling to Guatemala.

At the end of our voyage we spent one day with the children that benefit from the services that *Primeros Pasos* provides - an awesome day. We watched what a day in the life of that clinic looks like. On this particular day, a kindergarten class was there with their mothers. *Primeros Pasos* is located in a valley just outside of Xela central to about fifteen communities which are all serviced by the clinic. Each village has a school and *Primeros Pasos* has a deal that each day a different grade from a different community will come. Children receive a check-up from a doctor and a dentist, watch a short educational play about health related issues, play in the huge field around *Primeros Pasos*, while their mothers take a workshop on preventative medical techniques pertinent to their area. My favourite memory was playing soccer with the children. This day was fantastic because we saw how central the clinic was to the community. *Primeros Pasos* provides a vibrant place for children from the outlying indigenous



communities to receive proper health care. I am happy we raised \$20,000 for this community. To let you know how significant a contribution this was, *Primeros Pasos* at that time had an annual operating budget of approximately \$25,000 a year. We gave the money confidently knowing that it would be well used by this community.



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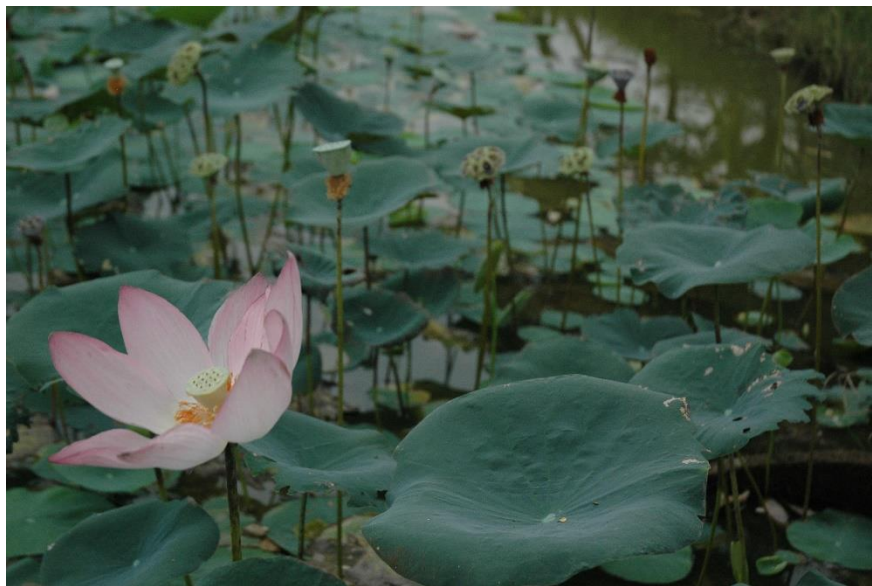
In 2004, a devastating tsunami hit the South-East coast of India negatively affecting much of the population of Tamil Nadu but particular difficulty impacted the senior population. *HelpAge India* already had numerous programs in this area but their efforts stepped up in the wake of this disaster. *HelpAge India* is a large India-based non-profit organization which aims at helping India's aged populations in all aspects of their lives, from social/ health programs to lobbying government. People from all ends of the Earth wanted to help in the disaster relief effort and many helped by opening their wallets and donating. *HelpAge India* saw this as an opportune time to create something special for the Tamil Nadu community. The goal, to create a revolutionary new style of seniors' home where seniors of varying levels of health would be mixed with able bodied elders caring for less able and that all the seniors would meet a criterion of being orphaned by their families and communities. When they started designing the concept of the home, they had visited areas around Tamil Nadu and watched how seniors were spending their time in the villages. The village was designed based upon how elders watched birds in a town square, cooked meals, and maintained agricultural projects.

Citizens of the United Kingdom donated money to the disaster relief effort and *HelpAge International* administered these funds in partnership with *HelpAge India*. *HelpAge International* hired Michael Etherton as a disaster relief consultant representing UK citizens to oversee some of the development projects undertaken in Tamil Nadu. Initially,



HelpAge International thought the idea of a village concept seniors' home in Southern India may not be viable. Upon Etherton's arrival, he quickly realized *HelpAge India's* concept for a home was magnificent, and the development workers on the scene were adept at navigating the complexity of the post-tsunami relief. Between Rajeshwar, Ramalingam, Sathiyababu, Mani, and their staff, the village concept home was in good hands. Etherton did everything he could to contribute to their efforts.

The construction of the village was completed in late 2007. Central in the construction of the village is a pond with lotus flowers and because of this the home is named after the Tamil word for flower - Tamaraikulam. Etherton watched as the first elders were brought into the village. The first two



elders were a couple, Vadevil and Kullamma. Tamaraikulam has a stringent list of requirements for elders. A large problem in post-tsunami India were areas known as 'Grannie-Dumps', where elders would be dumped by their community into zones with little support for their needs.

Tamaraikulam did not want to be a Grannie-Dump. Also, many politicians and wealthy business owners saw the facility being built and were interested in having their family members as residents. Tamaraikulam requires residents to be of need, either because they were orphaned as a result of the tsunami or they were neglected/rejected by their families. Vadevil and Kullamma's son tried to force Vadevil to sign over the family's savings. Vadevil did not allow this and moved away from his son to join a *HelpAge India* supported seniors' self-help group. Besides being neglected by their family, Vadevil has problems with his vision and his wife Kullamma has Parkinson's disease.

Another important component of Tamaraikulam is each resident wants to live in the village. Early in the process of filling Tamaraikulam, Etherton witnessed a man and wife leave the village because they were not allowed to have beer and, in another more complex instance, a woman elected not to live in Tamaraikulam because she was uncomfortable. Rajeshwar and Etherton heard of a woman who was sleeping in pigsties in a nearby town. They located the woman, told her about the village, and she agreed to try it for a night. She came and felt out of place. Her decision was to return to the pigsties because her preference was sleeping outside on the Earth. Rajeshwar told Etherton, "She does not like all the concrete."

Agriculture is an important component of Tamaraikulam. The village sits on fertile land which grows rice and beautiful flora and fauna. The elders help in maintaining the grounds' attractiveness.

The elders enjoy working on the ground as a part of their spiritual practices and many of them worked on farms most of their lives and relish the opportunity to contribute to the daily operations. Plus, many of the agricultural practices in the village contribute to the meals. Early on in the



construction, Sathiyababu insisted Tamaraiikulam buy some cows and create a structure in the village to house the animals. Etherton thought this an odd request. Why would a seniors' home need cows? Sathiyababu knew the spiritual tie the elders would have with cows and also saw the animal as a source of milk to help in the kitchen and to share with other community groups. The cows' presence in the village and the elders' ability to farm, complete Tamaraiikulam's atmosphere of serenity.

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Fall 2011, when I started my PhD, the first act was agreeing with Warwick on trying to re-visit the India project - now, the time comes for negotiating how it will all work. Warwick immediately teamed me up with Trudy Pauluth-Penner, a powerhouse applied theatre practitioner from Vancouver Island who David Barnet told me he considers Victoria's Pam Schweitzer because of Trudy's work with Reminiscence Theatre. Trudy and I started developing a proposal to send to Michael Etherton and *HelpAge India's* CEO Mathew Cherian. From early on, I knew an important component would be bringing in undergraduate UVic students. My undergraduate international experience influenced my career and I wanted to provide a group of young people the opportunity I was afforded. I also shared with Trudy my experience in Edmonton with the *GeriActors and Friends* (G&F) which inspired Etherton to believe theatre would work well in Tamaraiikulam. Three aspects are integral to G&F's process and product: it needs to be intergenerational, it needs to be playful, and the final product should work to achieve artistic mastery. A natural playfulness happens when people of disparate generations come together. What looks like an instinctive need to cross the boundary of age to impart knowledge and share stories in a joyful way emerges with little need for facilitation. After this innate playfulness the sharing starts; the job of the theatre practitioner is to help the community find ways to perform the story in an aesthetically pleasing performance complete with strong *mise-en-scene* and well dramaturged theatrical writing aimed at putting the community actors in situations where they can excel. After a period of drafting and re-drafting the proposal, we sent it to Cherian and Etherton. After some time, we had not heard back from Cherian. At this, Etherton encouraged us to send the proposal a second time. This marked one of my first cultural lessons. With the population in India and difficulty in access to internet, Indian professionals are under high demand and are accustomed to being reminded about proposals and other similar matters. After the proposal was sent off a second time, Cherian gave his approval and encouraged

me to start communicating with Ramalingam, the Director of the Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry Region for *HelpAge India*, on details.

Ramalingam and I started emailing back and forth. I wanted to have a phone conversation with him. India and Western Canada are in nearly opposite times zones; meaning, late day in India is early morning on Vancouver Island. We scheduled our phone meetings to take place at this time. The first call came at 4 AM, I hopped out of bed and answered the phone. The voice on the other end was happy and energetic. I was immediately charmed by Ramalingam and believed in his commitment to work with us. He and I started planning for me to come to India. We agreed I would come in Late-January 2013 and start working towards including theatre in Tamaraikulam.

Chapter 2 - The First Trip

My first trip to India in late January, 2013 was an exciting affair. I needed to be in Pondicherry and Tami Nadu working with *HelpAge India* to see if the idea of starting an intergenerational theatre company in Tamaraikulam was viable. To have an intergenerational theatre company, at a bare minimum, it is necessary to have an older generation, a younger generation, a director to lead the company, and an organization to take care of the finances/ business end of the company. I hoped *HelpAge India* would be willing to act as the organizational home (I thought this sell should be easy after the months of negotiating leading up to my trip), now it was a matter of finding the other components and making sure each group is interested in having a theatre company. I needed to market this idea to the Indian organizations; therefore, my suitcase was filled with materials which may come in handy. I had books on Theatre for Development, Intergenerational Theatre, Reminiscence Theatre, recorded performances and rehearsals of G&F and other intergenerational theatre projects I had worked on, all of my past notebooks filled with rehearsal plans and notes from conference presentations from Dr. Gene Cohen and Susan Pearlstein, and what ended up being one of my greatest helps, copies of the *Young @ Heart* documentary film and a PBS documentary *Over Ninety and Loving It* (I had Sathiyababu, Tamaraikulam's Manager, and Ramalingam watch the best parts of these films and they loved them).

After spending over 30 hours in airplanes and airports, I arrived in Chennai. For this Alberta farm kid, the spectacle was impressive. I have never before seen such dense population and this was noticeable the moment I landed. I was nervous about finding Ramalingam. It felt like there were a million people in the airport. After I found my luggage, I headed outside to see hundreds if not thousands of people waiting along a long metal girder. Many of them had signs calling attention to the different people they were meeting. Most of the signs were in Tamil and some were in English. I walked along the fifty metre long girder and at the end was a white sheet of paper with the words "Gusul" and "UVic" written on it. Holding the paper was Gnana, a *HelpAge India* driver, and standing next to him was Ramalingam.

In my first face-to-face meeting with Ramalingam, I found myself impressed with his kindness and professionalism. We took a few miles on the road to talk about my accommodations and what other

events were happening at the village during my stay. Ramalingam seamlessly steered the conversation to the purpose of my trip saying, “Why would *HelpAge India* want to start intergenerational theatre?” Looks like I have to start the salesman gig early. The first two points I made sure to communicate to him were the social benefits of intergenerational connections and the health benefits of being involved in the arts researched by Dr. Gene Cohen. Ramalingam was immediately intrigued by the *GerActors and Friends* work. I thought that a company of a similar structure in Tamaraikulam would be a great fit for their elders and the community at large. Ramalingam agreed and we started solidifying details. This meant *HelpAge India* was on board now we needed to arrange for directors and a younger generation. Something had been accomplished and I hadn’t even seen the village yet.

While travelling to the village, Ramalingam and I shared a few laughs. I asked him to teach me some Tamil words. I forgot them as quickly as he said them to me. He also told me a number of the names of important people I would be meeting, which I forgot as well. I will have to write down everything. The Indian names are so different than what I am accustomed to, it will take time to adjust.

I was noticing that many of the vehicles had ‘one family - one child’ stickers on the back. I asked Ramalingam about this. He told me in India they have been undergoing transition



from the norm being a Giant Family to a Nuclear Family – meaning, families that house everyone from up to four or five generations with Aunties and Uncles to small family units of three to four members. Two major reasons for this exist – first, because many people are moving out of the country for better job opportunities and secondly, because the government wants to encourage either sustaining or decreasing Indian’s huge population which is currently sitting around 1.1 billion. He told me that the forgotten people in this plan are the elders. The nuclear family does not include caring for the elderly like the giant family model does. He believes it is the younger generations’ responsibility to care for the elders and that our goal of an intergenerational theatre company will help achieve this goal.

When we arrived at the village, I was initially struck by a feeling of calmness which lies in complete contrast to the craziness of Indian highways and cities only a few hundred metres away. The seniors are very quiet. They sit together in silence and seek out places of tranquility. First, Ramalingam took me to lunch. The food here will be a treat. The elders take care of all of the food preparation. The meal was a delicious curry which I really enjoyed. The custom here is to eat with your right hand. It takes some getting used to. At this meal, the elders offered me a spoon. I declined, trying my best to fit into the cultural surroundings.

In January 2013, 86 elders lived at Tamaraikulam but there is capacity for 100. I was given a tour by

Prepu, one of the nurses, a small man at about five feet tall and maybe one hundred pounds, who was immediately warm and welcoming. Generally about five nurses work in the village and at least two of them



are present 24 hours a day seven days a week. Prepu was one of the 24-7 nurses who lived in the village. He had been there 6 months and loves it. He is 21 years old and fresh out of school. He showed me the fields in which the elders help farm and garden. He also showed me the elders' rooms. They are placed four people to a room. Two seniors are healthy, one is slightly dependant and one is totally dependent. This is ingenious design. The three healthier seniors care for the least healthy. The room I was in had four women. They were proud of their room and were happy to have me photograph them.

After my tour, we sat and drank coffee. One of the elders was excited to hear I was in India to help them create theatre and he sang me a song. A number of the other elders were laughing at him telling him he was crazy because I could not understand. They were right, I could not understand a word but I enjoyed his singing nonetheless.



While I was being toured around the village by Prepu, Ramalingam was meeting with a woman in the village office.

Ramalingam brought her to meet me. Her name is Pushpa and she is the director of the *Isha Foundation School*. The foundation runs a school close to Tamaraikulam. They are interested in working with the village. Ramalingam and I planned to meet with her later in the week at the Isha School to tell her about the intergenerational theatre project.

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My second day in India was Republic Day and I made sure to be awake to see how Tamaraikulam celebrates such a day. I set my alarm for 6:30 AM to be sure I was on time and to help if necessary.

The elders refused my help so I went for a walk around the pond and saw many bird species I had never seen before and a lizard.

After my walk, I went back to my room and met Dr. Sathiyababu for the first time. I will never forget this man as long as I live. At the time, I did

not know the impact he would have in my life. At first, he struck me as an elegant and kind man. I could tell immediately he is the kind of man that has a great relationship with every one that comes across his path. Sathiyababu has a PhD in Sociology and a life full of experience working in intergenerational development in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and India. He was happy to meet me and told me that I must hurry to the celebration so I could take my place as the guest of honour. I was surprised. I had initially thought that I could stand in the back row and be a wallflower to witness the event. That would not be the case. He grabbed a chair and set it right in the middle of the seniors. I then sat, took pictures, and watched the setup for the celebration. An artist created a mural out of powder on the ground around the garden and in the centre was a flag pole with a bunched up flag at half-mast. Prepu and some of the other men were setting up the sound system and after they finished Sathiyababu came to me and told me my role in the celebration - I would raise the flag and the seniors would sing songs in my honour. This was overwhelming and I



must have appeared uncomfortable because Sathiyababu told me everything would be OK and I would have fun.

I sat in my chair in the middle of everyone and then Sathiyababu started speaking into the microphone. He spoke in Tamil, so I do not know what he said but I'm guessing that he introduced the day and then he introduced me to the group. After he did this, he had me stand up and start the raising of the flag. One of the elders raised the flag with me. We ended up needing Sathiyababu's help because the bunched up flag was knotted really tight and when the knot was untied flower petals spilled out to create a beautiful sight. After this, I spoke to thank the seniors for the honour of raising the flag. In honour of the 64th anniversary of the Indian republic, I told the elders I felt privileged to spend the day with a group of people who had lived through the gaining of independence because they had a deep understanding of the importance of this day. Sathiyababu translated for me. He is adept as a translator which is an important component of intercultural communication.

After I spoke the seniors sang songs. Most of the songs were religious – Sathiyababu translated for me as best he could and Prepu took pictures with my camera. Half way through the song singing one of the village's donors came to join in the festivities. Tamaraikulam accepts donations from the community to pay for the meals that the elders eat each day. This particular donor pays for the meals on each major Indian holiday. He spoke to the elders and they responded well to him. He told jokes that they enjoyed. The singing then continued and then it was time to eat.

After the meal, I headed off to a meeting with Dr. Gunasekaran, the Dean of Performing Arts at Pondicherry University. I was interested to see if we could work either with professors or students to become the directors of the intergenerational theatre company. The only problem was that the vehicle that we were supposed to be taking had a flat tire. Gnana called Ramalingam to see what he should do and Ramalingam said that we should use one of the scooters. So, we did. Here I was a huge Albertan farm kid on the back of a scooter with a small Indian man driving. We must have looked so ridiculous or at least I felt ridiculous. We started driving down the road to the *Help Age India* office in Pondicherry where I was going to meet Ramalingam which was about a 30 km drive. After about the first 5 km, I realized that an overloaded scooter or motorcycle was a common sight in this community. We passed scooters which had entire four person families on them.

When we arrived at the university, Ramalingam and I went directly to the Performing Arts Department to Dr. Gunasekaran's office. We met with him for about twenty minutes. He described the whole curriculum and degree programs to me. He asked me what I wanted from him - abruptly and throughout the meeting he was brief with us. I had a hard time getting across to him what Ramalingam and I had in mind for the students and faculty with regard to their role as directors of the intergenerational theatre company. The language barrier and cultural barrier were difficult to overcome in this short meeting. I am not sure exactly what even happened. I know he described the program to me which included three degree programs (BA, MA, PhD) and he thought that UVic students should come and do one of these programs because it would be a great opportunity for them. When Ramalingam and I tried to describe to him anything about Tamaraikulam or *Help Age India* the discussion seemed to stop. He did tell us that they do teach applied theatre and when I asked him about this he gave a short reply, "Yes, we do that". Because of the communication difficulties, it was hard to get a pulse of exactly what he was willing or not willing to do. I came out if it knowing that there is a large pool of graduates from his program seeking work. The meeting was difficult and I was left feeling pessimistic about the relationship with Pondicherry University.

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Later on this January 2013 trip, I visited the *Isha Foundation School*. The atmosphere at the school and the mandate of the organization fit well with Tamaraikulam and the vision of our intergenerational theatre project. This school is a 45 minute drive from Tamaraikulam. My guess is it is actually a bit shorter but it was Ramalingam's first visit to this place so, we did get lost and had to ask for directions. The school was in the middle of a rural area. The children are from the rural areas and most are given scholarships to attend the school and many are first-time learners in their family, meaning their parents never attended school. A majority of the students' parents and extended family are illiterate. The main mandate of the school is to give rural students the same quality of education as urban students to help alleviate the poverty experienced in this region. Their main goal is to ensure their students learn English which is a requirement in India to attend most postsecondary institutions. The foundation's goal is to have a school like this in each of the 32 districts of Tamil Nadu province. At this time, they had built eight. This school was one of the first to be built because the 2004 tsunami left this area without a school.

The school's two directors gave Ramalingam and me a tour of the school. Children from ages 3-14 attended the school at this time. The school started four years ago and at that time the oldest students were ten. The school is actually growing with the students. Not just in the grade level but there are



actual floors being added to the top of the school. Originally, the school was one floor and now it stands at two floors with the roof of the building having building supplies, exposed rebar, and plans for a third floor once donations come through. The third floor will be needed as the students grow older and more students start attending the schools. Their intention is to grow until the oldest



students finish their high school and then to assist them in finding postsecondary institutions to attend.

The school consists of 480 students. The teachers are well qualified and most have graduated from universities in the area, a mix of male and female teachers with more females than males. The children were an absolute delight. We looked in on grammar, vocabulary, math, science, computer sciences, and physical education classes. They use innovative ways to teach each of these courses. Grammar is taught using a dice playing game, vocabulary by singing songs and using computer games. The students have won national and international honors in both math and science. The oldest students had an election because recently there was one in the state. They campaigned to the rest of the school to vote on what fruit was the best. Apple won. I was able to see the art projects of the students. The students are good artists with the oldest being adept at performing the traditional art of the region. Students also learn about botany and agriculture. They have a huge garden and grow many different varieties of plants and trees. The most recent cyclone ruined their greenhouse but they will fix it soon. It should be noted that the same curriculum is used in all of the schools but each schools adapts it based upon their experiences of working with their specific community.

The Isha foundation was founded by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. He sells DVDs and books based upon his spiritual ideologies and yoga practices. His belief is that for people to be whole they must help the less fortunate. That is where a lot of the donations come in. People from across the planet donate money to help the foundation. To me, it looks as if all of their funding comes from donations and from the profits of the DVD, book, and other products.



Some controversy surrounds this type of education. Some critics are uncomfortable with the school lessons being primarily in English. They believe that the English bias will signify the end of the Tamil language and rural Tamil culture. I shared this concern when I first entered the school. I asked the directors about this and they showed me a few of the techniques they use to ensure the honoring of Indian culture. Some of the English songs they have in their curriculum highlight each of the indigenous cultures in India and also their language. In learning the English words for this song they are also learning the major indigenous cultures and languages in their country. Ramalingam and I also had a discussion regarding this issue. He



pointed out that English is the unifying language in India. If young people from rural areas do not know English they will not be able to communicate with people from other regions in India that speak Hindi, Bengali, or any of the other 50 or so languages used in India. It should also be stated that the teachers allow the student to speak in Tamil. They do not get in trouble for speaking their mother tongue. Ramalingam and I also discussed how our project will be helpful in strengthening the influence of Tamil culture on the students of this school. The relationship between the elders and the students will also help to strengthen the relationship to their culture.

Finally, Ramalingam and I asked the directors if they would be interested in being the younger generation in our intergenerational theatre company. They agreed and wanted to start immediately. Ramalingam and I told them it would be a multi-year project and their agreement was the first step. We have an older generation, a younger generation, and an organizational home. We will be able to find directors, maybe from Pondicherry or from elsewhere and now I wanted to use the rest of my time on this first trip to discover how theatre works on this side of the world.

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I was privileged to see two theatrical performances at Tamaraikulam while I was visiting. The donor, GPK, who paid for the meals on Republic Day, also paid for two performances.

The first was an amazing dance troupe. Sambad, the head choreographer/director, came to me, introduced himself, and the show. The evening consisted of traditional dances of the Pondicherry area. The music was drum beat driven and the movement was beautiful. The music was highlighted by a highly skilled trumpet soloist and a group of four dancers wearing bells around their ankles. The first half of the show was beautiful but the second half was exciting. They started mildly dangerous and progressed to death-defying. First, they brought out a table and were performing hand and head stands on it. Then, they had one of the young men working on fixing the roof to come up on stage. They had him lay on the ground and gave him two bananas - one he stuck in his mouth and the other stuck in his pants sticking out of his fly. The girl dancer then put on a blindfold and danced around with a knife. After a few minutes of dancing she found her way to the boy on the ground and felt around to find his “banana” and then chopped it into pieces and chopped the one in his mouth as well.



The seniors laughed at this and so did I.

Next the dancers brought out two large metal pails of water and danced around with them in their mouth. It looked they were almost drowning. After this they brought out a ladder and one of the dancers was balancing on top of the ladder in a death-defying manner - which at this point in the show was beginning to be expected. Next, one of the dancers wore a blindfold and chopped a coconut in half that was on another one of audience member's head.

Finally, their grandest of finales. Two of the dancers danced with torches doused in kerosene. They also covered their bodies in kerosene and burned themselves. After this, they drank some of kerosene and blew fire. Sitting so close to this action was amazing. I could feel the flames. I was impressed and the elders loved every minute of it.

The second performance was a traditional presentation of *Theru Koothu*. This is a theatrical style dating back hundreds of years which features stories from the Sanskrit text and colorful, fancy costumes. The performance starts in the early evening and lasts late into the night. I marvelled at the costumes and the vocal ability of the actors. One of the main purposes of these performances has traditionally been to express the Sanskrit text to illiterate rural Indians. The



audiences can consist of thousands of people and because of this the actors need to have strong vocal ability.

After one of the performances, I spoke with GPK the donor from Singapore who made the performance possible. He started donating to Tamaraiikulam after winning the lottery. As the story goes, he was holding a lottery ticket for a massive amount of money. While the ticket was in his hand, he saw a special on NDTV about Tamaraiikulam and he said, “God, if you let me win the lottery I will donate money to this village.” He won and he is the village’s largest donor.

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Towards the end of this first trip, Ramalingam and I worked on documenting our agreement with this project. We agreed upon these proposed phases:

Phase One - UVic and *Help Age India*/Tamaraiikulam Managers will hire Tamaraiikulam intergenerational theatre directing team (will be made up of Indian Theatre artists) - to occur Summer 2014

Phase Two - UVic will train Tamaraiikulam Intergenerational Theatre Directing Team - to occur September/October 2014

Phase Three - Tamaraiikulam Intergenerational Theatre Directing Team, Junior Students, and Tamaraiikulam Elders will create play based upon the stories of the Indian elders (UVic will guide this process) - to occur October/November 2014

Phase Four - Premiere Performance of the Tamaraiikulam Intergenerational Theatre Company (in the Open Air Theatre at TEV) - to occur November/December 2014

Phase Five - Tamaraiikulam Intergenerational Theatre Company will Tour Pondicherry region to schools (to help support SAVE project) and to other venues that are appropriate (to support *Help Age India's Seniors' Advocacy* projects, *Help Age India Elder Abuse* projects, and other appropriate *Help Age India* projects) - to occur January - June 2015

After these five phases year one will be complete. *Help Age India*, UVic, and Tamarailulam Intergenerational Theatre Company will assess first year and plan second year. After second year *Help Age India* will assess long term sustainability of the project. Ramalingam and I agreed I would work with both the Isha and Tamaraikulam communities to train them in theatre skills on another trip in the future.

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“No, I haven’t gone yet.” I said in to the phone.

“That’s stupid you have to use the toilet eventually.” Liz said back to me from halfway across the world.

I really missed toilet paper but I finally used a bathroom after encouragement from home. The system in



India to deal with the function that toilet paper serves in Canada has been difficult for me. I am now a veteran of the Indian system which replaces toilet paper with a semi-high powered water hose but in those first days my stomach suffered.

The fear I had before coming to India had nothing to do with the toilet but my coffee addiction. I am happy to say the coffee in Tamaraikulam and from the street vendors in Pondicherry is fantastic. I was really worried about this. I drink at least a pot of coffee every day – don’t judge, I try to cut back. Trips to local coffee shops in Victoria are a regular part of my life. In the past work I have in done in Mexico and Guatemala, it was hard to find a good cup of coffee. I thought this was strange

being that much of Canada's coffee is grown in Mexico and Guatemala. The coffee at Tamaraikulam is made by a man named Deva. I think his secret is the freshness of the milk. The cow is milked and then the coffee is made within minutes of each other.

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On the January 2013 trip, I was privileged to work with the elders for a couple of hours to write a simple play. With Sathiyababu as my translator and co-facilitator, I attempted to write a short performance with the Tamaraikulam elders. We sat around



Sathiyababu's desk with eight elders. I asked each of their names and wrote them down. Next, I asked them if they knew a song which they all knew that they could sing together. After a few moments of discussion, they came up with a song titled *Palum Paluum*. They sang the song a couple of times so they could all remember it. Then I asked them to stand up and sing the song. We sang it twice. The first time I asked them to sing as if they were in a huge hall with thousands of people watching them and the second time I asked them to sing it as if they were singing a lullaby to a baby. They did a great job of singing for a crowd. The lullaby however was still really loud. Indian children must be able to sleep through anything. Not surprising, since the streets are so loud here.

Next, I started the session with an activity I learned from Susan Pearlstein years ago at a conference in Edmonton. David and I used it with G&F and other groups with successful results. The activity is called 'Hands'. In the activity, the participants are asked to close their eyes and reminisce about their favourite activity with their hands. I had them do this activity in two stages. First, they reminisced about their favourite activity in childhood and then their favourite activity in Tamaraikulam. I asked the seniors to close their eyes and start moving their hands. After they did this, I asked them to start

moving their hands doing their favourite activity from childhood. They did it for a short time and then I asked them to open their eyes. We went around and each person talked about their activity. It took some explaining and demonstrating and to be honest I still do not know what some of their activities were. I do not think that is too uncommon in intercultural work like this. I have learned that sometimes it is OK to not understand.

At this point, our meeting was interrupted. The major donor from Singapore, GPK, was leaving and we had to say goodbye. They had prepared a kind send off for him, his friend, and their wives. I have never seen anything like this before in my life. They prepared flowers and rice on a tray and every elder took a small amount of the mixture before the ceremony started. Sathiyababu spoke for a while in Tamil honoring the donor. GPK deserves the honor. While the elders were speaking they dropped the rice and flower mixture on the donor's heads. While this was going on, I could see how appreciative the elders are of the donor. Most of the people in the room had tears in their eyes. I couldn't help but think of how important his donations are



to this community. In my time here while walking in the streets, I see many elders who are suffering. I know the elders that live here realize this is the reality for many of their peers and they know that his donations help. This send-off was interesting for me to watch. After they left all of the seniors,

some staff, and I watched their car drive off. After it was out of sight, there was a moment where it seemed like everyone breathed and then Sathiyababu looked at me said “Ready!!” Off we went back into the office to continue our work.

I was emotionally affected by the elder’s reaction to the donor. I had to ask them what GPK meant to the community. They shared with me that he provides the clothes they wear and what is the significance behind them. The women have a band of beautiful fabric on the sleeve of their blouses. This band is usually reserved for people of higher classes in India. The men are provided with white clothes. This type of clothing is usually reserved for government officials and business elite. GPK said their clothes must be of this type because the elders here are just as important as the people of the high classes.

After our discussion, we started the second part of the Hands activity. In this part, I had the elders use their hands to reflect on their favourite activity in Tamaraikulam. The elders were much more excited to share this with me than their childhood memories. I could easily see the pride they have in their life here. They told me about how they love sitting and watching people come and go through the gate. They love making banana twine rope and soap. A couple elders love to cut vegetables. Another elder loved to care for the cows.

To finish off the session, I asked them to sing *Palum Paluum* one more time. I had Sathiyababu tell them I would write a short simple script based upon what they had told and that the next day we would rehearse the script and before I left we would perform it for the other elders.

The next day, Sathiyababu and I rehearsed with the eight elders the script that we worked on the day before. Sathiyababu called a meeting with the seniors acting in this short play into his office for a meeting. He started the meeting by telling the elders the reasoning behind the theatre project. He knew that if this small group knew the theatre project would inspire other elders across India to stand up for their rights they would be inspired to make the theatre as good as they could. He knows this community well and is responsive to their needs.

We started rehearsing at about 4 PM. I was quickly shown that putting on the entire script I had put together would not be possible in one rehearsal. Working through translation is always time consuming. So, I thought we could just get through



the first section in which the elders sing *Palum Paluum* and then tell the audience about their favourite activities when they were children. Sathiyababu then proceeded to help them stage this section of the play. The largest challenge for the elders was singing together. I do not think they spend a lot of time singing together - they mostly sing on their own. They made a lot of mistakes but the rehearsal process was great - so much laughter.

After about one hour of rehearsing, we took a break and had a snack with tea. This is an important part of G&F rehearsals that often when I have worked with other groups we have to enforce otherwise people would not participate. This community naturally did this. We sat, drank tea and ate a donut.



After the break, I told Sathiyababu we should rehearse the section twice more and then go outside to the open air theatre and perform it. I wanted to try it outside because I knew the elders would respond to the atmosphere of performing on the stage where they watch

other groups perform. The two rehearsals inside were taken a bit more seriously than the earlier ones possibly because of the added pressure of performing on the open air theatre.

We then went outside and performed the section of the play twice. Both times were not expertly done. Many mistakes happened and they were still having trouble singing together but they can perform and an audience will respond well to their performance. During their first run through, they generated an audience of the workers and some of the other seniors. I spent half my time watching the elders perform and the other half watching the impromptu audience. The audience had large smiles on their faces - so did the performers. From this simple display, it is easy to see these seniors can perform and their audience will love it. For me, it was rewarding to see them performing on the same stage that I had watched two performances earlier in my week here.

Flying on the airplane home, I reflected. I was excited to be returning home to watch the Super Bowl but I certainly was eager to return to India. Both Tamaraikulam and Isha were amazing development projects central to their community reminding me of the *Primeros Pasos* in Guatemala. The central life-saving support given by these two Indian development projects to this rural community are world class. I was thrilled to work with these people and in this area of the world.

Chapter 3 – Research Back in Canada

Upon returning back to Canada in February 2013, I focused the academic research process of this project. At this point, I knew the project was ‘a go’ and I wanted to make sure the research portion could be as high of quality as I hoped the theatre company to be. In an early meeting with Warwick, our discussion led us to agree that a significant contribution I was making to Applied Theatre was the conception of a hybrid form which we termed Intergenerational Theatre for Development – combining Intergenerational Theatre and Theatre for Development. In my research, I focused upon Applied Theatre’s Canadian history and its foundational relationship with Theatre for Development which created the groundwork for the intergenerational theatre of *GerActors and Friends*. I will share these findings later in this study. Tracing my Canadian theatrical roots was inspiring. Canada has a strong history of blending theatrical and development work. I take pride in being a part of this tradition.

* * *

“You need to read Amartya Sen,” Michael Etherton wrote to me in an email after I shared with him the details of my January 2013 trip. I took his advice and am glad I did since Sen’s contributions to my understanding of India are enormous. After Michael told me this, I went to the UVic library and took out every book by Sen and read them. I would highlight two of his works as being integral to any Westerner’s understanding of India and International Development.

Sen’s theory on *Development as Freedom* is what should be used as the analytical tool for development in the twenty-first century. In his theory, he marks five different types of freedom necessary for humans to have if we, as a world, want to achieve improved development. The five freedoms are: political, economic, social, guarantees of transparency, and protective security. Throughout the history of development in the second half of the twentieth century the main indicator of development has been Gross Domestic Production and Gross National Production. I would argue, and Sen argues, this is inadequate since it focuses on an ends and not a means of development. When a country reaches a level of monetary power development is finished and the world can move onto the next country and raise their money making capacity. This is not the case and India is a great country to illustrate this point. Although this country has money, development is still needed. The

other part of Sen's concept I find particularly valuable is his definition of freedom as not a universal concept agreed upon by all cultures, but a process which needs to be negotiated. Think of the Athabasca Tarsands debate currently raging in western Canada: which freedom is more important, the freedom of the oil industry's economic interests or the freedom of the Indigenous people's access to their sacred land?

In another book by Sen called *The Argumentative Indian*, he dedicates a chapter to furthering Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. Said developed the concept Orientalism to describe the relationship between the East and West by examining literature and culture finding that the West was dominant throughout this history and the East was in fact a construction of the West's imagination. Sen divides the West's approaches to interpreting India into three categories: the exotic - which takes full note of the strangeness of Indian culture, the magisterial - the imperial gaze used by many Western authors, and the curatorial - which looks at the diversity of cultures in India and focus on differences not similarities. I have easily been able to fit myself into each of these three approaches to India and in some cases it is in a most uncomplimentary way.

I also wanted to expose myself to other Indian authors. During this period between February - June 2013, the author, besides Sen, who impacted my thinking was Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and her addition of the category of Subaltern or Subproletariat to Marxist economic theory.

Spivak, a literary theorist from India, in her article, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' reports on "how the third world subject is represented within Western discourse". She calls the third world subject the "silenced center" that exists in "the margins". In this category she includes the "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat." She goes on to describe the different social status in India.

1. Dominant foreign groups.
2. Dominant Indigenous groups on the all-India level.
3. Dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels.
4. The terms "people" and "subaltern classes" have been used as synonymous throughout this note. The social groups and elements included in this category

represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the “elite.” (Spivak 284)

In this analysis of India, she adds another dimension to Marx’s theory on social classes - subproletariat. She writes, “If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (287). This includes labourers in third world multinational factories and other low forms of labour. Spivak writes, “On the other side of the international division of labour, the subject of exploitation cannot know and speak of the text of female exploitation, even if the absurdity of the non-representing intellectual making space for her is achieved” (287). In this article she asks the question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In her opinion, the answer is no. Even if she is given a platform to speak, she will not be able.

Chapter 4 - The Second Trip to India

In July 2013, I took a second trip to India. This time my former partner, Liz, joined me. The big purpose behind this trip was to find out how Indians play and how this could be used to contribute to theatrical creation. This meant I hoped to conduct workshops with the Tamaraikulam elders and with the Isha school children separately, and then I hoped I could bring them together for a first meeting. I also needed to meet with Dr. Gunasekaran to see if there was still any possibility of hiring his graduates as directors of the intergenerational company. Liz and I also wanted to see some sights and get to know the area.

I had two workshop sessions with the elders.

Workshop #1:

In planning the session, I wanted to cover three major areas and then, if there was time, I wanted to show the elders a video of *GeriActors and Friends*' scene "Am I Invisible" and teach them G&F's song "We're Here Because We're Here". The three areas I wanted to work through in our session were to allow the elders to sing one of their favourite songs together, then we would join together playing a common game they used to play when they were children, and finally we would share stories which came to their



minds after playing that game. I told this plan to Sathiyababu, who was translating for me in this session, and we carried it through not knowing exactly where it would take us.

When we started the session, the elders decided they wanted to sing *Palum Paluum*. This was the same song we worked with while here on my last visit. We sang through it about five or six times while sitting and then stood up to sing it as if we were performing. After this, we asked the elders to tell us a childhood game they had in common. One of the elders quickly started to pretend to be a train; then all of the other seniors joined in and formed a train. As this was happening in front of us, Sathiyababu was taken away for a moment to say goodbye to some visitors who were leaving the village. When left to their devices, the seniors made the game more sophisticated by including a tunnel to the train game. Two of the seniors used their bodies to create the tunnel and then the other seniors became the train and started going through the tunnel in a figure eight pattern. After Sathiyababu returned the seniors played the game one last time and then we all sat down.

I had Sathiyababu ask the seniors what memories were brought to mind as they were playing the game. Each senior quickly shared their memories from their experiences on trains. One man spoke about how he loved watching the trees whip by at such a fast pace. Another woman shared a memory about when she used to ride the train with her parents and they would buy her sweet buns to eat. Another story told of a woman's first train ride when she was married at the age of 15. She and her husband went all the way from Pondicherry to New Delhi, a 3-day train ride. Others told about how the trains were coal- and wood-burning and steam from this would run the engine. Soot and embers would fly from the front of the train and land on the skin of the passengers. Another elder told us a story of a pilgrimage he made to one of the temples in the North and another shared a memory about a pilgrimage to bathe in the Ganges. The final story was



shared by an elder that remembered the different animals she saw while riding the train: tigers, snakes, lions, deer, pigs, peacocks, and monkeys.

After sharing the memories, I was compelled to ask the elders how they saw seniors being treated on the trains now. I asked Sathiyababu if he thought this was OK and he thought it should be fine. The mood changed. They all became much less lighthearted in their manner. They told that there used to be more space on the trains. With India's huge population growth the trains are now packed tightly. One woman told me that for one train ride she sat on a toilet for the whole ride just so she could have a place to sit. Many of the elders said they were now afraid to take the train out of fear of getting crushed and instead they opted to take the bus. This often means that elders do not have a place to sit and most of the time young people will not give up their seat. One elder told us a story about her walking towards a seat and a young person running to get in the seat before she could. Also difficult for the elderly is catching the train. They told me, the train does not slow down at every stop. This means that passengers have to run to catch the train and this prohibits elderly people from riding. A couple of compelling stories were shared as well. One woman told us that before when she rode the train she would never talk to other people because she would travel with her family but now she travels alone and talks to the new people she meets. She really enjoys talking with and meeting new people. One of the men told us that one time when he was on the train a caring young man gave up his seat so he could sit for a long journey. The



seniors agreed that it was more likely for a young person to give up a seat on a long ride but still on short trips the elders found they had to stand.

As a follow up question, I asked what their dream would be. How best could a train ride be to accommodate elders? They would really like it if people would offer them a seat, talk to them, and treat them with dignity. One of the elders then told us a story that once one of her neighbours helped her go all the way to the train, made sure she got on safely, and that she had a seat. At this time it became tea time and we all took a break.

After the break, we met in another room where there is a recently installed entertainment system. GPK paid to have a high quality projector and sound system installed in Tamaraikulam's multipurpose room. Between Prepu, Sathiyababu, and me, we figured out how to play the "Am I Invisible" scene. As we figured this out a much larger crowd gathered to watch the video. In the theatre session, we had eight seniors and to watch the video there were about twenty five people including GPK who was visiting again. To watch the video, I would play about 90 seconds and then pause it so Sathiyababu could translate. Once the video finished is when something special happened. I told the elders that the final song on this video was the song I wanted to teach them in English. Then, GPK started to translate what the words meant and in doing so he started to sing them. Sathiyababu took his lead and better developed the song to add actions. The two of them with the help of a number of the elders spontaneously wrote their own Tamil version of "We're Here

Because We're Here". They sang it a few times in the multipurpose hall and then I asked Sathiyababu if we could take it outside to sing it in the Open Air Theatre. When we went outside many of the other elders and



workers gathered to see what the fuss was about. The crowd amounted to about fifty people. Then the group of actors along with a few of the other elders started singing the new Tamil song. They sang the song over and over for ten minutes. Sathiyababu led them, trying to perfect the presentation of the song and the atmosphere was energetic, playful, and filled with laughter. At one point, one of the elders was laughing so hard she fell over - great to watch.

I could not ask for anything more out of a first session with the Tamaraikulam elders. A beautiful scene could be written about their childhood train memories and the reality for the elders who ride the train now.



But better yet was the transformation of the elders watching the video of the Canadian seniors singing, taking that song, and spontaneously creating a Tamil version. A community of 50 rural, poverty stricken Indian elders singing a loud chorus proclaiming that they were here and that they were not invisible - a great moment of activism and *communitas*. The entire community came together in this moment. Many of the elders here have spent the better part of their life in low income, low education, and detrimental conditions while being told, either explicitly or implicitly, they were worthless. Now, in this community they are being given the opportunity to stand up and

sing in an act of supreme protest that the rest of the Indian community had better take notice to them and their conditions.

Workshop #2:

Something interesting happened on this day. The group grew considerably. Instead of having only eight elders, we had more like twenty five. I was surprised to see this. Sathiyababu told me later he thought it was because we were enjoying ourselves so much that



more people want to join in. He was happy with one of the men who joined us. He generally does nothing but sit in his room, not even talking with anyone only coming out to eat meals. On this day, he came to join us and he even got up onstage to act and sing. I have photographic proof. Our meeting started at 3:30 PM and lasted until 6 PM with a brief break for coffee.



First, we sang *Palum Paluum*. This was the best rendition I have heard. Some of our newly recruited males have great voices and really helped balance the sound. After this, I asked the seniors to create tableaux which fell under the category of a moment we wish we had photographed. They split into two groups and came up with two photos. I

gave them about twenty minutes to rehearse. The twenty minutes turned into closer to one hour but there was no way I would have stopped them. They were laughing and having fun. During their rehearsal period, I had to leave the room. The elders paid far too much attention to us and what we thought of their work. When we left they had much better focus. I snuck around the building and

watched them through the windows. It became coffee time, so we took a quick break and Deva brought us delicious Indian coffee.

Then, we moved our session to the Open Air Theatre. Each group presented their tableau. One group showed a tableau in which they walked down a trail and came upon a snake. They were creative and used a piece of clothing as a snake. The other group



presented a tableau about dropping the water jug by the pond in their village because they were scared by the pond spontaneously bubbling. Both tableaux were well done and the elders had a great time performing them. We finished the session by singing the Tamil version of *We're Here*. I told them that they would need to be polished with this because they will be teaching to the students at Isha next week. This helped to motivate them to perform at a much higher level. After this, we ended the session. One lady, Jayamma, did not want to end. She stayed on stage and performed for me for a while. She showed us a game that she used to play with her sons. Sathiyababu described the game, *Cababi*, to me. It sounds similar to a game I used to play as a child called Red Rover.

* * *

“What do we do?” Liz asked me.

“I don’t know.” We were standing on one of the walking paths around the village with a huge cow blocking our path.

“Well come on. We can’t stand here all day.” She replied.

“What if this is one of the most revered cows around. I don’t want to piss anyone off.” I grew up around cows all the time in the country but it has been years since I have been around them on a regular basis. Plus, I have no idea what Indian cows are like. I have heard that they are treated like sacred gods. I did not want to offend anyone by chasing their cow. Liz and I stood and contemplated our next move.

A group of the village’s workers noticed our predicament and started laughing. In our hesitation one of the workers saw two stupid North Americans standing there staring at a cow. A woman came to save us. She pushed the cow until it moved and then told us (or at least I am guessing she said this – she was speaking in Tamil) “Just



push the cow – it won’t hurt you”. When we got back closer to the buildings she told the other workers about our encounter with the cow which was met with laughter.

Another day, while we were resting our relaxation was interrupted by the sounds of a herd of goats being walked through the rice fields. Goats are really high on my list of animals I want to raise. I



enjoy their company plus goat milk and cheeses are wonderful food. One of the young goats was really noisy. The littlest goat was uncomfortable walking in the water and was screaming while jumping through the water - a funny sight.

A couple of new additions came to the village community giving me much joy. Here at the village they just adopted two kittens Sathiyababu found abandoned at the side of road. They are now a part of the family here. Liz spent some time putting milk on her finger and letting the cats lick it off. Both of the cats look healthy in the face and ears but one of them has a broken leg that will probably never heal. I hope it survives. I am not sure how they would feed

cats here but if the cats with three legs is left to hunt as his main source of food he will have a tough time.

Besides the animals, Liz and I have grown close with a few of the elders despite the language barrier. Vadevil has really taken a shine to us and he always is concerned of our comfort. Liz and I regularly walk around the village to see all the different animals and to see what is going on. From this activity, he has learned the word “walking”. The first couple of times we ran into him while we were walking he tried to communicate something to us that we did not understand so we would put our hand in the air to symbolize going around the village and say “walking”. The next time Vadevil saw us he looked at us and proudly proclaimed “walking” while spinning his hand in the air. The cook has also really been kind to us. He makes sure that we are well fed at every meal and if we are late for a meal he comes and finds us. Liz was comfortable eating with her hands, but on this trip when the cook offered me a spoon I accepted. I felt guilty but it was comfortable. Liz’s knitting has also been of interest to number of the women. While she sits in the village somewhere knitting they walk up to her and touch her knitting and say “super”.

* * *

I worked with the Isha students over a two week period having a total of three workshops. The workshops with the Isha children proved to be much more challenging for me.

Workshop#1

The first day I worked with the Isha students was a wonderful experience. When I arrived on the first day, the school was having their morning assembly. Every day the entire school assembles in the yard into evenly spaced rows. They sing the national anthem and have morning announcements from the principal, and one child each day comes in front of the 500 others to say a short speech about her/himself. This last part is of particular importance. It helps the child develop confidence and public speaking abilities. Also, as a part of this day's assembly, the principal introduced me to the school. She had me make a quick introduction to the project. After I finished speaking, the kids gave me a welcome that nearly brought tears to my eyes. They applauded for a long time and then started clapping in unison. It was beautiful.

I was stationed with the nine kids in a classroom on the second floor of the school. It is a great room and all of the children were excited to be there but also very shy. I can see two obstacles that will need to



be broken for these children. First, they are very well behaved and attuned to proper classroom etiquette. This is not a conducive atmosphere for a drama classroom. I compare classroom atmosphere of good acting training closer to a party or another place where fun and playfulness rule over good behaviour and etiquette. That being said, I appreciate the seriousness and respect they are offering. I feel no need to win them over because they are already attentive and receptive. The

second challenge is the gender split. Boys sit next to boys and girls next to girls. This is true in junior high schools in Canada as well but it is extreme here in India. I will have to check this with the teachers and Ramalingam for cultural appropriateness. I do not want to push the kids in ways that will be culturally inappropriate.

The first activity we engaged in was a brief conversation. I wanted to know what they knew about theatre. When I first asked it took them a while to understand my accent. They thought I said fear. We then started writing down on the chalk board key words. First, we wrote theatre and drama. When the kids understood the question they were quick to respond. They thought theatre was similar to movies and they identified that theatre has scripts that are called plays. They knew of some famous



Indian plays. They also identified that theatre needs actors. I also pointed out to them that for it to be theatre there cannot be actors alone, to which they responded that there needs to be an audience. After this discussion, I asked if anyone wanted to give a short performance. I opened up the stage to them to see if any of them would take the dive into acting. One of the boys eventually took up my challenge. I ended up becoming close to this boy. He is talented in many regards, being a leader in this theatre group and a great athlete, excelling in swimming and badminton. He pretended to be a frog and hopped across the stage - we laughed. I waited for a while to see if any of the others would take up the challenge but no one did. I told them this would be a repeated exercise so they would have more chances to take risks. I also told them about the importance of taking risks when they are acting.

Next, I used a Viola Spolin-type spacewalk activity with them. I had them move around the space anywhere and everywhere. They had a great time with this activity. They enjoyed moving around pretending to be the tallest person in the world and then the shortest. I then started asking them to freeze into statues. We started just freezing on the spot. Then we froze into the activity they did on the weekend. Here, their statues included playing cricket, watching TV, reading, playing tennis, and completing homework. Next, I asked what activity they would do as soon as they were home from



school. Here, the statues included sleeping, reading, homework, helping with the housework, and playing cricket. The next statue I asked for was their favourite animal. After they froze into position I asked the students to start moving like their animal. Cats, cheetahs, tigers, and a kangaroo moved around the space.

After this, I asked if the students would sing a song for me which they all loved to sing. They decided quickly on a love song in Tamil. They sang it proudly and beautifully. They then asked that I would teach a song to them. We decided to teach them “We’re Here”. They enjoyed singing it. I told them this was an important song for G&F in Canada. Next, I played Bombaya with the group. This is a song game where we sing a verse and a chorus while passing balls around. Normally, I have one ball for each person but this time we only had one ball. We played the game several times and they told us they really enjoyed singing the song.

Next, we started playing a game in which we passed an invisible ball around the circle. This game went well. The children passed the invisible ball with skill. After, we spent time playing Viola Spolin's mirror game. They stood in groups of two facing each other and played mirror. They quickly became quite good at this



game. After spending about ten minutes, we played it as a performance. Each group went to the front of the class and performed their mirror.

I wanted to make sure they were not walking away thinking we had just played games that had no transferable skills to theatre, so we had a short discussion. We spoke about what we learned about the actor-audience relationship in the mirror game and how we as actors can improve what an audience sees. We also spent time talking about the invisible ball and how our belief in the ball made it so the ball really existed. Even when we did not even have the ball in our hands we could watch it be passed from person to person. The space or air transformed into being a ball but, as I instructed them at this point, the space can be anything and we could transform the space into whatever objects we wanted. Finally, in the discussion I assigned them homework. I told them to bring in a small object that was important to them so they could tell us how they got it and why it was important. I hope to learn lots about the kids from this activity and I hope we can develop scene work from these objects.

Workshop #2

The Isha students were excited for their second day of training. We started with a Spacewalk where we pretended to be really tall, short, fat, and then skinny. Then, I taught them a few simple tongue twisters for them to practise while walking around the room: red leather yellow leather, unique New

York, and toy boat. After, we broke into groups of two and told each other spontaneous stories about something we did the day before. Then, we found a new partner and told a story about trees and then a story about water.

Next, we started their homework assignment. I split them into groups of three and I asked them to tell each other about their object. My initial reaction was they forgot about the assignment and just brought in whatever they had handy. Students had mostly brought in pens or a watch. They went on and told their stories to each other. After each person had told their story, I asked them to choose one to turn into a short scene. I did this because I wanted to gauge where their theatre skills are and what better barometer than diving right in. They took about 8-10 minutes to prepare the scenes and then we had a performance. Each group did their scene and their work was strong and their stories had depth. One of the boys and his group performed the story of how he acquired his watch. Each time his Mom would send him to buy vegetables he would keep the change, until he had saved up 650 rupees. Then, he went to the store and bought his new watch. Another boy bought his watch and the necklace he was wearing with his inheritance from Grandfather's death after suffering from lung cancer. The last performance was of a girl's birthday party. Her best friend gave her a pen but then her older brother asked

how much the pen cost and it was five rupees. He said that five was an unlucky number and said she could not have the pen. Then she cried and her brother caved to give her the pen. That was five years ago. She had been using that same pen for five years and she was still best friends with



the same girl despite the unlucky five. The children had experience presenting scenes before. I asked them and they said it is an activity they have done in the school. They were narrating their scenes saying the action before it took place and playing the action in a realistic style. I have worked with many groups and this is a style that I sometimes have to fight to bring out of students. These 13-15

year old Indian youth naturally gravitated to this style. Ramalingam offered praise to the children. He was impressed with their English skills and told them so. Then he spoke to them in Tamil for a while. Afterwards, he told me that they should push to deepen their stories and perhaps think if there are any morals to their stories.

Next, we quickly played a new rendition of *Bombaya*. We did not have a ball so we slapped hands in an intricate pattern instead of using a ball. Then, we played pass with an invisible ball again. They did well and progressed into a more difficult variation where we played with balls of different sizes and weights. After we used a number of different balls, I asked them to try and manipulate the space into various different objects. Each student would play with the space until it became an object, then they would pass it to the next person in the circle and that person would create a new object. They were great at this. They created kittens, flowers, guns, cricket bats, and many other objects to pass around. We then tried another sophisticated version of this where they worked with the space in groups of three. They were quick to let their imagination take them into different and unfamiliar places. Three people working together on a space object can be challenging for experienced student actors but these children were adept at the game. One group's space turned into a grouping of rabbits that they were feeding and were hopping around the room. Another group's activity turned into a cricket match.

Again, we finished by de-briefing the day. I spoke with them about how useful space objects can be when they are creating scenes. When they did scene work they were still relying on real props. I encouraged them in the future to try and use space objects instead. I also took this opportunity to attempt to call each of them by name. I am still struggling with the pronunciation of Indian names. The children delighted in my poor Indian accent. We enjoyed our time together this



day and I learned from them that they are more than ready to take up the challenge of creating scenes with the elders of Tamaraiikulam.

Workshop #3

I started the day by clearly explaining to the children the entire project. Both the principal, the two vice-principals, and I had explained the project to them already but neither of us had taken the time to write it on the whiteboard and make sure they understood everything about the project. I explained every detail from the origin of the idea with Michael Etherton visiting Edmonton until Spring/Summer 2015. They were very excited and were happy I took the time to do this for them. After, I showed them the “Am I Invisible” scene. The difficulty for the children was understanding the English in the scene but they recognized both the Bombay song and “We’re here”.

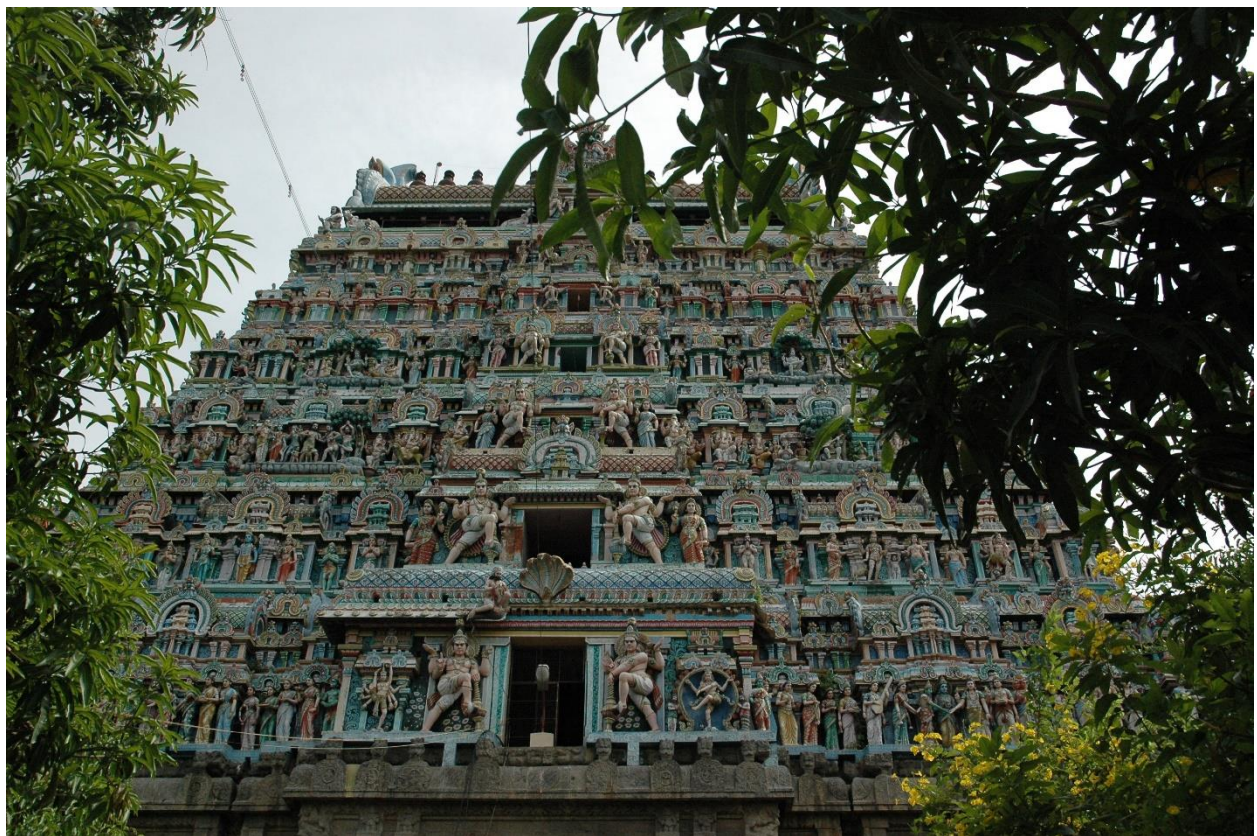
Next, I wanted to see if between the nine children and I we could quickly develop a scene and perform it for the principals of the school. I asked each of the students to think of what they wanted to be when they grew up. Then they would proclaim “Ladies and gentleman! When I grow up I want to be a...” and then they would perform the action of the job. They did a great job of this. Some wanted to be doctors, scientists, and there was a lawyer, a software engineer, and an actor. Once they successfully performed these, I asked them to think about some of the children in India who do not get to go to school. They knew of their realities and decided they wanted to sing the “We’re Here” song and dedicate it to the children in poverty. So, we developed some lines together in English and then started our performance. Since they had just watched the “Am I Invisible” scene, they started singing Bombay when they entered (on their own - I did not coach them to do this) then performed their job, said their brief dedication, and finished by singing “We’re Here” - A similar structure to the G&F scene. I directed them to touch up bits of the performance and then we did a performance for their principals. The director wiped tears from her eyes as they performed and I am proud of the children. We threw the scene together in only about 45 minutes. What I learned from working with them in this capacity was their ability to take direction and their ability to perform. Both are at a high level and will serve the future purposes of the Intergenerational Theatre Company.

I stated before I felt the time with Isha was challenging. Mainly this is from the level of discipline present in Indian classrooms. For me, coming in as an educator who uses playfulness as a major component of my pedagogy, I had trouble playing with the children productively. The children were disciplined or they were playing, the middle road of having them play while productively creating theatre was challenging for me and I think it was challenging for them too. This new style of learning would take time for the children to adapt to. I have read the work of James Thompson who addresses this challenge as well. The discipline in this Indian classroom is militaristic and not conducive to theatrical creation. This certainly will be a challenge moving forward.

* * *

“What do we do?” Liz asked.

“I have no idea.” I replied. We were in the Chidahanbram Temple, a thousand year-old temple which was about an hour’s drive from the village. I was experiencing one of the most ‘Othering’ experiences I have ever had. Liz and I had no idea what was going on. A loud bell was ringing and



many Indians were praying. We went outside to escape the loud bell. Upon finding some quiet outside, a young devotee found us.

“This is a beautiful place. Can I tell you about it?” asked the devotee.

“Yes, please do.”

“Did you just come from that part of the temple?”

“Yes.” I replied thinking about how intensely loud it was.

“Isn’t it a peaceful place? Does your heart not feel happy?” He said. I was still quite intimidated by what I had experienced. He took the time to explain the traditions of the temple to Liz and me. He was happy to hear we were in India working with theatre. He added as a part of his tour an explanation of *Theru Koothu* which was what I witnessed on my previous trip.

After our tour, we noticed a young boy following us. He really wanted me to take a picture of Liz and him. I did and then a few girls wanted to take their picture with Liz. Even though we couldn’t speak the same language we were finding ways to communicate with each other.

* * *

On the day I met with Dr. Gunasekaran to negotiate the hiring of his students as directors for the intergenerational theatre company, Gnana and I drove to Pondicherry to meet Ramalingam. When we arrived, Ramalingam told me that Mani, one of *HelpAge India’s* other workers, would be joining Gnana and me for the meeting with Dr. Gunasekaran. I had met Mani briefly before but I did not know him well but after what happened in Dr. Gunasekaran’s office I consider Mani a dear friend and a fantastic colleague.

When we first arrived, Dr. Gunasekaran was about to take his lunch so we went to the canteen to eat. I was thankful for this since I had yet to eat that day – minus a cup of coffee from Deva. We sat and ate. Dr. Gunasekaran spent a majority of the meal on his phone. Being Dean and Head of a

department of a university is a busy position. After lunch we returned to his office, he invited in another Theatre Professor, Dr. Bushan, and we started to talk about my research. Dr. Gunasekaran handed Dr. Bushan the proposal documents I had forwarded and asked him to read them and see if they made sense. After leafing through the documents for about ten minutes he and I had a discussion for an additional ten minutes about the full breadth of my research project and what exactly I intended to research in the two communities and the specifics on the involvement of Pondicherry University. Then, Dr. Gunasekaran asked Dr. Bushan to describe the project to him. They spoke in Tamil with Mani filling in any details Dr. Bushan missed. Then, Dr. Gunasekaran grabbed his secretary and told him what to write in a letter and told Mani and me to help. This turned into Mani writing most of the letter and me correcting the grammar. After we finished, we printed it off and then went back into Dr. Gunasekaran's office. He had a few minor edits to the letter and then also asked me to write a letter detailing exactly what our formal relationship was at this point in time. He was most concerned with showing that his involvement was voluntary, and that his travel expenses would be paid by *HelpAge India*. We went back to his secretary's office and wrote my letter and finished the edits to the other. We entered his office again and he signed the letter and then I had a huge smile on my face. At this moment he said that a deal is never complete unless we went to have tea and get a small snack. Gnana drove the four of us just off campus to find tea and some delicious fried hot peppers. For a moment, another professor from the Tamil Language Department joined us and then some students recognized Dr. Gunasekaran from his acting career and asked for his autograph. After our snack we took Dr. Gunasekaran back to his office and left.

I learned a lot about this man while spending these four hours with him. First off, he is busy. The entire time we were meeting, he was either answering questions from a seemingly endless amount of people. It reminded me of watching an episode of MASH where Col. Henry Blake was constantly signing different pieces of papers shoved under his nose by Radar O'Reilly. The only difference being, instead of one Radar, there must have been fifty. It makes me think back to my original impression of him. I thought he was an abrupt man. I now think this impression was just due to the fact that he has a revolving door of people constantly demanding his time and therefore deals with matters quickly. I am finding this with a lot of Indian men of high ranking positions. In Canada, there is a much smaller population and this is reflected in the amount of time people in high ranks

can spend with any given person. Here in India, with the massive amount of people the speed of relations is rapid. I imagine on any given day Dr. Gunasekaran deals with hundreds possibly even over a thousand people and I would guess Ramalingam works at a similar speed. I also discovered that Dr. Gunasekaran is a talented and famous man to the status of living legend. Mani was somewhat nervous to meet him, not because of his office but because he had seen many of his movies and had attended his folk music concerts. Until this point I had only viewed Dr. Gunasekaran as a scholar and if you look up his scholarly achievements they are impressive on their own but his contribution to Tamil art is unparalleled. A large reason for his fame is his cultural status. He is Dalit, which was one of the “untouchable” classes in India’s recent history. He is famous for being an actor that broke through despite racial inequality.

He expressed a very keen interest in coming to Canada to perform and deliver some of his scholarly work. I am going to put some serious thought and effort into helping him come to Canada. His story and art would be of interest to many Canadian scholars and I would love to help him get exposure in our country.

“They want to say good-bye?” Liz asked.

“Yes, it is something they do with people when they leave. To show appreciation I guess.” I answered. You may remember the send-off they gave to GPK.



“OK”.

Liz and I sat on the stage at the Open Air Theatre while the elders sat in the audience with Sathiyababu translating for us what was being said. The seniors told her how much they would miss her and that they wish she would stay in the village forever. Then, Liz spoke to them and she cried. When she started to cry all the seniors told her not to cry and some came to the front pushed on her eyes and then cracked their knuckles against their head. Sathiyababu told us this was thought to be a way to stop someone from crying. At this point, the elders sang a number of songs for us including *Palum Paluum* and their version of “We’re Here”.

One aspect which will always stick with me from this good-bye was the sun. When the elders and Sathiyababu started the sunlight was bright and by the end it was a dark twilight nearing nighttime. The ceremony lasted about twenty minutes and it took only that long for the sunset. Being from Canada, I am not accustomed to the quick sunset. In our summer, sunsets can last the whole night. Where I currently live, they last hours in the summertime. Tamil Nadu’s sunset lasted long enough for a community to say good-bye to a visitor.

* * *

In late July, 2013 on this second trip, the first intergenerational meeting between Isha and Tamaraikulam ended up being a wonderful affair. When I arrived at the Isha School with the elders, the principal and vice-principal gave the elders a short tour. They went into most of the younger grades. Seeing the elderly men and women interacting with the three and four year-old students was delightful.

At this point it was about 3 PM and the students had to leave on the bus at 4 PM. Because of the time crunch, the principals and I decided to arrange a short program to happen for the older school children. While grades four through nine assembled on the second floor long room (where they normally meditate) the Isha students met with me



quickly to rehearse singing “We’re Here” in English and the elders and Sathiyababu worked on “We’re Here” in Tamil. After the short rehearsal we went upstairs to perform.

The principal started by initiating a short meditation chant - all 250 students joined. After, we started the program. First, the principal introduced the elders, Sathiyababu, and Ramalingam. Then, she introduced the students and me. She went on to describe the intergenerational project that we were starting here on this day. Then, I quickly introduced the nine Isha students I had been working with and we sang “We’re Here” in English and the audience applauded their efforts. Then, Sathiyababu counted the elders in and they sang *Palum Paluum*. They clapped as they entered singing this song and the students joined in. It was loud. Then after the applause, Sathiyababu announced that the same song was now to be sung by the elders in Tamil. They sang the song to more applause. Then, the elders taught the song to the students. This took about three minutes. As soon as everyone was

ready, the entire long room full of Isha students, the eight Tamaraikulam residents, and a handful of teachers, the principals, and lucky onlookers like me, sang “We’re Here” in Tamil - an amazing sight. Over 250 students singing a song protesting elder visibility to a



huge group of students - this was a fantastic learning opportunity for the students and a great forum for the elders to be heard in their community. Sathiyababu made sure to take a moment to speak to the students. He asked the children to put their hands up if they had living grandparents or had other elderly people in their lives. Everyone put their hand up. He then said to make sure that they remembered this song and remembered to be respectful to the elderly. After this, the program was finished. A tradition in India is to finish a program of this nature by singing the national anthem. Everyone did this and then we were done. I had a brief conversation with the students congratulating and thanking them. They did a great job being mentors for the other students in their school. I also said my goodbyes to the principals. They have been so easy to work with and I am grateful for everything they have provided me with. I also made sure to touch base with the elders. They had a wonderful time. They loved singing for the students and they loved visiting the classrooms. A great day for everyone and a great last day for my second trip.

* * *

I had two major learning outcomes from the July 2013 trip which influenced the rest of my work in India.

While Liz and I were visiting some tourist sights, I bought one of the books from the Pondicherry Ashram's founder Sri Aurobindo. Aurobindo was a revolutionary in Tamil Nadu during the first half of the 20th century who fought for independence, created artwork in various media, and was a



spiritual leader in this area. In an address for university students after Indian independence was achieved, he said,

India, shut into a separate existence by the Himalayas and the oceans, has always been the home of a peculiar people with characteristics of its own distinct civilization, way of life, way of spirit, a separate culture, arts, building of society. It has absorbed all that has entered into it, put upon all the Indian stamp, welded the most diverse elements into its fundamental unity.

This has certainly been my experience here. Think back to my experience showing the elders the “Am I Invisible” scene. I tried to teach the community the English version of “We’re Here” but instead “the Indian stamp” was put upon the song. They took my offer, from Canadian culture – the Canadian *GeriActors and Friends*’ song – and created a unique Tamaraikulam Elders’ Village song in Tamil.

This phenomenon is consistent with my experience with the Isha students. I had the students working with Spolin and Keith Johnstone activities I have used throughout my career in Canada and instead of the students taking up the activities in the same way as North Americans they apply “the Indian stamp” - Space work turns into a cricket match; and Mirror turns into an exercise in Yoga. On the one hand, this shows the delightful openness of the playful theatre activities developed by Johnstone and Spolin but that is not what I am learning here. What I think I am seeing is the resilient strength of the Indian people here in the Cuddalore district and at large, the Indian people. Their culture has been infiltrated by many different philosophies, religions, ideas, political structures, art, and people of great influence but instead of ever being fully taken over by any of these infiltrations they accept the influence while absorbing it into the Indian fabric.

I remember in my Religion course as a freshman - the world religion course I referenced earlier - my professor, a Lutheran Minister who led an exchange group to India each year, told us that when Christian missionaries first entered India they were met with open arms. The Hindi people loved Jesus and immediately adopted him into their religion, worshipping him as a god in their temples. To this day, ashrams exist which are dedicated to the study of Jesus that are not affiliated with the Catholic Church or any other Christian sect. This story has stuck with me over the years and now I can see how this could actually happen here.



With every artistic offer I make to the Indian people they accept it while putting on it “the Indian stamp”. I adore this discovery. I still have to be concerned about being culturally dominant while implementing this theatre company for the people here but this discovery will alleviate any need to worry about being too soft-footed while planning workshops. I can have faith that the theatre work will be subject to the inescapable Indian Stamp.

The second learning I take away is complete and utter faith in Sathiyababu as a facilitator for this intergenerational theatre company. In his past, he was a choir director and, with his experience working at the elders’ village, he certainly knows how to work with an intergenerational group. Moving forward, training him to direct the company and finding ways to support him will be important if this theatre company will have any sustainability after I leave Tamil Nadu.

Chapter 5 – More Time Back in Canada and the Indian Business Trip

Beginning in January 2014, I started teaching a pre-requisite training course for UVic undergrad students who were joining me to consult in the creation of the Intergenerational Theatre Company between Isha and Tamaraikulam. The goal for this course was to introduce the students to the fields of Theatre for Development and Intergenerational Theatre and begin thinking about the challenges of blending these two approaches in Tamil Nadu. To kick off the course, the students read Naomi Klein's *No Logo* and a collection of readings on Canadian Applied Theatre history. At this point, I shared with the class a discovery I made blending Canadian Applied Theatre history with Naomi Klein. Both have roots in the National Film Board's *Challenge for Change* programme. Canadian Applied Theatre looks to the films on the Fogo community and Klein thanks growing up with a mother in Montreal who was a filmmaker working in the critical culture of this period of Canadian nationalism. Klein recalls attending films with her Mom and then the community assembled having critical discussions on the topic brought up. After this first class, our class structure took on a rhythm in which we would start class by giving presentations, we would take a break where a group of students would lead workshops in playfulness, and then we would finish class with more presentations. First, the students' presentations were focused on Theatre for Development readings and then we looked at various Intergenerational or Reminiscence or seniors' theatre projects and companies.

In our final class, we went to a seniors' home in Victoria and I facilitated a simple intergenerational theatre workshop with seniors from an upper middle income home. It seemed to have a slow start. The residents rolled in little by little and it was slightly uncomfortable but then slowly the residents started to outnumber the students and we had ourselves a loud room filled with intergenerational conversation – the natural playfulness. I interrupted the conversation and asked that we start by singing some songs the residents like to sing. We went through a few songs – some I knew, other I did not – we sang *You are My Sunshine*, *Bicycle Built for Two*, *Eastside Westside*, and others. After the singing, I asked residents and students to work together in groups of four or six. The game was to get to know each other well enough that you could introduce your new friends to the rest of the group. They chatted for about 20 minutes and then we went around the circle and told the group about the new friends. This took about 30 minutes, contained much laughter and, of course, stories came about. The most memorable story for me was one of the residents moved to Victoria in 1946

when her husband was hired as a professor at UVic. This was the year UVic moved from Craigdoroch Castle to its current site because of the soldiers coming home from the war to free education. This would have been such an exciting time to live in Victoria. I would love to pick her brain about this time to put together a piece of theatre about it. After everyone was introduced, we started the next game. Each group was to reform and decide which concept was the most important: Health, Wealth, Family, or Travel. After they decided, they created a tableau to represent this concept. Next, they either made up or remembered a song that was to be performed with their tableau. Finally, they had to invent a title for their tableau. Each group performed and we shared many laughs. The groups were split with which concept they felt was most important. Family and health were chosen by all the groups. We had about ten minutes left so we chatted for a few minutes about our group's trip to India. Between having the students introduced to intergenerational theatre process via this workshop and the academic course material, the students were as ready as they could be to help me consult in the theatre work in Tamil Nadu.

* * *

“That feeling you have, right now, that is what I am trying to bring to India,” I said to the group assembled at the International Week presentation. After the *GeriActors and Friends* finished their performance, I looked out at the audience and saw a room full of people with smiles on their faces.

I had the opportunity to give a number of presentations in Victoria but it was a presentation in Edmonton which had an impact upon the project. In late January, the University of Alberta hosts an annual event called International Week. Between the *GeriActors and Friends* current directors, David Barnet and Becca Barrington, and me, we organized this event to begin with a workshop performance - an event in which G&F facilitate the audience through a few simple playful theatre activities and then have a short performance, on this day they performed a play they were currently writing which blends Shakespeare's *King Lear* with their own fears of losing purpose in older age, to show the audience the full process of the company - which would be followed by a presentation on my work in India.

“I feel like my heart has grown bigger like the Grinch on that Christmas movie. That is what needs to happen in Tamil Nadu to the audiences and the theatre company.”

I then shared a video of Tamaraikulam and the stories of my experience working with the people.

When I returned to Victoria, I told Warwick about this experience.

“Oh, well... you need to read a James Thompson article. I’ll send the information to you on email.”

Later that day, Warwick sent me James Thompson’s article ‘Digging Up Stories’ about his work in Sri Lanka. This helped me a great deal. In the article, he writes about a move in focus from epistemic to ontic during Theatre of Development theatre facilitation. The epistemic describes the way a group sees, studies, and observes the world. The ontic describes a group participating and being in the world. From this, I was able to see that the focus of playfulness G&F takes is an example of Thompson’s ontic approach. This helped a great deal with my communication about the philosophy of facilitation for this project (I will write about this further in a following chapter).

* * *

“Wait, you’re going to buy a cow?” I said.

“Yes, it is close to Chennai,” Sathiyababu replied. “A young girl’s birthday is tomorrow and her family wants to buy a cow for her to give to the village to celebrate. They will be here tomorrow and we need a cow.”

“You’re going to buy a cow at a temple...Can I come?” I thought it would be interesting to witness the conducting of business.

“Yes, we’ll leave after tea.”

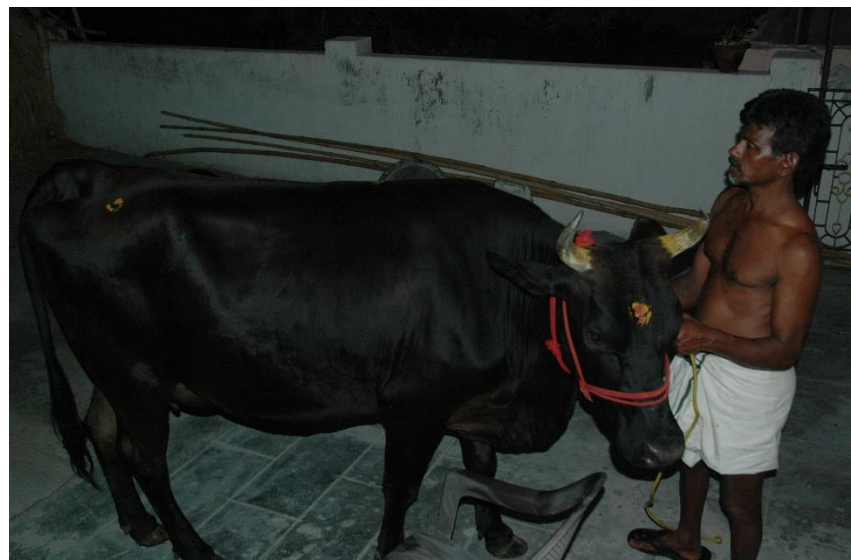
Gnana, Sathiyababu, and I left for Chennai. The drive was great. We went to a community close to Chennai which is usually a three hour drive but being that it was late in the day the traffic was insane and it took much longer leaving Pondicherry - so many cars, bikes, and buses. Finally, we were on the highway and on to quicker riding. I am not sure how we got onto the topic but Sathiyababu and

I both realized that we are singers. He then challenged me to sing a song. I am not sure why but I started singing a Joe Strummer song from the album released right after he died called “Silver and Gold”. Sathiyababu loved it. He sang a song in Tamil for me and told me what it was about. Then, he asked me to sing a song about lost love because all the best songs in Tamil are about that. I sang “Yesterday” by the Beatles. We went back and forth like this for about an hour or so.

When Sathiyababu and Ramalingam were trying to find a place to buy this cow they called a number of people but when they found that this man was willing to deal with them, they stopped looking. The man’s family had been supplying this local temple with milk for generations. As most people know from even brief encounters with Indian cultures in history or in pop culture, they often venerate cows as gods. Or to be more precise, as goddesses. The cows in India were marvels of the ancients’ era in that they provided enough milk to live on and were powerful workers to help in agriculture.

Once we arrived at the temple and met the man, we went to his nearby house where the cows were kept. He had a number of cows but one cow was quite a bit nicer than the others. We had to leave with this one. A good price needed to be negotiated. This took quite some time and it all took place in Tamil. I sat and quietly watched the proceedings. They would talk for a while and then Sathiyababu would call Ramalingam. Ramalingam would talk to the man selling the cow and then the man’s employee would grab the cow again and parade it around for us. Finally, it seemed as though it had come to completion and Sathiyababu told me we were going to walk to the temple.

After arriving at the temple, they went into an area where I had to wait outside because only devotees of Hindu were allowed. They came out of the temple and we walked back to the car and left. While we were driving away I asked...”Well, what happened with the cow?” Sathiyababu and Gnana



laughed because, I am assuming, they forgot I do not speak Tamil. They told me that the original asking price of the cow was 50,000 rupees and they only wanted to pay 35,000 rupees. Finally, after all the negotiations they settled on 38,000 rupees which in Canadian terms is a little less than \$800.

The drive back to Tamaraikulam was going to be a long journey. I had just arrived from Canada, and was still feeling the effects of jetlag. To start the journey we stopped to grab beer and brandy. The beer was warm and reminiscent of my days at age 19 when I would buy a Colt 45 or Big Bear in 40 ounce bottles, but when mixed with brandy, which Sathiyababu told me “would help” - help what I am not sure, it certainly was a good way to start this journey. After the beer and brandy we grabbed some food - naan and omelettes - and then headed straight for the village. I layed down in the back of the jeep and slept. The combination of beer, brandy, food, and jetlag made the noisy Indian highway a perfect place to sleep.

* * *

My 3rd trip to India in July 2014, I called ‘The Business Trip’. The focus on this trip was figuring out how exactly the schedule would look for the UVic students’ time in Tamil Nadu, hiring the directors for the theatre company, and working out the budget with *HelpAge India*. Before this trip and during this trip, I focused my research efforts on understanding neoliberalism and reading authors who deal with anti-imperial thought specifically focusing on Indian authors. The best of what I read, which I ensured all the students would also read, were: Jawaharlal Nehru’s speeches before and after Indian independence, Ashis Nandy’s *The Intimate Enemy*, and Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*. Nandy’s work was important for introducing to me an important component of anti-imperialist thinking. He writes about the psychological effects of imperialism on the imperialist mind. If one takes on imperialism as a mindset, they damage themselves psychologically and give up the opportunity to be a fully ethical, just person. *Hind Swaraj* is an important book for everyone to read. I am surprised it has not risen to have the same level of fame as *The Communist Manifesto* or *Beyond Good and Evil* or *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as far as fame in Western Academy. *Hind Swaraj* is an important book which Gandhi wrote to guide the Indian people to revolt against imperialism using non-violent self-rule.

The neoliberalism study has impacted my thinking on international relations which is well reflected through my experiences in airports on this third trip to India. I have both seen in presentations and read in articles and books about airports being theoretical “non-places”. Of course, logically they are places on earth but the argument I have heard is that they are places of between or simply a liminal point between two places - a transitional space. I have constantly been uncomfortable when I have encountered this reference and this trip has really highlighted why. To me, airports are spaces of consumerism and state driven militarized border control.

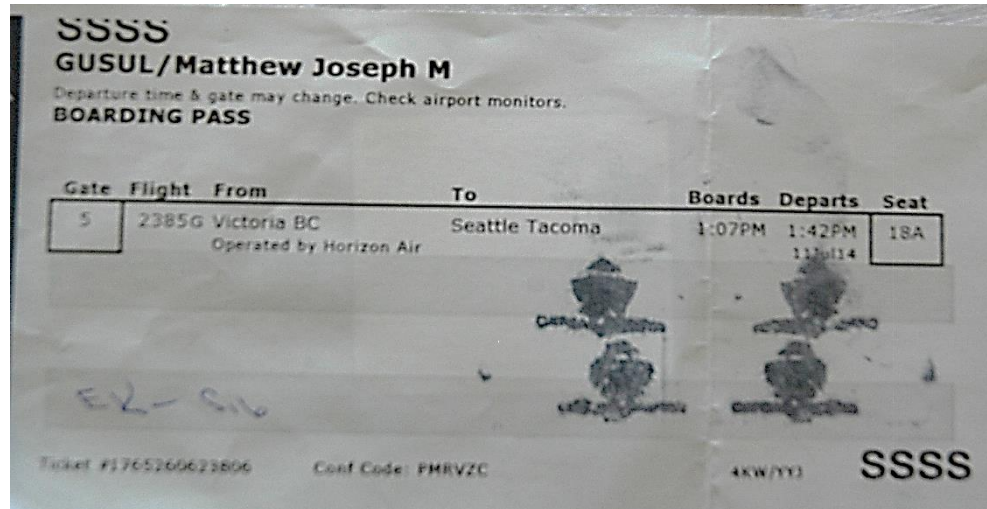
Sitting here in the Dubai airport, I drank a Starbucks Café Latte which I thought was a better choice than grabbing a Big Mac at McDonald’s or a Whopper at Burger King. On my wandering around the terminal I was offered to try several different colognes by Ralph Lauren, Dolce Gabbana, Calvin Klein, etc. which I declined and I also was witness to many billboards splattered with the faces of celebrities ranging from Carmen Diaz to Hugh Jackman to World Cup International Soccer superstars selling everything from watches to fashion.

Needless to say consumerism is running rampant in the Dubai airport. In this place, if you have enough money, you can buy damn near anything from high fashion to greasy fast-food.

Secondly, when I received my ticket for my flight from Victoria to Seattle the letters SSSS appeared at the bottom. This means Special Secondary Screening Selection and it is enforced by the US’s Department of Homeland Security. This meant that when I went through Canadian customs all of my carry-on luggage was emptied and swabbed. Also, I was felt up and down by two different customs agents who now know that I bought new underwear for my trip. According to *Wikipedia*, only 14,000 people are on this list - aren’t I lucky? Many reasons exist for why they would have selected me but based upon on a quick web search it is most likely that it is because I had to change my flight last



minute due to me handing in my Visa Application later than I should have, on the advice of someone from the Indian Consulate, and not getting it until yesterday. Apparently, US



Department of Homeland Security views this as a security risk. Perhaps they should – it is certainly not an area of expertise for me. But it did serve as a reminder that air travel is highly controlled and anytime humans on planet Earth want to cross a border they are under tight surveillance.

With these two experiences in mind, I feel airports are highly policed spaces of neo-liberal, globalized consumerism, not non-places. I often interpret the world through a Marxist/Materialist paradigm. Within the Materialist paradigm, the ideology of the ruling elite is an important component for analysis and the ruling ideology of our era is neo-liberalism/corporate consumerism and nowhere is that more prevalent than in an airport.

“GPK is here again.” Sathiyababu said.

The Donor from Singapore was visiting again. Can you believe that I have visited Tamaraikulam three times in the last year and a half and he has been here all three times? Sathiyababu and I shared a laugh at this. This meant that one evening, Sathiyababu and I went to GPK’s birthday. He was hosting the party in a five star hotel in Pondicherry. The party was at a beautiful hotel and it turned out to be a really great party. A great band was playing, the food was great, and the people were wonderful. On this third trip, I decided to bring my own spoons with me but to only use them at the village. I had a few meals outside the village when I used my hands to eat but this night, the fancy hotel had spoons for me to use. I know you may be thinking that it is silly for me to be here in India

on what I referred earlier as a business trip and to be attending parties. In the world of fundraising and working for non-profit/charities, parties can be a great avenue for conducting business. All the best donations I have ever



garnered have been after the donor has had a few drinks. In this case, Sathiyababu and I spent most of the evening with Lion's Club members. I really enjoyed their company and they mine. They ended up inviting me to be an honorary Lion's Club member. All I have to do is contribute a small amount of money "to aid the needy". They were all interested in our project and intended to help with Tamaraikulam's final theatre performance. The excitement of Lions' Club may be important in maintaining sustainable funding for the theatre company.

* * *

In late July 2014, *HelpAge India* hired two directors to help Dr. Sathiyababu direct the Indian Intergenerational Theatre Company. The two recruits are Sugnatha Lakshmi Rajogopal and Dr. Balapajany. The meeting started over lunch at a restaurant close to Pondicherry University's campus. After we finished eating, we went to a room in Pondicherry University's guest house; there, we hashed out the budgetary details. This was a great day for our Intergenerational Company. Both the directors are excited to be on board. Lakshmi had a letter made out to me that details all of her credentials. She has five degrees ranging from theatre, television production, and her PhD in theatre. Her MA degree comes from the premier university in India - Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. She is a great candidate. I had a meeting with the two new directors before I left to give them some reading on Intergenerational Theatre. This would give them a better idea of what to expect in October when all the students are here and it will be time to start having intergenerational theatre rehearsals. I felt hugely optimistic about the relationship with Pondicherry University on this day. Everything seemed to be falling in place nicely for Tamaraikulam and Isha's theatre work.

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“Let’s go!” Gnana said to me.

With that, we were finished in Pondicherry and headed back out to the village. Traffic was packed in the streets and at one of the lights there always gathers a crowd of panhandlers. I have encountered this before in India but this time it was different. A young woman of about 15-20 years of age walked up to the car holding her baby in her arms. She held her hand out begging for money. I am always shell-shocked in this situation. In Canada, I usually turn a blind eye and continue walking or even take the action of rolling up my window.

I stared forward behind the shield of my aviator sunglasses. My gaze caught the eye of an auto-rickshaw driver. He just stared at me. Or at least I thought he did. After what felt like ten minutes but was probably five seconds of this I had an awakening. The young woman’s baby grabbed my finger. Sending a shock throughout my body. For a moment, I was connected to their family. I couldn’t take it anymore. I reached down to my bag to grab money. The smallest bill I had was 100 rupees. I made the decision to give it to her but as I brought it out from my bag Gnana grabbed my wrist

“Too much,” he said. “Ten rupees.”

“I only have 100 rupee bills.”

He grabbed some change out of his shirt pocket and handed it to me. I don’t know how much was there, maybe 5-10 rupees. I gave it to the woman and shoved the now crumpled 100 rupee bill into my bag. The light changed and we drove forward. After about 45 minutes of driving we finally made our way out of the traffic jam and were moving on the main road back to Tamaraikulam.

“Coke?” Gnana said to me. I often drink Coke to cool down on these hot days (+41 Celsius this day).

“No, just water.”

He then pulled over and I opened my bag. A moment occurred where both of us looked down into my bag and saw the crumpled bill. I thought of the woman and her baby again. I took in a long breath of air, grabbed the crumpled bill and handed it to Gnana to buy the water. He came back with a one-litre water and a 400 ml Coke. At this I felt so guilty. The bill that was to be for the poverty stricken family was spent so a chubby white guy could have his unhealthy beverage. I was so ashamed of myself. I felt I had to drink the Coke to not offend Gnana but I felt like a real jerk while doing it.

Chapter 6 – Preparing/ Travelling/Adapting to India with the UVic Students

In September 2014 before the students and I left on the field school, we held a two week pre-departure training. Here are the names of the 11 undergraduate and 1 graduate students who travelled with me to India: Nikki Bell, Laura Buchan, Katelyn Clark, Kaeden Derksen, Molison Farmer, Chelsea Graham, Blair Moro, Jillian O’Quinn, Kathleen O’Reilly, Emily Tennant, Leah Tidey, and Aisling Kennedy, who worked as the Teaching Assistant. In this time, we covered logistics of our travel plans, started a conversation on what it means to be Canadian, commenced our discussion on white privilege, returned to our discussions on neo-liberalism, and began dealing with the stresses of international travel and culture shock. One of the most important days during this session was the day on which each student shared their ‘personal mythology’. I developed this assignment as a way for the students to answer the question “What the hell made you decide to come on this trip to India?” The idea, each student would answer this question in whatever creative method they wanted. The work they presented was impressive and brought about a great amount of cohesion. Some students sang songs they had written, others, showed photo montages of their past, either set to music or, in one case, that was a short film which included fantastic animation and dubbed-in storytelling, another student shared a collage she made which represented her past and vision for the future, and in a memorable performance, one student who was born and raised in Oak Bay, a few minutes’ walk from the university, shared chocolate with us and told us a rhyming story with photos of her family – halfway through she stopped rhyming and then told us “she was OK with abandoning her rhyming life for the unknown of India.” My heart was warmed after seeing the presentations. That night was a great moment for the group of people – a moment where we came together.

Besides having the pre-departure course, I also did a number of interviews with various press outlets. I have a conflicted view of the attention this project received. I will never shy away from talking about the work in India or any of the other development work I have done because it is simply enjoyable to talk about my experiences and I am also happy to have the chance to give others the opportunity to be inspired to try social justice work. Where my conflict lies is in how the tale of my work is spun by media outlets. Most often stories begin with how the work is with underprivileged people and how great it is that Canadians go overseas to contribute in positive ways (unlike our American neighbours – who are the bad guys – them bad vs. us good). If you ever want to see the full picture

of the Canada as peacekeeper myth, read *Canada's Little Black Book of Foreign Policy* by Yves Engler. For the most part, what I have learned in my travels is that no matter how much money I can raise for an organization or how I can help with some work by facilitating storytelling, it is always me who gains more from the experience. The encounters with different cultures leaves an imprint on me which allows me to grow. Now, I have twelve students coming to India with me to be imprinted by this great community in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

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The journey was not without nervousness but all the students arrived in India with their baggage in one piece and with no problems at customs and immigration. The amount of hard work and planning that goes into transporting a group of people to the other side of world is massive and I was so glad it happened without any international incidents.



After we arrived at the airport in Chennai, Kumaran, one of *HelpAge India's* drivers, was waiting for us. We jammed our gear into a big van and completed the four hour drive to the village.



Upon arrival at the village the students were instantly charmed by the place and its residents. The village looked particularly beautiful, as it was rainy season. The whole place was green and flowers bloomed everywhere. After figuring out where we would be sleeping over the next two months, we gathered and some of the seniors came to give us a hello. Jayamma



and Vadevil were happy to see me and gave me hugs and kisses – this entertained the students a great deal. The students have become instantly comfortable, happy, and ready to live in the village. We were most undoubtedly firmly in the honeymoon stage of being in India.

Watching the students eat their first meal was fun. The seniors were happy to show them how to eat with their hands and how to wash their dishes. On this trip, I brought a spoon and kept it in my pocket with full intentions to use it everywhere. At the time we arrived, it was a season of celebration for *HelpAge India* - a national week dedicated to honoring the elderly. Events happened throughout our first few days and the students and I were a part of the fun.

The day after we arrived, the students and I went to a celebration - an event organized by Ramalingam to honour the International Day of Elders on October 1, 2014. He had a great program put together - dancing, singing, a fashion show, and a guru. When we arrived, the dancing was in full swing and the students did a great job of joining in. Then they had a break where coffee, tea, and cookies were served. I am constantly amazed at how line-ups work in India. The seniors at this event were nearly brawling just to get some cookies. Many of the older people were amazed our students were not lining up for cookies. This intercultural exchange entertained me. After the break, we re-entered the auditorium and the program started with a meditation done by an elder Hindu guru. This ended up lasting about 40 minutes and when I was looking back at the group most of them had fallen asleep. Blair, who was right behind me, was snoring. When the guru finished, Mani and Sathiyababu told me I was going to be a judge for a fashion competition. He had me sit up at the front of the room and the guru and I were to be the judges but at this moment a high ranking politician showed up and *HelpAge India* instantly had him give out awards. As this was happening, I was falling asleep in front of the audience. I looked at my students again and some of them were also falling asleep. Jetlag is hard to deal with and all of us were right in the worst part of exhaustion. Sathiyababu came close to me and I asked him if we could pardon ourselves from the event. We did. Being still quite early in the day, we went for a walk on the beach to see the Gandhi statue on Pondicherry's beach front. The

walk was long and hard – at least in our exhausted state. But, we had to be active to stay awake and speed up the process of jetlag and besides, how often do Canadians visit a Gandhi statue on the eve of the iconic man’s birthday? Sathiyababu’s brother was our tour guide for this journey. He is visiting from New Zealand because of his father’s illness. On my last trip during July 2013, Sathiyababu’s father had been diagnosed with late stage brain cancer and was living his last days. Sathiyababu’s father decided he wanted to live at Tamaraiikulam for his final days. Because of this, all of his sons were visiting to say final good-byes. Sathiyababu’s son was also with us. He and Kaeden had fun goofing off together. After this walk, we returned to the village and took a long, much needed rest.



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My project, the students, and I were broad sided by an unexpected wonderful surprise on the day of Gandhi’s birthday celebration on October 2, 2014. On this, our third full day in India, we visited another village near Tamaraiikulam for a Gandhi birthday celebration with the elders. I had no idea what to expect but what happened was a truly special day my students and I will never forget.

At 1130 AM, we drove to what Sathiyababu told me was a celebration for the elders at a destitute young person's village. While we were driving to this village, I noticed the sign was for *SOS Children's Village*. This is an organization that I have heard of before on



television. In Canada a few years ago, their spokesperson was Fred Penner and since it has been Mike Holmes. I remembered the commercial but nothing of the organization. I knew a bit about the concept in which they would take orphaned children and have them live together to create family units in village communities. When we arrived at the village after our five minute drive, we gathered in their outdoor auditorium. Many of the elders from Tamaraikulam had arrived before our group and were sitting in chairs around the auditorium except one elder, Vadevil, who was sitting on the ground among the children. As soon as we arrived and were comfortable sitting either with the children or around them on chairs the program for the day started. I sat between Ramalingam, Sathiyababu, and Chandra, the director of Pondicherry's SOS Village. From the start, I noticed the white board at the front of the auditorium had written on it Happy Elder's Day to our Grandmas



and Grandpas, showing how this celebration was an inclusion of the elders into the SOS Village family. The program was a mixture of singing, dancing, and a short drama. The dancing was done to Tollywood/Bollywood music from the 1950s/60s which the seniors love. At one point during the dancing one of the

elders, Vadevil, jumped onstage and joined the fun. Ramalingam told me he did this because the song was about a boy and a girl dancing together but there were no boys dancing. Vadevil took the opportunity to dance with the young women. The singing was performed by both the elders and the young people. They also asked me to come onstage and sing. I brought Sathiyababu onstage to translate for me so the seniors could understand everything I said. I introduced our group and told them why we were in India. Then, I sang Forever Young by Bob Dylan. The children then performed a short scene for the elders depicting how gods were born. The performance was entertaining for the audience because the actors were all boys and they were dressing as pregnant and playing the pain of child birth. Towards the end of this program, I realized that this community had much synergy with Tamaraiikulam. The reality was the program they put on this day is nearly exactly what I envisioned would be the performances of the intergenerational theatre company. This auditorium was filled with the natural playful sharing between generations that is a driving force of the intergenerational theatre work I have participated in in Canada.

Towards the end of the performance, I leaned over to Ramalingam and said to him “these young people work well with the residents”. He immediately agreed and said, “I would like to work with this community.” With this brief admission the landscape of the intergenerational theatre experiment had changed. He and I started chatting about how we could have these two organizations come together for a pilot project. The first challenge is to have the director of SOS Village onboard. The immediate challenge is that these two communities are so similar that when it comes to obtaining donation dollars they are in competition with each other. I see this not as a problem but an opportunity. A theatre company could be a first step in unified fundraising. They are only a few kilometres from each other and could join forces in strategic ways to fundraise. As soon as we have the director’s consent then we will need to figure out exactly how the pilot project could



look. Sathiyababu loved the idea of working with more than one community. He added to our conversation stating just because a group is not part of the company does not mean that they cannot benefit from the intergenerational theatre. This company can have a large impact and we should never feel limited. Sathiyababu and Ramalingam went with the director of *SOS Village* and I went with my students to have a tour of the village.

I went with Molly, Laura, Kaeden, Aisling, and an elder into one of the family homes. The tour was a wonderful atmosphere of playfulness mixed with spirituality and love. The children and their step-mothers showed us around the whole house. Beautiful high ceilings with open concept living areas. I would love to live there. It honestly made me jealous. Then, we sat in one of the bedroom where a small shrine was located. The children and step-mothers led us through a meditation and brief ritual honouring god on this special day. After this, we sat in one of their living areas and began lunch. We sat on the ground in a big circle and ate off banana leaves. The food was delicious. Rice, soba, a banana, beets, and deep fried onion leaves. I enjoyed eating on the ground. The elder who was with us tried to help Aisling eat with her hands. I had my trusty spoon with me. The meal was full of laughter.

After we ate, we had a dance party in the open air living space. The children and the UVic students had a great time. After the dancing, we left their house and joined everyone else playing in the field and auditorium area. The joy of everyone in the field is difficult to describe. Elders, children, UVic students were all happy. The young people were playing soccer, volleyball, cricket, and other running



games. They were using the playground equipment and singing. Other girls were drawing henna on the UVic students' hands and they were singing songs in English and Tamil back and forth. At one point, Nikki came over to me and said, "This is the best day of my life." This sentiment was repeated by a few

other students as well. We left the village and it was certainly hard to say goodbye. The UVic students were now either the Aunties, Uncles, Brothers, or Sisters in these families and the elders were Grandmas and Grandpas. We left feeling at home and that we had had one of the most special experiences I can think of.



When we arrived back at the village, I thought we could all use a rest and then to follow it with a conversation about what we had just experienced. I know we all had been sharing with each other on the ride home but I wanted to sit in a circle and have everything out in the open. I also needed to chat with Sathiyababu about some logistical matters and I wanted to see how the meeting with the director went. The director was open to meeting with me to discuss the possibility of a pilot project. He called the director and I had a brief conversation with him to set up a meeting. I went over the schedule with Sathiyababu and he expressed some nervousness about being trained in the theatre over the four days with the other directors. His nervousness was not about the material we would cover but with the time commitment. I told him I would work to make the time spent at these trainings short and effective. I also reminded him he would not be alone. The other directors Lakshmi and Bala were hired to be the leaders and he will support. The reason for him to be trained is for sustainability so he can act as leadership.

In the evening, I had the meeting with the students. The atmosphere for this meeting was great. In the near darkness, we sat on the roof of one of the village buildings. The meeting was lit by the moonlight. As we were talking we kept being interrupted by wonderful sights from our perched point of view. We saw a firefly, a cat running around on the roof of another building, and fireworks exploding at a nearby village's celebration. We spoke about our experiences. We split into separate tours of the family dwellings, three students were alone, two were together, three students were

together, and then my group. The experiences were diverse in that each family ate differently, some did not pray, others spent less time in the home and more time outside. The universal experience we shared was the experience of being instantly adopted as members of their families. Laura astutely pointed out that we were



“Learning their culture, not from the outside in as tourists do, but from the inside out”. Katelyn echoed this saying, “Travellers would know what food they were eating because they would have looked it up in a Lonely Planet guide. I have no idea what I ate today but it was great.” I described the situation of the potential of adding a pilot project between *SOS Village* and Tamaraikulam to the students. I told them about the wonderful potential I saw with this opportunity. I also took some time to explain the uniqueness of the experience we were all having. Katelyn asked me if the children saw Westerners on a regular basis. It took a long time for me to answer her because I was in the process of thinking about the events of the day. My guess is that that was one of the most unique experiences I have ever encountered in all the readings, experiences, conferences, and conversations I have had in my time working in this field. Two communities came together that are both villages for destitute people. The environments at both the villages are not anywhere near the stereotype that one thinks of as destitute. They are both active happy places filled with laughter, joy, fun, and life. Plus, one village is for the elderly and the other is for children. Plus, when you add in the UVic field school element, it is not just an intergenerational experience but an intercultural experience. We all, meaning the Tamaraikulam Elders, *SOS Village* Children, and UVic, had an intergenerational intercultural experience of joyful playfulness that happened at the apex of the combining of the three disparate communities. What wonderful gifts we can receive when we cross borders of age and culture. I am so excited that I am able to include the UVic students in what I am seeing in this community and my process of working in the field. This project is alive and vibrant. I guess my answer to Katelyn would have to be they may have seen Westerners before but they never experienced it in this atmosphere.

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The day after the Gandhi celebration, I arranged for us to witness a theatre performance in a rural village. This was a village in which Sathiyababu had helped to establish a palliative care clinic. The performance took place right in front of the clinic. I rode to the performance in the second vehicle. The first vehicle was driven by a man that works for *HelpAge India* I did not know and our vehicle was driven by Sathiyababu. Upon arrival some of the people told Aisling and I that he was a dangerous driver. They seemed upset and afraid. I cannot tell if this was an intercultural moment where the driver was just like a lot of other India drivers who drive quite recklessly in comparison to North American standards. I chatted with some of the people in the vehicle who were not as upset and they thought it was dangerous but that it was typical of what they had witnessed on the roads. After this moment, a number of village children showed up and chaos reigned. Every child wanted to know every white person's name and the UVic students' response was to play with them and sing for them. As the play and rowdiness grew the power went off and the streets of the village went into darkness. Then the excitement and play of the children grew even more. While this was happening Sambad, Sathiyababu, and I were trying to arrange this performance to take place. Sathiyababu moved his vehicle so the lights from it could be used as stage lights. Meanwhile, Sambad and I were trying to calm the crowd and arrange them in some sort of seating arrangement. While we were attempting this the UVic students were playing with the children acting in the precise opposite way of what I was attempting. I became upset at them and told them to sit and try to calm the children. This message took a while to move around our group. I became more upset and yelled at some of the group members "Be modest". I really regret this action and I regret my anger. I should have been more understanding of their position. The day before playing with the children in SOS village was a wonderful experience and I can understand the desire to repeat. I should



have taken a step back, relaxed, and calmly dealt with the situation. The intercultural learning that is taking place for the students is happening for me as well. My hope is that my actions did not take away from any of the students' experience of the theatre we finally did see.



Once the audience was settled the performance began. The atmosphere was amazing – raw, energetic, passionate, and unbridled. The stage was arranged to be right in front of the Palliative Care Clinic. The car lights were shining onto the stage which was arranged as a corner stage. The children sat on the ground on one side with their parents and other community members behind and on the other side we were seated in chairs. The performance began with Sambad's fellow actor banging on a drum while Sambad danced around the stage in a frenzied way gaining the energy to begin the performance. After a few minutes of this banging and dancing the performance began. The whole performance was in Tamil so none of the Canadians were able to understand a word but we were getting some translation from Sathiyababu and his son. The performance was to inform the community about the work the Palliative Care Clinic does in their community. A few scenes were



performed that depicted people who were ill and needed care from the clinic. Sambad played the starring role in each scene. He is a highly charismatic actor. The audience laughed at his jokes and watched with anticipation his every action. He dressed in drag for a few of the scenes and this was enjoyable for everyone to watch. At the end of

the performance, Sambad asked everyone to put up their hand who wants to volunteer at the Palliative Care Clinic. Many people put their hands up. Sambad then yelled, “Then come with me and sign up to volunteer”. He then went into the clinic and the people who had their hands up came in to commit to



volunteering. All of us Canadians went in as well. We took photos of the group who had volunteered with the clinic. After the photos were finished, we returned to Tamaraikulam. I told the students they did not have to ride with the driver if they were uncomfortable. When we arrived back, I spoke with some of the students who I thought were ill affected by my actions. One of them initiated the conversation with me and the other I did. Both ended well.

I want to take a moment to briefly analyze the performance we saw looking at both the effect and affect of the performance. The effect is easy to recognize. The clinic now has a number of new volunteers that will help with the services. I also look at how delighted the audience was at witnessing the performance. The performance was a moment of gathering for the community where they could all work to improve the community while laughing at a talented performer. I have read about some times in the history of Theatre for Development that educational pieces of theatre have been done completely inappropriately, often done by people from outside the community while delivering messages that may not have addressed any needs of the community. This educational piece of theatre was different. Sathiyababu and Sambad organized this performance with village members and people who work at the Palliative Care Clinic. The play’s message-based style works to both aid the community and was delivered in a style of theatre that is appropriate. The clinic needs volunteers to keep functioning and giving the service that this community sorely needs. Also, Sambad’s performance leans on the traditional Tamil theatre conventions. The beginning drum beating, the cross dressing, the comedy, and other elements are normal components of the theatre the

community is accustomed to seeing. This was a well-functioning piece of theatre that helped a community.

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“Hurry!” I yelled at the 12 students. They were slowly stepping on the bus as if we were riding in downtown Victoria. In Tamil Nadu, the bus will leave without you if you don’t get on quick. They all rushed on the bus, and with that we all successfully were on the bus riding into Pondicherry for the first time.

After arriving in Pondicherry, we split up and went our separate ways. I asked everyone to be back to the village by dark (a rule I later broke and here’s how). Aisling, Kaeden, and I went for a meal, and then we took a quick stop to buy some calamine lotion at a pharmacy. Heat rash is killing me. Then, we called Ramalingam who said he would help Kaeden buy a guitar. We ended up meeting Ramalingam at 6 PM and then going guitar shopping. By this point, I knew I would be late returning to the village and the students would tease me for being late but in this case it was worth it. Kaeden and I both bought guitars with Ramalingam’s help. We are both happy to have them and they may end up being something useful for our theatre work.

“Gus!!! We were worried sick. Can’t you see it is after dark?” I felt bad but the students were just kidding with me... I assume. Kaeden, Laura and I played some guitar music late into the night. We were relieved to have an instrument to play. I was surprised. I ended up bringing the guitar home with me. It just might be my favourite guitar.

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In our second week, I arranged for us to meet the people from Pondicherry University who were going to be involved in the project. At the University, we met with Dr. Gunasekaran and Lakshmi. Dr. Gunasekaran gave us a lecture about Indian Theatre history. He split this into two sections Classical Theatre history and Folk Theatre History of Tamil Nadu. I was able to listen to the first half of this lecture and it was well done. I was impressed with the level of clarity he had as an instructor working in his second language. After the first half of his lecture, we took a break and one of the students informed me she was feeling ill. I am guessing she was suffering from heat exhaustion.



It has been extremely hot here every day with daytime temperatures around 35-37 degrees. Since she was feeling ill, I sat with her during the second half of the lecture. Gnana went to buy her some cold juice and she eventually felt better. After the lecture, I spoke with the students and they thought the second half of his lecture was even better. Dr. Gunasekaran also told us he is about to undergo kidney surgery so he will be taking a three months leave from work.

That may be the last time we see him but Lakshmi, Bala, and Dr. Bushan will be regularly involved with our group and with the beginning stages of the Intergenerational Theatre Company.



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Our first day spending time with the *Isha Foundation* happened on October 8, 2014. The school is a wonderful place to spend time. Pushpa, Revi, Raj, and Chitra gave us a tour of the school but first, we were witness to morning assembly. We arrived at the school at about 9:30 AM and all the children were gathered on the basement floor. The students and I stood on the stairs and Chitra introduced us to the school. The Isha students gave us a wonderful reception and afterwards the principal asked me to give an award to one of the students. The student ended up being the student who I mentioned was a group leader on my second trip when I taught drama. He had just won several medals at a swimming competition. After the assembly ended, the UVic students and I waited in the main office until our tour started. While we waited, the principal gave the students an introduction to the school. In this introduction, she shared one new statistic about the school that I did not know until this day. She told us that over 90% of the students in the school were first time learners. I learn a lot about how to handle first time learners at the university level but in this



case she was referring to the fact that over 90% of these children were the first members of their families to attend any kind of school. This is astounding. This school will help many people find their way out of crippling poverty. Education is one of the best tools to climb out of poverty and the high quality education that Isha provides in regards to computer training and literacy in both English and Tamil will give this rural population opportunities it has never had before. At this point in the day, just before our tour started, was when I was broadsided with emotions.

Chitra and Pushpa then told us about the sponsorship program and child sponsored by Liz's mom's grade two class in Rocky Mountain House, AB. Last school year Kathleen's students and she raised enough money to provide a scholarship for one child for a year's worth of education. I met the boy

yesterday. He is the first member of his family to ever attend school. His story is a tragic one. His father was an alcoholic and one day while he was drunk he killed Neran's mother. Now, he lives with his Grandmother since his Mother is dead and his father is in jail. Pushpa



regularly searches the nearby areas for young children to give scholarships to attend Isha. This boy caught her eye as an energetic bright young boy with ample energy and curious bright eyes. After hearing his story from his Grandmother, she knew he would greatly benefit from receiving the scholarship. Pushpa and Raj introduced me to him. I took a couple of pictures with him and then followed him back to his class so I could see him with the other children. I was swept by emotion and had tears in my eyes most of the time I spent with him. It is inspiring to see firsthand the impact donation dollars can have. One of the best roles for Western people in development is as fundraisers and giving to this particular school gives a child a chance to pull themselves and their community out of poverty.

Our tour of the school was wonderful. I loved being able to share this place with the UVic students. We saw nearly all of the classes: the science class, the Tamil and English language rooms, the computer room, the library, the kindergarten class, the auditorium, in which all of the children were participating in their daily yoga session, and finally, the kitchen. Our students were left with the impression that this school may even provide a higher quality education than many in Canada.

* * *

“Why are we here? I’ve been struggling with this and... Why are we here?” Kathleen asked.

This question was asked at the end of class one day - a great question. This is tricky to answer because of the implication behind it. In reality, maybe we are not needed here. Isha School provides a great education for rural youth, *SOS Children’s Village* has a great facility and happy children, and Tamaraiikulam has happy elders who are well adjusted into their community. So after all of that being said: what are we doing here? Why did I choose to conduct my research in India? I could simply take an easy route to answer this question and say I am here because of Michael Etherton. It would be true. He saw the work in Edmonton of G&F and thought it would be a good fit with Tamaraiikulam but in my mind that answer has even more questions behind it: why was Michael Etherton here? Why does Isha, SOS Village, and Tamaraiikulam exist in the way they do? When I ask these questions, I find myself back at the 2004 Tsunami tragedy. This entire area of India had to re-build at that point and in the re-building process it truly had an opportunity not only to re-build but to build anew. By this I mean, they had the chance to build ideal communities, buildings, and schools. Part of the reason these amazing communities exist here is because in the re-build they were able to utilize the best of human knowledge to build their new education system and their new village communities. The Tsunami, although it was an undeniable tragedy, offered an opportunity to build better communities than those that had existed. Now, we, as theatre professionals and students from Canada, can offer to them our expertise on another wonderful component to add to their community: an intergenerational theatre company.

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Saturday, October 11, 2014 was intended to be an easy relaxing day of planning for Monday and Tuesday’s director training, which did happen, but it also ended up being a hectic day which had a

large item added to it. The students and I had a quick meeting to assign roles for the training. The training will take between 9-12 hours. The two main thrusts of the first day of training will be an activity where I take the directors and the UVic students through a mock rehearsal in which we will engage in intercultural play ending with story-sharing and the second part will be the UVic students and I giving presentations on theatre companies which have an intergenerational component including *Geriatrics and Friends*, *Roots and Branches*, *Age Exchange*, *Washington's National Centre on Arts and Aging*, and the intergenerational reminiscence projects I have worked on in Victoria. On the second day, the directors will have the opportunity to take what they have learned from the previous day and create the plan for the rehearsal schedule over the next two months. On the second day particular attention will be paid to taking the western model we are presenting to the Indian directors and making it culturally appropriate to this region. The only tenets to be held by the Indian directing team are the theatre should be devised from the intergenerational meeting between the young people and the elders and that they should work to maintain a playful atmosphere during both the rehearsals and the performance. Other than those two elements the Indian directing team of Bala, Lakshmi, and Sathiyababu should make every decision. My group and I are only here as consultants. Yesterday, the students split into five groups and worked on each of the five companies we are presenting to the directing team and I also directed them to perform three scenes from the intergenerational reminiscence work in Victoria.

Mid-way through the day of preparing all of this I received a phone call from Lakshmi telling me Bala, Dr. Bushan, Dr. Gunasekaran, and she needed a ride to the village. This caught me off guard but she then told me this would be the last chance for Dr. Gunasekaran to speak with the UVic student group before he started his leave for his surgery. I quickly arranged a ride for them and accompanied the driver to Pondicherry to pick everyone up. We then turned around and came back to the village. When we arrived at the village all the students gathered. Dr. Gunasekaran then spoke for a while. He introduced Dr. Bushan to our group saying that he would be taking over for him while he was on leave. Dr. Gunasekaran then taught the group a couple of folk dances. He then asked that the UVic students would engage in a few theatre exercises. He and Dr. Bushan then directed our group through some simple individual improvised scenes. One person walked across the room while it was starting to rain, another was a cat catching a mouse, and they had me play a scene where I was skydiving and my parachute would not work. It was fun. Dr. Gunasekaran seems

keen to teach us theatre skills while we are here and on a few occasions he asked if I would pay to have folk dancers teach them for the performance. I think he is confused about our project in that he expects that the UVic students will act here in India and then tour a piece of Indian theatre in Canada. After Dr. Gunasekaran and the others had said their goodbyes to the group I pulled the two directors I hired aside, Bala and Lakshmi, and made sure we were clear the elders and young people would be acting together and any theatre training the students would get would be a bonus. Our main goal for being here is not to learn theatre skills but to witness and consult in the creation of an intergenerational theatre company. They understand and will be here on Monday to start training.

While the directors and Dr. Gunasekaran and Dr. Bushan were waiting for the driver after the session Vadevil walked up to the group and started talking. He is always interested to meet new people coming to the village. When he started talking I could tell that everyone there became interested in him. I



asked Dr. Bushan if he could translate for me and he told Vadevil was telling them that he had played many different *Theru Koothu* characters and Vadevil was then performing one of the monologues. Dr. Bushan then asked me if Vadevil was in the company and I immediately said yes. Then Dr. Bushan replied, “We are in good shape then.” As the driver came and the group was departing the two younger directors Lakshmi and Bala both hugged Vadevil and I asked Lakshmi what she thought and she replied, “I am excited to work with that man.” This felt like a great start for the work we were trying to accomplish.

Chapter 7 - Training the Directors and the Final Days in the Students Course Work

Our third week in India began with Monday's training session with the directors worked out well. Lakshmi, Bala, and Sathiyababu all attended our first training session. The training was simple. I wanted to have a brief impactful training period and then allow the directors to take over the process so they would have leadership over the company. Our brief offer only lasted about two hours and thirty minutes. To start the training, I ran a 55 minute mock rehearsal. The purpose was to show them how it feels being a part of the playful group. This is an attempt to take on James Thompson's ontic approach to theatre training, beginning with activities to impact the trainees' ontic reality. I introduced it to the directors as what I may conduct as a first rehearsal with an intergenerational group although this would take a slightly different approach because the 'inter' in this group that was more appropriate was intercultural sharing.

I started the day by playing 'Bombaya', a game that I have played regularly to start group processes. In the game, I teach a song that is in no language, filled with "na na's" and some gibberish to a catchy tune. After the song is learned, we pass balls around the circle in the



rhythm of the song. It is always a great game in that balls never are passed well and they are constantly dropped. I use this game regularly because it is an icebreaker that begins with a group of people who are low energy, entering a process they know little of and by the end they are laughing, smiling, and ready to begin having fun.

Next we played a game called ‘yelling your name into the center of the circle’. In this game, I count down from 3 and then each person simultaneously yells their name into the circle. We repeat the activity a couple times and then follow it by yelling each name one at a time – the individual yells their name and the group follows simultaneously yelling the name.

After we finished this game, I had the group sit in three groups each with one Indian and four Canadians. The activity was that each group was to interview across cultural lines. The Canadians were to introduce their new Indian friend to the group and the Indians (a more difficult task) had to introduce their four new Canadian friends to the group. They ended up chatting for about fifteen minutes. I could have let them talk a lot longer but we had other activities. We went around the circle and had each group present. Being that the Indians had to introduce the four Canadians nothing new about the Canadians were revealed but I now know each of the Indian directors better. Sathiyababu’s professional experience is much broader than I thought it was, Bala has a beautiful young family, and Lakshmi’s experience as a teacher/facilitator continues to be impressive.

After this, I had the group play a great intercultural game I learned from David Barnett called ‘yes-no’. In it, two actors come together and improvise a simple scene where one only says the word yes and the other only says the word no. I had Blair help me demonstrate the game in English. After he and I did this, I asked the Indians how we could play the same game in Tamil. They told me that the game in Tamil would be called ‘Amma - Ilya’. I then had everyone break into groups of two and play ‘Amma - Ilya’. After a while, I had them switch partners and then again I asked them to switch partners again. After playing the game three times with much laughter and smiles, I had them break into three groups again where there was one Indian and four Canadians in each group. This time I



asked them to share an experience where they had an argument or a disagreement. Then I asked them to choose one of the stories and create a tableau for it. After they had made the tableau, I asked them to develop a title for the tableau and to add music, either a famous song or a tune they invented. I finally asked them to add some sort of dance move to their performance. After they had completed these tasks, each group performed.

The first group's performance was titled 'Eat it' and was about being a child at the dinner table refusing to eat their vegetables before their dessert. They sang the words eat it to the tune of Michael Jackson's 'Beat It'. The story was a reminiscence from Jillian's childhood when her parents would sit at the table for hours with her while she refused to eat her veggies. I asked around the room and this was a common experience.

The next performance was titled 'Ilya' (no). The performance was complicated and ended in the singing of a Tamil folk song repeating 'Ilya' repeatedly. Emily shared this story about when she told her father that she was coming on this exchange to India. Bala contributed greatly



to this group with the addition of the dance moves and the folk song. When I asked the room if their experience was similar most of the Canadians shared that their parents had encouraged them to come. The final performance was titled 'Greedy Child'. The previous summer, one of the students was a nannie and she sometimes encountered difficulties with a three year old girl. This performance was well done. When I asked the group if any of them were greedy children they quickly replied they were not. I think I may have been a greedy child - you would have to ask my Mom to have an accurate answer.

With this, our mock rehearsal was finished. I explained to the Indian directors within the short time frame we had used playfulness and some simple games to bring us to the point where we were sharing stories about ourselves and interesting cultural differences. We had pop songs from western culture

mixing with Tamil folk songs and Tamil dance moves that were also mixing with our personal lives. Although the rehearsal was short, it was enjoyable and we were able to have intercultural sharing coupled with pleasant theatrical performance. We then took a short break before the UVic students were to share their presentations on various intergenerational theatre companies. During the break, Lakshmi walked up to me and told me that she understands a lot of what I had her read (I gave the three directors my Master's thesis and a few other materials to read over the summer) better after this mock rehearsal. She said, "You forget there is even an outside world and you play." Sathiyababu also came to me and said he enjoyed himself and thinks this model will work well with the elders.

After the break, the students presented. Kaeden and Molly presented first on *Roots and Branches* from New York. Then, Leah, Chelsea, and Emily presented on *Age Exchange* from England. Next, Laura and Katelyn presented on *Washington's National Center on Creative Aging*. Sathiyababu instantly saw the value in this group because of the medical research headed up by the late Dr. Gene Cohen. Next, Jillian and Nikki presented on *GeriActors and Friends* which I added to by showing a video of a performance. Finally, Blair and Kathleen presented on the reminiscence work *Trudy and I have done in Victoria over the past couple of years*.

After the presentations, the students left and I sat and chatted with the directors. They were bubbling with excitement. All of them have had some time to think about what was to happen with this company and you could see a lot of their ideas coming to the surface. It looks to me like there will be a good balance between Sathiyababu and the two Pondicherry grads. Sathiyababu has *HelpAge India* and Tamaraiikulam's mandate in the back of his mind while he is working as director and Bala and Lakshmi have a theatrical approach. I hope that this brings a balance where *HelpAge India* will be able to be satisfied with the company's impact and at the same time the theatre will continue to be from an honest community-driven approach. The three of them were happy with the training so far and were impressed by the UVic student work. I would echo their sentiments of being impressed. The students did great work. I ended by saying that today would be the next day of the training and it would be dedicated to them planning how the sessions would work. I am about to prepare a plan with blank spots for them to fill in what will happen in rehearsals. Our plan is to start after breakfast today which starts in about thirty minutes.

* * *

“I think Vadevil stole my keys.” Aisling said.

“No way. Why would he do that?” I said.

“You took them, didn’t you?” Kaeden said to Blair.

“No.”

“Look which one of you guys took them?” Aisling said.

I thought she had just forgotten them in the room. Aisling then suggested that maybe Vadevil could have taken them when he came to chat with us at the beginning of the meal. I thought this was absurd – why would he do such a thing? Blair then went back to Aisling’s room and it was indeed locked. So, we started looking around everywhere for the keys. I was starting to think maybe Kaeden or Blair was playing a trick. Finally, we had exhausted all other possibilities so Aisling decided to confront Vadevil outside of his room to see if he took the keys. He did! When she asked him about it he started laughing, bobbing his shoulders up and down, and ran back to the kitchen to grab her keys off the top of the fridge.

* * *

Lakshmi and Bala had a wonderful training experience on the second day. It really inspired me to see them having the experience they did and it was great to see this intergenerational theatre project take another step forward. The UVic students had time to work on an assignment that was due later in the week and the Indian directing team was to have a planning day for the rest of the project. Lakshmi spent the night here last night and I saw her at breakfast. She was still excited from yesterday’s work and was anxious to start on today’s training. Bala showed up a little after breakfast and I sat and spoke with Bala and Lakshmi until Sathiyababu came. Once he came, the directors had a meeting. I gave each of them a sheet that showed how many rehearsals there will be. The intergenerational company will have twelve rehearsals to create a performance and then a dress rehearsal followed by the performance day. My suggestion to the directors was to use the first half of

the time as a period to collect stories from the intergenerational community and then the second six rehearsal times to solidify the scenes, dances, and songs. They seemed to think this was a great idea. I think this will end up being quite flexible but at least it gives us a starting point. The directors spoke in Tamil to each other for about twenty minutes. I asked for a translation at a couple of points and they told me they were discussing strategies for how they could extract stories. After the twenty minutes, Sathiyababu called for Deva. He asked Deva to collect all the elders that were interested in acting in the company. Deva left and the directors and I went into the large open space next to the office to start setting up a circle for everyone to sit in. The purpose of this first meeting was to let Bala and Lakshmi meet the elders and to start the storytelling process. After a few minutes of waiting the elders started to arrive one by one. This is when I started to become inspired by what was transpiring.

The first time I came to this community in January 2013, we put out a call like this to have eight elders come to our meeting. The sharing that took place in that first meeting was wonderful. At that meeting, I learned about the childhood games they loved to play and we created a short scene based upon the games. Much more than eight elders showed up on this day. At first the original eight were there and I thought “OK, great. We have the same folks this will be wonderful.” The elders from that first group were a talented bunch with experienced dancers, singers, and actors in the group but something wonderful started to happen

as we sat there. More and more elders were coming when they heard the theatre group was having its first meeting with the Indian directors. I was trying to write down how many elders were there to keep track for research purposes and each time we were about to start more showed up. I kept having



to cross out smaller numbers and replace it with a larger number. By the end of this process, we finally were able to start the meeting and we ended up having 23 elders present - 6 men and 17 women. I am not sure if they all want to act but the common element was that they wanted to tell their story. After the meeting started I snuck upstairs and invited the students to peek into the room

to see what was happening. Seeing a group of 23 elders gathered in a large circle was a wonderful sight. Most of the students had a brief chance to gaze upon this meeting.

The meeting started with Sathiyababu explaining the project to them again. The seniors had heard about it before from my past trips but he reminded them. He then introduced Bala and Lakshmi who also gave a short introduction to their experience and their hopes for the company. After this, the seniors started to share their hopes for the company. One elder said, “We need to show our happiness and sadness. The community will help us become happier and listen to our sadness.” After this many other elders echoed her sentiments and they were already laughing and smiling at the prospect of sharing their stories. Sathiyababu then invited the elders to share their stories with Lakshmi and Bala. The elders went around one by one and shared the story of how they came to be living in Tamaraikulam. Most of the elders here were on the receiving end of abuse from either their community, family, or children, making their stories ones of tragedy followed by hope when they entered the *HelpAge India* network. One elder told us this, “I came to the village because my son and his wife lived in too small of a place to fit me. They fought and I was forced to leave. I used to wake up very early and it made them upset. They would fight about me all the time. Now I live here and I live according to my customs. I wake up early and lead the prayers for the other elders every morning.” Vadevil told us, “I was the only man in my family growing up. At age fourteen I worked for my father. My father arranged for me to be married at age twenty-one. My wife and I tried having babies but they kept dying when they were only babies or my wife would miscarry. We decided to adopt a son. After my son grew up at age twenty-two he married and the two of them forced me to leave my house so they could live there. Then, my son tried to bully me to sign the property over to him. I refused and had to leave. I ended up joining an elders’ group run by *HelpAge India*. I became one of their leaders. During this time I made the decision to sell my property. When I received



the money I put it in the bank and gave nothing to my son. After this I moved to Tamaraikulam. I was the first to move in.”

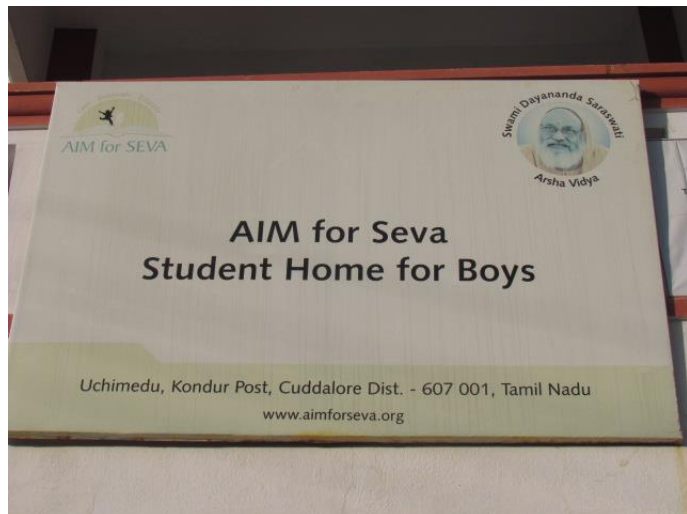
One by one these stories kept rolling in. I could see both Bala and Lakshmi were emotional and many of the elders cried while telling their stories. The request to tell stories filled a serious need for these elders. Allana Lindgren, our department chair and a committee member for my research, said, “Being alone means not having anyone to tell your story to.” I could see these elders needed to tell their stories and this company can become that outlet.

I can see what young people and playfulness could add to this atmosphere. In this session all the stories were heavy, sad stories. I believe that the young people will bring an energy that will add hopefulness and levity to the atmosphere. Story-sharing of this nature has so much value but I have often had a difficult time making theatre out of it. What has helped my process has been when spontaneous play is added to story-sharing. Spontaneity and play make stories more performable. The story-sharing which takes place in a circle like this helps because it gives an opportunity to have others bear witness to your life. This is greatly important and healthy for people. My hope is that the children will help the company bring a wonderfully full story-sharing that can, as the elder said at the beginning of the session, “show our happiness and sadness”. At the end of the session the elders, Lakshmi, and Bala started singing songs for each other - a good way to end the training for the directors.

* * *

On Thursday, October 16, 2014, we found another community of young people to try a pilot project with called AIM for SEVA. AIM for SEVA is located extremely close to the village, about a five minute walk. It is a boys’ home where the children are from the rural areas around Tamil Nadu. Their parents are day workers, meaning it would be nearly impossible for any of these boys to go to school if it wasn’t for this home because they would be wage earners in their families. The boys live here so they are closer to schools and have a chance to climb out of poverty.

Aisling and I went to AIM for SEVA at 5 PM. It turned out to be a lovely place to visit. I spoke with their Managing Trustee, a man named Vasudevon. He was excited to meet Aisling and me and so were all the 26 boys who call that place home. It is a small house for 26 boys to be living in. They all sleep in one big room and share a large bathroom. A woman also lives there who takes care of all the cooking and



cleaning. This home is nowhere near as overwhelmingly beautiful as SOS Village or Isha or even Tamaraiikulam. From my Western eyes, it looks like a difficult situation to live in but I have to remember I have completely different cultural expectations. The boys and Vasudevon and even Gnana and Googan who showed us this facility were proud of it. They said the boys would be given a much better chance for a good life by living here. Vasudevon was also proud because AIM for SEVA has 100 homes like this throughout India and has a goal in the next six years to double that number to 200 homes. I can see with the more time I spend here how important it is for young people to get an education to aid in the country's efforts to help a generation climb out of poverty. Certainly Isha, SOS Village, and Tamaraiikulam are friendlier to western eyes as being comfortable communities but there is no doubt in my mind the boys in AIM for SEVA will benefit from spending time with the elders at Tamaraiikulam. We worked out a simple plan that has the boys coming each Saturday starting on October 25, 2014.

* * *

During the UVic students' course work, they had a number of readings. One of the last readings was Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" I really poured myself into this presentation. I spent most of my free time on the days leading up to it working on gaining a clear understanding of Spivak's methods to clear up for myself exactly what her purpose was in writing this article. It is a seminal work and I wanted to ensure the students had a solid grasp of this difficult to comprehend text. Being that she works in the methodology of deconstruction theory, I asked that all the students reserve any questions until the end so I could have an opportunity to say everything before we started

questioning. I spoke for about 30 minutes. The complexity of deconstruction theory ties knots in the minds of the readers and I worked hard to be as clear as possible. If I had to explain her purpose I would say, Spivak offers this article as a way to argue the subaltern or the subproletariat class has no voice in global politics and the western academy. This voicelessness is a result of the several century-old epistemic imperial constructs used within the academy and the current global division of labour between the developed world and the developing world. Spivak argues the work of developed world academics and activists should be to find space for the subaltern to gain voice consciousness in their representation by moving this position from always being in the position of “Other” and moving the subaltern to a subject position. These concepts rattled around our heads during our class. After I finished, we were all in an emotional state. We have all been surrounded by what Spivak terms as the subproletariat class for the past three weeks and to come to the collective realization of how they have been unjustly represented throughout history and the power we in the western world can have to better their representation is a lot to handle. The group was speechless for a while. In this silence, I came to the realization of a shift in myself. I have always been comfortable advocating as a neocolonial thinker. I love the tie to emotions and activism this position allows for in the academy. In the past, I have been critical of feminism and at this moment I changed. I understood how important woman’s rights activism is in our current world. This is the first instant I could comfortably align myself as a feminist. I feel that unifying some of my neocolonial work with feminist theory will be helpful, especially Spivak’s deconstruction/ feminist theoretical work. After I mentioned this to the students, we had discussion start. Many of the students expressed frustration with how confusingly written the article was and appreciated my attempts to clarify the article. They were frustrated by the difficulty of Spivak’s writing saying the effect of her writing being inaccessible means the people who most need to hear her ideas would never put the time into understanding them. Some of the students thought perhaps this could be the project of our group members. Spivak’s ideas are important and perhaps we could take it upon ourselves to share these concepts. I am glad we collectively came to this realization. I think this speaks to the power of pedagogy in a field school setting. The stakes in the ideas raised in this article are raised when we are here in India living with people who fit into the subproletariat class. How could I lecture to a group of students in Canada and have the same effect on the students as I did while here in India? The answer might be simply I can’t, but there may be some sort of way to try and make Spivak’s ideas better known.

* * *

Saturday October 18, 2014 was the day each of the students opened their letter they wrote to themselves back in the pre-departure training exactly one month earlier. I recruited Laura to create a video by compiling many of the best photographs we had all taken up until this point. She did a wonderful job. We watched the video on Tamaraikulam's projector and sound system. Immediately following, I handed each person back their letter so they could read it again. It was comforting watching them read the letters again. They took about ten minutes to read the letters. After they finished, I had them each put their envelopes at the front of the room and asked them to write each person in the group a kind message. At first, they kind of laughed at me for engaging in what was a children's camp activity but when they started working I think they grew to understand why I had them do this now. After each person finished, I handed all the envelopes back and people read their notes. The students made them for Aisling and me too. It was great to read the messages. I will share two of them with you here: "Gus, pretty fly for a white guy. I've never met someone so smart, intuitive, educated, and passionate who I could also call a friend. You make me look forward to my 30's." and "Gus, Thank you for providing this amazing opportunity for all of us. It will likely change and impact the rest of our lives and goals...and you will be to thank for the globally responsible people we will become." Many of the other notes said similar sentiments but these two touched me in that these are sentiments I would have shared with the wonderful educators I have encountered earlier in my academic career - a fantastic feeling to be on the other end.



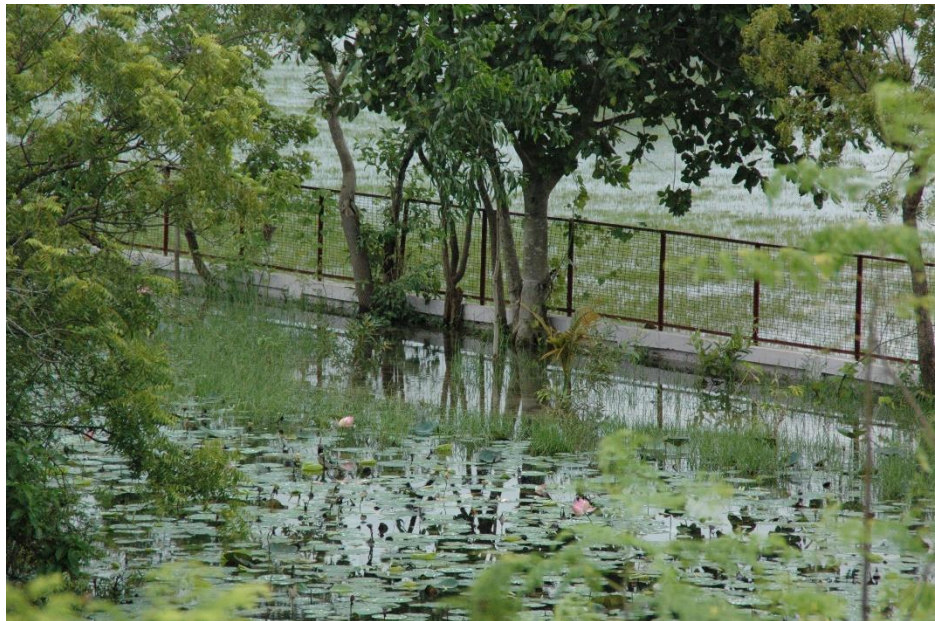
After the activity the students, all eleven of them, left on an overnight trip to visit some ruins in a nearby town. This left Aisling and I alone for a couple of days. We saw the students off and then rented a car to explore Pondicherry in search of good food and some drinks. If you are ever in Pondicherry and have a

hankering for some western food the place to fulfill this desire is the Promenade Hotel at their buffet. I have been eating nothing but rice, idly, dosa, and different varieties of chutneys, curries, and soba for three weeks. This food is fine but it is certainly not what I grew up on. Eating at a buffet where the chef knew how to perfectly sear beef, select a spread of fine cheeses, olives and hummus, bake several varieties of bread, create beautiful omelettes, and make perfect ice cream, crème caramel, brownies was great. I now know where to go when I am in need of the comforts of western food.

Chapter 9 – Lots of Rain, Diwali, and the Early Rehearsals

Is the world conspiring against me? No, I am just kidding but I wouldn't believe this situation if I didn't live it. The day our intergenerational theatre company was to start rehearsing, all school in Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, and Kerala was cancelled due to rain and to quote the government website "natural calamity". Crazy, I cannot believe. But when I started to think about it more and more and look around the village an absurd amount of rain had fallen. I tried to go for a walk around the lotus pond but couldn't because the pond had overflowed and flooded the sidewalk. The fields around the village are now marshland. The birds are happy but I imagine many of the roads in these three states are flooded out. This means that the upcoming Diwali festival will be a four-day holiday for the surrounding school children and that the first rehearsal of the intergenerational theatre company will be postponed by four days. I used the rain day to catch up on some other work

I had been putting off and I also read a copy of *HelpAge India: The Saga of Age Care in India*, a book Ramalingam gave me about the 35-year history of *HelpAge India*. The two strong takeaways I have from the book are how huge the organization is and



how many people it is able to help, but how they are actually only reaching 1% of India's elderly and secondly, the wonderfully wise development of Tamaraikulam Elders Village in its early days. When they were developing the plan for the village, *HelpAge India* staff would travel around the Tamil Nadu region and watched healthy seniors at leisure and how they lived. After gathering this type of data from the community, they built the village to allow for the elders who live here to have the same type of life. That is a wonderful way to engage in development – learn from the community and then implement the program.

* * *

“Come outside everyone!” I yelled at the students.

One by one, each student came outside to the rooftop balcony of Tamaraikulam’s guest house. Today was Diwali – the largest festival in India. The celebration is acknowledging the moment in the Sanskrit texts where goodness defeats evil and lightness triumphs over dark. Indians give each other new clothes and sweets on this day, but, the most fun is the fireworks. Earlier in the day, we blew off fireworks indoors with the elders – you read that correctly, indoors - but this evening the spectacle from the balcony was remarkable.



“I’ve never seen anything like this.”

“There are so many.”

In every direction fireworks were being blown off. The size of the fireworks were never the monstrous ones you see in the US 4th of July celebration or a ‘castillo’ in rural Mexico but the sheer volume was undeniably impressive. East, west, north, and south every community were shooting off a continuous stream of fireworks. At any given moment there must have been 10-50 simultaneous colourful explosions. We Canadians took a moment to take in the beauty of the country we were visiting. I could not help but appreciate India’s culture and people in this moment.

* * *

My heart was quite heavy on the celebration day of Diwali. Earlier, I wrote about Sathiyababu's father and how he has been suffering from a brain tumour for some time now. On Diwali, Sathiyababu's father was admitted into the hospital and was not responsive in anyway. Sathiyababu, his mother, and his family are waiting for his father to die. I know Diwali is meant to be one the most joyous days on the Indian holiday calendar but I had a heavy heart. I saw Sathiyababu for a few minutes. Even through this difficult time there are things he and I need to discuss. After we finished our quick business, I told him our whole group's thoughts were with him. I gave him a hug and told him I loved him.

* * *

After a postponement of four days, it finally happened - our first rehearsal. I know it was only four days late but in the timeline of this project it felt like forever. The rehearsal did not come without its difficulties. In the morning while we were on our way to Isha where the UVic students had been teaching English to the Isha students, we ended up with a flat tire and were stuck on the side of the road. When this first happened I thought, "Oh no, here we go. Another rough day." But it ended up being just fine. We missed the language lesson but I had arranged for an Isha bus to take the Isha students to Tamaraikulam so the bus just picked us up on the way. The bus ride ended up being quite fun.

When we arrived at the village, I called Bala and he rode his motorcycle over immediately. He lives quite close to the village. I had him meet with the students before lunch and then after lunch we had our first intergenerational rehearsal. While reading this and all of the descriptions of rehearsals after this, remember each rehearsal from here out is taking place fully in Tamil. I am only guessing at what is happening at many points and when I have a translator I will mention it. For the first half of this day, I had no translator.

Bala spoke with the children for a few minutes and then had them start into action immediately. He started by having the children walk in a circle in one direction and then in the other direction going back and forth. After this, he built a square in the room using four chairs and had the students walk around everywhere and anywhere inside of this square. After they had warmed up, Bala wanted to see their acting skills. He had them split into three groups and each group performed a short scene

where they were depicting some sort of simple story using an old person or a sick person. This is a similar technique used by *Roots and Branches* and G&F had also tried it a few times. It works well to start to talk about stereotypes. I think Bala used these scenes as teachable moments. After each scene, he would look to the students in the audience and ask them what they saw. He would then give his interpretation as well. After they had performed all the scenes, he had the Isha students each try a round of 'mirror' at the front of the room. A number of these students were with me the previous summer; so, 'mirror' was certainly a game they were familiar with. It was great watching this activity. After they finished this activity, it was time for lunch. I want to note here that the students were having a blast playing these theatre games and they were so excited on the way to the village. That excitement has started to influence the village. The lunch was notably more excitable than usual. Although the Isha students sat mostly with the UVic students, the elders were certainly wondering what was happening today. Many of them knew but some did not and there was a lot of conversation.

When the intergenerational theatre rehearsal started is when I really was excited. I couldn't help but be super excited since this had been a moment I had been working for the previous three years of



my PhD life. I was also imagining my mentors and other influences in my life: David Barnet, Arthur Strimling, Pam Schweitzer, Ross Kidd, Michael Etherton, Susan Pearlstein, *et al.* they were all sitting somewhere in the world with a growing smile on their face not knowing why. At this point in the process there is much to be done but the fact that elders and students from rural Tamil Nadu were sitting together in a room with the intended purpose of creating intergenerational theatre is a serious win in my books. Whether the company has success or struggles this moment is one to relish. When the rehearsal started, there were 29 Tamaraikulam residents, 13 Isha students, 1 Isha teacher, Bala, Sathiyababu, Ramalingam, 12 UVic students, Sathiyababu's son Jeswanth, and me, all in the room. The elders, the Isha students, and all the directors sat in a circle in the center of the room and everyone else was along the walls. The event started by Sathiyababu addressing the whole group. I was happy his son Jeswanth was there since I quickly recruited him as a translator. Sathiyababu took this moment to introduce this whole project to the group and told them the goal. My favourite bit was when he explained this project was the bringing together of two communities to form one community. After this, Sathiyababu and Bala brought together the healthier elders and the Isha students with their teacher into the center of the circle. As this was transpiring I couldn't help but be reminded about James Thompson's writing about what he called "a public workshop". When I first read this concept in his writing, it reminded me of many G&F rehearsals because there were always interested parties coming in to watch the rehearsal process.

When the smaller group started working, Bala had them join hands in a circle and had them walk in a circle in the two different directions just as he had done before when only the Isha students were in the room. Sathiyababu started singing loudly while they were walking. All the young and old had huge smiles on their faces and were laughing. After they did this for a while, they played a game in which they walked around to each person of the other generation and introduced themselves. This is, once again, a game used by G&F. I never spoke about this game to Bala and Lakshmi. Bala knew this activity would work and I never told it to him. After they played this game, they split into two groups. One group was to be the audience and the other the actors. Bala gave the actors the assignment of putting on a performance for the audience. It took them about five minutes of conferring but after they were ready to perform. The stories were fictional and invented on the spot.

The story went, in an Indian rural village an old man had become tired of living there and he had convinced everyone else in the village they all had to leave. They started their long journey and they became thirsty. Upon the trail, they found wonderful mineral water to drink, not the bad water sometimes travellers have to settle for. They drank and kept walking. While the group was journeying, Sathiyababu spontaneously sang a traditional song. They became tired so they rested. During this time they revealed the old man was sick. At this moment, a random young man who was riding his bike yelled at the old man “Get out of the way.” Nearby in a village there were two grandmas that were presidents of that village. A young man from the travelling party went ahead to find the grandmas and brought them back to see the sick old man.



The old man asked the village leaders, “We need food and water and a place to stay. Can we stay here?” The Grandmas said yes, and the two communities came together to form one.

Bala asked the group what they learned from the story. Isha students and elders both really enjoyed the story because of the aspect of the richer community helping the poorer. After reflecting upon the description of the story, I can see it as a metaphor for the work that was accomplished on this day. Two communities becoming one. Afterwards, Ramalingam and I were talking about the rehearsal and he thought this was already a performable scene it just needs the direction of Bala and Lakshmi to bring it up to a quality standard. This was the end of the first rehearsal. I remember

being happy since the group had created a spontaneous story that could be used in the performance and the elders and young people enjoyed this day. This was a great first day.



The rehearsal did not end without concerns. At the end of rehearsal, it was much more important for the Isha students to say final goodbyes to the UVic

students. The relationship here is further developed than the relationship to the elders. This will be something to think about. It is totally understandable. The Isha students have been spending time with the UVic students during the English language lessons at the Isha School. In an ideal world, it would be the elders-Isha student relationship which develops furthest in this process but the intercultural exchange is highly important as well.

* * *

The following Saturday was the day in which Sathiyababu's father left his body and Sunday was the service. The UVic students had already made plans to leave the village from Saturday afternoon after our second intergenerational rehearsal afternoon. I chatted with Ramalingam if they should cancel their plans to stay and he thought it was appropriate for them to still leave. Chelsea drew a beautiful card with a lotus flower on the front which Aisling and I presented to Sathiyababu's mother. We sat with her for a while to express our sorrow.

An Indian funeral is a beautiful experience. The body was in a glass case which was in Sathiyababu's house. The closest family members sat beside the casket and people from the community came in to pay respect. I went in on Sunday morning. When a larger group of people came there were musicians that would play a trumpet, drum, and chime to announce their arrival to view the body. The viewing was filled with tears and I couldn't help but be reminded of the viewing of my father's body when I was a twelve year-old boy. Losing a family member is of immeasurable difficulty and my thoughts were with Sathiyababu and his family but mostly with his mother. The loss will affect her a great deal. The body was set in a large flower filled vehicle looking similar to a parade float in Canada. The float is then led by the musicians and the whole funeral marches to where the body will be placed. I watched the procession from the village.



* * *

The same Saturday morning as the passing of Sathiyababu's father, I went to *SOS Children's Village* to plan with Chandra and the directors how the rehearsal plan would work for their pilot project. When I arrived at the village, Ramalingam, Lakshmi, Bala, and Dr. Bushan had all arrived before me as I was late because I had to take one of the UVic students to the hospital with what was a minor illness. Before meeting with Chandra, I wanted to make sure all five of us were on the same page, as the last time I saw Dr. Bushan was when he and Dr. Gunasekaran auditioned our UVic students for a play they were to tour across Canada.

Dr. Bushan became angry to begin the meeting. Ramalingam and he had a heated discussion for a few minutes in Tamil. Sometimes when matters become tense the language flips over to Tamil in business meetings I attend in India. After a few minutes in Tamil they flipped back into English and the first words uttered by Dr. Bushan were "Dr. Gunasekaran didn't understand the project." I was not shocked. Intercultural communication is fraught with misunderstandings and Dr. Gunasekaran has tons of projects enter into his responsibility. Now that we were on the same page, we could meet with Chandra. The meeting went smoothly. He is happy to have his children involved. *SOS*

Children's Village residents will be creating theatre with Tamaraikulam Elders' Village residents in a pilot project that was to happen on a couple of Sundays during UVic's time in India.

The folks from Pondicherry University, Ramalingam and I returned to Tamaraikulam because AIM for SEVA was to have their first pilot project rehearsal with the elders. The boys arrived and the theatre work started immediately. I asked the UVic students to come in a few at a time after the rehearsal started so as not be too disruptive. Dr. Bushan facilitated and had each member of the intergenerational group introduce themselves what I would deem as "loudly and proudly". By this I mean, he made sure each person stood up and proclaimed their name to the rest of the group. Lakshmi came over to me to give a bit of a translation of what the plan was for the rehearsal. The plan was before lunch the children and elders would share their stories with each other. After lunch they would start creating theatre. During the first half of this rehearsal, there were 22 elders and 10 boys. Watching this rehearsal was extremely interesting from a western point of view. Dr. Bushan and the elders were much more physical with each other than I have ever seen in a community theatre rehearsal. Dr. Bushan noticed one of the boys was having difficulty telling his story so he brought the boy closer to him and had him sit on his lap while the boy cried. He wiped away the boy's tears and encouraged him to continue his story. After he told his story, the boy went over to Lakshmi and sat on her lap. The boy's story was one shared by many of the boys and girls staying in AIM for SEVA homes. Jesyanth, Sathiyababu's son, translated the story for me. His parents divorced and when this happens in India often the children become orphans since divorce carries with it devastating stigma. Children of divorce are marginalized and both parents often are too. Sometimes the children remain with their parents but in this boy's case AIM for SEVA is now his home. The elders were weeping from the boys' story and they started asking other boys to come and sit on their laps. Dr. Bushan encouraged this process and told the elders and boys to share their stories. Tears were flowing throughout the audience. I can only imagine what was being said, orphaned boys or boys separated from their families sharing with elders in similar rejected, orphaned status. Jesyanth left, so Ramalingam and Lakshmi came over to me to help with the translation of what was happening. They told me the elders and boys were sharing stories and this process was bringing them closer together. I could see this happening. At a certain moment the sharing between generations became easy. They looked happy to tell each other their stories. After they shared for a while, Dr. Bushan asked them to come to the front and tell the story they heard from the other

generation. I did not understand a word they uttered but I knew the importance of this moment. In this theatre rehearsal, young orphaned boys told the stories of orphaned elders and orphaned elders told the stories of orphaned boys.

After lunch, while watching the second half of this rehearsal, I was uncomfortable with what I witnessed. The rehearsal contained no playful element. At first, I thought it was because Dr. Bushan did not receive the training and it should have been Lakshmi and Bala facilitating because they knew of the



importance of playfulness. Dr. Bushan occupied much of the space of the rehearsal. I imagine he talked about 70% of the time. Plus, only 8 elders and 10 children were present. After about 30 minutes, in which young and old shared their experiences during lunch since it was during that time the elders showed the young people their rooms and toured them through the village, Dr. Bushan asked people to come up to the front and share their experience in a performance. Vesudevon, the head master of AIM for SEVA's Cuddalore home, was the first to perform. Then, Vadevil stood up and performed masterfully as he always does incorporating dance and song, and finally Jayamma and one of the boys did a short small scene where she spoke softly to him. At this, the rehearsal ended about 45 minutes before planned.

I thought I had a huge problem on my hands. I spoke about this quietly with both Katelyn and Kaeden and they agreed. In my field notes I have written down: Where is the playfulness? How do I get this back on track? Yesterday was expertly facilitated by Bala and Sathiyababu, how can Dr. Bushan be made to understand playfulness? I even went as far as to approach Lakshmi and Bala and say to them, "We lacked playfulness today." They nodded and told me the group had come a long way to bond and this was a good outcome. Dr. Bushan, Lakshmi, Bala, and the boys left and as they drove away I could see all the elders were congregating by Sathiyababu's house. I went over

to see what was happening. The ambulance had backed right up to Sathiyababu's house and they unloaded his father into the living room of the home. I stood there with the elders for some time. All of Sathiyababu's family were there, his three brothers including the one from New Zealand were there with their families. After a while, Sathiyababu came outside and asked everyone to leave. Ramalingam and I walked away together. I expressed to him my concern with Dr. Bushan's facilitation. Ramalingam thought everything was fine and what the project really needed was the return of Sathiyababu. Having Dr. Bushan and Pondicherry University involved was highly valuable to this project and it showed great commitment on their end that Dr. Bushan was to be facilitating on the weekends giving up his free time to follow through with this project. It means better coverage and hopefully more funding. I still said I was concerned about the importance of playfulness. Ramalingam agreed and thought Sathiyababu knows this better and loves the vision including playfulness for the intergenerational theatre company, and upon his return everything would be fine. For me, after having some time to think about it, I may have acted inappropriately. The most likely reason for the lack of playfulness and decreased numbers from 22 to 8 elders had to do with Sathiyababu's father and nothing to do with Dr. Bushan's facilitation. It could have been even facilitating the eager elders was difficult after hearing the sad news. I should have seen this in the moment but I missed it while being too focused on one aspect. When I met with the students later, they were much less convinced that Dr. Bushan deserved the benefit of doubt. A number of them thought his facilitation was completely inappropriate throughout the whole session and that we should consider cutting ties with him or at least force him to receive some sort of training before facilitating again.

Chapter 10 - Michael Etherton's Visit

On Tuesday, October 28, 2014 Michael Etherton and his wife Mary came to visit our project and Tamaraikulam. This would be Michael's first time visiting Tamaraikulam since he acted as consultant in the early days of the village construction and bringing the first elders to live in the village. The plan for his and Mary's visit was the two of them, Ramalingam, Sathiyababu, and I would meet him for supper on Tuesday in Pondicherry, on Wednesday he would visit the village, on Thursday he would witness a rehearsal of the intergenerational theatre company, and then, after rehearsal I would interview him in front of the students which would be followed by a discussion.

Before heading to Pondicherry for supper with Mary and Michael on Tuesday, the intergenerational theatre company had rehearsal. The Isha students came to the village. Bala and Lakshmi started the rehearsal with the Isha students. They had them engage in stretches and then in a spacewalk. As they were spacewalking, a few elders entered and joined in. This was instantly pleasurable for both generations and it was a really good way to start the rehearsal. Bala was facilitating the spacewalk while Lakshmi was helping the other elders who were coming to watch become comfortable in the room. After the warm-up, they went right into scene creation. By the time they started this there were 24 elders in the room with the 15 Isha students. In this time, they improvised about 5-7 scenes. Some were well done. Most contained some sort of intergenerational turmoil. Either a young person being totally inconsiderate or an argument of which son would take care of an elder. Some talented actors are starting to emerge. Jayamma and Vadevil are exceptional actors and two of the young people have really stepped up and shown their ability. All the while, in the first session elders were yelling at the people onstage, wanting to discuss the scenes before the improvisations were even over. A few of the scenes really inspired long conversations which were equally engaging for young and old. One of the scenes which stimulated the most discussion was one where two elders were drinking and young people came to try and help them to connect them with an agency to help. Jayamma had a demonstrative way of showing she was throwing up from drinking too much. She would make the action of throwing up while making a loud noise making us all laugh. The children were jumping up to play the next scene. The one aspect lacking in this rehearsal was that it was only really four elders participating. Sathiyababu vowed to try and fix this after the Isha students left.

The first half of rehearsal went longer than planned since it was so valuable and we lost most of the after lunch portion. We started trying to gather people at 2:30PM when there was only 30 minutes left before Isha had to return to school. Because of this, Lakshmi and Bala had the young people work on what they thought were the three best scenes from the first half. Eventually, the elders joined too but it was too late to include them in the scene work. Apparently the custom for the elders is to have a rest after lunch. Why did I find this out in late October? I had been planning rehearsals to happen at this time for months. The problem is a funny one to have but Sathiyababu tells me the elders will be fine to go without a rest as long as they are forewarned. The Isha students performed the scenes for a second time. This is more often than not the most difficult performance in the devising process. A scene works wonderfully when it is spontaneous but when tried a second time it is difficult. Perhaps it was OK to have the students take on this challenge and give the elders a chance to watch.

After the students left on the bus, Sathiyababu gathered 13 elders into the rehearsal hall. They spoke as a group for some time. After a while, Lakshmi came over to me and told me Sathiyababu had fixed this as the company to act everyday with the young people. I was happy to see one of the elders who joined us. She was involved with both of the previous projects I worked on here and since coming back on this trip she has not appeared to be herself. She looks sad and less energetic. She lived her life as a part time dancer and even taught dance when she was younger. I hope being involved with the company helps her find joy. I think it may have even on this day. After solidifying the company Sathiyababu

asked Bala to teach a dance. As he started doing this, I thought it would be appropriate for the UVic students to join in. They would act as surrogate young people for when in the future the elders will do this with Isha. It was such a happy event. Smiles were shared by



everyone. After a long time of dancing they even sang the Tamil version of “We’re Here”. Also, the intercultural group played a game in which everyone formed a train and went under a bridge which was formed by two elders. As people were passing under the bridge, the elders would let them pass but then they would capture one person inside and sing a song to them. After the song, they would let the person out and re-start the game. I was looking forward to Thursday when Michael can join us to see the company have a rehearsal.

* * *

Meeting with Michael and Mary was a pleasure. Ramalingam, Sathiyababu, and I met the two of them at the lovely Hotel Amboille in the Tamil section of Pondicherry. This hotel is a refurbished historic building which has been transformed into a gorgeous palace of a hotel. In the 18th century, the home belonged to a successful Tamil business man. After we met at the hotel, we went for a quick drink and then for supper. Michael was a professor at the Northern Country’s College of Education in Warwick’s final year of his undergrad. Mary jokingly referred to our meeting as an intergenerational academic meeting. I was taken with how cool it was to have a beer with Michael after having had beers on a few occasions with Warwick, his former student. Most of the evening I felt privileged to be watching Sathiyababu, Michael, and Ramalingam reminisce about the early days working to build Tamaraikulam. They were having fun.

Michael paid me a great compliment I do not want to forget. Perhaps the compliment was less for me and more for what the model of intergenerational theatre provides communities. Of course, it has not been me who developed this model it has been a combination of David Barnett’s work in Edmonton and Pam Schweitzer in the UK plus Arthur Strimling plus the others who have written about this theatrical model. I came along at a great moment to learn from their work. He said, “When I saw Gus’ work in Edmonton and saw the performance of *GerActors and Friends*, it was the first time I saw theatre work with seniors where they were saying what they actually felt and not just saying what they were supposed to say.” I was really touched by this and thought he was totally correct. Once again this compliment is perhaps more for David Barnett than for me but it resonated with me because it was the first time I had heard it described this way. The question I was left with is: how can the elders here in Tamaraikulam say what they actually feel?

* * *

Thursday, October 30, 2014 represents a turning point in the whole process of this project. I always tell people who are new to applied theatre or who do not understand really how everything works, in most projects I have been a part of you take the test first and then you get the lesson. By this I mean, as facilitators, we confront problems in the moment, solve them in that same moment, and only upon reflection do we analyze whether our actions worked or not. What works one day, will not the next. On this day, I had a huge lesson and it turned into a new phase of this project. After this day, the rest of the time in India and with the intergenerational theatre project was different.

The rehearsal started with the elders gathering and the students arrived while the elders were still gathering. There were 24 elders and 14 Isha students. Bala started warm-up activities with the young people. They did a spacewalk and then some stretches. Then after ten minutes, they started in on the scene work. The exact

same scenes as before. They worked through three scenes. The elders were engaged only as audience but they were engaged and having fun. Vadevil and Jayamma were the only elders to act. I had sat and watched enough. I went over to Sathiyababu and asked him to facilitate a dance I had seen



him facilitate before. As soon as they started dancing there were 9 elders dancing and the 14 Isha students. They were laughing and having fun. I found out from Ramalingam this song is similar to a town anthem. Everyone from this area knows this song. The song is about putting water on the ground and flowers growing from the water. After some time of Sathiyababu singing the song, he passed the lead part over to one of the Isha students and Jayamma. I then asked Bala to split the group into several smaller groups to tell each other stories about this song and how they came to know it. This did not happen. Instead they continued working on the same scenes. Then after

working in the scenes for 30 minutes or so Sathiyababu taught them another song which looked like something to be used as a curtain call.

At lunch and into the beginning of the second half of rehearsal, I chatted with Michael. Mostly he reminisced with me about the village and told me about some of the elders. One thing he told me I never knew about the village was that it was intended to be a multi-lingual facility since it is to house elders from both Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the major languages of these two areas are different. In Tamil Nadu it is Tamil and in Kerala it is Malayalam but there is really only one Malayalam speaker who ever came. Some of the caregivers were speakers of this language but I am not sure if any were there. Michael said for the one woman who did come to live in the village it must have been a difficult decision carrying the risk of losing her language. I continued to chat with Michael through the break and while the rehearsal started again. Bala had the elders and Isha continuing to work on the same three scenes. They were becoming polished but Michael turned to me and said, “If they work on these scenes for the next month you will lose the children.” He was certainly right. I think I would probably be lost too. He then suggested we use the English language skills of the young people as a tool for influencing change in the process. He thought there may be opportunity for UVic students to help the Isha students build scenes to be performed for the elders. He thought especially the girls could be used since young women have the bleakest future of anyone here. He thought a good starting point could be asking the students what was unfair in their lives. Then once they had scenes we could have them performed for the elders in Tamil and have the elders comment on what they see, perhaps

joining the scene as a chorus giving wishes to the young people. This kernel of an idea was fantastic. I had been swimming upstream in a way trying to keep out of the theatrical process and this suggestion felt like a way to fit into the process

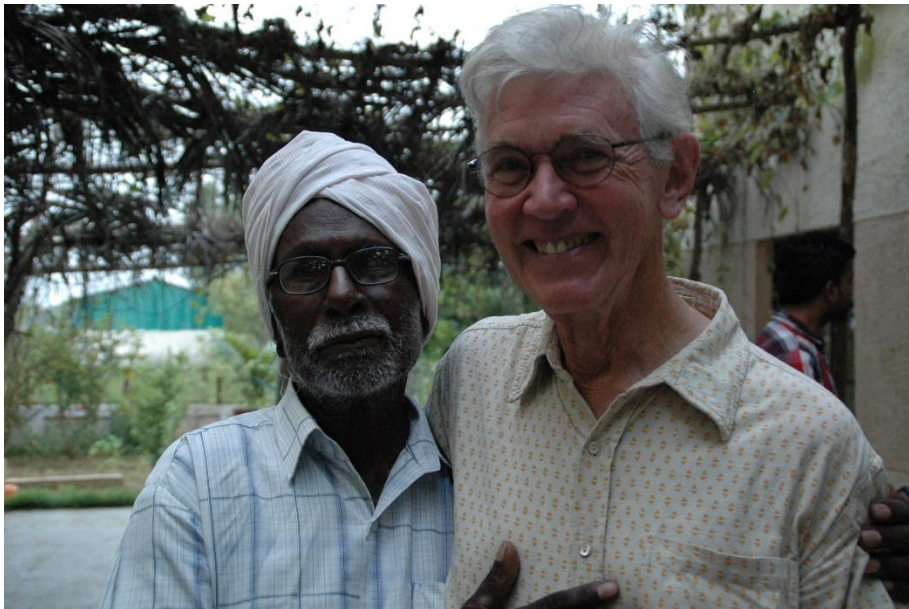


which will be more meaningful for the UVic students, the Isha students, and the elders. Plus, with the end result of the theatre improving.

After rehearsal ended, we moved into the *HelpAge India* office to have our interview. I would certainly facilitate an interview like this again. It was much less like an interview you see on TV and more of me prompting Michael to share his stories, thoughts, and ideas about theatre, Tamaraiikulam, and international development. The best outcomes for the intergenerational project were not during the interview but when we opened up the floor for discussion. In the first part, Michael asked to hear everybody's name and what their career ambitions were. From here we jumped into questions. The first was from Katelyn who was asking how he thought we could be involved in the project. She has been worried about our role as researchers since the beginning. At this moment, Michael told the students about what he and I were talking about with building in the UVic students and how important it is to give voice to the community. Up until this point in the project, the participants have not had as much of a voice as we had hoped. It has been the NGO which has been talking more than the community. I can hear echoes from Spivak. Can the subaltern speak? No, not if the NGO talks for them. The UVic students can help the Isha students have a voice. Aisling and Kathleen both asked questions about the future of Theatre and Development. He spoke about his experience in some wonderful projects he had done which were well funded. He identified the largest issue as being funding and if donors or NGOs are providing the funding they want to control the message and are less interested in an open ended structure which is what is needed in our work. Michael also spoke about how he thought the future for development work just maybe intergenerational projects or elder focused projects. His words were, "You are on the side of history in this project." In this period, he also spoke about the importance of design in applied theatre, helping young people with stage craft, and his negative opinion of message-laden theatre. He took a moment to encourage Sathiyababu to fully utilize our UVic community while we are here to help with all of these aspects. After the question period ended, the UVic students had a quick opportunity to speak with him. Blair took a selfie with Michael which ended up on Facebook. Michael and Mary had a driver waiting for them and Sathiyababu and I walked them to their vehicle. Michael and Mary wanted a coffee from Deva before they left. As Michael, Mary, and I were sharing a coffee Vadevil came over to see Michael. Vadevil was the first elder and it was Michael who helped to bring home to the village. It was such a privilege to be a part of watching Vadevil thank Michael.

They had not seen each other since 2008. Michael and Mary got into their vehicle and drove off. I shared a moment of contemplation with Vadevil. Michael has had a massive impact on this community and I think he may have just had an equally as large impact on this project. He certainly lit a fire in me.

I had a quick conversation with Sathiyababu about Michael's input regarding UVic's involvement and about, as Michael put it, message-laden drama. From hence forward in this project, my goal was to be much more involved in the process. Up until this point, the students and I have been fully in the backseat but I can now see if the project continues down this path it may struggle. It was great to have Michael here because he helped the theatre practitioner in me come out. I have had my researcher hat on a little too much until now and I want to help this community have a voice in this piece. It is about the community's voice not the NGO's or the director's but the community's voice. Sathiyababu seemed like he agreed with this assertion.



After my conversation, I had a de-brief session with the UVic students. I revealed this idea of our deeper involvement and utilizing the younger generation as our 'in' with the community. They were all excited about this. The best outcome of this day was the renewed energy I,

and I think the rest of the group, had from Michael's visit. I feel like he gave us the 'go-ahead' to be more involved. Certainly, I have felt we should hang back but after watching three rehearsals where the community's voice has been little heard it is time we tried to give life to the community's voice in an appropriate way. For me, the best reminder I have from Michael is when he saw *Geriatrics and Friends* in Edmonton he thought the work was good because the seniors were saying what they

‘really felt’ not what other’s wanted them to say. Now, it became our job to have the Indian Intergenerational Theatre Company say what they really feel.

* * *

“Really? You want to celebrate?” I said to the UVic students.

“Yes, it will be fun.”

“Wouldn’t it be fun to go to AIM for SEVA and give candy to the boys there?”

I paused to consider this. Halloween has been a holiday I have barely paid attention to since I was in junior high school. I was once talked into dressing up as the cowardly lion from *The Wizard of*



Oz during my undergrad but besides that I usually have avoided the holiday.

“Sure, why not. It could be fun.” You can never call me close minded.

In the afternoon on October 31, we started the Halloween festivities. First, we had bought a bunch of candy and made cards to give out to the boys in the AIM for SEVA home. Kumaran gave us a ride. We all loaded off the bus and I facilitated Bombaya with everyone. We didn’t have balls so we just clapped hands and danced. This was a particularly interesting rendition of playing Bombaya because none of the AIM for SEVA boys know English. Because of this, I used a lot of hand signals and was thankful I had twelve eager UVic students with me to help lead the boys in playing the game. After we played this for a while, the UVic students gave out the cards to the boys. Then, I had all the boys stand in a line and I had them repeat after me “Trick or Treat!!” They said it a few times and then we gave the candy out to them - an enjoyable time. We had way more candy than we needed. The UVic students noted had we done this in Canada there is a good chance all of the candy would have

disappeared quickly. The boys kept trying to give the candy back. They were happy and appreciative. We ended our visit by taking a group photo in front of their home. It was a great way to spend the day and was a reminder for our Canadian group how exciting Halloween can be for children. Even if this was the boys' first Halloween celebration.



When we arrived back at the village, we sat in the village and spoke with the elders. There was a doctor on campus who spoke English and helped translate. Kaeden went up to my room and grabbed my guitar. He and I played songs for an hour or so for some of the elders. Both of us tried to find songs all the Canadians could sing together. After, it was supper time and this was when most of our group decided to put on their costumes. The students had decided they would all dress up but the rule was you could only use items you brought to India. No buying any item to help the costume. I went up to my room to get ready for dinner and noticed my hat and sunglasses were missing. Someone was going to dress as me. I assumed it would be Kaeden since he borrowed the key to my room. When I came out of my room, I was surprised to see Blair had dressed like me and Kaeden was dressed like Aisling. It was quite funny. All the others had great costumes - an



elephant, tiger, monkey, fox, and a fortune teller. If I had to give an award for the best costume it would be for Nikki and Jillian depicting a stereotypical redneck couple. Jillian was barefoot and pregnant and Nikki dressed as her trailer park husband. Nikki used coffee grinds and makeup to create realistic stubble.

Chapter 11 - A Challenging Two Days

The day after Halloween ended up being one of the most challenging days I had had as a theatre/development worker but it came with what I thought at the time were positive outcomes. The positive outcome being, we have finally found the true voice of the elders and the young boys of AIM for SEVA and have backed away from message-laden drama. The first part of my day was the most difficult. I sat with Dr. Bhushan, Bala, and Lakshmi as we all tried to come to an understanding of what the project plan would be. This is something I know quite well but in its time rolling around through translations and being bumped around the communication chain from Pondicherry University and *HelpAge India* the goals and method have been affected by outside influences. The first obstacle to overcome was Dr. Bhushan who wanted to attribute blame for whose mistake it was that Dr. Gunasekaran thought the Canadians were to perform a play in Canada. At first, he blamed me but I said I did not think it was my place to tell a man who was on his way to face a risky kidney transplant surgery his idea was totally off. He asked me where he came upon the idea it was Pondicherry University's job to teach my students theatre skills to perform a play and tour it in Canada which is a question I have no answer for. At this moment he was quite angry. He said, "Well, Dr. Gunasekaran did not make it up." I told him he would have never heard those ideas from me or *HelpAge India*. Our project the whole time has been about intergenerational theatre and he now wanted me to prove it to him. I printed off all of the documents I had shared with him, Lakshmi, Bala, and Dr. Gunasekaran. He read over all of them and decided the blame was to be placed on Lakshmi and Bala. In his mind, they should have spoken up when Dr. Gunasekaran had such incorrect assessment of the project. I cannot hold blame for them. Dr. Gunasekaran has a strong personality and it is hard to change his thoughts plus he was on his way to a risky operation (which I was told was a success and he recovered in an isolation ward where he had to stay for three months).

Finally, we were able to get past the assessing of blame period and were able to move on to planning for the future. We were able to agree on the rehearsal period. They were strict about wanting times set. I agreed and set time but had to ask about their experience working with NGOs. All three of them told me this was their first and they had mostly, when working on community/ applied theatre projects, worked with advocacy or more protest-oriented organizations. I explained to them how

thinly stretched workers in these organizations are. From the CEO down to the entry level positions and interns, people working for NGOs, and this is intensified when you are dealing with international development organizations. Often times, people are working jobs better suited to be done by three or four people and because of this we have to accept what Sathiyababu and Ramalingam call elastic time. I am not convinced they accept this but they have to as this is the reality of the industry. It may end up being a caveat which makes this relationship highly difficult. I also added an explanation of the organizational structure in our agreement. With Lakshmi, Bala, and Sathiyababu as directors, Dr. Gunasekaran and Dr. Bhushan as Cultural Consultants and me as the Intergenerational Theatre Consultant. I also included an explanation of *HelpAge India* as the organizational home for the company and controller of the funding. I also added a vision statement for the company which reads: “Our goal is Intergenerational Theatre Performance which gives voice to destitute elders’ and youth’s stories through a process of the natural playfulness shared between generations.” This is important to the company and the foundation of everything we are working towards.

After this meeting, it was lunch time and then the rehearsal with AIM for SEVA started. With AIM for SEVA, this was the second rehearsal in their pilot project. This was finally a rehearsal which used an approach similar to mine. This is also the first rehearsal I was helping with the leadership of the workshop and where the students would participate more fully. Dr. Bhushan started the rehearsal by splitting the group in two. At this time, there were only the UVic students and elders. After a few minutes, AIM for SEVA showed up and Dr. Bhushan let them join in naturally to the group. All of the boys ended up sitting in one group. Dr. Bhushan allowed them to find ways to communicate on their own. In one group, Lakshmi acted as a translator and in the other the UVic students took a leadership role in the communication. Dr. Bhushan asked each group to create a performance and left them to work on it. Some amazing results came from this day. I am glad Sathiyababu was in attendance this day because it was a much different style of facilitation than his. Usually Sathiyababu is highly involved in the group process and this hands-off approach had some elders joining in who rarely join. At the end of this process, each group had a performance. One group presented a “happy machine” and the other presented a clapping game in which each person said their name. Both performances were quite nice. After the performances, Dr. Bhushan had each person stand up and say what they felt. All the UVic students stood up and most said they were happy with the result but the process was difficult due to the language barrier. I had Sathiyababu sitting next to me to translate

what the boys and elders were saying. To a person, they were really excited and thankful for the playfulness they had just had. Some quotes Sathiyababu told me from the boys were “When I played with the elderly I enjoyed I had fun,” “I didn’t know what to play. When I play at my house I am not as happy. When I play with the elderly I was much happier. It was great to play with the foreigners,” “To begin, I learned how to play. I didn’t know if it was fun but you taught me to play,” and “I only understood happiness while I played.” Some quotes from the elders were “When they played the guitar last night. I saw my future. Playing and getting onstage is my future,” “Sitting and playing with children was a gift from god,” and “When I see the foreigners I was happy they joined us in play.”

Next, Dr. Bhushan asked the group to create more scenes. At this moment, the group split into three groups and many of the elders left to rest and perform other essential village activities. Also, many of the Uvic students stepped out and expressed their discomfort with the process which was happening. The lack of translation and their perceived over-involvement in the project was too much but after stepping away they became more comfortable after seeing how well the young and old were working together and also I shared with them the translation of the comments from the boys and elders. This struggle is something I wish I could have seen coming. I did not expect the students to be



uncomfortable but in hindsight it makes total sense. We went from being completely in the back seat and now having a role right in the thick of the project. I told everyone to find a place where they were comfortable with their involvement. Some stayed involved in the theatre creation and others sat outside and watched. After about 30 minutes of preparation, there were three performances. All were quite well done, well enough for Sathiyababu to start thinking about how great the end performance will be. It was good to see him pleased. The first scene is one which Jayamma repeatedly tells and it seems she needs to be told. It is the story of how she came to be living in the village. In her story, her two sons were alcoholics and they did not want to help her in any way. At one point they even forced her to drink and she became sick and threw up. This scene was performed on this day. Also, performed was a story about a boy who was bitten by a snake to be cured by a doctor and a wonderful scene about one of the elders' marriage which was filled with overtones of gender inequality and triumph of the human condition after emerging from oppression. Finally, it seemed that the stories were directly from the elders and young people voices.

* * *

I know I just stated that the day after Halloween was one of the most difficult days I have had as a professional, but I would have to say that the following day, November 2, 2015, is without a doubt a day I will always remember and proved to be another turning point for this project. In some ways, it came out of nowhere but at the same time we have been headed down this path for some time. The short version or the head line would read 'Dr. Bhushan has left the project after Gus accused him of using abusive facilitation techniques with vulnerable populations'. I will try and describe the events which lead to this as best I can.

On this Sunday morning, I left in the Bolero truck to pick up Dr. Bhushan and Lakshmi in Pondicherry. They wanted to be picked up closer to 10 AM and it was 1045 AM when I was leaving. I called them when I was on the road and they had impatiently left to take the bus, so the driver, Pathu, and I went there to pick them up. We arrived there and they got into the Bolero and we turned back to the village. Dr. Bhushan wanted to stop for tea on the way. He said it was because it was a day of celebration. It turned out it was Lakshmi's birthday. I wished her a happy birthday and noticed she had a new watch. She told me it was a birthday present to herself. When we stopped for tea, I took a moment to remind Dr. Bhushan of the company's vision statement. The two key tenets

being the voices of the elderly/youth and the use of playfulness in the process. He listened to me and then we left to go to the village.

When we arrived at the village, I gathered the elders with the help of some of the caregivers, gathered the UVic students, and we waited for the *SOS Children's Village* children to come for their first day of the pilot project. I introduced myself to the leader, Raja Kaaviyz aka Ruby, who came with them who works as a co-worker in their village. As the children arrived, Dr. Bhushan started the session. All the participants were sitting around in a large circle. He asked each of the students to introduce themselves. He was aggressive in his way. If the students did not say their name at the volume he thought was right he yelled at them to do it again. After each child had finished, he asked them to walk up to the elders and introduce themselves. Each child did this and it was great to see the intergenerational connection happen immediately. The children ran from elder to elder and you could see the joy on the faces of old and young. At this moment, I leaned over to Bala and asked what Dr. Bhushan had planned next. He answered, "Meditation." I remember being concerned at this in the moment but thought perhaps it could be well done. I have regularly done meditation but it seemed early in the process.

Dr. Bhushan had the whole group sit in a circle and asked the other facilitators to turn out the lights and fans. He wanted complete silence and worked hard to obtain it. Through my years of working with elders, I know a completely silent room full of seniors is a near impossibility. Even in Anne Basting's book *The Stages of Age* she writes about the crinkling of candy wrappers and yell-whispering in each other's ears. In India, this is no different. Elders are hard of hearing and to make matters worse he was facilitating in English most of the time so the elders were having difficulty understanding him. Elders were talking back and forth, entering late dragging chairs, and dropping their canes. The distressing part of this was not that it was occurring but his reaction. In my work, I have learned to allow for this because it is a part of the community group but he would not accept it and he yelled at people to be quiet and was aggressive. Once the room was quiet, he started a meditation. He spoke mostly in English throughout his meditation. I wrote the word Tamil in large letters on the last page of my notebook and showed it to him but he still continued in English. This means most of the room could not understand the meditation. Ruby even came over to me to tell me he needed to use more Tamil. I showed him the sign again and he finally started translating but

Ruby told me it was not sufficient. The meditation took people through a dark vision of their life. He had people remembering their family and the faces of their favourite family members. As they were remembering this, he took them through their life quickly living through each decade. He may be spent 20 seconds on each ten year period asking participants to focus on how their body would feel and still thinking about the people. He was saying nearly everything in English. There may have been times he was speaking in Tamil but they were much fewer than the English. He even took the group through death and then a re-birth. It was a depressing meditation which made life seem as if it is passing in a flash and the only events of importance are the passing of loved ones. Lakshmi started to cry and he asked her to share what was happening. She told the group of her uncle who was the person who had taught her English and she cried because he had died. He yelled at her, "Control your emotions" and grabbed by the head and shook her. Then, one of my students started to cry and he quickly walked over to her and asked her to share. She refused and I stood up and motioned at him to move on. He was pushing people to emotional responses and then aggressively telling them to control themselves. This technique is horrible with most groups but ridiculously horrible with the vulnerable populations of neglected elders and orphans. He stopped the meditation and then asked the elders and the SOS Children to speak to each other about their experience. He was still yelling in an aggressive manner and I had to ask Ruby to translate into Tamil for the elders and young people.

I quickly touched base with Ruby to see what she thought and she was in agreement with me. She thought it was inappropriate with these populations. I promised her I would repair the situation and we would return to the playfulness the project is predicated on. I also touched base with the student who cried. She told me she was feeling unsafe and uncomfortable because of the dictatorial approach he was taking in the meditation. I asked Dr. Bhushan to speak with me outside. I told him my point of view. The workshop was all wrong and before the workshop he gave me the impression he understood the importance of playfulness. He told me this was his method and it would achieve results. I told him results are not the only goal the project also needs to have a playful atmosphere. Better results will come from playfulness than aggression and breaking down individuals to negative emotional responses. I offered him an ultimatum to change immediately or his involvement with the project would end. He seemed to agree to change his approach. He and I re-entered the workshop and the young and old were sharing in an idyllic way. They were excitedly speaking to one another.

It fulfilled his vision and the certainty of his methods. I do not believe it was his methods which caused the beautiful sharing between these two communities but it is the natural desire for connection. Either way, this was happening and continued to happen through lunch.

I had a conversation with the UVic students to see what next steps we should take. Many of the students refused to continue if Dr. Bhushan continued to facilitate. Some wanted me to tell him to leave and take over, others thought I should ask him to watch me facilitate after lunch and I offered the suggestion, only because it was an option albeit not a good one, to allow him to continue since I had just had him agree to change. In the conversation, we came to the point where the best option was to ask him to watch me facilitate. I tried calling both Sathiyababu and Ramalingam to tell them what was happening but neither were answering their phone. I went outside and asked him to watch me facilitate and he refused stating, "If you take over now you will benefit from the great work I did in the first part. I either facilitate or I go." I was put in the position where I had to either ask him to go or to have him continue to facilitate. I asked him, "What would you do in my position?" He looked at me for a few moments and said, "I will go." I asked, "What about Bala and Lakshmi?" He replied, "They can stay. You hired them. The relationship between me and this project is over. I am still your friend and want to work with your university." I grabbed Aisling so she could be a second set of eyes and ears for what was happening. I also grabbed a couple of students including Kaeden and a few others. I asked them to facilitate until I came back. Kaeden suggested using guitar and Bombaya to which I agreed. Dr. Bhushan called Bala on his phone. Lakshmi and Bala quickly came outside. They spoke in Tamil. Aisling and I watched as Bala drove away with Dr. Bhushan on the back of his motorcycle. Dr. Bhushan held his hand high in the air the entire time while leaving the village.

Lakshmi came over to me and asked what happened. Her, Aisling, and I went into the village office and spoke. Aisling and I told Lakshmi our view of the workshop, what was discussed between the Canadian students, and what happened when Dr. Bhushan and I spoke. Lakshmi told us the method Dr. Bhushan used is common in Indian theatre training. What happens is a focus on different *rasas* in a meditation. This meditation was focused on raising negative emotions. She thought this method would be used in projects throughout India with regularity. I told her it may be common but with this community of orphaned children and elders it was completely irresponsible to work using this

type of methodology. I had to act to change the atmosphere on behalf of *HelpAge India*, *SOS Children's Village*, and the University of Victoria to protect the participants. She agreed this methodology was incorrect with orphaned peoples. She understood where we were coming from but she was still confused as to why Dr. Bhushan and I could not agree and work together. I suppose I am confused by the same issue. I wish we could have worked together. He is a smart person who I have already learned a lot from but it seems we could not come together for this project. I would be hard pressed to accept him back on a project working with any vulnerable population. I was clear with him from the start about using a playful methodology and he continued to use a non-playful approach. Bala eventually joined us and Lakshmi updated him on what was said. At this moment, I asked Aisling to check on the group to see what was transpiring. She snapped a couple photos and I saw there were about 25 elders and all the UVic students and the SOS Children engaged in play, singing, and improvisation games. It looked like fun. More fun than I was having in the meeting. After Bala and Lakshmi spoke for a while in Tamil, I told them both they should take their time to consider if they want to remain a part of this project. Their career is important and I thought they should consider everything before agreeing to stay onboard. I think they had already made the decision to stay but I asked them to take their time.

I went back to the rehearsal and the group was playing in a large circle. Laura came over to show me more photos she had taken and I asked her what had happened. She said they had played *Bombaya*, sang *Lion Sleeps Tonight*, played a dancing name game, played a game called *Movement Telephone*, and now they were improvising simple scenes in the middle of a circle. It looked like fun. The group then split into groups and created four scenes.



The four scenes were then performed outside on the open air stage. The scenes were nice. A few contained religious themes and others were stories from the elders' lives. Jayamma told her story again about her sons drinking and forcing her to drink. This is clearly a story of great importance to her. Another elder also performed a scene in which she was a teacher – a story from her career years. All the sharing was fun, beautiful and most importantly facilitated in a safe, kind, and caring way. The UVic students with the translation help of Ruby did a fantastic job. After the session ended, Bala and Lakshmi told me they did not need to take time they wanted to continue on in the project. Also, Ramalingam called and I was able to update him on what had transpired. He was OK with everything and said we would meet soon to discuss next steps for the project. The children went home to their village, Bala and Lakshmi went to their homes, and now it was time for the UVic students and me to de-brief/plan for the future.

Our session lasted a long time. Aisling started by telling everyone how proud she was. She thought we had really answered the challenge and come through with flying colours. The end of the day was great. She was proud of the resiliency of the group and the individuals. I echoed what she said but I was feeling quite low. I am not sure if it was fatigue or sorrow but I told the students I felt bad for having to put them and the community through what happened. In hindsight, it is often easy to see the signs which could have led to me ending the relationship with Dr. Bhushan and I was pointing out a number of these but now with me sitting here writing, it is difficult for me to imagine a man dedicated to using theatre to improve the lives of people to use what I consider an abusive methodology to achieve the end goals. Jillian and I both echoed the sentiments, “Sometimes you need to see what you are not to know what you are.” Everyone shared a bit about their experience. It was a trying day for all but I think we were much more comfortable with Dr. Bhushan no longer being involved in the project. From this time on, we took on an approach in which groups of UVic students led the facilitation for the first part of rehearsal with one of the directors translating and then after the directors would take over during story sharing and scene creation periods. I asked Molly, Katelyn, and Chelsea to focus on working with Isha - Blair, Jillian, Laura, and Kathleen to focus on the AIM for SEVA pilot – and Emily, Nikki, Kaeden, and Leah to focus on *SOS Children's Village* pilot. Each group would facilitate, but I helped manage and structure how they would facilitate. We planned to meet regularly and I would share with them how to use the loose planning structure which I call the Playful/Ontic Approach.

After the session, we went for beer. There is a bar within walking distance just over the Tamil Nadu - Pondicherry border which is actually quite an odd place for westerners to go but after the day we had it was great to share beer.

* * *

“I am certain. We have to keep walking,” I said while we were walking home at 11 PM after beers.

“I bet you’re wrong,” Katelyn said.

“You’re on,” I replied. As we kept walking down the dark highway. This was the night I found out there are three different Indias: one, which exists in the day light, another which exists in the night time which is well lit, and finally, yet another which exists in the night without any lights. We continued walking down the road walking across a bridge which none of us remembered passing when we walked to the bar.

“Excuse me, where are we?” Kaeden asked some police officers who were gathered the end of the bridge.

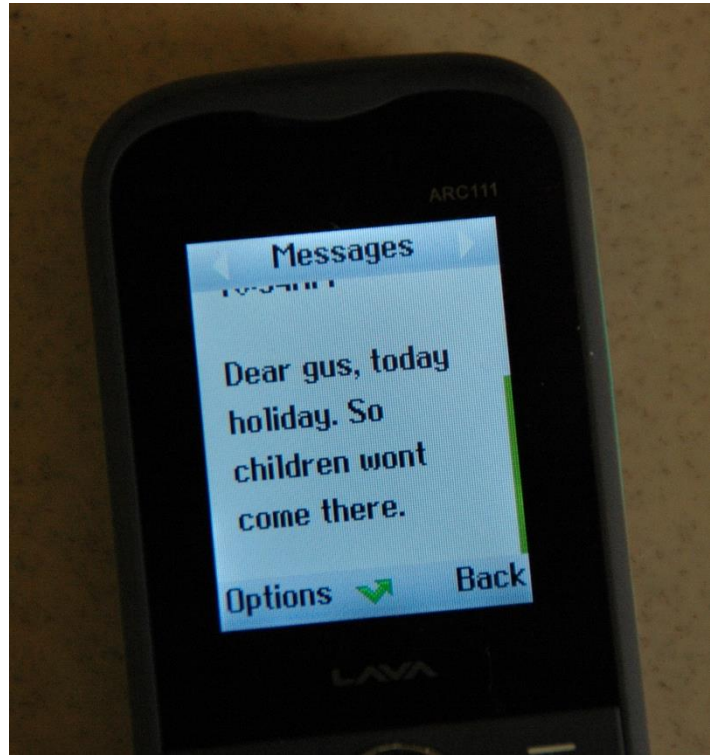
“Where are you going?” One of them asked back at us in English.

“Tamaraikulam Elders’ Village - *HelpAge India*,” Kaeden said back.

“You passed it. It is on the other side of the bridge.” At this, all of the students started laughing at me and Katelyn started boasting her victory. This was first meeting with the third India - the India which is dark and without lights.

Chapter 12 - A New Era for this Project

“Dear Gus, today holiday. So children won’t come there.” This message was texted to me about five minutes before the Isha students were expected to arrive at Tamaraikulam on Tuesday, November 4, 2015. Always interesting and never predictable - this is India. Sometimes life throws you exactly what is needed. November 4th was a Muslim religious festival called *Ashura*. What? This is the second time there has been rehearsal missed for a holiday. Zizek, one of my favourite authors, has a book titled ‘*First as Tragedy, then as Farce*’. That was



certainly how this news fell upon me. I quickly organized the students to tell them the news and show them the text. For me, it actually turned into a good day because I was able to give my full attention to some other agenda items which now were able to receive proper attention. A day off was needed. The reality may be Indian culture has it right to celebrate nearly all of the major religious holidays. Days off are rejuvenating.

Before kicking off the new era of this project, the student groups and I had meetings with Bala and Lakshmi to prepare the rehearsal plan leading up the completion of our two pilot projects and the intergenerational theatre performance with Isha. One by one each group came to meet with Bala and Lakshmi in the Tamaraikulam office. Each group has a plan for working with each group. The planning sessions with Bala and Lakshmi were fun. They were good to work with and it was a great sign they came this day to meet with us. Lakshmi missed a day of teaching a film appreciation course in Chennai to come meet with us. She did not tell me this before, I would have told her not to miss it, but in reality it is a sign from her as to how seriously she takes this project.

During these meetings with Bala and Lakshmi, I realized how difficult the playful/ontic approach I am trying to teach really is for others to grasp. Most of the UVic students, who I have been working with for the last calendar year, still develop a plan which has a defined starting point leading to the next activity and on to the next game and so on. The idea of the loose plan is not necessarily difficult to grasp but perhaps the gap is simply being able to trust your ability as a facilitator. I remember when I was first learning Spolin/ Johnstone style improvisation techniques from Paul Johnson at Augustana, when an actor would walk on to the stage he would say, “trust the moment”. By this he meant, trust your mind and stage and the audience will unify into some stage action which will be interesting for an audience to watch an actor experience – actors have all the training they need to be able to trust their intuition; we are humans and we know how to act. I think this might be a closer metaphor for what I am working towards with the playful/ontic approach. The goal is to begin each rehearsal or workshop by creating a playful atmosphere and then to allow the group’s interactions to dictate what games/activities/songs will be played next. The final result being spontaneous story sharing and simple scene creation. The loose plan may have a theme or chosen subject but should allow for the group’s interactions to take the rehearsal time off course. The facilitator identifies where the group begins and a possible or desired outcome of the rehearsal time and then plans numerous activities which could take the group to the desired outcome. In the loose plan, a facilitator can even use activities which are not in the plan and can use activities which spontaneously emerge from group.

The more I work with the playful/ontic approach, the more I realize how difficult it is to trust and then, how difficult it is to teach to someone else. In reality, I learned this approach on my own through years of working with community groups, but then my time watching David Barnet facilitate the *Geriatrics and Friends* and being trained by David how to facilitate this way is where it really solidified itself. I see two different skills sets I developed. In my time working odd theatre contracts with community groups, I learned many games, songs, and activities to generate playfulness and to lead to story sharing. These are the epistemic details of creating workshops. What David taught me through the loose plan for rehearsals was an attentiveness to the ontic portion of a group’s interactions. I first had to learn the epistemic games/activities/songs and then I was able work with an ontic focus and trust my intuition to lead a group with a loose plan.

Both the UVic students and Bala/Lakshmi were struggling with the playful/ontic approach because of my inability to articulate it to them up until this point. At this time, I felt like I was better prepared to help others learn what it is I am working towards with this approach. I wished I was here at the beginning of the time in India. I guess this is why this project is my PhD research. I still have my training wheels on and am hardening the steel of my sword – to mix metaphors. It takes a long time to develop into a competent teacher.

* * *

Maybe, I came to some conclusions too soon. Thursday, November 6, 2014 is a day I will never forget. The group who led this day's rehearsal understands the Playful/Ontic Approach. I started the day by having a meeting with Molly, Katelyn, and Chelsea to try and build an understanding with them about exactly how to facilitate using the playful/ontic approach. I communicated with them what I wrote about in the previous section about my history of building a repertoire of epistemic games and learning from David how to trust the moment to moment reality of the group's interactions to guide rehearsal time. Each of them came into the meeting with an understanding of what I was speaking about because of reading the draft article on the playful/ontic approach and hearing me speak about it over the course of the last year. So, between the four of us, I showed them the process I use when I am planning rehearsal. One aspect which this group brought in I have never mentioned in any of my writing is a theme. Having a theme is amazingly helpful to the playful/ontic approach. It focuses the games which can be used in the rehearsal and it also helps focus the participants' minds while engaged in the rehearsal. In G&F, we regularly used themes for any given day's rehearsal and on this day the group brought in the theme of rain. I wrote in the top left hand corner of the page the words playful/laughter/fun and drew a box around them and then in the bottom right hand corner, I wrote story-sharing and simple scene creation about rain and monsoon in a drawn box as well. With this as a starting point, we listed off a number of games we thought could work. I also told them we needed to start the rehearsal by telling the group about the logistics of what was in front of us; the remaining rehearsals and the performance date and how we would be spending the time. They were as ready as they could be. I was ready to let them facilitate but I was there if they needed me.

Isha students arrived about forty minutes ahead of schedule. Bala had not arrived yet and the elders had not yet assembled. After the elders arrived, the rehearsal started by Katelyn explaining the logistics of the next few weeks receiving translation help from the Isha teacher



who accompanied the children named Kanakaraj. He acted as a translator throughout the whole rehearsal first for the UVic students as they facilitated and then for me as the simple scenes were performed at the end of the rehearsal. Next, Chelsea facilitated the group through a soundscape activity where the group simulated the sound of rain by first rubbing their hands together, then snapping their fingers, then clapping their hands, and finally stomping their feet. The first time she did it she went through the motions with the whole group, the second time she went around the circle passing the sound gradually building through all the steps, and in the last turn she had all the participants close their eyes and imagine the rain falls as the sounds were made. Afterwards she asked the group to share any thoughts or memories which came to mind while playing the game. A few elders shared in Tamil. Next, they played the follow the leader game in which someone starts a motion and then everyone else follows them. One person is outside of the room and comes back in and has to guess who the leader is. They played three rounds. Two of which, a student was the leader and one where an elder was. Each generation had a lot of fun. Next game the group played was 'Where the West Wind Blows', a game in which a person will say, "The west wind blows on people who..." and then the facilitator says something like "love swimming," "have an older brother," or anything which people could have in common. This game was a bit tough for everyone to comprehend but the purpose was achieved in that it allowed for the participants to begin sharing aspects about themselves. However simple those aspects may be, they were sharing. Next, Molly and Chelsea asked the group if they knew a song about rain. They did. One elder knew a song and she sang it a few times until everyone knew it and they played with it for a while. First, the elders

developed or already knew actions to go with the song. Then, Molly had the group hold hands and walk in a circle while singing. During this, Katelyn explained to Bala the next activity so he could facilitate it. While the group was still singing the song Bala came in and choreographed a few dance moves with the group. Then, he started facilitating a Spacewalk which led them through a rain storm. After this, we broke the elders and Isha students into four groups. We then replayed the soundscape game to remind the participants of the rain theme we had for the day. After playing the game, we asked each group to share stories about rain and about monsoon season; then, afterwards, to pick one story to develop into a simple scene. We gave them time for this and then broke for lunch.

After lunch, each group performed. The stories were absolutely wonderful. Three of the four scenes are instantly performable. The first scene was a story from Jayamma. She told of how her mother gave her away to be married and gave Jayamma's husband five acres of land as a dowry. After they were married, Jayamma's

husband hired workers to plant a rice field. After three months when the rice was ready to harvest a large rain came and flooded the field so they were unable to harvest the rice. This ended up happening two more times. They would wait



three months for the crop to mature and then see it ruined by the rain. Finally, the fourth time they were able to harvest the rice and from then on they had a profitable farm but Jayamma's mother continued to give her two cents at every movement on the farm. It must have been great for Jayamma to play her mother and see herself played by a young girl.

Next, two scenes about the tsunami were performed. The first was Vadevil's story about how he lost his father, mother, and daughter to a building crumbling and the second was Tanganrangakai's story of how her daughter was out shopping for jewelry, even after she told her not to because a storm was



coming, and was crushed by a falling tree. I never would have guessed these scenes would come out of the theme of rain. This was wonderful to see the openness the elders shared these stories and then when looking at the age of the students most of them were between the ages of 1-4 when the tsunami happened so most of them were not cognisant of how devastating it would

have been to have lived through the storm. The participants both young and old had a range of emotions. Some were laughing, others crying, but what struck me was how no one appeared to be afraid to broach the subject matter. I knew I would love to see these three scenes performed but certainly for the scene about the tsunami we would need the community's consent. At least the intergenerational group shared a moment where these vital transfers took place.

One more scene was performed about a king using a clever plot to give stones instead of seeds to his four prime ministers to see which was honest. He told them which ever grew the tallest tree would become the next king. Three of the prime ministers had tall trees and one did not have a tree. The honest prime minister with no tree was chosen as the next king. I am not sure if this scene will be performed but it is nice. After this scene was performed, Sathiyababu sent the children off with some encouraging words and the students left. It was good to have Sathiyababu witness these scenes and really great to have him back in the community. He took leave to help his family with preparations for the traditional ceremonies which take place after someone dies.

After the session, I had a short de-brief session with the UVic students. The other students were complimentary to Molly, Chelsea, and Katelyn. I echoed this and they certainly deserve credit. They facilitated a great rehearsal. I now have a much clearer vision on how to educate/ communicate the playful/ontic approach. Elements needed when preparing to facilitate are:

- 1) activities/ games/ songs which are playful in nature (epistemic details),

- 2) an invitation for the participants to supply epistemic details through giving a song, dance, or game,
- 3) a clear idea for the starting point and ending point for the rehearsal/ workshop,
- 4) a theme for the rehearsal/ workshop,
- 5) a focus on the ontic playfulness of the group during the rehearsal which includes an attentiveness and trust of the facilitators' intuition to lead the participants through the rehearsal.

I will try to help the other groups see this as clearly and then we will try and impart this knowledge to Bala, Lakshmi, and Sathiyababu.

One of my favourite moments from this day was at a moment when Molly and Katelyn broke away from facilitating and the participants were working in small groups they told me facilitating in Canada will now be easier for them. They are excited to use the Playful/ Ontic Approach in Canada where translation will not be an issue.

After the de-brief session, the students all left because it was a five day fall break for them. Only Aisling and I stayed at Tamaraikulam and I have a short trip to Delhi to meet with Rajeshwar, Mathew Cherian, Avenash Datta, and other executive members of *HelpAge India*.

Almost as soon as all the students left, Sathiyababu and a friend of his who is a reporter on a newspaper named Sanka brought a supply of beer and a feast of delicious seafood. The following three days, were spent mostly with Aisling exploring Cuddalore/ Pondicherry and just relaxing alone enjoying the quiet. All of the students were gone to their far off destinations and it was only the two of us at the village with the elders and workers.

* * *

“You look like you could use a good beer, eh?” I couldn't believe my ears when I heard an Indian man speak in a perfect Albertan accent. I later found out he lived in Calgary for many years and had a good impersonation.

“I sure could.” I said back to Avenash Datta, now retired executive of *HelpAge India*. I ended up going for beers with him that night. Tamil Nadu, India, where I was staying, had terrible beer; tasted like Lucky Lager – a malt beer – terrible. But that night, Avenash and his wife took me out for fancy Belgian Beer at a Mexican Restaurant in Delhi. Being in a metropolitan city after weeks in rural India was a real treat.

“I see Tamaraiikulam as being a beacon for destitute elders along the whole coast of Eastern India.” Avenash said. “Any Indian elder who is abused or neglected can see a place where elders are treated with dignity and respect. The village is not a pie-in-the-sky ideal. It is a place that really exists.”

I thought about what he said, a beacon of hope for the whole Eastern Coast. I see it now as being a step further. This home does not exist as a model only for India. It can represent a model for elders worldwide. Whether it is a neglected First Nations elder in a Northern community in Canada or a Mayan elder in the Guatemalan mountains or a neglected Grandma in a war torn village in Afghanistan, the world has as a part of it a beacon of hope.

* * *

The meetings in Delhi went well. Mathew Cherian, Avenash Datta, and Rajeshwar all treated me well in my short stay. Mathew was interesting to spend time with. He told me about his past experiences working with Michael Etherton in other countries and organizations. He also told me about his love for cooking. Mathew is Christian and from an ethnic heritage which is quite unique in India. His ancestors immigrated to India in the twelfth century from Syria. He has learned the cuisine of his culture and wants to create a cookbook. Mathew spent a total of about six hours meeting with me which I was told by Rajeshwar is a rare treat for a foreign visitor. I received a lot of great advice from Avenash and Mathew on how to help the intergenerational theatre project be sustainable in Tamaraiikulam and Mathew confirmed with me he would come at the end of November to see the performance to support my efforts in that regard.

Warwick and his partner Barb came to Pondicherry. I rode with them from the airport to their hotel on Wednesday, November 12, 2014. They had spent a couple weeks staying in Sri Lanka and Chennai. I updated Warwick on the project and he was excited to come see the work. It is certainly

a different project than anything anticipated but Warwick is accustomed to such change through his years of experience and research. I was happy to have his influence to help with the final days of this project and the UVic students liked having him around too.

Chapter 13 – Moving from Being Playful to having a Play

On Friday, November 14, 2015, Ramalingam, Sathiyababu, Nikki, and I had a meeting. Nikki has become passionate about fundraising in her time here and the meeting was regarding her fundraising goals to assist *HelpAge India* and more specifically Tamaraikulam. Her goal is to raise \$1000-\$2000. Ramalingam suggested she raise the money to help the village install a new water filtration system and solar lights to use inside the elders' cottages. This is a great idea and Nikki will be living in Nelson, BC when she is back in Canada. BC is a great place to raise money for an Indian elders' village improving their environmental impact. I think this will work for her. After we finished the fundraising business, Sathiyababu and Ramalingam wanted to speak about the state of affairs of the intergenerational theatre. They were not pleased we have no fixed stories which can be performed. They really want to fix stories and start creating theatre. I share their concern. The company needed to start moving toward having scenes. I am glad Nikki was in the room for this meeting. I tried repeatedly to explain to both these men how important having the right atmosphere is for the company. They are so focused on the end product they forget how important process can be and also what is helpful about the intergenerational theatre model G&F works under allows process to be presented with the product. Nikki used the word magic to describe the intergenerational connections being made. She said to Ramalingam and Sathiyababu we would let the magic of the intergenerational connections be an important part of our end product. Part of the reason the focus has been so much on process so far is the company needs to create the magic - taking time to foster a deep relationship between the generations. At this point, the magic had happened and now it was time to focus on the stories but we needed this connection to be strong. I think they were satisfied but were still nervous. I would be nervous in their shoes too. *HelpAge India* has invested a lot of money into this project and Mathew Cherian is coming on the day of the performance.

Out of this meeting, I was highly concerned. That night, I was able to fall asleep easily quite early around 8 PM but I woke up at 3 AM with my mind racing in a million directions. I had no idea what any scenes could be written out of the work done so far. I was second guessing myself and the hubris which led to me thinking I was capable of helping start an Indian Intergenerational Theatre Company. Some white kid from rural Alberta has no business on the other side of the world trying to co-create theatre with Indian communities. Who do I think I am? What was I thinking?

After my panic ended, I sat down and started making a list of all the stories I have heard from the elders and young people. I could see a few seeds of scenes but it is more difficult to see a full play or a true story. Then, I started looking at all the tales Jayamma had told us. She has told us the story of how she ended up in the village a few times. Her boys being alcoholics and neglecting her, even forcing her to drink too. If you combine this with the story of her marriage/dowry of five acres of land and another story of her protecting her boys from people while they ate supper a play emerges. The sequence would be 1) Five Acres of Land Equals a Dowry and One Year of Losing Crops, 2) Jayamma Protects her Boys from Rowdies while Eating Supper, 3) Jayamma's Boys become Alcoholics and Force her to Drink, and 4) Jayamma Finds Help and ends up Living in this Village. This sequence makes a play and we could end it with the singing of the Tamil "We're Here". At least one play has emerged. I also saw potential in the tsunami stories becoming a scene. Also, Vadevil shared a story about two communities coming together to form one in the first intergenerational rehearsal. This could act as a great metaphor for the young and old joining. I planned to meet with the elders to ask about these stories to gain permission to have them performed. The next 13 days would be a tough challenge but I could finally see a performance taking shape.

* * *

On Saturday, November 16, 2014, we had our second to last meeting with the AIM for SEVA boys. The day began by Aisling and I having a meeting with the group in charge of facilitating AIM for SEVA consisting of Blair, Laura, Jillian, and Kathleen. We met for a while. They came in with the idea of using the theme of holidays. I suggested it might be vague and we should try and come up with a more specific question. We chatted and came to the idea of using the more direct question: "What tradition would you like to pass on to the young?" The thought was this could work for both the younger and older generation being the boys of AIM for SEVA have younger boys living in their home and in their schools. This group had a number of good games. One of the group members was struggling with feelings of not being heard. I think this is something a number of us are feeling. I certainly am struggling with this. We spoke for a while about these feelings and how it is so helpful at these moments to take a step back remind ourselves of the larger picture while taking moments to celebrate little victories. I told them about my revelation from the night before on Jayamma's life

story play and the meeting I had with Ramalingam and Sathiyababu. I also reminded them *HelpAge India* had committed to having an intergenerational theatre company here after UVic's departure from the community. Our group has made an impact here at the village and beyond. We cannot forget these large effects we have had when in moments we struggle - a difficult task for certain.

As I was waiting for the AIM for SEVA boys to come I went downstairs to make sure a driver was around to pick them up. I ran into Kumaran as he was on his way. I gathered the students who were facilitating this day and asked them to start setting up the room and then I gathered the elders as best I could. The elders started to come and then Chandran, the office manager, came to me to tell me there were only four boys available at AIM for SEVA today since the rest had gone to school. Sathiyababu had forgotten to confirm the boys were supposed to come. I ended up asking the four boys to come so at least some intergenerational theatre would be possible. Once everyone was in the right place - boys, elders, directors, UVic students - we started the workshop. The first activity was to sing the awesome Scout song Blair and Laura knew. This is an activity I will use in the future - a new version of *Bombaya* which is more complicated but the exact idea - a song in a gibberish style language which makes you smile. The group taught this to the elders and boys and we then used a beach ball to pass around the circle while we sang. At some point during playing this, Warwick and Barb came in. It was great to have them there. The Scout song game lasted for about 20 minutes. Next, they facilitated a game called "Pass the Box". They asked each participant to pass around a box. Each person would put into the box a tradition they wanted future generations to continue with. The box went around the circle with each person putting something into the box. After this game, Warwick jumped in to facilitate. He asked Leah to stand up and use members from the group to create a statue of the tradition she wanted to pass on. She used a mix of elders, boys, and UVic students. After Warwick had Lakshmi translate asking the elders and boys what they saw. They spoke in Tamil and I have no idea what was said. Next, he had Lakshmi and Bala build an image. Then, the UVic students read the image. Next, the group facilitated through Lakshmi a simple story sharing where the elder and boys would sit in groups and tell stories about traditions which would lead to them performing the stories in simple scenes. They all worked on their scenes for a while and then shared them. All of the performances were strong. Two groups showed scenes of ceremonies which were performed in temples - one to the god Ganesh (which was played by Vadevil wearing a cloth as a trunk) which also incorporated a drum. The other group played a scene of

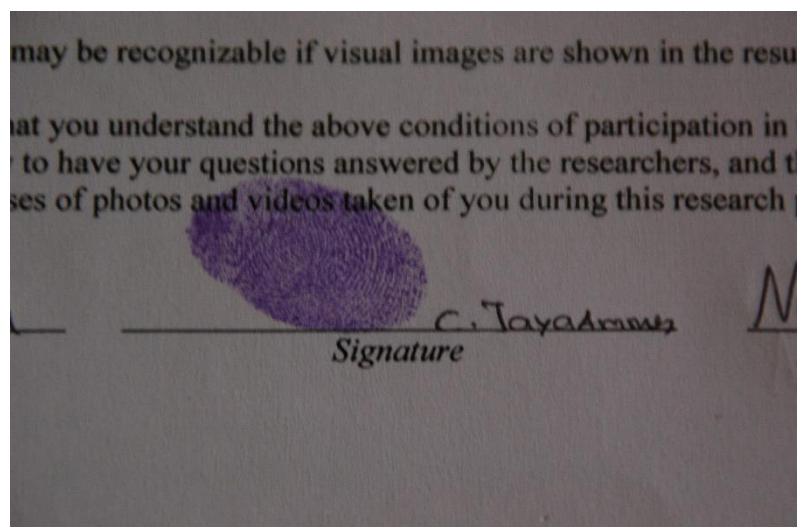
planting rice paddy and then picking it. After this was lunch time. The plan for after lunch was Lakshmi was to take the three scenes and develop a short play about sharing traditions. After lunch we struggled. The same struggle we repeat nearly every day. Almost none of the elders came back. They were tired and wanted to rest. Only Jayamma and a couple others returned. She ended up playing *cubadi* (a local game which looks like a combination of tag and Red Rover) with the boys. Kaeden and Blair ended up joining in and so did Lakshmi. They had a lot of fun. Finally, some scene work started. Lakshmi was able to direct one of the three scenes but it was low energy. Then, Bala directed the boys through a story one of the elders told him another day. The second half of rehearsal was low energy and a reminder of how tough it is to re-gather the elders after lunch. From this point on, I asked Isha to send the students from 10-1 PM to help with this issue for the upcoming final performance. The group facilitating wanted to end with the Scout song and game again - a good way to end. We played it for about ten minutes and then the boys left. While the boys were leaving they were singing the scout song and dancing.

I had a de-brief session with the students to end this day. At this point in the process, I think some of the students were carrying the weight of the project on their individual shoulders and being caught in the moment to moment perceived failures being experienced by us all. I made a point of telling them about the minor triumphs we were all experiencing. The intercultural connections between Canada and India (language learning between Isha and us, our friendship with elders and young people in India, the elder Sundrabal involving himself in the theatre who at the beginning of our time refused, a young person who now knows the word 'resist' because it was written in Chelsea's journal, etc.), the intergenerational connections between the elders and the groups of young people we were introducing to each other (Jayamma playing *cubadi* with the AIM for SEVA boys, Isha students holding hands with the elders, SOS Children playing in the village, etc.) and finally, our field school is also contributing larger triumphs (the commitment from *HelpAge India* to have a future theatre project, the contribution of a play telling Jayamma's life story and a tsunami scene and possibly more). Michael Etherton sent me an email reminding me of the good work we are accomplishing here and I was able to pass it along to the students in this de-brief session. I hoped they would keep this in mind and be inspired in the final days of our consulting.

* * *

On Monday, November 17, 2014, I arranged to have a meeting with all the elders involved in the intergenerational theatre project to ask their permission to tell their stories and to make sure they were appropriate/ comfortable for them to be performed for a community. The first elder to come to the meeting was Jayamma. I had Sathiyababu tell her it was her life story which we would make into a play. She seemed thrilled. I went through with her beat by beat how I saw the play being formed as Sathiyababu translated. When I hit the beat about her protecting her sons at dinner she could not remember it and then we figured out it was because she had made it up. It was fictional. She still wanted to include it because it 'made the story better' (Sathiyababu's translation). While we were talking with Jayamma, other elders came in. Vadevil, Lakshmi, Tangamrangakai, and her husband all joined us. These five elders represent the leadership of the community and of the intergenerational theatre work. I told them (through Sathiyababu's translation) the three plays we were to work on, -Two Communities Become One, Tsunami Stories, and Jayamma's Life Story - the order they would be performed on November 28, and the rehearsal schedule which would take us to the performance (with a change which would move rehearsal time from 10-1 PM on the days the Isha students were here). They all agreed it was a good plan and were excited at the opportunity to tell these stories. The next step was now having them all sign the release forms required by UVic's ethics board. I knew this was a difficult task with this community. I knew translation would be difficult and some of the elders would simply not understand. I am glad it started with these five since working with them was easy but I had a surprise. Bavani, the head nurse, who was helping us gather more elders to sign the forms, went into the other office and brought back an ink pad. When it became Jayamma's turn to sign the form she stuck her thumb in the ink and pressed where the signature would be. Then Sathiyababu printed her name beside the ink print. I watched more elders come in most of which signed the paper but a few others did the same as Jayamma to sign the consent form.

After the elders had left and it was only Sathiyababu and me, I asked him about why Jayamma and some of the others signed the form in this way (at the time I knew the answer



but I wanted it confirmed). He told me it was because they are illiterate. They cannot read or write. My jaw nearly hit the floor. Not because some of the elders here are illiterate but because Jayamma is illiterate. Jayamma is the star of the theatre show we are about to put on. Jayamma is one of the most caring people I have met. She is the first to show up for most theatre rehearsals and generally the last to leave. This community is her life and I am honoured to call her a friend/ surrogate Grandmother. I have referred on a regular basis my suspicion the subaltern can indeed speak, this in reference to Spivak's seminal article, there just needs to be certain conditions present and a well-designed theatre approach can help to provide a platform for the voice of the subaltern to be heard. I am excited to see it happening before my eyes. This has been happening since long before I arrived in India. The combination of the power of *HelpAge India's* message of equality for elders, the fantastic design of Tamaraikulam, and then the opportunity for me to bring in the model of intergenerational theatre using playfulness has led to a subaltern finding voice - it has led to a subaltern speaking. Jayamma, an illiterate oppressed elder from rural India, who was traded for five acres of land to be married and had alcoholic sons who abused her found her voice while living in this village using intergenerational theatre. I can no longer consider this a minor triumph. Jayamma represents something much larger than a minor triumph she is a beacon of hope for destitute people everywhere. Or perhaps, she represents a reason why the term subaltern and the notion that one in this position could not speak is completely pejorative and should become a passé concept.

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The rehearsal on Tuesday, November 18, 2014 was a surprise. Both for the positive and the negative, if you are worried about the final performance on November 28th as I am. To my surprise, for the first time in this rehearsal process Isha was late, really late. They texted me they had left the school at 930 AM which should have had them arrive at 10-10:15 AM. They ended up not showing up until 1145 AM because their bus had a problem with the fuel injector. As Kanakaraj, their teacher put it, "no diesel to the engine". This, on the day I was motivated like no other in the whole process. The other huge surprise was Sathiyababu. I have been working with him for two years now and yesterday may have been the longest I have seen him in one room. Since the students were to arrive at 10 AM, I arranged all the elders and directors to arrive at the same time. I had Sathiyababu in the rehearsal here at the village for a full three hours. He even went and set his cell phone down on the other side of the room so he could not answer it. He had to check it a few times but I imagine this was a difficult

act for him. Sathiyababu's dedication will be helpful. Isha's lateness disrupted today's rehearsal but vehicle problems are commonplace and Isha's work in this project had been nothing short of fantastic.

Before Isha arrived, Sathiyababu facilitated the elders and the UVic students through a number of activities. They sang and danced the flower song. The dance was done both in a circle and in a train. After this ended, the group sat for a while and then Lakshmi, the elder, started teaching a game to the UVic students and the elders. It was similar to a Viola Spolin game I use called 'Kitty Wants a

Corner' or also similar to 'Cat and Mouse'. The elders and UVic students formed a circle and there was one person inside the circle and one outside. The one on the inside has gold and the one on the outside wants it. To obtain the gold, the person on the outside must break through the hands of the circle. The



goal of the circle is to not allow the thief to get the gold. After this game, we waited for a while again. Then Sathiyababu started running some of the songs with the elders. They ran the rain song we are hoping to incorporate into the performance somehow and also the Tamil 'We're Here' which will end Jayamma's story. During all this, I was quite worried about the Isha kids. Both for purposes of our rehearsal and I was worried they had an accident or something along those lines. I was quite relieved when they showed up. I was also pleased with how Sathiyababu, the UVic students, and the elders handled it. At one point one of the UVic students walked up to me and said, "Sathiyababu is facilitating this rehearsal exactly as we imagined." He was, he did - playfulness and singing were involved. The elders were contributing new games I had not seen before. This was great. The UVic students took on leadership in helping facilitate and the elders used the time to be happy and share playfulness with each other. Warwick marvelled at the energy some of the elders had and proposed even some of the elders could take on leadership roles in the company's future. I can see it too. I

know some members of *GerActors and Friends* lead workshops in the Edmonton community. Wouldn't it be a serious triumph if five years from now Vadevil and Jayamma were facilitating workshops for seniors' theatre storytelling in the surrounding communities?

After the Isha students arrived at 11:45 AM, they went through the songs Sathiyababu had led the group through earlier. The Tamil 'We're Here' sounds great to me every time I hear it. After the singing, the group split into two, one group, which was led by Lakshmi, went into the village office and worked on Jayamma's story and the other group, which was led by Bala and Sathiyababu,

attempted forming the tsunami stories into a scene. They ended up having about 80-90 minutes of rehearsal time. Watching Lakshmi work was a pleasure. She took the reins of leadership and worked to put the scene on its feet. By the end of the rehearsal, the group was



able to perform a 'stumble through' of the whole scene. The other group struggled a bit more. I think they had a more difficult challenge. With Jayamma's story there is a clear arc but with the idea of the tsunami stories there are a few fleeting memories with the idea of connecting them with song and dance. This is something I would have struggled with too. They really only staged one of the memories of the two there were to share and spent a lot of time dealing with the motion in and out of the scene they had developed.

I am excited about Jayamma's scene and where it ended up after this day but I was more pessimistic about the tsunami stories. I was hoping there may be some magic or leadership would emerge from the community on how to deal with this difficult scene but it did not happen. I also see a problem with how the rehearsal was led. Warwick told me he thought there were people trying to lead but it

really needed a single vision to lead the process. I think maybe the process may need a leader but it is difficult for a leader to emerge when the vision of a scene is tough to grasp. Jayamma's story has a clear structure and Lakshmi was able to lead because there was something to work on. With the tsunami stories we lacked clarity of vision. I was disappointed only one of the two memories was shared. As I wrote earlier, I now ally myself with feminism and I did see this moment in rehearsal through this gaze. Two male directors were given 90 minutes to work on a scene which had two stories: one told by a male and the other a female. They spent the entire time focusing in on the male story - Vadevil's story. This was not intentional by either of the men but from my perspective I was both disappointed for Tangamrangakai because her story was not staged and I was also disappointed because we had no idea if her scene is stageworthy; meaning it may not even have a chance to be staged.

* * *

That evening, I went into Pondicherry to have a beer with Warwick. He reminded me about how monumental my PhD project has been. He told me he thought I may need to run about three or four field schools like this before I actually had the pedagogy down where I could teach a methodology to a group of students and then co-teach the methodology with the students to a group of facilitators from another country. He might be right. It has been quite difficult but I suppose any task worth achieving is generally quite challenging. I have learned in my efforts both with the UVic students and working with the local community. At this point, I knew the last few days would present many more challenges but I looked forward to the moment when I could look back at this field school and start thinking about taking the knowledge I had acquired, to share it with others, and to apply it to future work. If I have the opportunity to teach a field school like this three or four more times until I master the pedagogical approach, I will certainly be a lucky man.

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On Thursday, November 20, 2014's rehearsal, the company was able to run all three plays. All of them. Up until this point, I had been highly pessimistic about having a fully-staged piece of theatre to present but that changed on this day. The show still needed work but providing the directors with a loose script and giving it to all the UVic students worked as a strategy. In the morning of this day,

I made a beat by beat script for each scene. I am glad I put in the little bit of work I did because it paid off hugely.

To begin the rehearsal, Bala drew the stage on the ground split into the nine areas: downstage, upstage, center stage, etc. He asked the company to stand up. At first only the Isha students stood up, but then Sathiyababu told the elders this was for them too and they joined in. I think Bala would have been content to facilitate the activity with only kids and having Sathiyababu to prod the elders was important. All activities should be for both generations while rehearsing or in the workshop. Bala had the actors move around to the different points on the stage. After this, they engaged in a short physical and vocal warm-up. Sathiyababu then took the group through two songs: the flower song and the Tamil 'We're Here'. During the flower song, Jayamma led for a while and one of the Isha boys led for a while as well. He has a great voice. At this point, the group broke into two with one group working on the Tsunami Stories and the other on Jayamma's story. The UVic students and Kanakaraj led Jayamma's story and Bala with Sathiyababu led the Tsunami Stories. After about ninety minutes, each group was ready to perform. Before we had the performances, Bala led a rehearsal of the Two Communities Become One play which took about twenty minutes. This meant we were able to have a run of all three plays. The run took about 29 minutes. It ran long and there were tons of errors on the parts of performers but theatrical performance was happening. Jayamma's story has incorporated some beautiful design elements of using fabric to represent the fields and seeing her tell her story to an audience was inspiring. The tsunami stories play has some great moments as well. I was uncomfortable with how long Bala had the children crying onstage at the death of someone so I had him shorten the crying and have Sundrabal, the elder with a cane, sing a song which would be sung at a funeral. He was late on his cue in this rehearsal but it is easy to see the impact of this moment. Also, we are now ending the scene with declarations from the group on what hope they are left with now the tsunami is ten years in the past. The group declares they are thankful for the relief



effort. The Isha children share their thought that without the tsunami they may not have a school and the elders share about their appreciation of the elders' village and the outpouring of generosity they saw from individuals during the aftermath of the tsunami. I am somewhat disappointed with Bala and Sathiyababu with where this scene is currently. They finished earlier than the other group and there is only Vadevil's story being shared. I know both Tangamrangakai and Sundrabal have amazing stories of triumph and tragedy from the tsunami. I asked them to include them in the scene but instead they only included Vadevil's. I have asked for this twice now and I am not sure why they are not including the other stories. After rehearsal, I asked to include these stories but Bala said it was too late to add more stories. I will try and ask again next week because it is certainly my hope to have more points of view represented in this scene but I can only have so much impact. The Two Communities become One play works well. It needs to be rehearsed the most out of any of these three plays but it is not surprising considering it only had a few minutes of attention in this rehearsal.

I was so proud of this community and everyone who has come together on this project. Despite all of the obstacles we have encountered we had three plays to perform. The following week, there were three planned rehearsals, a dress performance in the Isha School, and a performance here at the elders' village. An exciting week for sure.



Chapter 14 - Jayamma's Son and Our Final Rehearsals

On Friday November, 21, 2014, I had a quick meeting with Ramalingam and Sathiyababu about the logistical challenges of the upcoming week. They were all easy to deal with and the meeting only lasted a few minutes. I came upstairs to my room and on the way there I found out the news Jayamma's son had just died. Sathiyababu and I were about to go to AIM for SEVA to meet with the boys so he could teach them the songs for the performance next Friday, as some executives from AIM for SEVA were planning on attending the final performance and we wanted to include the boys in some way. Deva came upstairs to grab me to leave with Sathiyababu. When I came downstairs, I could see Jayamma was in the back of the Bolero. Sathiyababu and I gave her a ride to her old home where her son's body was being kept. I have never been with a grieving mother as expressive as Jayamma. She spent the entire time in the backseat wailing. I asked Sathiyababu what she was saying and she was screaming a combination of prayers and questions to God. Sathiyababu then told me the cause of his death was he drank himself to death. After a few minutes driving, we arrived at Jayamma's home before she came to the village seven years ago which she lived in with this son who had just died. Sathiyababu and I helped Jayamma out of the Bolero and into the home. This home was a shack - with a thatched roof and flimsy wooden walls. I imagine when it rained outside it also rained in the shack. I could hear Jayamma coming upon her son's body. It must have been difficult in so many ways for her. She had just seen him the day before. He came to the village to borrow 100 rupees from her. These 100 rupees may have bought his final drink. Thoughts I imagine Jayamma may have been having. After Jayamma was in the home, Sathiyababu and I went to leave. On my way back to the Bolero, a few men walked up to me one leading the way who could speak English. He was repeating, "They were a poor family. A poor family." I was not sure exactly what he was looking for so I sat in the front seat of the Bolero. Sathiyababu sat in the driver's seat and then noticed the men following me. The man spoke in English again saying, "We need money to help the poor family." Sathiyababu then spoke to him in Tamil and the man spoke back. We then drove away. Sathiyababu told me he told the man to not worry about money and to care for Jayamma. Sathiyababu then said, "Any money you give him he would have used to buy more alcohol." Sathiyababu and I spoke about Jayamma's life on the way to AIM for SEVA. It was here he told me many details about Jayamma I never knew. She was one of the earliest elders to move into Tamaraikulam. Both of her other two sons and her husband had already died and she was only

living with her last living son who was a suffering alcoholic. A neighbour of Jayamma's called Sathiyababu and they asked her if she wanted to move into the village. She did and has lived and thrived in Tamaraikulam ever since, being one of the community's leaders never mind being the star of our intergenerational theatre company. Sathiyababu then told me the funeral for her son would happen the next day and by Monday, Jayamma would be back at the village. He thinks she will be excited to come back and act in the company. I have trepidation about his assertion. Grieving takes many forms and I do not know much about how it works in this culture but in Canada I would expect a mother who had lost her son to have a tough road ahead and her priorities would be to take care of herself before a theatrical production. Only time will tell but my thoughts are certainly with Jayamma. I feel a deep pit in my stomach at her loss. She must feel lonely knowing now she is the only remaining member of her once prosperous family.

* * *

On the weekend of November 22 and 23, we wrapped up the pilot projects with AIM for SEVA and *SOS Children's Village*. On Saturday, the boys from AIM for SEVA came for their last day at the village. I wanted to let them have an easy day of games and laughing. I also thought we would play with them and give the elders a day of rest. To start the day, the boys wanted to perform the dance Sathiyababu had taught them the night before. They did a great job of learning the dance. At Friday's performance, the plan is to start the whole event with the flower song dance. After they performed for us, we played a Viola Spolin game I know well called 'Whack Tag'. It is a tag game where you hit each other with a bat which is made from newspaper and packing tape so as not to hurt when hit with it. The boys loved the game. At one point during the game, I was running and fell over. I was so embarrassed but the students told me my fall was graceful. Afterwards, we played

Bombaya, Motion Telephone, and a couple other games. Eventually, it became lunch so we ate and then after the boys left. It has been wonderful getting to know those boys.



On Sunday, Warwick, Barb, and the UVic students went to *SOS Children's Village*. Our plan was to have Warwick take the children through his classroom drama *Green Children*. *SOS Children's Village* had identified about 15 children to play with us. It was great for both the SOS Children and for the UVic students. Many of the UVic students had done this activity with Warwick when they took their first Applied Theatre class and anyone who didn't take it with him had heard the legend of how enjoyable of an activity it is. Both UVic and SOS Children were happy to have gone through Warwick's classroom drama.

* * *

On Tuesday, November 25, 2014, before I did anything else my first priority was to speak with Jayamma. I went and found Sathiyababu so he could help me with translation. When I went to his home, he was in the middle of readying himself for the day so he grabbed one of the caregivers to help. I went into Jayamma's room with her and immediately Jayamma came over to me and hugged me while she wept. She wept for a while and then we sat down and held hands. The caregiver stood there and listened while Jayamma cried and spoke to me. Eventually, Jayamma stopped crying and looked at me with a defiant smile. At this, I could sense she was ready to continue on with her life and she would be OK. It was also her sign to me it would be fine for me to leave now. I left with the caregiver and brought her to Sathiyababu who was now showered and dressed. I had the caregiver tell him what Jayamma said so I could get a translation. Jayamma, through the caregiver's memory and Sathiyababu's translation, said "It is terrible to think of being alone in the world. All of my family is dead but I do not feel alone. I feel Sathiyababu and Gus are now my sons. I will never do anything to disappoint you and I am excited to tell my story to be a part of the theatre. I have loved the last two years spending time with you. I feel you are a part of my family. Thank you. I love you." After this, the caregiver walked away to continue with her morning work. Sathiyababu and I never addressed what was said. How can you? I feel honoured to have Jayamma say such words to me but what did I do to deserve it?

I met with the UVic students before rehearsal. I wanted to update them about what had just happened with Jayamma, what was to happen between then and the end of the field school, and a few other housekeeping items. It went quite quickly. The UVic students seem to be in good spirits.

I think there was an excited anticipation to be finished but a simultaneous sadness we would soon be leaving this lovely place where we have forged relationships we will never forget in our lives.

Rehearsal started soon after. It was difficult getting started. There were few elders and energy was really heavy. I imagine my own heavy heart led to this reading on my part but it looked to me like Sathiyababu was pressing too hard, possibly from his nervousness of the pending performance. I leaned to him to say, “Remember to have fun. If you have fun the group will too.” After this, he lightened up a little. They danced and sang for a while. Then, it was time to start scene work. Lakshmi and Kanakaraj took Jayamma’s story into the office to work and Sathiyababu and Bala worked on the Tsunami story in the hall. I spent most of my time with Jayamma’s story because of my worry about her state. She was low energy to begin with but grew stronger through the rehearsal. It was great to see. The scene was certainly having issues growing as quickly as it needs to but for now I was just happy to see Jayamma being brave enough to try. The tsunami story is ready and performable now.



Sathiyababu and Bala did well to have a performable scene. After a while, the full group gathered to work on the Two Communities Become One play. This scene works really well. It is much more natural for the actors to play than the other two scenes. I asked Sathiyababu if he had any idea why this was the case but he was not sure. You could see the scene almost instantly develop into a beautiful performance. I was growing even more proud of Jayamma throughout this rehearsal. She

was gaining more and more strength throughout the time with the children. By the end of this rehearsal, she had regained a ton of strength. She was laughing with the boys and directing people where to stand and the volume of her voice was back to a level it was in previous rehearsal time. The camaraderie built in an intergenerational theatre company is special for elders. I have seen moments like this in G&F and what a pleasure to watch this happen here in India.

The directors really wanted to meet with the whole group after lunch. I advised them not to but they assured me it was needed. I am worried about taxing the community too much. We have to be careful not to exhaust them. They took the time to talk about the next couple of days and how the structure of the performance would be. They also took a few moments to talk about make-up and costumes which will be incorporated on Thursday at Isha and again on Friday evening. They have been rehearsing with simple costumes and props all along. I am not sure what will change but I am excited to see. It is really hard to sit back and watch other directors working at this stage of rehearsal. All of my theatrical instincts are screaming at me to help but I must remember this show belongs more to this community than to me and being this community speaks in another language, I have to trust it will be OK. I think some of the UVic students struggled with the same issue. I would direct differently and so would all of them and we all care immensely about this community we have worked with.

* * *

Wednesday, November 26, 2014's rehearsal went well. Before rehearsal started, I went to sit with Jayamma for a while. Her eyes looked much better and she had more power. I can see her recovering little by little but she still had some distance to travel before she would truly be back to herself. Throughout the rehearsal again today she gained strength. I am amazed by theatre's power to help people recover energy. I am always hesitant to use the word therapy or therapeutic when describing theatre but I can certainly see why many people gravitate to the word when witnessing something like Jayamma's last few days.

To begin rehearsal, Lakshmi (who was the only director present at the beginning rehearsal) had the group sing the Flower Song. The energy was quite low so she led them through a quick energizer. A physical and vocal warm-up which only took a few moments but put smiles on everyone's faces. She

then continued on with the Flower Song and dance. After a while, she split the group into two groups to work on the Tsunami Story and Jayamma's Story. Both scenes took leaps forward today. Sundrabal added more music to the Tsunami scene and Jayamma Story was fully staged. About half way through this period, Bala showed up to help with the Tsunami scene giving Lakshmi and Kanakaraj an opportunity to focus on Jayamma's Story. After finishing working on these two scenes, the company came together and played a train game together. They took about fifteen minutes to play the game but the directors were really trying to perfect their movements. As an outside observer, I was confused why they were playing this game with the looming performance. I asked Kanakaraj and he told me they plan on playing games as a transition between the different plays. This is a great idea. Next, they started working on the Two Communities Become One scene. The directors also told me they were planning on changing the order of the plays: first would be the Tsunami Story, then Jayamma's Story, and then end on Two Communities Become One. At first, I thought of asking them to change it back but the reality is it does not matter. They want to finish that way because the whole company is in the Two Communities Become One and I wanted to finish on Jayamma's Story because it is a story of triumph which *HelpAge India* would like. Either way, the performance quality will not really change. In fact, Two Communities Become One is starting to take the shape of a great



piece of theatre. Sathiyababu showed up towards the end of rehearsal and helped the group sing through some songs. They sang the song Sundrabal introduced to the group and Sathiyababu taught them *We Shall Overcome* by Pete Seeger in both English and Tamil - a great song which fits nicely into the program.

Chapter 15 - The Dress Performance and Opening Night

On Thursday, November 27, 2014, the company had their dress rehearsal at the Isha School. It happened and I could not be more proud of the theatre company. On this day, an intergenerational group of community member actors performed and entertained an audience of 300 school children with a collectively devised piece of theatre based upon stories from their lives. What a great day.

Before the day even really started you could sense an excitement in the village. When I left my room to check on the state of affairs on our rides, breakfast, elders, and UVic students, people were hustling and bustling to ready themselves. Many of the elders were already waiting for the ride to Isha, UVic students were up and ready, Warwick and Barb were already here with Ramalingam and Sathiyababu, things were happening. After eating breakfast, we piled into three vehicles and headed for Isha. Upon arrival at Isha, we went upstairs and started rehearsing our three plays. Something which may receive little attention about working with elders is how it looks to work with them. Sundrabal has turned into one of the stars of our performance. He is a wonderful singer but he has mobility issues. He uses a cane and is really slow moving. For him, the act of going upstairs is time consuming and risky. I held his cane and helped him up the stairs. It was slow going but a reminder to me of how important it must be for him to share. If he is willing to put this much work into sharing his performance skill as a singer, I am happy to make sure he does not fall.

First, the company wanted to have a full run of the play and then they would perform it for the school children. The rehearsal went very well. Well enough Warwick and Barb thought maybe it should have been performed. After the rehearsal 300 students,





grade 4-9, came to watch the performance. The performance started with the flower song and dance. Then, they performed The Tsunami Story. It went well. Sundrabal has become the star of this play with his singing at the end. He seems to love the

spotlight. The Isha students were instantly engaged by this play. I watched the audience as much or more than the performance. At moments the children were climbing over each other to see the stage - great to watch. Next scene was Jayamma's Story. Jayamma looked so proud throughout the performance. A few of the Isha students have really done great work holding this complicated and important story together. Next, the company performed a public game of trains. One of the Isha students interrupts the game and suggests another which the company then plays. Finally, the performance ended with the play Two Communities Become One and then by singing a song led by Sundrabal, the Tamil version of We're Here, and then *We Shall Overcome* in English and Tamil. This full performance lasted 36 minutes. It was great to have a first performance under our belts.

After the performance, we ate lunch at the school. This was my first time eating lunch at Isha. What a great sight. They do not have a cafeteria so where do they eat? In the hallways sitting on the floor. After lunch, we went back to the village. Warwick left on this day so he and Barb said their last goodbyes to the group. He said a quick word about how proud



he was of the group of UVic students and the work they achieved here in India. One of his signifiers of success was the children at Isha's attention to the performance. They have so little exposure to theatre and today kept their attention - a beautiful sight to see. A number of us headed into Pondicherry to have a final beer with Warwick. He was a calming influence for me and he gave a lot to the UVic students in their learning.

* * *

The evening of Friday November, 28, 2015 will be one of the great nights of my life. Finding words to describe the feeling it is to have gone through a process like this over the past two years and then to watch this community flourish is difficult. I have always allowed myself to learn some of the largest lessons in my theatrical work from the audience's presence and reactions through watching and bearing witness to the theatre created. That night's audience will never forget what they saw.

Of course, we were not able to hold the performance outside in the gorgeous open air theatre which is central to the village. It rained all day. I have always heard if one is married on a rainy day it is a good omen for the marriage (a superstition which exists in Tamil Nadu as well) so I must conclude it will also be a good omen if a theatre



company holds their first public performance on a rainy day. The performance ended up taking place in the rehearsal hall we had been working in. In the afternoon, a group of men working for *HelpAge India*, Ramalingam, Sathiyababu, Chelsea and I worked to transform the room into a different universe. A particular way exists to design events here and Chelsea helped me make sure it did not take away from the theatre. Had the performance taken place outside Chelsea had a few different plans drawn up but...rain. We ended up with a design which was both familiar to the audience but did not distract from some of the aesthetic elements incorporated in the plays. What I



thought was the nicest touch Chelsea incorporated was a ring of Marigold petals surrounding the stage.

The event was scheduled to start at 5:30 PM but started at closer to 6 PM. It began by the sharing of a few prayers and then introducing the dignitaries for the event. This included the directors of AIM for

SEVA, Chandra Mouli - Director of *SOS Children's Village*, Chitra - Principal of Isha School, Mathew Cherian, the Lion's Club President, and me. After the introductions each one of us lit a lamp. Then, there were a number of speeches. Ramalingam spoke, Sathiyababu, Mathew, the Lion's Club President, Chitra, and me. Finally, after all this we cut the ribbon to symbolize the beginning of intergenerational performance in this community and it was time to start.

The company really stepped up to the plate. Not a flawless performance by any means but so many single actors took moments to shine. The Isha children really showed their talents and ability to hold the show together. They provided the elders with leadership in remembering their cues. Kaeden also really helped the show by providing some well-placed background music during transitions. Each individual play was well performed. Where I received my most joy was in watching the audience. They truly enjoyed what they saw.

The performance started with the dancing of the flower song, then the actors played *Tsunami Story*, next was *Jayamma's Story*, followed by the intergenerational playing of two games, with *Two Communities Become One* following and the finale of the singing of Sundrabal's song, *Tamil We're Here*, and *We Shall Overcome* in English and Tamil. The program was enough to show the company's process and product. After the performance, in true Tamaraiikulam style, there was a birthday party for a one year old girl. We sang happy birthday and ate cake.

After this, the audience and performers ate a meal and the Intergenerational Theatre Ad Hoc Committee had their inaugural meeting. The idea for this committee came from my time in Delhi. Mathew and I planned to chair the first meeting. The committee was much larger than I anticipated. Since Ramalingam is to be the committee chair, the decision was his as to who would attend. Seventeen people ended up attending including representatives from Isha, AIM for SEVA, *Elders for Elders Foundation*, *HelpAge India*, *SOS Children's Village*, the directors from Pondicherry University, and me from Canada. I started the meeting by first welcoming everyone and handing out a document I created which I hoped would act as a guide for the committee to lead the process and product of the theatre created. Immediately, there are a few problems for the committee and its chair to deal with. First, the intergenerational theatre work needs more elders. Tamaraikulam Elders are too few to work with three organizations. Also, we need money to pay directors. Where will this come from? Mathew spoke after I did and he gave high praise to the event. I wish I had a recording of exactly what Mathew said but I will try and paraphrase it here. Mathew said, "What Gus has done here is filled a role of both a guru and a teacher. A guru is someone who shines light where there was darkness before. Gus shone a light on our elders' and these young peoples' stories and talents. He also taught us how to do it. Now it is our job to keep this alive." After this, I suggested the committee have preliminary discussions to tell the committee what they are willing to do on behalf of their organizations and then to set a first meeting date. Each person is committed to fulfilling this vision and they set a first meeting date for December 10, 2014. This is a great outcome from this meeting and this event. Not only was there a great event but there is some sustainability here. Wouldn't it be wonderful if throughout the Cuddalore, Pondicherry, and Chennai region there were a multitude of Intergenerational Theatre projects taking place? We just might be headed in this direction.

Although, the end of this day was wonderful and it is a memory I will celebrate for years to come, I am left troubled by a few acts which occurred. The first is Lakshmi and Bala's plea to me about being underpaid and wanting more money. The timing was inappropriate in my mind. I can admit this may be cultural or simply what happens to people at functions when they have people they are paying but I wanted to celebrate not be surprised by an inquisition as to why I was not paying a living wage. I had to remind them it was *HelpAge India* paying them not me and they negotiated their wage in July. If they wanted to have a serious conversation about this they needed to speak with

Ramalingam, not me. Lakshmi then told me the only reason she was working on this project was the opportunity to work with me and then asked if I could arrange a trip for her to come to Canada. I would be happy to arrange for her to come to Canada and teach if she can find a purpose but I am in no position to hire her as I am certain she was implying in this conversation. The other bit angered me. First, I do not believe that she was only here to work with me. She worked with the community not me. The voices, stories, and ideas of the elders and young people are the most important part of the project, not me. I told her if she was only here for me she should question her motivations. I am not the best part of this project, the intergenerational theatre and connections made and the raising of under-heard voices is the most important part. In my mind, this night was not a time for talk of money and academic positioning which is best left for another time, the night was to celebrate the less privileged voices.

* * *

The next day, Ramalingam and I saw off Mathew Cherian. Before leaving, Mathew asked if there was anything more he could do for me or anything else I wanted to say to him. I had nothing except gratitude. I am really thankful for the support he has offered this initiative and thankful he was able to come see the performance. After he drove off, Ramalingam and I had a meeting discussing a structure for how all three children's organizations could be involved, where the elders would come from, and who would direct them. *Elder for Elders Foundation* would provide actors for AIM for SEVA to work with and Isha School to work with while the Elders from Tamaraikulam would work with *SOS Children's Village*. Lakshmi will direct *SOS Children's Village* with the help of Ruby. Bala will direct Isha with the help of Kanakaraj. Sathiyababu will direct AIM for SEVA with the help of Lakshmi. Sathiyababu and Ramalingam will be in charge of overseeing all of the groups. Ramalingam is putting in a budget request where the directors will be compensated fairly. I sincerely hope this works out. It is a great plan and I am happy to see the community take up intergenerational theatre so excitedly.

After our quick meeting, I organized the UVic students to have our final de-brief session. The students were thrilled with how the performance went. I think a lot of them had major doubts during the process, what sane person wouldn't, but seeing the finale allowed them to feel great about the work done with this community. They identified how amazingly talented the community proved to

be in the performance and also how the performance was appropriate for this region of India. Even though a group of Canadians were a major part of the intervention which led to this performance it was a full-on Indian event complete with a flurry of color, many speeches, and Hindu prayers. The difference with this event, it was for the people, with the people and by the people who made up the audience. Many events we have attended here in the village seem to be aimed at making either donors or an official visitor happy. Not this performance, it was for the elders and young people.

Chapter 16 - Our Finals Days in Tamaraikulam

Sunday, November 30, 2014 was a nice day in which I rented a bus for the group of us UVic kids to have a breakfast at the Promenade Hotel. To sit around and have a fancy breakfast after everything we had gone through together felt nice. We chatted, laughed, and ate bacon, croissants, eggs, and many other delicious foods. After eating, we went outside and spent some time on the beach staring at the ocean. We then snapped a few pictures on someone's phone to then part ways. I went off with Emily and it was our goal to buy some small items and then head back to the village to work. I bought five t-shirts and we then found a rickshaw to take us back to the village.

Emily asked me if I had met Lakshmi the elephant. I hadn't, so she asked the driver if it would be possible to see him. The driver said no because the elephant has a break from visitors from 12-2 PM. But then he said, "Wait, wait!" He drove down a few streets and then left the rickshaw. When he came back to the rickshaw he said, "Come, come." We hopped out of the rickshaw and followed him through a set of doors which led to Lakshmi the elephant. What an amazing sight. Emily and I received a back stage pass to visit Lakshmi on her break while there were no other visitors around. To be honest, I was scared at first. What a huge animal. I positioned myself with Emily between me and the giant creature. Emily noticed and laughed at me telling me not to be scared. I sucked it up and touched Lakshmi's trunk. I had a moment where I looked into her eye and understood the obsession humans have with elephants. I have read before they are one of the few animals on Earth which can recognize themselves in a mirror. After a few moments, we left. What was an added benefit of this trip to visit Lakshmi is that neither Emily nor I had a camera. This is a memory we will have to hold in our mind's eye. After this, the rickshaw driver negotiated his price to drive us home. Good timing on his part. He certainly proved his value to be above the average ride home. The rest of Sunday was filled with work and was uneventful. I will never forget meeting Lakshmi.

* * *

Monday, December 1, 2014 was a day fully dedicated to running around the Cuddalore and Pondicherry region. First, Aisling and I went out to Isha to finish up our data collection at their site. I needed to conduct interviews with their students, Kanakaraj, Pushpa, and Chitra. I have interviewed young children before for other research projects I have worked on but this experience was unique.

Generally my experience in Canada has been the equivalent of pulling teeth. I have had interviews which lasted five minutes and most of it was me talking. The Isha students were different. They were quite comfortable talking. I think I had a good way of framing it before we started which helped but I do not want to take away how excited they were to talk about their wonderful performance. I told each interviewee my research would be read/heard by people around the world and this was their chance to send the world a message about their school and the intergenerational theatre. The children truly love their school and had a great time on this project so it was an effective prompt. Earlier, I wrote about a boy who emerged as a leader early on in my teaching in the Isha School. My interview with him was eye-opening, to display to me how important this project was to the students. He told me, when he was singing *We Shall Overcome*, he felt a passion arise in him he had never felt before in his life. He thought that children India-wide should learn this song, singing it to unify all Indian people to achieve justice for all those who have hunger or are destitute. Kanakaraj was truly one of the surprises of this whole project. His passion for teaching these children is infectious and his generosity is unparalleled. After I interviewed him he thanked me. This act in the plentiful way he did it surprised me so I had to ask, "What did I do?" I thought he would give the generic answer I have been receiving from Isha and from Bala and Lakshmi. Kanakaraj thanked me for giving him an opportunity within the school to further his impact on the children and to put the children's and elders' voices in the public light. He also spoke of how happy he was to have a second mother (Jayamma) and how happy it made him to think of the opportunities present for the Isha children to perform with the elders in villages and other places. At this, I realized how great it was to hear a person prioritizing the community over his career and his partnership with me. I made sure to tell Pushpa and Chitra to include him from now on with the committee meetings (I also told Ramalingam).

After the time at Isha, Aisling and I went into Pondicherry to meet with Ramalingam and also because I needed to make an international call to Canada to be interviewed on the CBC. Also, I needed to set up the UVic students to have rides to their travel destinations.

The CBC interview was fun. I called in and it went smoothly. The best part was they taped it to air later in the day. I called them at 5 AM Victoria time and they aired it at 8 AM. This meant Aisling and I were able to arrive back at the village in time to listen to it with a number of the students. The

students all joked about being famous afterwards. I found it comforting to think of Canada while hearing the CBC theme song.

* * *

On Tuesday, December 2, 2014, I interviewed Sathiyababu, Ramalingam, and all the elders. It went smoothly and well. Bala and Lakshmi are still no shows. I have emailed and called them both several times. Bala even told Sathiyababu he would come last night and he did not. It is extremely unfortunate I do not have interviews. I should also mention I spoke with Ramalingam about Dr. Gunasekaran and Dr. Bushan asking for money and he thought they should not be paid. I bet this will remain true and he will not pay them. This does mean our relationship with the Performing Arts department at Pondicherry University is over but I think it will be fine. Many educators and artists live in this area which we could utilize as facilitators.

It was hard to believe this was the UVic student group's last full day together. The next day, everyone was to go off in different directions. I am proud of these people. I spent part of the day yesterday reading their final journal entries and final papers. They did great work. I have seen most of the students grow throughout their time at UVic and to a person each one did some of their best work on this project.

* * *

Wednesday, December 3, 2014 was our last full day together. I am happy to have spent this time with these people. The day started slowly as the night before involved a few beers at a local bar. We started working in the late afternoon, the UVic students had to execute their final assignment the Personal Mythology Addendum. In September, each student performed a Personal Mythology which answered the question why they wanted to come to India and work on this project. This assignment was now to answer the question: what has changed? It turned out to be a great assignment and the students really sunk themselves into the presentations. I am amazed at how well they were able to assess their learning and even go as far as to project into their futures and how this experience will affect them. I would certainly recommend to anyone planning a field school to build in an assignment of this nature.

I also presented a Personal Mythology for the students. When I was 21, I had similar field school experience on the *Canada World Youth* exchange as I wrote about earlier. We did not have an assignment like this but when I returned home I wrote a song which answered the same question. I call it, *I'll See you Soon*. The song is about me (a western white male) having a conversation with a little oppressed girl. When I wrote the song, I had a specific little girl in mind who I saw in a village and found out she was malnourished and had a monstrously large parasite surgically removed. Now, I can see the song as being just as applicable to elders in India as to the little Mexican girl. I sang the song for my students and thanked them for helping my dream teaching job come true.

After the personal mythologies, it was time for us to say goodbye to the elders. Bavani, the head nurse, was there to help us translate. We started the goodbyes with me singing a song which the students came up and sang the final chorus with me. It was another song I wrote, which the students had heard before and liked called *Feels so Good*. After, we sang together *Hey Ho* by the Luminaires and the classic *Lion Sleeps Tonight*. When we finished singing, Bavani translated our final goodbyes. Many students spoke and thanked the elders. The elders reciprocated. Both groups of people were sad. Many wept. Vadevil was beside himself crying. Jayamma was pleasant to say goodbye to and everyone had words for each other even though the Tamil-English divide is so deep. These two groups of people really learned to love each other. How amazing of a world we live in when a group of students from a Canadian university can travel across the globe to live with destitute elders from India and grow to love each other. I loved this night. I know saying goodbye is often sad but I couldn't help but reflect on how amazing of a connection was made even with so many cultural barriers to overcome.

Later, after we returned to our rooms, Sathiyababu had his way of saying goodbye and thank you. He showed up with beer and brandy. Later, my good friend Sanka showed up as well. The students, Sathiyababu and I sat around talked and drank beer with brandy in it. It was a great end to the day. The students had a gift for me. They gave me a spoon they bought in a local market. Now, at least I could use an Indian spoon to eat the local food.

* * *

On Thursday, December 4, 2014, I woke up at 4 AM to see the students off. They are all leaving out of Chennai to various destinations. A few hours later, Aisling and I took a car to the airport to start our journey home. Her and I sang Christmas Carols on the road to help us think about the world we were about to re-enter.

* * *

Back in the Dubai airport, I was reflecting upon the prior two months, this was the happiest I have ever been in the consumer hotspot. I still hate the place but with the lingering feelings of the past two months and the effects of the two Heinekens I had drank I felt great.

Now, it was time to get back to normal - back to my life and my home country.

Chapter 17 - My Time Back in Canada and my Final Trip to India

When Warwick and I met in December 2014 upon my return, I told him I proposed taking some time away from thinking about my research or writing and take a course. I had a specific course in mind. A professor in UVic's theatre department, Dr. Jennifer Wise, was about to teach a new graduate level seminar course called Theories of Meaning. My thought was, since I had just started to gain a further understanding of deconstruction and post-structural thinking through teaching the students Spivak's work, perhaps I could gain further knowledge by taking this course to help me understand other post-structural writers and thinkers. After finishing the work in India during this longer visit, I thought I truly saw the world or, at least my research, through a post-structural lens. By this, I mean I saw the work as no longer being within the structural phase of Marxist thought driven in practical pedagogy by the work of Freire and Boal but something different was taking place within the intergenerational and intercultural playfulness. I wanted to articulate the pedagogy I was seeing differently.

In Jenn's course, I happily re-discovered the works of Derrida, Freud, Nietzsche, and Bakhtin. Each were authors I had read before but in this reading I had my field work in the back of my mind and with each article or book thoughts were illuminated in my mind.

As I was sharing this with my applied theatre colleagues, Lauren Jerke, a fellow PhD student, shared with me an article from South African Professor Kennedy Chinyowa. He wrote of a shift he was seeing which he termed post-critical pedagogy. The article was centered on a criticism of the binaries present within critical pedagogy, specifically the critical pedagogy of forum theatre. Chinyowa calls for a movement to post-critical pedagogy where we lean on forms of education which reach beyond the binaries present within structural theories and critical pedagogy. I was happy to be reading other applied theatre practitioners who are reaching in similar directions.

* * *

"Gusul, the rehearsals are going well. We already have some stories we are working on and the generations are coming together." Lakshmi sent me an email that read like this towards the end of January 2015.

“We have already had rehearsals with each group.” This was a great sign from my perspective sitting in Canada. We had arranged for the first meetings to take place in December right after the students and I had left, I had received reports from these meetings from Ramalingam and now, it was great Lakshmi was emailing me with updates. I had a small amount of concern since the emails did not describe any activities being used during the rehearsals. Because of this, I emailed asking for clarification.

“Lakshmi, I hope all is well and that you are happy and healthy. Could you send examples of playful activities you are using with the intergenerational groups? I would love to know so I can write about them.” After I sent this email in early February, I had no response. I decided I would give them time. It makes sense that the directors would want some time with their companies to develop group rituals and a style of rehearsal they were comfortable with.

In mid-March, I booked my ticket to return to India in June 2015. I wanted to share the news with Ramalingam and Sathiyababu while using the email as a chance for an update on the work of the three companies. After I sent this email, I received a cryptic response from Ramalingam. The email had a line in it that read:

“We will speak about what happened with the directors when you come in June.”

With all the great momentum we had in our favour after the performance in November, this was a sad response to receive. I knew little from this cryptic message. Did this mean that the work was still going? Was there a huge problem? Did the work stop? Was Sathiyababu still working meaning Bala and Lakshmi were fired? Was there any intergenerational theatre being done? I emailed asking some of these questions immediately but received no response. I emailed a second time cc’ing Mathew Cherian and had a similar cryptic response in early April.

“With the students being on vacation, we will resume rehearsals when they are finished.” Again I emailed back more question but received no response. I guess I will have to wait until I am on Indian

soil before I will find out anything. I am understanding of this, if I had to give bad news I would prefer to do it in person too.

* * *

On Wednesday, June 17, 2015, I arrived safe and sound in Tamarakulam once again. I ended up having to take a cab from the airport to Pondicherry where I met up with Ramalingam. I felt wonderful returning to a place that feels like home. Honestly, I felt like I never left. Ramalingam and I went for coffee and chatted about what happened with the theatre work and the cryptic emails I had been receiving.

It turned out some of my feelings about Bala and Lakshmi came true. I had concerns about their schedule and I was highly concerned with their focus on money. The committee we had formed while I was here in November met and was successful in their planning. They solidly had three companies ready and rehearsals started. Bala and Lakshmi directed around ten rehearsals with each group from December - March. Of the problems that occurred in the workshops, first was scheduling. They were rehearsing on Saturday and Sunday, days which Ramalingam and Sathiyababu were unable to attend. To compound the problem, Bala and Lakshmi were not filling out the reports required. I had organized a system in which all members of the committee would know about the comings and goings in the workshops because the directors would fill out reports. Bala and Lakshmi were not filling these out and when Ramalingam tried to pressure them to fill them out they demanded more money. The directors were also showing up at random times asking to be paid for labour they were not performing. Even Dr. Gunasekaran maintained his request for money for his role as consultant. Dr. Gunasekaran asked me to pay him the \$200 CAD for his role, and at that time, Ramalingam and I agreed his and Dr. Bushan's consultancy work was worthless to our project and in reality, ended up holding us back. Dr. Gunasekaran called Ramalingam every morning for weeks trying to get his money. I find this unbelievable. Think back to the letter Dr. Gunasekaran had me draft guaranteeing he was not being paid, only requiring transportation. The final straw came when Ramalingam finally attended a rehearsal with *SOS Children's Village*. He saw a rehearsal style which he thought was similar to what Dr. Bushan had worked with. Playfulness and celebration between generations was not highlighted. In fact, what was being highlighted in the storytelling was conflict between the generations. Being that many of the *SOS Children's Village*

residents were victims of neglect or other abuse type situations, Bala and Lakshmi used these stories and cast the elders as abusers. This ended up being the final straw for Ramalingam. He fired Bala and Lakshmi and decided to suspend the Intergenerational Theatre Programme until my arrival. So, to me he asked, what now? We decided we would have a meeting with Sathiyababu to strategize as soon as we could.

After our coffee, Ramalingam and I headed for the village. This was a wonderful homecoming for me. Jayamma nearly fell over when she saw me. Her and I hugged and kissed for a few minutes. I love her so much. I still find it amazing how wonderfully profound a relationship between her and I can be while neither of us speak each other's language. After Jayamma, I saw Vadevil. He and I hugged and he bobbed his shoulders up and down in his trademark fashion. I saw all the other elders as well. My face hurt from the smiling this homecoming caused.

Next, I saw Sathiyababu. Out of the relationships I have forged while in India, he and I are extremely close. I am amazed how much he and I share in common considering the cultural barriers. Sathiyababu, Ramalingam, and I decided to have our strategizing meeting immediately. Ramalingam re-hashed the details for Sathiyababu so that he knew what I knew. Now, time to strategize. I knew that our best bet to have ongoing theatre work at Tamaraikulam is to have Sathiyababu as the director. I have full confidence in his abilities but he is apprehensive to take on this role. He felt he needed help with the theatre aspect. He liked working with Bala but understood why that relationships could not continue. Over the twelve days while I was in Tamaraikulam, I would train Sathiyababu to direct this company. What impressed me most in this whole situation is the dedication to the original idea Sathiyababu and Ramalingam showed. Abandoning the project could be easy but they were dedicated to having theatre performance. I hoped that over the next few days, I could offer enough help to give Sathiyababu the confidence to don the role of director. I know he can do it. He just needed to approach it in the right frame of mind.

After breakfast, I waited for Ramalingam to finish some work he had and then he and I went out to Isha to see if they would be willing to be the younger generation for the company. We knew this meeting would be a slam dunk, since they had already been involved but he and I wanted to be sure to figure how best to form this relationship and how intergenerational theatre programming could

become a sustainable part of Tamaraikulam. He and I agreed that we should only work with one young person's group. Last year, when I was with the UVic students the project grew and was difficult to manage. Moving forward Sathiyababu and Ramalingam will work on having a single consistent theatre group. The goal for this trip would be for us to have rehearsals with Isha and Tamaraikulam led by Sathiyababu and to have a final performance of whatever they developed. The purpose of my involvement would be to position Sathiyababu as best I can to direct the company moving forward.

Arriving at Isha was once again a homecoming. I love the school and the staff. They are contributing so much to the remote community. Their work is the difference between life and death. I am proud to say that from the time I first met them in early 2013 until this June 2015 trip the school has grown from 480 to 800 students. This growth is astounding and the difference it will make in 20 years to this rural area is easy to see.

The meeting went smoothly and quickly. Pusha, Chitra, Ramalingam and I agreed that over the next few days while I was in India, Isha will travel to Tamaraikulam twice and the elders will travel to Isha twice to have rehearsals led by Sathiyababu. After I left, they will meet once a week revolving between Tamaraikulam and Isha with the goal of having a second annual performance in late November 2015 at a 1000 seat auditorium in Cuddalore. All partners were happy and this goal is certainly achievable. After the meeting they fed Ramalingam and me. I had the spoon the UVic students gave me in my pocket. I had no shame at this point about not enjoying eating with my hands. I am what I am.

On the way back to the village Ramalingam and I ate coconut. The coconut was really young and the flesh was delicious. Both he and I were happy with the outcome of this day and our new goals. He is worried that other young persons' organization will come forward and want their own theatre companies. I told him if that happens they should help train them how to start and try not to tax Sathiyababu and the elders too much. I also suggested, he could have them send for me.

* * *

Friday June 19, 2015 was the first rehearsal. Sathiyababu and I rode out to Isha with five elders. When we arrived at Isha, we all waited a few minutes for the principals and teachers to organize our group. We ended up working with 16 students and the five elders we brought.

To begin, we started in a small room. Sathiyababu explained the project to them. We would have four rehearsals over the next two weeks and they would perform for their school and parents and then they would meet weekly to have a larger performance in November, 2015. The students and elders are now familiar with this idea from last year's work. The elders have been involved in the project before and this group of students had seen their older classmates in the project last year. Of the 16 students from seven and eight standard involved in this year's group, only two were in last year's performance. When this finished, we moved upstairs into the large auditorium space.

Once upstairs, Sathiyababu had the intergenerational group stand in a circle. The aged were spread out evenly and there was a mixing of genders amongst the Isha students. They started by singing the traditional flower song which was used to begin the performance last year. At first, Sathiyababu led the singing, then Jayamma for a few rounds, and then a brave young female Isha student took the lead. With Sathiyababu facilitating this activity, there was much laughter. After this, they knew the song quite well and Sathiyababu wanted to take a moment to try and make the singing become performance ready. They started this by practising entering while singing and then by working on the steps of the dance.



Next, they split into two large groups to start story-sharing.

Sathiyababu asked each group to prepare a story about the importance of intergenerational relationships. One group, started working on the story of Vadevil's relationship with his son. I am not sure how they will create a story arc out of this but I am anxious to see it. Vadevil has been so important to our work and it is important for him to tell his story. The other story came from an

Isha student. The boy told us a story about his family life. This story will create a good scene. I had Sathiyababu ask the boy why he wanted to tell this story. He told Sathiyababu he wanted to tell the story to his community so they would know how important Grandmas are to the world. They are going to perform these two stories next week when we work together.

The session ended by the group standing in a circle to sing *We Shall Overcome* in both Tamil and English. This song is certainly becoming the anthem of this company. They sing it so well with such passion. I am looking forward to next week's session to start building these two scenes into a performance.



* * *

On Tuesday, June 21, 2015, the group's second rehearsal went well. The Isha students arrived at Tamaraikulam and had a rehearsal which lasted about 4 hours which included a 45 minute break for lunch. I was actually so blown away at one point during the rehearsal, I ran into Ramalingam's office to grab him to show what was transpiring.

To begin rehearsal, Sathiyababu and Kanakaraj had the group sing and dance the flower song. Once again, the young girl who led it last day did the same again. This was a good rendition of the flower song to watch because everyone was laughing and smiling. Sundrabal was using his cane to hit the boys when they were performing the dance moves incorrectly. Sathiyababu really works to make the steps important during the dance. He drills the steps over and over in an enjoyable way which maintains the level of enjoyment for the group. As the sounds of enjoyment and laughter leaked out of Tamaraikulam's meeting hall, more elders came in to watch the rehearsal. Jayamma had to take

rests but she joined in on the dancing as much as her body would let her. I think she may have even done too much but it is hard to stop someone from having fun. Despite all this fun, the children and elders improved the dance exponentially during this rehearsal. By the end, the dance was looking great.



Next, they split into the two groups from last week to work on the two stories. As soon as the Isha boys group sat together Sundrabal started singing. He sang a song which will be incorporated into the scene and upon his completing singing the group clapped for him. After Sundrabal sang, another one of the Isha boys stood up to sing as well. After this, the group stood up and started practising staging their scene. Up until this point, Kanakaraj had been working with the Isha boy's group. As soon as this group stood up and started developing the scene, Sathiyababu and Kanakaraj switched groups and this continued throughout the rehearsal. I think what I was witnessing was Sathiyababu and Kanakaraj developing a co-facilitation style. Sathiyababu is great at seeing the larger stage picture and incorporating music and Kanakaraj is great at helping a group through the beginning stages of making sense of a story to find its performable beats and then helping the actors be comfortable showing emotion. The staging of the Isha boy's story quickly grew to become stronger. The students were using their bodies to create a doorway and Sathiyababu was helping with the music. Throughout this time, Vadevil's group remained seated, planning with Kanakaraj's help. After a period of planning, Vadevil's group stood up and started building their staging as well. At this moment, Kanakaraj and Sathiyababu switched again. This gave Kanakaraj a chance to help the Isha boy's group show emotion and Sathiyababu helped Vadevil's group begin building a stage picture.

While watching Sathiyababu and Kanakaraj direct, I could see how much they must have learned from last year's work. The co-facilitation the two men were performing looked highly similar to the co-facilitation used by the UVic students. I could see a high level of confidence in both Kanakaraj and Sathiyababu. This helps make the



argument on how to best train development workers on how to lead theatre workshops and rehearsals. While the UVic students and I were here last year, we modeled co-facilitation techniques which are now being employed by the current directors of this company. Watching the playful rehearsal transfer over into scene-building which was maintaining a playful quality was amazing for me to see. I was reminded of a Nietzsche quote I referenced earlier, "Mature manhood: that means to have rediscovered the seriousness one had as a child at play." When as a group, the children, elders, and facilitators all intentionally enter into play, they take on the seriousness of the childhood playful world. During the dance, they smile, laugh, and engage in play and then when it becomes time to work on the scenes, they carry over the seriousness of the play world into the scene creation. All members of the company bring an intense focus into building the scenes. By integrating this community into a playful theatre creation process last year, we left them with the ability to re-create the same atmosphere when we left. As long as Kanakaraj and Sathiyababu are here to lead Isha children and Tamaraikulam's elders through this process they will be able to create theatre in a playful atmosphere which will help in community building, educating both generations, and ultimately, bringing about social justice by allowing a space for these communities to tell their stories to a larger community. Inside of this, I was also seeing individual performers shine. Jayamma and Vadevil are truly gifted performers. Also, some of the Isha students are standing up to show their talents.

As I was watching Sathiyababu and Kanakaraj facilitate, I thought a wonderful thought, "I am not needed here!" The skills have been transferred. This was the moment I went running into

Ramalingam's office to grab him. I pulled him away from whatever he was working on his laptop and brought him into the meeting room. On the way to the room while I was tightly holding onto his wrist I said, "We did it. It is one thing to have goals but it is another to achieve them. We did it." He replied, "That is good, Gusul." "Come into this room and see. This is exactly what a *Geriatrics and Friends* rehearsal looks like. They are working on scenes, having fun, and you have two men here that can facilitate just like we do in Canada...maybe better." As we entered the hall both groups were deeply connected to their work. The Isha boy's group was working on a solo singing portion where he is exclaiming his delight in repaying the favour and caring for his Grandma. Vadevil's group was working through the challenges of showing the moment when Vadevil finds his two children dead after the tsunami. Ramalingam was pleased. He took about five minutes to watch and came over to me and said he thought he saw much improvement from anything he had seen the group achieve before. He also took a moment to have a quick conversation with both Kanakaraj and Sathiyababu. After this, I asked Ramalingam, "Now what? We did it. Should we create an MOU to bind Isha and Tamaraikulam together? A commitment to create intergenerational theatre." Ramalingam replied, "Yes, you type it up and send it to me." "OK, I will. After rehearsal."

At this, the group broke to eat lunch. Sathiyababu approached me to ask about the development of Vadevil's scene. He was worried that it did not have an ending. The arc of the story ended on an incomplete note. I told him to not take on the pressure of this and to ask the community how they felt about the story and to have Vadevil tell us why the story is important to him. Every resident in Tamaraikulam is free to move at any moment, why does he stay? Sathiyababu connected with the idea.

After lunch, we met outside between the village office and the *Elders for Elders Foundation* office in a shaded area which had a cooling breeze. The time was spent working on Vadevil's scene trying to find an ending. While the rehearsal was happening many elders and workers gathered to watch. The whole company of actors and



community of workers and elders were laughing throughout the scene-building process. Sathiyababu and Kanakaraj came away from this rehearsal happy with the ending they were able to construct. To finish off the day, Sathiyababu led the group through singing *We Shall Overcome* in Tamil and English. The children and elders are enjoying this song.

* * *

On Wednesday, June 22, 2015, we had another rehearsal. The elders, Sathiyababu and I headed out to Isha in the morning. I gave Sathiyababu a few tips on our way driving to Isha. I thought it might be enjoyable to start the rehearsal with some games. He liked that idea and thought of a few that would work.

When we arrived at Isha, we went upstairs to work in their auditorium area. Kanakaraj came to me to say he had to finish teaching a class but would join us in a few minutes. He ran over and told Sathiyababu and then ran off. Sathiyababu started the session with two games. Both were games which I have



only seen played in India. The first game was new to me. All the children formed a line with Vadevil at the front. Each person held on to the person in front of them and then Vadevil tried to tag the last person in line. When he tagged them, they had to leave the line. During this game, everyone was screaming and having fun. The elders who were not playing were happy to watch. The second game is one I have seen the elders play before. One day, while the UVic students were here they played with the elders. The game has the group form a train and then run under a bridge formed by two elders. Every once in a while, the bridge will capture a person and then sing a song to the captured person. After the song, they would let the person free and re-start the game. This game was chaos. The students and elders enjoyed playing together.

After the games, the elders and Isha students practised the flower song. The students were really high energy and their skill was highlighted on this day. The students were so high energy it was hard for the elders to keep up. After working on the singing and dancing, the two groups presented a 'stumble through' of each of their scenes. Kanakaraj was able to join us during this portion. Both scenes are coming together nicely. Moments exist where the stage picture is excellent but for the most part these 'stumble throughs' displayed how much more work needs to be done on these scenes. Through my years of experience directing collectively created theatre, I have learned when a group has a great rehearsal it is almost always followed by a lower energy challenging rehearsal. This rehearsal was challenging but I saw moments where this group's work was excellent. As Sathiyababu and Kanakaraj were directing the scenes, the children were whispering advice into their ears.

After the two 'stumble throughs', the two groups split up to improve their scenes. Kanakaraj worked with the Isha boy's group and Sathiyababu worked with Vadevil's group. As soon as the groups started working, the classes were let out and it became lunch time. This meant that the auditorium space filled with students needing a place to eat and that were interested in what it was that our group was working on. The two groups and I escaped into a classroom to complete the rest of the rehearsal. After this move, it became more difficult to maintain focus. Kanakaraj and Sathiyababu worked to maintain order and were actually able to achieve some constructive work. A new beginning was added to Vadevil's scene and the Isha boy's scene was drilled a few more times to tighten up the beats. I give a huge amount of credit to these two men for maintaining the focus of the group throughout the Isha School's lunch hour. After working on the scenes, Sathiyababu finished by working on *We Shall Overcome* with the group. Every time they re-visit this it improves.

As we were leaving Isha, Pushpa and Chitra made sure Sathiyababu, the elders, and I all had a drink of the lovely juice Isha Schools provide their children with. The juice is a mixture of fruit and sweeteners which help with energy and mental acuity. As we were all standing around drinking the juice, Vadevil walked over to Chitra and me. He put his arm around me and started speaking to Chitra. After a moment, Chitra laughed and asked me if I understood what he said. I didn't, so Chitra told me he said that out of all the people who have visited Tamaraikulam, Vadevil ranked me as his favourite - a great honour for me. My time at Tamaraikulam has been a wonderful time of

huge personal growth and skill development but to have Vadevil say this really adds to how special my time in India has been.

* * *

The rehearsal on June 23, 2015 was a rushed affair. Isha was not able to use a bus to come to Tamaraikulam and the elders, Sathiyababu, the elders, and I ended up driving quite late in the day to Isha arriving there at about 330 PM. The children's bus leaves school at 430 PM so we had an hour for rehearsal. At the beginning of rehearsal, I grabbed Sathiyababu's cell phone. If we only had an hour all his business could wait. Taking his phone actually can be life or death and I sincerely hope it wasn't in this case but I feel like the children and elders deserve his full attention.

First, Sathiyababu ran the groups through the flower song. A young girl has taken the lead vocal part and she was wonderful in the role. Next, Vadevil's scene was ran once with Sathiyababu stopping them at certain points to work it and then again without stopping. The scene has come together. Then, the same was done with the Isha boy's scene in that it was ran with stops and then once without. The group assembled to sing *We Shall Overcome* but the students all had to run to the bus instead.

I will take a moment here to describe how the story in each scene runs and some of the staging.

Vadevil's scene is a snapshot of his life-story. The staging starts with a dance and song representing Vadevil and his wife's marriage and building of a small family. Early in their marriage, their two children became ill. An elder in the village they were living in looked at the children and thought they had the chicken pox. The illness was much worse and both children died. After a mourning period, Vadevil and his wife decided to adopt. They adopted a boy and a girl. After the tsunami, his adopted son and his wife moved into Vadevil's home. After a while living in the home Vadevil's son tried to bully Vadevil into signing the deed of the house over to him. Vadevil refused and sold the home and took all the money and put it into a bank account. From this, Vadevil and his wife joined an elders' self-help group where they received support. Through this group, Vadevil and his wife were accepted to Tamaraikulam and were the first people to move into the village. The scene ends

with the Isha children telling the audience about their time learning from Vadevil, how happy he is, how much they love him and are glad they have the opportunity to spend time with him.

The Isha boy's story is about his life with his parents and grandparents. The boy was sick and his parents took him to the doctor. The doctor discovered that the boy has several food allergies which were quite severe. The doctor told his parents to make sure he never ate certain foods because if he did he would go into anaphylaxis and he would be unable to breath. His parents did not take the doctor's warning seriously and allowed the boy to continue eating normally. One day while the boy was teaching other children a song and dance he had learned, he went into anaphylactic shock and fell to the floor. The children didn't know what was happening so they ran away. The Isha boy's grandma and grandpa visited to find the boy nearly dead on the floor in his home. They picked him up off the floor and took him to the doctor. The doctor told the boy's grandparents about his illness and about the irresponsible behaviour of the boy's parents. The Isha boy's grandparents were angry and confronted the parents who said they no longer wanted the boy because he was too much trouble. At this point, the Isha boy's grandparents took over caring for him. One day, while the boy's Grandma was working in the yard she severely hurt her leg. This time it was the boy who had the chance to rescue his Grandma. He cared for her leg and made sure she had everything she needed while her wound mended. The scene ends with a song and dance created by the Isha boy which is an ode to his Grandmother and how he is thankful he had the opportunity to care for her after she cared for him.

They look ready for performance. Isha has invited the parents, grandparents and communities of the Isha children. Friday, June 24, 2015 will be an important day for this project and for the theatre company.

* * *

Isha School was packed with people. Since they invited the parents and community, the audience was double any audience I have seen in that school. There were about 350 students to watch the performance and 250 adult community members.

Before the performance, I showed the MOU to Pushpa and Chitra and they were both happy with it and excited that the theatre work with *HelpAge India* would continue. Now, next week Ramalingam will come to Isha to sign the MOU with Chitra and, fingers crossed, Intergenerational Theatre will become a continued program for this community.

Both Kanakaraj and Sathiyababu were unavailable for a quick run through before the performance so I asked a few of the students to lead a rehearsal. It took a few minutes but eventually the elders and students ran everything. I was highly impressed by this act. In this project, I have spent so much time focused on training directors, forgetting that the communities have been trained as well. Thinking about G&F, all of the actors in that company have wonderful training. They have learned tons about theatre and community building to the point where some of them now facilitate theatre workshops in Edmonton. Honestly, I can see a future where Isha students and Tamaraikulam elders facilitate. I watched the students run rehearsal. It made me think, maybe this whole time spent focusing upon only training directors was incomplete. Not only were the directors being trained during this project but the community was as well. In the future, if I am ever to design a training program like this again, I will have a multi-leveled focus, working at training directors and the community because this is what happened in this project, somewhat, by accident.



Sathiyababu arrived and we started the performance for the 500-600 people gathered. Being that I had seen the scenes performed a number of times I spent most of my time watching the audience. All eyes were on the stage. The audiences really enjoyed watching Jayamma and Vadevil. They really perform well once an audience is present. Also, some of the children are strong onstage. The Isha boy did a wonderful job singing and making sure he was heard. There was nothing but compliments

for the performance. The principals were ecstatic about how many community members were present. They thought it was one of their best attended event.

And, with this, my final trip to India for this research project ended. Or at least the formal part. I decided for a short celebration I would visit Sathiyababu's home with him. I was happy that we were able to have a performance with such little rehearsal time and I am highly aware of how this project both had an impact on this community and had an impact upon me as a practitioner/ scholar.



Chapter 18 – Sathiyababu’s Second Job

Spending a weekend with Sathiyababu was an adventure. I really got to see a lot of his life away from Tamaraikulam and much of the area where he grew up. I spent a full day in Kodaikanal, a tourist hotspot and a must see for anyone coming to Southern India, I toured around Dhavadanipatti with Sathiyababu’s mom one day meeting her friends and family, and I also had an adventure travelling back to Tamaraikulam, before my flight leaving the country. But, of the experiences I had while gone for these four days, I was able to see what I will henceforth call Sathiyababu’s second job – his work with the *Scope India Trust*.

Scope India Trust was started in 1992 by Sathiyababu and his father to work for the welfare of marginalized sections of people with the mission of promoting peace and sustainable development. The trust’s activities focus on child development, promoting alternative livelihood opportunities



and disaster relief. Sathiyababu’s father wanted for years to develop a village style home to be a residence for destitute children. *Scope India* focuses their child development program in Villuppuram on children that beg around the major train station in the city. The idea for a children’s village-style home started as being a place where the destitute children from the railway station would live. He tried for years to find land or a place where this could happen, never quite succeeding in finding a large enough space. Once, he visited *SOS Children’s Village* and was inspired by their concept in which young people would live in a home and be cared for by older destitute orphans but he felt that maybe it would be a better model to use grannies as the caregivers linking with Sathiyababu’s work with *HelpAge India*. For a period, Sathiyababu and his father worked with

HelpAge India to see if the railway children could live in Tamaraikulam. Ultimately, *HelpAge India's* mandate is aimed towards older persons and the railway children do not fit.

Upon Sathiyababu's father's passing last year, Sathiyababu and *Scope India* dedicated efforts to begin the creation of an intergenerational home for destitute elders and the railway children. They recently broke ground on a five acre piece of land which was purchased by Sathiyababu and his brothers with their inheritance.

The home will be called 'Shankat Moitcha', which in Sanskrit means 'Who has suffered will be in Heaven'. The model will be based upon *SOS Children's Village* in that each home will be a separate unique house having its own



kitchen with the grannies being the caregivers for the children. So far, they have built a small building which has a dedication to Sathiyababu's father and they have connected the land to Dhavadanipatti's water infrastructure. On the day I visited the land, Sathiyababu hired a backhoe and a few workers to build the beginning pipe system for water to be connected with the various buildings in the village style intergenerational home. I was able to walk around the land and could easily see the vision of a village. The land has a backdrop of a beautiful mountain range which includes Kodaikanal and numerous mango and jack fruit orchards. The location is picturesque and will be a beautiful home. At one point in walking around the land I said to Sathiyababu, "You know this place has to have a theatre company." He quickly answered, "Of course, you know it will."

The journey back to Tamaraiikulam before my leaving the country was long and difficult. The day was around 40 degrees Celsius and I spent most of it either on the side of the highway, in a mechanics garage, or on a packed bus. Throughout the day I had acquired a sunburn, dehydration, and a severe case of being grumpy. When arriving at the village, I needed water, a shower, and my bed so I could be well rested for my upcoming flight. I took my suitcase and headed towards my room. Walking up to Tamaraiikulam's guest house I could see the building was locked. This took my grumpiness and amplified it to be closer to anger. I stomped over to Sathiyababu's house to find a key so I could be alone in my room and fix what ailed me. When I stepped into Sathiyababu's doorway, I looked at him with an exasperated face and said, "my room is locked". He looked at me and said, "Step inside and say hello". When I turned the corner I looked down at the bed and saw a woman lying on a bed who must have weighed about 60 pounds, wearing a bandage on one of her legs that was swollen to five or six times its normal size. "Hello," I said. She looked up at me from the bed and said, "Wannacum." Sathiyababu later told me she was 17 years old and in the final stages of leg cancer. Her father had abandoned her after the tsunami when her mother died. She had been begging in the streets but recently had become seriously ill because of her cancer. Someone found her and took her to a nearby hospital. The hospital could not admit her since she had no support system to pay for her treatment. The hospital doctors know to call Sathiyababu when situations like this come up - Sathiyababu's second job. While Sathiyababu and I were journeying back to Tamaraiikulam, he was on his phone arranging for her to stay in his home until he could connect her to hospice care where she would live her final days. This was all happening in Tamil so I had no idea. After seeing her in the bed, the problem of my locked door and the hardships I endured over the past twelve hours disappeared. I now just wished for this girl's situation to be better and with the help of Sathiyababu, it will be as good as could be expected.

Introduction to Exegesis Chapters

The following four chapters are written about the ‘cherry-picked’, salient issues I have identified coming out of my research project in India. Here is a breakdown of what I will be reflecting upon in each essay:

In the first chapter titled “The Playful Ontic Approach”, I outline the playful ontic approach I have developed in my practice and throughout this research project.

In the second exegesis chapter titled “Playfulness and Neoliberalism: Intergenerational Theatre as a Space Outside Neoliberal Control”, I present an argument contending that playfulness offers a site where communities can develop communication external to neoliberalism

In the third chapter titled “Inaesthetic and Applied Theatre: A discussion on “Message Laden Theatre vs. Real Voices” and “Theatre Magic”, I write what I propose could be the beginning of a philosophical framework for artists to have meaningful conversations with non-artists.

The fourth chapter is meant to act as a dialogue. “The Conversation Doesn’t End When They Leave for a Beer: Movement from Critical to Post-Critical Pedagogy” is intended to be an homage to Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* in that it is written in the style of dialogue between Reader and Editor. This chapter details a hunch I have that applied theatre practitioners may want to consider post-critical pedagogy within their practice.

As you read through these chapters, you will see a lot of repetition and overlap from the creative non-fiction section. The first three chapters are written to stand alone, separate from the case study section. The last chapter is meant to act as a jumping-off point from my study; meaning, the chapter will act as a catalyst for my further practice and research in theatre. Please, enjoy these four exegesis chapters. I hope they will inspire dialogue and assist practitioners to incorporate some similar strategies into their practice.

Exegesis Chapter One - The Playful Ontic Approach

O - Introduction

Throughout my career as an Applied Theatre practitioner, I have benefited from theory's impact upon my work. I seek out opportunities to encounter theorists and other practitioners' writings to influence my work, guiding me to use theoretical approaches in my practice. This chapter is written in an attempt to expose an instance of theory's impact upon my theatrical practice. As mentioned in the case study section, I have been working in intergenerational theatre since 2006. First, I worked as Assistant Artistic Director with Western Canada's *GerActors and Friends* and followed this up by acting as a consultant in the creation of an intergenerational theatre company in Tamil Nadu, India. In both cases, theoretical approaches have had an important role. With *GerActors and Friends*, using a playful approach was important and, with my consultancy work, it has remained crucial. Since beginning the India project, I have encountered James Thompson's epistemic and ontic approaches theory from his work in Sri Lanka, and I have found his theory regarding the ontic approach a valuable tool. This chapter seeks to unify Thompson's ontic approach and *GerActors & Friends'* playful approach to explore the impact upon Applied Theatre practice as a way of working that leads to a culturally appropriate design for intercultural theatre programs and Theatre for Development.

In the first section of this chapter, I write about James Thompson's theory on epistemic and ontic approaches and how it emerged from his practice in Sri Lanka. In the second section, I pursue the unification of Thompson's ontic approach with the playful approach taken by *GerActors and Friends'* directors by analyzing the company's rehearsal process and performance style while also exposing the history of Canadian applied theatre and G&F's place in the history. In the third section, I explore how I used the playful/ontic approach in my theatrical work in India in a workshop setting by citing examples. In the final section, I investigate the impact the unified playful/ontic approach had upon the entire project in India and assess the impact of the skills left behind in the Tamil Nadu community.

I - Thompson's Theory on Epistemic and Ontic Approaches

James Thompson's 2004 article "Digging Up Stories" focuses on his Theatre for Development work in Sri Lanka in which he suggests the focus of Theatre for Development has been mostly upon epistemic concerns. Projects focus upon participants learning techniques/ exercises to be applied in various contexts or upon the analysis/ performance of personal stories. This focus only takes into account a portion of any community's given reality. He proposes Theatre for Development should draw back the focus from epistemic concerns to working with the ontic concerns of communities, looking closer at a community's ways of being or the ways 'they exist in the world' as opposed to their way of understanding or the ways 'they see the world' (Thompson 2004: 159).

A cease-fire was declared in Sri Lanka in February 2002 after a civil war of over twenty years duration (Thompson 2004: 153). The Sri Lankan Army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were in conflict using guerilla warfare tactics similar to those in Latin America, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East. The disagreement was across political and symbolic lines. The Buddhist Sinhala community sought a unified Sri Lanka while the minority Hindi Tamil group wanted various degrees of division and decentralization (153). History, mythology, and political rhetoric were the main motivating factors in this conflict. Both sides had claims to the island stemming from before the colonial era.

In Thompson's article, he writes about a human mural activity he used working in Sri Lanka in January 2000 (154). He adapted the activity as a component of a training program for youth workers from communities affected by the war. The participants were to spontaneously create an image using their bodies against a wall in the workshop room. Thompson then asked the trainees, 'What is the story that is represented in these bodies?' Next, the group told their stories, one-by-one, and then the group would discuss each story (154). When Thompson ran the exercise, the first stories were told and provoked little discussion and then a third person arose to incite controversy. Thompson writes, 'A Tamil participant came forward, moved along the line of the mural and read each statue as the twisted corpse of a person thrown into a shallow grave. He did not read it as a general killing but as a very precise act of violence known as the "Chemani Massacre".' During the time of this

workshop, a battle was being fought in Sri Lankan courts and in the media about the events in Chemani (155). The workshop participants' story of the mass grave was different for a Sinhalese than for a Tamil person. At this moment the workshop fell into silence, no one wanted to discuss the story. After a period, Thompson moved onto the next participant's story. After the workshop, in discussion with participants, Thompson was told the story of the Chemani Massacre 'stepped over the mark' (156). Thompson writes, 'the enactment of the story created a moment of discomfort for some people even as it was a strong assertion-accusation for others.' The fallout from the human mural caused Thompson to question the use of theatre and specifically 'the difference between the "epistemic" logic of the theatre training course and the "ontic" relation of participants to the stories of war' (156).

Thompson interrogates Theatre for Development with Sri Lankan anthropologist E. Valentine Daniel's approach for analyzing a group using an epistemic and an ontic method. The epistemic describes the way a group sees, studies, and observes the world. The ontic describes a group participating and being in the world. In this, the epistemic is a subcategory of the ontic; the ontic approach is a widening of the lens used in an exclusively epistemic approach. Thompson writes, 'Facilitators conducting social theatre training workshops assume the epistemic as the optimum mode of participation. In the workshop a group member...learns the techniques to apply later...' He argues that an ontic approach may be better for building workshops, writing, 'People would do, react, and experience rather than receive, study, and reflect upon stories told. Participation at the ontic level would mean a person would lose him/herself in the process rather than remain critically detached.' I agree with Thompson's assertion that an ontic approach could be favourable in theatre projects and, in my analysis of the process and performance of the *GeriActors and Friends*, I will show how the company's focus on intergenerational playfulness is an example of the ontic approach.

II - Canadian Applied Theatre History *GeriActors and Friends* & Director's Playful Approach

To understand where *GeriActors and Friends* fits into Canadian applied theatre history, we must look to the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance (CPTA). CPTA had a major impact on theatre history in Canada. I have separated Canadian applied theatre tradition into three historic categories:

“Before the CPTA Era”, which runs from pre-colonial times to 1978, “the CPTA Era” from 1978 to 1991, and finally, “After the CPTA Era” 1991 to the present.

Canadian applied theatre history’s “Before CPTA Era” is detailed in the writing of Ross Kidd, Alan Filewod, and in Jan Selman and Tim Prentki’s *Popular Theatre in Political Culture*. During most of the history of applied theatre in Canada, the term applied theatre is not used as an umbrella term. Instead, applied theatre was generally referred to as popular theatre because of its tie to the popular education of Paulo Freire. Ross Kidd, in his 1979 article “Popular Theatre and Popular Action”, writes, “popular theatre was an important institution in Indian (First Nations) and community life.” Song, dance, story, and music were used to communicate community history; theatre was not just for entertainment but also for education (7). When Captain Cook landed on Vancouver Island in 1778, he and his crew were invited to see a communal drama (8). Kidd then goes on to describe the Community Theatre and Little Theatre Movement that was to be found across Canada. It started in the 1600s and is still alive today. A part of this movement was what Kidd calls the “Samuel French monopoly”. Community and Little Theatre groups would select plays based on cast numbers and gender rather than based upon any local interests (9). In 1932-35, a worker’s theatre movement rose across Canada in 6 cities and 60 towns. In this movement, groups of actors performed short functional sketches to help raise awareness and support worker’s protests (14). During the post-war era, theatre was performed on the radio by the *Farm Radio Forum* from 1941-65. *Farm Radio Forum* included plays about protest and social criticism, but the biggest impact was that it brought Canadian dramatists into the homes of Canadians (14).

Included in the “Before CPTA Era” is Chris Brookes’ *Mummer’s Troupe*, a company which made a significant contribution to the field. Alan Filewod goes as far as to write that the *Mummer’s Troupe* “pioneered the principles of social justice partnership that came to define the popular theatre movement” (Filewod 211). Interestingly, Ross Kidd’s work, which eventually inspired many Canadians to use popular theatre, was actually inspired by Chris Brookes’ work with the *Mummer’s Troupe*. Kidd read about Brookes’ 1973 project which used theatre to protest the forced relocation of the village of Sally’s Cove because of the proposed creation of Gros Mourn National Park. After this from 1973-78, Kidd became an organizer of theatre work in Africa, Philippines, and Bangladesh. Filewod writes, “consequently a case can be made that Canadian experience of popular theatre,

which begins with community intervention by companies like *Mummer's Troupe*... is related both historically and methodologically to the popular theatre movement of the Third world" (Filewod 201).

Jan Selman and Tim Prentki write about a number of theatre projects in Canada that existed before 1978 that were involved in similar work to *Mummer's Troupe*. They point out that in the late 1960s, nationalism grew in Canada (73). A large amount of funding was allocated to allow artists to develop Canadian national identity. Much of the funding went to a *National Film Board* program called *Challenge for Change*. Many films were made about unique Canadian cultures made by the communities. Some films were made by First Nations communities, Francophone communities, and a memorable film was made about Fogo, a fishing community in Newfoundland. This nationalism also caused theatre companies to emerge that were dedicated to telling the stories of Canadians (73-74). The most notable company to do this work was *Theatre Passe Muraille* directed by Paul Thompson. In 1972, they performed *The Farm Show*, a play that was collectively created by a group of actors from their experiences working in farming communities (74). Predating this and running at the same time during the late 1960s and 1970s, groups of activists on university campuses were creating Agit-Prop performances to accompany the protests of various social movements (74). Another early contributor to the Canadian popular theatre movement was the work of a collective group from Edmonton led by University of Alberta Professor David Barnet called *Catalyst Theatre*. They worked with the *Edmonton Rape Crisis Centre* to develop theatre to combat violence against women. They also worked with the *Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission* to create a play called 'Drinks before Dinner' a play about having an alcoholic in the family (74-75). Each of these projects followed a pattern where the play would be created by actors working with the agency, developing the play in the rehearsal hall, performing it for the agency, revising and then performing it for the public at large (75). Selman and Prentki write, "The process of exchange, initiated by Barnet and his group, was central to the ethical relationship of performer to community" (75). Selman and Prentki cite a multitude of examples from all across the country that were using theatre with communities during the late 1970s and early 1980s that was a part of the popular theatre movement starting to take shape in Canada (75-77).

The period of 1978-1991 is the history of Canadian popular theatre that was defined by the CPTA. Jan Selman writes, “Popular Theatre came to Canada in 1978 [...] Why 1978?” (Selman and Prentki 73). In 1978, Ross Kidd moved to Toronto to start his PhD (Filewod 200). In reality, work with the same principles and objectives as popular theatre was already being done in Canada but now there was a name to describe the work and a visionary leader to help start a solidarity movement connected from coast to coast to coast (73). The first step in setting up CPTA was taken by Chris Brookes. In 1978, a group of theatre practitioners and companies met in Newfoundland and were introduced to Ross Kidd’s work, who had just returned from Zambia and Botswana (1). After this meeting in 1978, Ross Kidd toured the country with Ngugi wa Mirii offering workshops telling people of their experience using Theatre for Development and teaching them some of the techniques they had learned from communities throughout the developing world (Selman and Prentki 73). Many alliances were made between artists during this tour.

In 1981, the first popular theatre festival was held in Thunder Bay, ON called *Bread and Circuses* (Selman and Prentki 77). Michael Sobota of *Kam Theatre* sponsored the festival which featured “small, non-Equity, politically-engaged theatre, work which was for the most part collective in their approach to playwriting” (Filewod 1). The festival was followed by a week-long workshop conducted by Ross Kidd. At this workshop were twelve Canadians and seven people from the Caribbean and Africa to exchange skills and techniques. Out of this meeting CPTA was formed. Filewod writes, “Ross Kidd had given the workshop participants an instrument that enabled them to define their commonality clearly and which relocated the defining criteria for political theatre to the active collaboration with a community in the process of struggle” (2). Besides bringing together many artists from across this huge country to share skills, the CPTA was officially formed and created a list of their original principles.

a) We believe that theatre is a means and not an end. We are theatres which work to effect social change.

b) We see our task as an ongoing process in which art is actively involved in the changing nature of the communities in which we live and work.

c) We particularly attempt to seek out, develop and serve audiences whose social reality is not normally reflected on the Canadian stage.

d) Therefore our artistic practice grows out of a social rather than private definition of the individual.

e) Therefore there is a fundamental difference of purpose, priorities and aesthetics which separates us from the dominant theatre ideology in Canada today. (Selman and Prentki 79, Filewod 2)

Although these principles were written and accepted as a part of the organization, not all CPTA members agreed with them; some felt they were too politically left-leaning and others thought that theatre companies that produced seasons were fully excluded (Selman and Prentki 79). Filewod points out that these principles and the formation of the alliance gave theatre work a “structural tool” that provided them legitimacy for funding from arts councils (247). This alliance “was less of a counter-professional structure than an instrument to level funding for the festival.” (248).

In 1983, *Catalyst Theatre* sponsored the next festival in Edmonton, AB and it was called *Bread and Roses* (Selman and Prentki 80). A workshop was held in Hobbema, AB, a native reserve near Edmonton before this festival. The focus for the workshop was on the Hobbema community and was facilitated by Ross Kidd and his friend from Hobbema, Darrel Wildcat. The festival included two Québécois companies, one of which introduced English speaking Canada to Boal’s forum theatre. The forum theatre performance was translated into English and was performed by *Sans Detour* and joked by Lib Spry.

In 1985, the festival was in Winnipeg, MB and was called *Bread and Dreams* (81). The workshop at this festival centered on Winnipeg’s inner city and it’s community members. A performance of a forum theatre piece caused much debate and discussion at this festival (81). The piece was centered on issues of women’s violence and was performed by a company of actors for female survivors of domestic abuse and the festival participants. Ethical issues were raised when the survivors were asked

to intervene in the scene. Festival observers noted victims of violence were exposed as vulnerable in front of a group of festival participant voyeurs.

In 1987, the festival was on Cape Breton Island in Sydney, Nova Scotia and was called *Standin' at the Gaff* (81). This festival featured an extensive workshop conducted by Augusto Boal. Selman points out that Boal gave a public address to the festival participants and in this address he seemed to speak with the assumption that Canadians had never been introduced to “process drama, improvisation or community-based theatre.” She adds, “it was insulting” (81). The festival had a focus on development issues and on linking theatre to development organizations.

In 1989, the festival was called *Bread and Water* and was in Guelph, ON (82). The highlights of this festival were the performances of two theatre companies that were made up of communities that were telling their stories: *Theatre Puente*, led by Lina de Guevara, performed a collectively created piece by a group of non-actor immigrants; and *Tununiq Theatre* an Inuit group (82). This festival had a much larger population of non-professional performers in comparison to previous festivals. Many of the theatre professionals found themselves in a teaching role leading community groups rather than building any new professional skills.

The last of the large festivals was held in Edmonton in 1991 and was once again hosted by *Catalyst Theatre*. In response to the 1989 festival, this festival had a focus on professional work (82). *The San Francisco Mime Troupe* performed and the focus of the workshops was to allow experienced popular theatre facilitators the opportunity for professional development. Selman believes the reason this was the last festival is twofold: the funding was no longer available and, more importantly, “they had run their course”. In the 1990s development work was headed towards local and regional efforts. Selman calls the era of 1978-1991 the “childhood of popular theatre”. She writes about the new movement of popular theatre in Canada stating, “Many looked to dig in more deeply within their home communities and ‘make a difference’ over the long term” (84).

This leads to the ‘After the CPTA period’ of popular theatre in Canada from 1991 to the present. This can be looked at as popular theatre “grown-up”. In the efforts to make a long term difference, many practitioners and theatre companies can be seen “digging in”. There is the work of David

Diamond with *Headlines Theatre* in Vancouver, Jan Selman and Jane Heather's *Are We There Yet?* in Edmonton, the ongoing work of *Puente Theatre* in Victoria, Julia Salverson's work in Ontario, and many others throughout Canada. David Barnet's *GerActors and Friends* fits comfortably into this category of Canadian Theatre history.

GerActors and Friends (G&F) is an intergenerational theatre company made up of members of SAGE (Seniors' Association of Greater Edmonton) and University of Alberta students. I was the Assistant Artistic Director from 2006-2011. G&F is a collective creation company which builds theatre by 'playing games, storytelling, improvising, and taking elegant coffee breaks with free flowing discussion'. Some plays are inspired by reminiscence, others are about issues of aging, and some come out of the discussions during coffee breaks. Founder and current Artistic Director David Barnet is a professor at the University of Alberta and founding Artistic Director of Catalyst Theatre with 'extensive experience in Popular Theatre and Theatre for Development in Africa and Asia' (www.geriactors.ualberta.ca).

At G&F's core is a focus on playfulness, both the playfulness which emerges because of intergenerational connections and the playfulness which can be created as a part of the theatrical process. In 2009, David Barnet and I published an article in a newsletter for International Consortium of Intergenerational Programmes. The following is an excerpt where I describe five direct benefits playfulness provides.

1. Playfulness is able to help members of G&F build scenes. Directors of the company use games that utilize the playfulness of the group in order to find themes and structures for scenes. This works well with a community theatre group because members do not feel pressure - they only have to play the game.
2. The games G&F play help the members learn acting skills. Just as children play to learn skills for later life, G&F play to learn skills for the stage. The primary focus is playing the game and the secondary focus is to gain acting skills. This works well in community theatre because most of the actors in the company have never had acting training.

3. Playfulness in G&F is essential in the creation of safe space in the rehearsal process. In play, participants are not at risk. In rehearsal and performance, participants expose personal experiences. It is therefore important that there is a safe space.
4. For G&F, it is important that the rehearsal process is fun. Rehearsals are fun when the company is playful while scenes are built. When these scenes are then performed the actors bring the fun energy that was generated in rehearsals. This helps untrained actors when they are onstage. Actors in a community theatre group are playful in rehearsal and they bring this energy to the performances.
- 5) Playfulness helps bring out multiple points of view. In play, G&F feel comfortable expressing their opinions about the scenes they are working on in rehearsal. Members feel comfortable sharing their point of view on subjects that affect their personal lives. (Barnet and Gusul 2009: 8)

Playfulness is a versatile approach which is used in the Intergenerational Theatre of G&F.

Intergenerational relationships are a key element to G&F's playfulness. Play has a power to blur the line between young and old. By playing together, the stereotypes of young and old are broken. Normally elders are viewed as wise and the young should just sit and listen, but that line is blurred which allows for a deepened sharing. Play breaks down the intimidation factor between young and old and the labels of young and old disappear inside G&F's play.

G&F members identify play as important in inspiring the group to become more active. Seniors have a tendency to sit around and talk, and play has forced them to stand up. Adults have learned rules throughout life which stop us from being playful and it is difficult to return to play. Early 20th century American play theorist Neva Boyd writes in an unpublished piece: 'Relatively few adults actually play but a sort of residue of the joyful play experienced in a person's childhood and youth remains with them always and flavors life as nothing else does' (Boyd n.d.: 2). G&F have moments where they are close to reaching the 'joyful play' of childhood. G&F senior members told me playing with younger members of G&F is like playing with their grandchildren. One member said her play with

G&F is just like the play she shares with her granddaughter. Another member told me when she plays with her granddaughter she forgets about the world around her, and she exists ‘in the moment’ just as when she plays with G&F.

In G&F, laughter builds community. The fact G&F share a laugh about mistakes gives its members relief to know no one has to be perfect and is instrumental in the creation of a safe space. Pam Schweitzer, author of *Reminiscence Theatre*, calls this a ‘failure-free environment’ (Schweitzer 2007: 251). In his book *Free Play*, Stephen Nachmanovich writes about mistakes:

In school, in the workplace, in learning an art or sport, we are taught to fear, hide, or avoid mistakes. But mistakes are of incalculable value to us. There is a value of mistakes as the raw material of learning. If we don’t make mistakes, we are unlikely to make anything at all (Nachmanovich 1990: 88).

The laughter shared as a part of G&F playfulness allows members to make valuable mistakes helping theatrical creation and creating a comfortable atmosphere.

A delightful example of playfulness between generations took place in rehearsal on October 26, 2006. In this moment, a female senior member of G&F was working on her portrayal of a young boy in a bar for an upcoming performance. A student member of G&F helped to teach her how to walk like a young man. This was a good example of an intergenerational exchange using playfulness. The student said to the senior member, “You need to be more gangsta”. He also taught her a number of hip-hop phrases to help her portray a young person.

Another strong example of shared play between generations happened on September 20, 2007. A student member of G&F was lucky enough to learn how to use a senior member’s motorized wheelchair. Here is an excerpt from my journal:

September 20, 2007

In rehearsal today, I described an activity to the group in which they would teach each other how to engage in one of their favourite activities. Each group would then perform the tasks for the rest of the group. When it came time to perform one group missed the actual described activity. Instead of teaching each other tasks and then performing them, they only introduced each other. After they finished, I teased them for having completely missed the point of the activity. The senior member was angry with me and told me I never gave her enough time and she was planning to teach the younger member to ride in her wheelchair. I then challenged her to do it. She accepted. From holding herself up using a table she taught the younger member to drive her motorized chair. It was such a wonderful sight to behold - a wheelchair-bound senior teaching an able-bodied male university student to drive her electric wheelchair. This could potentially be the poster for G&F. This was an example of such an amazing connection between two people.

G&F's intergenerational playfulness exists in relation to the ontic and epistemic approach argued by Thompson. In his article, Thompson identifies the act of creating theatre or theorizing about theatre as epistemic. Any theatre company which performs stories will take on an epistemic focus to story; analyzing, working to understand, and eventually, inspiring audiences to epistemologically engage with their performance. What is of particular interest with G&F is the company's focus on the ontic. The company's way of being and participating is prioritized when planning both meetings and performances. In each rehearsal, the company plays together; they play games, laugh, and engage in a playful approach while creating theatre. David Barnet, in directing the company, structures rehearsals and meetings using a loose plan. Many times, Barnet will enter rehearsal with a plan which has structured gaps and minimal activities, so he can respond to the fluid movements of the group. When he instructed me on how to plan sessions with G&F, he told me to identify the beginning point at which the company is entering the rehearsal and to identify a desired outcome. Then, to supply yourself with various activities which could potentially take you to your goal while maintaining flexibility to be taken off course. When a discussion takes G&F into an unplanned direction, he allows the natural flow of the company to dictate where to go next. He seeks these moments in

rehearsal because they are often useful in writing scripts. As a company, G&F is engaged in the present, current, and spontaneous interactions among the members of the company. Effective scripts are developed from the company's sense of being in the moment. Better ideas often come from the spontaneous play rather than from planned activities.

The company also takes on a playful/ontic approach in performance, personified by G&F's workshop performance. G&F have two main goals for their performances. The first is to transmit the social knowledge, memories, and the identity of the members of the company. Diane Taylor, in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, suggests that performances can act as 'vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity' (Taylor 2003: 2). In the organization and scripting of G&F's performances, they try to achieve these 'acts of transfer'. The second goal is the desire to produce theatre which is entertaining for an audience. Arthur Strimling, in writing about his New York based intergenerational theatre company *Roots and Branches*, quotes legendary jazz musician Louis Armstrong, who stated, 'There's only two kinds of music; good and bad' (Strimling 2004: 124). He believes the same is true of theatre. He writes, 'Bad theater does nothing but undermine the values we promote' (124). G&F works hard to master their art and produce theatre which entertains, provokes, and intellectually engages audiences. In a workshop performance, the audience becomes an honorary member of G&F. The audience participates in singing, playing games, and creating simple performances with the company. Then, G&F perform a selection of scenes which is followed by a coffee break and finally, G&F performing more scenes. When using a workshop performance the company is trying to impact the audience's way of being or their way of participating with G&F's theatre. If the audience takes on the same playful energy which the company has they will fall into the allure of G&F's participatory style.

David Barnet and I developed the workshop performance in December 2006. We planned the structure of the premiere Workshop Performance over a coffee at the High Level Diner in Edmonton, Canada. This first event took place on December 6, 2006, and the company still uses the workshop performance as its preferred style and if it is not appropriate to use a workshop performance they utilize whatever elements they can. Here, I focus on the Workshop Performance given at a symposium during Edmonton's inaugural *Creative Age Festival* on June 3, 2008.

This workshop performance started with a game called **Bombaya**. In this game, a song is sung in a gibberish language in which there are two sections: a verse and a chorus. Before the game starts, balls are handed out to everyone in the room while participants sit in a circle close together. After the song has been taught to the group, the game starts. During the chorus section the balls are passed around the circle in one direction and then during the verse the participants hold on to the balls and keep rhythm with them. I am always surprised to see the difference in the atmosphere of the room at the beginning and at the end when this game is played. At the beginning, some people are reserved but by the end every person in the room looks as if they are at a fun party. This is the function of **Bombaya**. It works as an icebreaker to open the audience to the energy of G&F.

Next we sang a famous folk song called *Hole in the Bucket*. This song is familiar to most English speaking audiences as a folk song representing a squabble between a husband and a wife over a bucket with a hole in it. Because of this, the group was split into two. On one side were all the men and on the other were all the women. In this group, the women greatly outnumbered the men. The atmosphere here was rowdy, similar to a sing-along at a camp-fire or in a bar. The gender split works well because it creates competition based upon the archetypal relationship of men and women which helps with the energy and playfulness in the room.

After the playful energy in the room was created, the workshop audience split into four groups. Then each group chose what they felt was the most important of four words: family, health, wisdom, and independence. Time was given for each group to discuss their choice. Then each group created a tableau image to represent their word. After giving time to work on the tableau each group thought of a song to accompany their tableau. Each group then performed. The performances were energetic and filled with laughter. The audience sang or clapped along with the songs. After each performance the audience guessed which of the four words the group had chosen. The word they chose is not as important as the consideration of the concepts and the energy created by the performances. The sharing which takes place during this section is important for the experience of the audience because it gives them a glimpse into G&F's creative process. Sharing the creative process is important for G&F because it helps the audience join in the activity of creation with the company. This participation enables them to view the scenes in a way which helps them build and reflect on their

own experiences. This also helps the audience to be in a space where they are not only watching the theatre performance but also remembering stories from their lives of which they are reminded during the performance.

After this step, G&F performed scenes from their repertoire. They entered singing the song from the game *Bombaya*. The audience knew this song from the workshop, so they were able to sing along. On this day, G&F performed three scenes: *Am I Invisible* - a scene exploring the issue of seniors' invisibility in society, *Sanctuary* - a scene about an elder who is abused by a family member and finds sanctuary in a seniors' shelter, and *Alberta Hospital* - a scene in which a woman suffering from bi-polar syndrome navigates friendship in an institutional setting. Performing these scenes after having the audience enter into a rehearsal format with G&F and play with the company allows for a deeper sharing of knowledge and memories because both the audience and company has gone through the process of creating together.

After the performance, David Barnet and I facilitated a discussion with the audience and G&F. David told the audience this was a mini-version of our regular show because this was a shortened performance. Normally, a workshop performance would last two hours and this was at a symposium in which we were scheduled for only a one-hour time slot. A normal part of a workshop performance is to have a coffee break in the middle just as in rehearsals, but that was not possible in this context. This discussion period was a mixture of intellectual reflection and light-hearted joking which parallels the atmosphere of many of the discussions G&F shares as a company.

The playful/ontic approach of G&F's workshop performance differs from much contemporary theatre. A more conventional style of theatre performance does not have the level of embodied audience participation which takes place in the workshop performance. Tim Prentki and Jan Selman, in their book *Popular Theatre in Political Culture*, write:

The movement of contemporary popular theatre is towards greater and greater degrees of participation; an increasingly uncertain blurred distinction between performer and audience as well as an increasingly uncertain demarcation between

what constitutes a theatrical space, a space of fiction and public spaces of daily reality (Prentki and Selman 2000: 158).

A parallel exists between what Prentki and Selman write and the workshop performance. G&F perform in an unorthodox theatre space; in this case, it was in a conference room in the *Telus Centre* at the University of Alberta campus. The scenes performed change because of the theatre space and the relationship created with the audience. The audience relates to the scene work in a more intimate fashion than conventional theatre because they participate in the creation of the event by playing games, creating tableaux, and singing. American improvisational theatre practitioner/ theorist and Neva Boyd's student, Viola Spolin states an audience should have the same opportunity to have as personal an experience as the actor in a theatrical presentation (Spolin 1963: 13). G&F achieves this in a workshop performance because creation is shared between audience and actor during the games and tableaux section of the performance. Cultural theorist Diane Taylor believes '...the production of knowledge is always a collective effort...' (Taylor 2003: xx). In the workshop performance, an intellectual and creative energy is shared between G&F and the audience. G&F is not acting as an expert group putting on a show for an audience. They act as a conduit to display the knowledge, energy, and understanding of the collective group assembled for that event. Here is a description of the workshop performance from a senior member of G&F:

My granddaughter is imaginative as all three-year-olds are. We play hiding games when I am with her. It's a similar feeling that I have when I am with G&F. We play together and we are free to use our imagination and to be on the spot and change things as needed and the tableau and the games that we play at the workshops with other people who come to see our workshops and our scenes. You can see them drop away their inhibitions and suddenly be a part of our acting group and within ten to fifteen minutes their childlike side emerges and they take part in the drama with us. I think it is a healthy thing for people to use their imagination. I just think that imaginary play is a healthy human experience and I am honored to be a part of G&F.

Philip Taylor, in his book *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community*, writes about the style of theatre which he believes to be of value: 'Participants are having an

experience while simultaneously understanding the nature of the experience they are having' (Taylor 2003: 6). The audience of a workshop performance is in this state of experiencing a transfer of social knowledge and memory, and at the same time, they are able to analyze critically the experience they are having in the workshop and after performance critically analyze experiences from their own lives. This dynamic reading takes place in the workshop performance highlights the strength of using a playful/ontic approach in Applied Theatre performance.

Diane Taylor identifies two different ways to transmit knowledge: through identity, and through memory. She writes about the archive and the repertoire. To her, the archive is the form of transmission which is taken through any recorded means, whether that is video recording, sound recording, or most frequently, written materials (Taylor 2003: 16). The repertoire is enacted by embodied memory: 'performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing - in short, all of those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge' (20). The repertoire consists of live embodied actions which are traditional and stored in the body. In performance, these actions are acted out as 'forms handed down from the past' that 'are experienced as the present' (24). She calls for a focusing on embodied practices that transmit social knowledge, memory, and identity, because she believes there is too large a focus on the archive, and because of this, important acts of transfer are being ignored (16).

In the workshop performance, the acting company works to transmit social knowledge, memory, and identity through embodied or ontological acts which are both shared with and performed for the audience. At every point through the performance, members of G&F are using their bodies to share a collective experience. Games are played together, then tableaux and songs are performed, and finally the acting company performs scenes for the audience. In the workshop performance, the focus is on sharing the embodied actions of the repertoire which Taylor describes. The workshop performance places the primary focus of both audience and performer upon the embodied action of playing and performing theatrical stories. This focus on embodied actions is important for the mutual experiences of the audience and actors. Using the embodied acts of the repertoire, the participants of the workshop performance join together in a form of spontaneous *communitas* because of the shared embodied ontological experience.

III - India Consultant Role - Playful/ Ontic Approach in Workshop

As mentioned in the case study, Theatre for Development practitioner Michael Etherton attended a workshop performance of G&F in 2008. After participating, Etherton connected the company with *HelpAge India* because he believed their methods could be productively transferred to the Indian subcontinent. G&F could not take up the challenge at that time; and, having facilitated a summer institute at the University of Victoria in the summer of 2011, Etherton suggested the rapidly-developing Applied Theatre program might consider taking up the project. In September of that same year, I began my PhD studies in Victoria. Following detailed discussions with Dr. Warwick Dobson, we proposed the formation of an Intergenerational Theatre company in India. This led to an Intergenerational Theatre project which has *Isha Vidhya Matriculation School* students and *Tamaraikulam Elders' Village* residents forming an intergenerational theatre company. I travelled to India to serve as consultant to the company's creation. In January 2013, *HelpAge India's* manager, Venugopal Ramalingam and I identified the goal to build the Indian equivalent to G&F. I have since visited India in July 2013 to conduct workshops, I visited again from September -December 2014 to consult with the company as it holds first rehearsals leading to its first performance while helping to train the directing team, and had final monitoring visit in June 2015.

Both *Tamaraikulam Elders' Village* (TEV) and *Isha Vidhya School* emerged after a devastating Tsunami hit the South-East Indian coast in 2004. TEV was completed and has been home for seniors which were displaced during the tsunami. Michael Etherton helped with the disaster relief effort and the construction of the village. The village has space for one hundred seniors - designed to sleep four elders to a room. Central in the layout of the village is an open air theatre which can be used for the performances by this new theatre company. As a part of *HelpAge India's* exit strategy, they have helped the Elders create a non-governmental organization which has ownership of the village called *Elders for Elders Foundation*.

The Isha Foundation started building schools in rural Tamil Nadu in 2006. The mission on their website reads:

Isha Vidhya aims to provide high quality school education to rural children who cannot otherwise afford it. *Isha Vidhya* schools:

- Take education beyond literacy and rudimentary skills
- Strive to make children fluent in English and adept in computer skills
- Adopt a nurturing, holistic approach to education, helping children realize their full potential
- Actively promote education of female children
- Increase educational awareness in rural communities
- preserve village identities and culture. (www.ishafoundation.org)

The particular school we are working with was finished construction in 2009. At that time the school was K-4 since older children from the local villages were already wage earners in their families. The school has grown with the children and is now K-10. The school has plans to continue growing to K-12 and then help place students into universities and colleges throughout India. The student population of this school is over 90% first generation learners.

Before I transition into the final section of this chapter in which I analyze how the playful/ontic approach has been implemented in the Tamil Nadu community, I want to draw attention to the hybrid form of theatre this project is creating which I am calling 'Intergenerational Theatre for Development'. This hybrid form is bringing together Theatre for Development and Intergenerational Theatre. Theatre for Development is a field which has been studied in the academy over the last 40 years. The term Theatre for Development started being used in the mid-1990s 'as the umbrella phrase to describe the various practices undertaken by non-governmental agencies' (Prentki and Preston 2009: 13). Theatre for Development can be defined as the production and construction of theatre or the facilitation of theatre workshops in developing communities worldwide (Prendergast and Saxton 2009: 105). The focus for Theatre for Development has been on multiple issues, relationships, and complexities, depending upon the diverse contexts in which different projects and workshops have taken place, and in which theatre companies have emerged. Although some projects have been intergenerational in nature, this concept has never been at the core of any project. Also, playfulness has not been utilized as a central tenet of Theatre for

Development. Some projects have had a focus on a process which included games but playfulness has not been central. 'Intergenerational Theatre for Development' is a developing genre of theatre which includes the multiple tenets of Theatre for Development and introduces the focus upon intergenerational connections and the natural playfulness that exists when these relationships are forged.

As written in the case study on pages 44-48, I had a chance to create theatre with the elder population while using the playful/ontic approach to plan the workshop in July 2013. The workshop ended with the elders singing their Tamil version of "We're Here". The transformation of the elders watching the video of the Canadian seniors singing, taking the song, and spontaneously creating a Tamil version was an excellent end for this workshop. A community of 50 rural, poverty-stricken Indian elders singing a loud chorus proclaiming they were here and they were not invisible was a great moment of activism and *communitas*. The entire community came together in this moment. Many of the elders here have spent the better part of their life in low income, low education, and detrimental conditions while being told, either explicitly or implicitly, they were worthless. Now, in this community they are being given the opportunity to stand up and sing in an act of defiance that the rest of the Indian community had better take notice to them and their conditions.

The second instance occurred on Tuesday, July 23, 2013 and appears in the case study on pages 49-50. The session was from the second trip and was the day we worked with tableaux to show a time we were surprised. The session was filled with laughter and joy but perhaps the most encouraging outcome was the former beggar joining in. Usually he sat only but on this day, because of the playfulness, he joined in.

Both cases have positive results. I planned both these workshop sessions with a 'loose plan' similar to G&F's using a playful/ontic approach allowing spontaneous offers from the participants to guide the group's way of being and participating. In the first memory, the group played together leading to story-sharing and ultimately their appropriation of the G&F's protest song. The marginalized group of Indian elders sang loud and proud a song which proclaimed their presence and shouted in the face of people who would ignore them. In the second memory, the group's shared playfulness led to a man including himself in a social activity for the first time since his move into the village. This

moment of a former beggar joining the other elders, besides showing the usefulness of the playful/ontic approach, illuminates the purpose of theatre in a development context. Even though this man was given food, shelter, and stability he still struggled to join the community. It was when the other elders were engaged in childlike play he first broke the barrier and included himself within the community. I am happy to add to this story. Each night during the rest of my stay, I witnessed this same man sitting outside with other male elders listening to the radio; laughing and sharing their final moments before bedtime.

As written about in the case study section, during the September - December 2014 period of this project, I had 12 UVic students with me who helped in my consultancy work. We worked to train Dr. Sathiyababu and directors from Pondicherry University to lead the performance which took place on November 29, 2014. To do this, we had a short training period and then started rehearsing with the full intergenerational company. The directors performed well early when the company was meeting using the open structure of the playful/ ontic approach but an incident occurred in which the students and I felt we needed to take over the directing of the company (details of this are in the case study section). On November 6, 2014, three of my students led a workshop which well represents the playful/ontic approach and how it can be facilitated in a rehearsal. I wrote about this day on pages 140-143. This was the day in which we used rain as a theme and the stories about the tsunami and Jayamma's story of the field flooding were shared.

After watching these three women facilitate the session, I had a much clearer vision on how to educate/communicate the playful/ontic approach. I have since broken it down to five components: 1) activities/ games/ songs which are playful in nature (epistemic details), 2) an invitation for the participants to supply epistemic details through giving a song, dance, or game, 3) a clear idea for the starting point and ending point for the rehearsal/ workshop, 4) a theme for the rehearsal/ workshop, 5) a focus on the ontic playfulness of the group during the rehearsal which includes an attentiveness and trust of the facilitators' intuition to lead the participants through the rehearsal. The five elements identified here are helpful when considering how to facilitate using a playful/ ontic approach in a workshop setting. If a facilitator wants to use this approach, I would suggest taking a moment to consider each of these elements. I will include here a longer description of these five elements which

I passed along to my students and to the Indian intergenerational theatre project community but first I need to point out what is distinctive with this style of facilitation.

The playful/ontic approach allows the community group to influence the direction of the rehearsal utilizing their natural playful energy and the creativity inspired by their spontaneous interactions. The facilitator does not create a step by step plan which is followed but creates a loose plan which is intuitively followed by using the guidance of the group's interactions. This is similar to the improvisational acting training I received early in my career. Paul Johnson, my instructor who was taught by American improvisation theorists/practitioners Viola Spolin and her son, Paul Sills, would say, "trust the moment" when an actor would walk on to the stage. By this he meant, trust your mind and stage and the audience will unify into some stage action which will be interesting for an audience to watch an actor experience - actors have all the training they need to be able to trust their intuition; we are humans and we know how to act. This is a clear outline for what is needed from a facilitator using the playful/ontic approach. The facilitator must trust they will unify with the group, the moment, and their loose plan to create a workshop/rehearsal which will be engaging for the participants and lead to collectively devised theatre. The goal is to begin each rehearsal or workshop by helping to foster the natural playful atmosphere and then to allow the group's interactions to dictate what games/activities/songs will be played next. The final result being spontaneous story-sharing and simple scene creation.

Now, more about the five elements:

- 1) A clear idea for the starting point and ending point for the workshop/ rehearsal gives the loose plan I am suggesting structure. How I deal with this is I write in the top left hand corner of my page the starting point, which more often than not is playfulness/ laughter/ fun, and in the bottom right hand corner is the projected ending point, which is often story-sharing and simple scene creation. It is important to find a way out of all the playing to begin story-sharing. I most often have seen this done in small groups but I have also facilitated where there is the entire group present at the story-sharing stage. After stories are shared then it is time to move towards performance. I would argue every story is performable in some simple way but what is best is to allow small groups to decide which stories to perform. The performance should

happen the same day because it is important to have the sharing as close as possible to the spontaneous moment when the story was first told and then also important to make sure the whole group sees the performance as close as possible to the spontaneous story-sharing. This makes it a viable option to be used in the collectively devised piece. It is difficult to revisit stories on the next day. I am not totally sure why but when you are farther away from the spontaneous story's birth it becomes more difficult to perform for community members. I say projected ending point because when a facilitator lets the moment and the group's interactions dictate the direction of the rehearsal moments happen which need to have longer attention which can change the planned ending. One of my favourite moments of this from my practice was a group of Filipino seniors remembered a game from their childhood they had not thought of in years and we ended up playing it for the whole rehearsal. This was not a wasted rehearsal, I would argue it was an hour period where we all smiled, laughed, and grew together as a community.

2) A theme or a question for the rehearsal/ workshop which can lead to story-sharing are other elements which help provide structure to the loose plan and is also helpful when the facilitator is listing the activities/ games/ songs. Anything can be used as a theme for a starting point but I would suggest simplicity allows for more openness. Themes like food, vacations, rain, driving, music, etc. can lead in many directions. I would suggest thinking seasonally when coming up with these themes. If it is monsoon season or near a holiday this can work well. It is also important to be culturally sensitive when thinking of themes. Suggesting vacations to a group which is in poverty may not be appropriate but changing it to trips or faraway places you dream of may work better. A question can also work as a theme. One of the most successful questions I have seen asked to an intergenerational group was "When did you start to feel like you were aging?" This can be answered by any age group. A young school child could say when they had their first day of school or when they grew into a shirt which was way too big. An older person could say when they had their first grey hair or when they went unnoticed while shopping with their young daughter. The litmus test for a theme or question is if you as a facilitator can think of multiple stories when asked the question or presented with the theme then it should work in the group.

3) Playful activities/ games/ songs or what I refer to as epistemic details are the numerous actions used by theatre facilitators during workshops/rehearsals. During our lifetime every human learns a multitude of these activities. Theatre professionals and young theatre students have been participating in and facilitating these activities in classes and when they work with community groups or with other actors. I call these epistemic details to separate them from the ontic side of the equation of group dynamics. When a group comes together and they have a facilitator leading them through activities there is both an epistemic and an ontic reality. The epistemic is the details of what game, song, or activity is being used at any given moment. Along with anything any member of the group sees or observes during these activities. These epistemic details are of the utmost importance which is why years are spent learning them. They teach children many skills, athletes use them to train, actors use them to learn focus, and so on. Many guides exist which have lists of the actions: Viola Spolin has several books, Keith Johnstone as well, a search on Google will provide you with many games, and there are also guides which help acting teachers develop games with their group. Everybody knows how to play these activities/ games/ songs and every culture on earth has their own. For facilitating in this approach what is needed is a list of these on your planning sheet which could potentially be used on the particular day being planned for. List all the activities, games, and songs which you think could work on this day.

4) An invitation for the participants to supply a song, dance, or game is a vital part of the playful/ontic approach. As I stated before, during our lives every human learns tons of these playful activities. Or at least we do when we are children. Many people forget them but when they are in a group which is playing together they are reminded of games and songs they knew as children. Facilitators must allow for a space where these memories can be shared and a group member can take over facilitation for a few moments while they teach the rest of the group the song or the game. This technique can be immensely valuable. It serves a multitude of purposes including a step in having the group take leadership, allowing individuals to gain confidence in the group setting, inspiring others to take a risk and share their memories, and so on. Often these songs or games end up being valuable portions of the collectively devised piece.

5) And now I come back to the focus on the playfulness of the group during the rehearsal. The facilitator must be attentive and use their intuition to lead the participants through the rehearsal. If, as I set up before, epistemic details are one side of the equation for facilitators, the other side is the ontological considerations. Often approaches facilitators take put the ontic as secondary; in this approach it must be primary throughout the planning and during the rehearsal/ workshop time. With intergenerational groups, I suggest facilitators use the natural playfulness between generations to guide the planning and facilitation. Other energies may come up during rehearsals but playfulness has a way of coming back with these groups. Young people often have more difficulty if challenging topics or stories come up but the life experience of elders often takes over. In the intergenerational exchange, the elders often marvel and are inspired by the young's energy, enthusiasm, and courage while acting but the elders provide leadership on how to bring the playful energy back after/ during/ or to help with any difficulty. Much can be taught in classrooms but only by living a full life can one learn how to cope with troubled times.

IV - India Consultant Role - Playful/ Ontic Approach for Training Directors and Community

Thompson's concept when he first introduced the ontic approach to training was to design a program for training practitioners to experience a theatrical programme in a format where they would experience activities and be introduced to the feelings and ontological reality of being involved in theatre work. The India intergenerational project took on this approach. The UVic students and I led the Indian community through the process of utilizing intergenerational playfulness to lead to a performance. Many members of the community were involved in this ontic training, including *HelpAge India* staff, Isha School teachers/ administration, the hired Indian directors, the Isha students, and the Tamaraikulam elders.

As mentioned in the case study on pages 186-190, I returned to India to assess what was left behind in the community after the intervention led by the students and myself in June 2015. What I saw led me to believe that Thompson's notion of using an ontic approach to training during theatre for development projects is an effective approach for unlocking a community's ability to use theatre in

a culturally appropriate way to communicate their stories. The directors and the members of the community were well trained on how to create intergenerational theatre. My major takeaway from the entirety of the final monitoring visit is the training received by this community as a whole. I spent so much time focused upon training directors, *HelpAge* staff, and Isha staff in theatre techniques forgetting that the community actors, the elders and students, were receiving training as well. The experiences had by the whole community led to their ability to perform stories from their lives. All levels have received training and are now able to facilitate playful theatrical process. I know leadership is important which is why there had been a focus on training directors but it was a great outcome to see the elders and students taking on a leadership role on my final day consulting this project. I can now see the benefits of using an open playful/ ontic approach in that the experiential nature of the training process allows for multiple members of the community to be trained while also actively encouraging the theatrical work to be rooted in the home culture of the community. The community drives the process in such a way that the facilitation is not led by any individual but by the collective energy of all the people assembled in the group. This collective energy is what allows for the culturally appropriate nature of the facilitation style to be a guiding force in Theatre for Development. The hierarchy of having an outsider coming in is inverted and it is the community which leads the process. No individual person is marked with leadership but the community is open to take on a multifaceted leadership. This member contributes a song, another a story, a facilitator helps create playfulness, and then another facilitator helps assist in expression. The community unites in leading. The playful/ ontic approach facilitates cultural unity while encouraging multiple individuals to take on leadership. The potential for using this approach in any intercultural setting or in any Theatre for Development context is strong. If the approach can lead to allowing for multiple points of leadership and to unify/ unite a community in sharing performance there is massive potential for a variety of applied theatre projects.

Exegesis Chapter Two - Playfulness and Neoliberalism: Intergenerational Theatre as a Space Outside Neoliberal Control

0 - Introduction

On July 4, 2015, I found myself in the audience for Tim Prentki's paper presentation at the IDIERI Conference in Singapore directly on the tail-end on my final visit to Tamil Nadu in June. I knew I wanted to hear his paper presentation because I connected with his writing and I knew he had a relationship with both Michael Etherton and my former MA supervisor Jan Selman. As his presentation started, I found myself scribbling down copious notes in my book. Many times with the words "Yes!!!" or "That's right!!!" next to them. Tim, seemingly, had written the paper about what I had just experienced before I had the chance. In addition, apparently, he and I have a similar looking bookshelf filled with books focused on the current macroeconomic trends of neoliberal policy. After his presentation, I sat in the audience and spoke with some of the people sitting near me. We agreed that Prentki's analysis was superb. Later in the day, I complimented Tim on his work and asked that he send me a copy of the paper. Here is an excerpt from the introduction to his paper which will give an idea of the content of his presentation:

This paper aims to offer a necessarily brief overview of how applied theatre might be employed in the service of counteracting the prevailing dominance of neoliberalism; a dominance which threatens the survival of our species. I am proposing that the counter-hegemonic aesthetics of folly provide theatrical precedents for the ways in which we might set about this task of deconstruction whether in the formal educational arena of the school classroom or at those non-formal and informal sites where applied theatre practices are located. (Prentki)

This statement aligns well with my belief that the playful approach used in the intergenerational theatre within the performances of the Indian theatre project has a similar quality to the "counter-hegemonic aesthetics of folly" described by Prentki. Intergenerational playfulness and Prentki's "aesthetics of folly" are connected in that they both have as a central component free play. This is the free, unstructured play, which children engage in. Through my time working in India, I have been

illuminated by hope while working within the partner organizations' structures, but then when encountering the harsh realities of poverty, I often had direct contact with the full breadth of the power of neoliberalism's mighty unforgiving oppression. My movement back and forth between these realities showed me the strength a playful approach has in creating spaces outside neoliberalism. Performances of the Indian Intergenerational Theatre Company are locations of intergenerational playfulness. At the sites where playfulness is employed, a dialectic counteracting neoliberal thought's dominance of individual freedom exists which exposes the needs of community support of individuals in areas of extreme poverty.

This chapter will be presented in three sections. First, I will provide a description of neoliberalism by providing a definition, surveying neoliberal history, exploring neoliberal policy, investigating neoliberal thought, and delving into the question: if it is so bad, why do people allow this to happen? Then, I will offer a description of Prentki's analysis of how Applied Theatre offers a space of resistance against neoliberalism. Finally, I will pull examples from the Indian intergenerational theatre case study to further illustrate how playfulness and the dialectic between individual and community are created.

I - Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism refers to the global macroeconomic trends which have been commonplace since the 1970s. Henry Giroux, Canadian/ American scholar in cultural studies and public pedagogy, offers a definition of Neoliberalism in his book "Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education". On the first page, he writes:

Four decades of neoliberal policies have resulted in an economic Darwinism that promotes privatization, commodification, free trade, and deregulation. It privileges personal responsibility over larger social forces, reinforces the gap between rich and poor by redistributing wealth to the most powerful and wealthy individuals and groups, and it fosters a mode of public pedagogy that privileges the entrepreneurial subject while encouraging a value system that promotes self interest, if not an unchecked selfishness. Since the 1970s, neoliberalism of free-

market fundamentalism has become not only a much-vaunted ideology that now shapes all aspects of life in the United States but also a global phenomenon that drives the practices and principles of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and World Trade Organization, trans-national institutions which largely determine the economic policies of developing countries and the rules of international trade. (Giroux 1)

Many points can be pulled from Giroux's quote but that is to be expected when looking at a macro-level economic trend which is currently affecting the planet. As far as economic policies are concerned, neoliberalism pushes governments to implement policies which promote privatization of most industry, commodification of all aspects of human interaction, deregulation of all business, and free trade between countries and trans-national companies. A result of the forty years of these policies is a widening gap between the rich and poor. Giroux also points out the public pedagogy which is central to neoliberalism. The public is encouraged to privilege entrepreneurship and self-interest while believing that personal responsibility takes precedence over larger social forces. This all means that individuals can thank their personal hard work for any success they achieve while ignoring any social support they received; also, if any individual commits a crime or is unsuccessful in this system, they have done so because of their personal decisions and larger social forces had no impact. Giroux finally identifies that this ideology is not localized to a small part of the world but is taken up by the economic giants (IMF, WTO, World Bank) that dictate economic policy to all areas of the globe from national economic powerhouses within the G7, G8, or G20 down to smaller developing countries.

In Noam Chomsky's book *Profit Over People*, he makes a direct link between the policies of neoliberalism and the Washington Consensus. He writes,

The Washington Consensus is an array of market oriented principles designed by the government of the United States and the international financial institutions that it largely dominates, and implemented by them in various ways – for the more vulnerable societies, often as stringent structural adjustment programs. The basic rules, in brief, liberalize trade and finance, let markets set price (“get prices right”),

end inflation (“macro economic stability”), privatize. The government should “get out of the way” – hence the population too, insofar as decisions of those who impose the “consensus” naturally have a major impact on global order. Some analysts take a much stronger position. The international business press has referred to these institutions as the core of a “defacto world government” of a “new imperial age”. (Chomsky 19-20)

The Washington Consensus provides a framework for neoliberalism. Chomsky offers a place and a government which we can look at as the central figure for neoliberalism in the world. The main location for the powerbrokers of neoliberalism is in Washington and is made up of the US government and the heads of trans-national corporations which are mostly located in the US. Chomsky goes as far as to refer to these groups as the “*de facto* world government” and I am inclined to agree with him.

Chomsky exposes the true corruption in this neoliberal system when he examines the centralization of decision making. Even though the US is thought of as a free democratic nation, the wave of decisions that stem from Washington are not subject to public scrutiny. Chomsky writes,

...the approved doctrines are crafted and employed for reasons of power and profit. Contemporary ‘experiments’ follow a familiar pattern when they take the form of ‘socialism for the rich’ within a system of global corporate mercantilism in which trade consists in substantial measure of centrally managed transactions within single firms, huge institutions linked to their competitors by strategic alliances, all of them tyrannical in internal structure, designed to undermine democratic decision making and to safeguard the masters from market discipline. It is the poor and defenseless who are to be instructed in these stern doctrines. (Chomsky 34)

The centralization of power to the neoliberal system is compared to a “socialism for the rich” here by Chomsky and I see this as an appropriate description for the economic system in the contemporary world. The collection of powerbrokers collected as leadership in corporations and

dominant governments move positions and trade sums of money back and forth in a constant game where the wealth only moves between the upper strata of society not to ever ‘trickle down’ to the middle or lower classes.

As recent as some of the neoliberal trends can seem, the roots of neoliberalism can be traced back to classical liberal economic ideas. Chomsky believes that within the whole system “Adam Smith is revered as the patron saint” (Chomsky 19). Chomsky writes that the first experiment of early neoliberal principles can be seen in India when the British colonized it through the 17th to 20th century. Chomsky points to an official commission written by the British on the colonization of India which concluded “the settlement fashioned with great care and deliberation has unfortunately subjected the lower classes to most grievous oppression.” The commission also goes on to say it is the worst in history and the death of India’s poor has been the result (Chomsky 26). Even though the Indian people felt hardship and oppression the British did not write it off as a complete failure; after all, the investors did get wealthy (Chomsky 26).

The “principal architects” of the neoliberal economic principles are huge corporations, governments, and think-tanks housed within universities. The US is home to all this because post-WWII, they took on the role of police for the “world capitalist system” (Chomsky 20). Neoliberalism became the answer to failing Keynesian economic policy prevalent in the 1950s and 60s due in large part to the Washington Consensus (Harvey 13). After the depression of the 1920s & 30s, Keynesian economic principles of supporting social programming and funnelling wealth to the middle class rescued a fledgling post-depression economy but, after WWII, the economy was healthy and the upper classes wanted to regain some of the wealth they gave up during the Keynesian era. Neoliberal theory arose from a small group of academic economists, historians, and philosophers. In 1947, the Mont Pelerin Society was created by Austrian political philosopher Friedrich von Hayek. Other notable members of this group included Ludvig von Mises, Milton Friedman and Karl Popper (Harvey 19-20). Hayek in his book *The Constitution of Liberty* argued that ideology was the main battle field for neoliberals. They had to defeat Marxists, socialists, state planners, and any form of Keynesian intervention. This would take at least a generation (Harvey 21). In the 1970s, several think-tank off-shoots of the Mont Pelerin Society started. One was Friedman’s in Chicago (Harvey

22). Neoliberal theory had gained academic respect by the 1970s which was shown when Hayek won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1974 and Friedman did likewise in 1976 (Harvey 22).

The first implementation of the 20th century's conception of neoliberalism took place in Chile in the 1970s and was led by Milton Friedman and the University of Chicago's Economic Department. Milton Friedman and his students/ researchers worked to revolutionize economics in the 1950s & 60s. For them, "economic theory is 'a sacred feature of the system' not a debatable hypothesis" (Klein 57). Klein goes on to write of the think-tank, "Just as ecosystems self-regulate, keeping themselves in balance, the market, left to its own devices, would create just the right number of products at precisely the right prices, produced by workers at just the right wages to buy these products..." - a science-based, closed-loop economic system (58). For Friedman and his group, free market equals a perfect scientific system. The struggle for Friedman's ideology was it did not have a beginning point; meaning, his ideology did not have an enemy which needed to be defeated before the perfect scientific system could be implemented (Klein 60). What he landed on was the conclusion that free market's enemy is not Marxism but Keynesian economics. The state controlled capitalism which gained strength in the 1950s & 60s throughout the world but most notably in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil helped to develop these countries (Klein 63-64). From the perspective of corporations, these were dark days as there were strong unions and less investment opportunities.

Beginning in 1953, Friedman started working with Chilean leaders to bring in economic reforms to help the free market (Klein 68-69). Chileans studied in Chicago and Friedman's students and colleagues would travel to Chile to study economics and teach in their universities. This came to be known as the "Chile Project". At first the project was not successful with the "Chicago Boys" (Chileans economists trained by Friedman) being left out of policy decisions and, in 1970, the Chilean people electing a far left-leaning party (Klein 72-73). Salvador Allende was elected leader of Chile in 1970 on a platform of bringing large segments of the economy into government control (Klein 74). Richard Nixon, on being elected US president, kept the Chile Project alive. Nixon wanted to change this leadership and enlisted the CIA's help since the US stood to lose many investments not only in Chile but the rest of Latin American if this left-leaning movement was to spread (Klein 74). Before Allende was even sworn in, Corporate America declared war on him (Klein 74). Nixon

and associates helped foster a military coup (Klein 76). The Chilean military planned the coup with help from the CIA and Chile's "Chicago Boys" planned how the economy would look after the coup (Klein 82).

What David Harvey refers to as "little September 11" started on September 11, 1973 (Harvey 7). This was the beginning of the coup (Klein 87). On one side, jets, tanks, and soldiers and, on Allende's side, only a small contingent of 36 guards (Klein 87-88). By the end of the coup, Allende was dead, 3200 nationals were dead, 80,000 nationals were imprisoned, and 200,000 Chileans fled the country (Klein 89). While shots were being fired, the economists were already at work and before mid-day on September 12 the economic plans were on every desk of the newly appointed government officials (Klein 90). These policies were used in many other countries in the following years but this was the first implementation of Friedman's policy of wresting control from Keynesian policy (Klein 90). This sent much of Chile into poverty (Klein 90) and a small elite group went from wealthy to super rich (Klein 100) while largely eliminating the middle class (Klein 101).

The years that followed the Chile Project saw neoliberalism spread to every corner of the world. For the history of Neoliberalism's takeover, importance should be attached to the years 1978-80. In these years, Deng Xiaoping took the final steps to liberalize China which two decades later led to their becoming a somewhat open capitalist nation (1978), Paul Volcker took command of the Federal Reserve with the remit to end inflation no matter the social cost (July 1979), Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister with a platform to curb trade unions' power and end inflation (May 1979), and Ronald Reagan was elected President to support Volcker's moves and to curb labour unions' power, deregulate industry, and liberate financial markets in the US and abroad in 1980 (Harvey 1). These global events did not take place by coincidence. In each case, a small group took what was before seen as a minority argument for economic ideology, neoliberalism, and transformed it into their "central guiding principle of economic thought and management" (Harvey 1). In the case of Margret Thatcher, she developed a friendship with Pinochet, Chile's leading military dictator of the Chile Project, and used the Chilean economy as a model for her work in Britain (Klein 155). The process in Britain was slower since it was a democratic nation. The Falkland Island War against Argentina allowed Thatcher to start privatizing everything because of her surging political popularity from winning the war (Klein 165). During this period, she gained her nickname "the Iron Lady" by

leading the war against the Argentinians for control of the Falklands Islands. After the war, she took on the coal miners' union in what was a struggle showing her tenacious ability to fight for privatization (Klein 164-165) and in the years 1984-85 privatized many essential services in Britain. After seeing how far she was willing to take the fight against the coal miners' union the other unions quickly fell. This period under Thatcher's leadership showed that Chicago School economic policies did not need a bloody military coup. A large political crisis could work as a similar shock (Klein 165-166) and the Falklands War was this for her.

US involvement through the Washington Consensus aided the spread of Neoliberalism. Any threat to the "stability" required to maintain the Washington Consensus was met by force backed by the US. Any time there was a movement which threatened nationalism or addressed the rights of the poor American forces intervened to stop the movement. The Washington Consensus dictated that private and raw materials need protection for purposes of profit (Chomsky 21). The general makeup of this economic agreement was that Southeast Asia was to provide raw material for the world while African countries were to be exploited by Europe (Chomsky 22). Latin America was to be exploited by the US but this area was more problematic because the people in these countries had strong beliefs that poor people should benefit from wealth (Chomsky 23). Force was needed to spread Neoliberalism in Latin America. The US also helped to spread neoliberalism to other areas of the world including: Mexico (Chomsky 27), Eastern Europe, Grenada, Guatemala, Egypt, Middle East, Taiwan, South Korea, Venezuela, etc. (Chomsky 28-34). Now, in the 21st Century, the world is left with the defining ideology of Neoliberalism in every corner.

The Post - 9/11 era created a crisis atmosphere where Neoliberal trends could spread through the US. Milton Friedman's students were to be found throughout Bush's white house (Klein 13-14). In the five years that followed 9/11, the security-state was built into a \$200 billion sector by massive growth in the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) and the National Security Agency (NSA) coupled with a military-style buildup of police forces throughout cities in the US (Klein 14). Also, in post 9/11, post-war development is privatized: UNICEF no longer helps rebuild, Bechtel does; Pizza Hut, McDonald's, and Subway follow the US military to Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, displaced people from hurricanes in the US can stay on Carnival cruise ships; and Blackwater provides security (Klein 15-16). Donald Rumsfeld's time as defense secretary in the Pentagon was "an attempt to bring

the revolution in outsourcing and branding that he had been part of in the corporate world into the heart of the US military” (Klein 341). The privatization of military post 9/11 allowed companies like Blackwater, Halliburton, and Lockheed-Martin to profit from US government contracts being off-loaded onto the private sector. Rumsfeld wanted to spend less money on military staff to funnel it towards private military and surveillance companies (Klein 343). According to Klein “the war on terror - was built to be private from the start... [to] increase the policing, surveillance, detention and war-waging powers of the executive branch”. After these steps were complete the newly built infrastructure was then “handed over to the private sector to perform at a profit” (Klein 358).

After 2006, up until today, Neoliberal economic policies have been adopted throughout the globe. During the financial crash of 2008, which affected economies worldwide, public money was used to bail out private banks thus beginning the economics of austerity which has taken hold. Tim Prentki writes, “Austerity is the latest strategy for transferring money from the already poor to the already rich by destroying the public sphere and reducing governments to the status of hand-maidens to transnational corporations.” Currently, world leaders are negotiating the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). This agreement will give corporations “power over the rights and sovereignty of elected governments and their peoples” as the goal for this agreement is “to remove regulatory barriers which currently restricts the profits of transnational corporations such as labour rights, food safety rules, regulations of toxic chemicals, digital privacy laws, and banking safeguards.” The TTIP will allow for what they are calling “State dispute settlements” which will give corporations ability to take governments to court if they are not following Neoliberal policy (Prentki).

Canada, the country I live in, is not immune to the constant pressure of Neoliberal policy. Henry Giroux takes a look at the Canadian Government’s policies and the effect they have had on the Canadian economy. Canada has seen a shift in equality between the rich and poor. Giroux cites Bruce Campbell who writes, “The richest Canadian 1% has almost doubled its share of the national income pie - from 7% to almost 14% - over the last three decades. The average top 100 CEOs compensation was \$6.6 million in 2009, 155 times the average worker’s wage [while] 61 Canadian billionaires have a combined wealth of \$162 billion, twice as much as the bottom 17 million Canadians” (Giroux 157).

Giroux goes on to further criticize Neoliberalism's relationship with higher education in Canada, specifically looking at Canada's military budget. He writes, "the military budget could be cut by two-thirds and those funds invested in public and higher education" (Giroux 25). As I look at this as a Canadian student with a student debt load it angers me. He goes on to further describe the relationship between the military and higher education stating,

The defunding of the social state and higher education and the increasing attack on the social contract are also evident in the Canadian state's willingness in the latter half of the 1990s "to reduce by 50% the federal transfers to the provinces for post-secondary education [which has amounted] to a loss of income of \$800 million per year for Quebec.: Federal funds that could have been used for investing in higher education have instead been relocated to support the conservative government's tough-on-crime agenda and either squandered on prison expansion or diverted into a growing Canadian military budget. (Giroux 166)

Free education could be offered if the military budget was cut back. In 2011, Canada's military budget was \$24.7 billion which placed it at 14th in the world. Canada has purchased F-35 fighter jets valued at \$45.8 billion from American arms manufacturers (Giroux 167) and the Canadian Forces have been drafting a plan to buy unmanned drones for the last decade (<http://www.thestar.com>).

The scaling back of funds to universities has also coincided with an attack on freedom of speech in regards to any finding which would negatively affect the market and an attack on the privacy of Canadian citizens. Giroux writes,

On the national level, the Harper Government has both cut back crucial research on the environment and censored scientists critical of the government's policies on "climate change, fisheries, and aquaculture [that] affect Canadian ocean biodiversity." The Harper Government has also withdrawn public funds from scientists, archivists, statisticians, and librarians who use their research and scholarship to address crucial issues that affect the public good. Ideology now

trumps evidence, and science gives way to the brutal demands of neoliberalism.
(Giroux 177)

As if cuts to funding were not enough, the Canadian Government also saw fit to silence academics who spoke out against any Neoliberal policies. The infamous Bill C-51 was passed into law on June 18, 2015 despite much criticism from the public (<http://www.cbc.ca>). The bill is a vaguely worded document which is being touted by the Harper Government as a bill giving CSIS the ability to stop terrorist propaganda and plots by allowing for increased capacity to peer into the private lives of Canadian citizens and visitors. Critics argue that the bill has no oversight and could easily be abused and that the bill is unconstitutional in that it infringes freedom and privacy.

With all this in mind, it is easy to understand why in 2012 university students in Quebec protested cuts to education (Giroux 155); an act which they repeated again in the Spring of 2015 (<http://montreal.ctvnews.ca>); or, why the Occupy Wall Street Movement of 2011 gained support across Canadian cities (Giroux 155-180). Both the Occupy Movement and the Quebec Student protests were met with violence by Canada's militarized police forces. Perhaps the clearest moment of the over-use of force during these protests was when a masked police officer shot a can of tear gas into 18 year old CEGEP student Naomie Trudeau-Tremblay's face. She was attending a rally in late-March 2015 and was shot in the face from point blank range. Besides the protests against austerity by the Quebec students and during the Occupy Movement, Canadians and visitors to our country were also met with the overuse of police force during the G20 meetings in 2010 - an infamous period of Canadian history.

In 2011, Dan Dicks directed a documentary film called "Into the Fire" which displays the atmosphere, moment-by-moment events, and the outfall of the G20 summit held in Downtown Toronto for two days in late June 2010. The protests gathered people from all over the world. Some were there to protest climate change, inequality, war, or the corruption of the banks. The unifying feature of the protests was their commitment to being heard by the gathered world leaders of the G20. Violence erupted on the first day of protests which was carried out by the suspicious "Black Bloc" anti-capitalist organization but was kept in check peacefully by the gathered police force. All that occurred was cosmetic damage to store fronts of corporate stores like Starbucks, McDonald's,

and some banks and the police abandoned a few police cruisers which were lit on fire by the Black Bloc. The second day had the police force take on a different tactic. The police would single out people in the protest who they thought were organizers or leaders of professional protest organizations and arrest them with the charge of “conspiracy to commit mischief”. After the arrest, the individuals were taken to a detention centre away from the protest which was set-up in the Toronto Film Studios by taking chain-link fence and creating cages which more closely resembled a dog kennel than a jail. At the end of this day, 1105 protestors were caged in this facility making it the largest mass arrest in Canadian history with a vast majority of those arrested never being charged of any crime. Over \$858 million dollars was spent by the Toronto Police Force in the creation of the security around this single event. André Marin, Ontario’s Ombudsman, reported on the police actions of this day describing them as illegal and unconstitutional. The police were given the clearance to arrest people on the streets from the enactment of the “Public Works Protection Act” which was created in 1939 as an act to be used in times of war, an act deemed by Marin to be a highly questionable use of this existing law.

If neoliberalism is so bad, why do we allow it to continue to govern us? Why are so many people numb to this harsh reality?

Neoliberalism has remained outside of the main discussions in nations across the world. Neoliberalism is an unused term outside academia and when it is discussed it is as if it is the only option. In the mainstream, these trends are referred to as free market, consumer choice, or private enterprise and there is a “sacred aura” to these concepts (McChesney 7). Governments will do anything to help forward these ideas and policies often in corrupt ways and when announcements of austerity are made, they sound like the poor are being helped by the rich (McChesney 7). Possibly, the most relevant point that can be made about Neoliberalism is brought up by McChesney in his introduction to Chomsky’s *Profit over People* when he writes, “The ultimate trump card for the defending of neoliberalism, however, is that there is no alternative” (McChesney 8). With the perceived failure of communism and social democracy, neoliberalism is the only option to govern our world (McChesney 8). Neoliberalism works best when the public is diverted from decision-making on issues that really matter. The public should be pro-business and debate minor issues. Another by-product of neoliberalism is a cynical and apathetic population because political parties

are only appealing to business and because of this neoliberal elections are closer to one party elections (McChesney 10). Democracy needs citizens who feel connected and this happens through public institutions like libraries, schools, trade unions, and community groups. The pro-business mentality of neoliberalism hurts these institutions. Neoliberalism strives to create consumers not citizens (McChesney 11). McChesney points out that, "...the inability to have honest and candid debates about neoliberalism..." is a major problem for democracy (McChesney 13). Neoliberalism seems "off limits to mainstream analysis". News and intellectual culture provide "necessary illusions" to make this unpalatable situation appear rational, benevolent, and necessary if not desirable." (McChesney 14). Neoliberalism is often referred to as the "end of history" and much money is spent to convince people neoliberalism is the best possible system (McChesney 15). Chomsky agrees with this assertion when he writes, "The people must submit to their rulers, and it is enough if they give consent without consent. Within a tyrannical state or in foreign domains, force can be used. When the resources of violence are limited, the consent of the governed must be obtained by the devices called 'manufacture of consent' by progressive and liberal opinion" (Chomsky 45). The US government helps provide governments with the capability for force through the use of their military machine. Chomsky shares his findings that the public believes the system is unfair when democratic principles are not being fully followed and that was even the case through the Reagan era of cuts to social institutions. (Chomsky 55). The public allows leaders to believe we are at 'the end of history' and that the system has become "utopia of the masters" (Chomsky 58). In 1973, David Rockefeller funded the Tri-lateral Commission to study the "crisis of democracy". The crisis was "excessive democracy". The commission wanted a return to the days of Truman who ruled with elite financial heads and developed policies "to restore discipline, and to return the general public to passivity and obedience, overcoming the crisis of democracy" (Chomsky 60). The public is discouraged from discussing neoliberalism and if they do neoliberalism is to be the only option.

Besides being held outside of public discourse, noted political theorist David Harvey writes about how neoliberal thought is as efficacious as it has been throughout society. He writes,

The founding figures of neoliberal thought took political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom as fundamental, as 'the central values of civilization'. In so doing they chose wisely, for these are indeed compelling and seductive ideals. These

values, they held, were threatened not only by fascism, dictatorships, and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgements for those of individuals free to choose. (Harvey 5)

The concepts of dignity and individual freedom appeal to populations. Many historic revolutions were quests for freedom of speech or personal choice. Humans feel connected to their freedom and neoliberalism, using freedom of the individual and the market as a central value, is appealing to many people, especially those that already have some level of power and wealth. Anything which can jeopardize individual freedom can easily be pushed into the role of an enemy – examples can include terrorism, immigration, protest, etc.

Henry Giroux writes about the public pedagogy of neoliberalism and its relationship to the system of individuality and market value. In his mind, neoliberalism has disdain for “community, social responsibility, public values, and the public good” and social problems have been transformed into individual flaws (Giroux 2). Under Neoliberal pedagogy, freedom has become “the liberty to seek one’s own interests and well-being, without being responsible for the interests or well-being of anyone else.” This represents a morality that considers individual before collective or social. Giroux believes this is currently manifesting itself as a war on young people. Throughout North American schools and prisons are modelled using similar designs; violence against student protest is regular; banks are bailed out while cutting social assistance (Giroux 3); all while the wealthy 1% are gaining wealth during austerity cuts. Giroux sees these measures, “...punish the poor and cut vital services to who need them most” (Giroux 4). Giroux continues, “In addition to amassing ever-expanding amounts of material wealth, the rich now control the means of schooling and other cultural apparatuses...” and the rich are less welcoming to critical education (Giroux 5). Critical education has been replaced with “test taking, memorizing facts, and learning how not to question knowledge or authority” (Giroux 6). Within this new public pedagogy and the new Neoliberal school system ethics and the market place are growing further apart. Giroux writes,

Not only does neoliberal rationality believe in the ability of markets to solve all problems, it also removes economics and markets from ethical considerations. Economic growth, rather than social needs, drive politics. Long-term investments

are replaced by short-term goals and profits, while compassion is viewed as a weakness and democratic public values are derided. (Giroux 12-13)

The market should rule human interaction and “Greed is Good”. Giroux concludes “...the struggle over education has become one of the most powerful fulcrums for redressing the detrimental effects of neoliberalism” (Giroux 24). An absolute injustice is happening to younger generations currently being raised through a public education system which prioritizes neoliberal pedagogy. This is why students who have been brought through this system are willing to protest, even in the face of oppression from their leaders.

2 - Applied Theatre as Resistance to Neoliberalism

In Tim Prentki’s presentation in Singapore, he argued that Applied Theatre is able to create a space of resistance to neoliberalism. He pointed out two ways Applied Theatre can perform this vital act: by engaging theatre participants in free play and by creating a dialectic for theatre participants to encounter.

Prentki draws attention to Ken Robinson’s study of anthropologist Peter Gray’s investigation of children’s free play in hunter-gatherer societies. Gray noticed that the children were bright, happy, cooperative, well-adjusted and resilient. Prentki writes, “... from a biological evolutionary perspective, play is nature’s means of insuring that young mammals, including young human beings, acquire the skills that they need to acquire to develop successfully into adulthood.” Free play is a naturally occurring space where children learn how to live in terms of all aspects of their life. They learn skills of a physical, intellectual, and emotional nature which are difficult to acquire in other spaces. If children do not engage in free play something essential is being lost. Prentki citing Robinson writes, “Nothing that we do, no amount of toys we buy or ‘quality time’ or special training we give our children can compensate for the freedom we take away. The things that children learn through their own initiatives, in free play, cannot be taught in other ways.” Prentki identifies theatre as being a space where free play happens. Of being involved in theatre, he writes,

Whether applied to young people or adults, the process being engaged in is that of matching their experiences, either lived or observed, with socio-cultural expectations. They are trying themselves out against the world and, in places where they do not fit, seeing whether the application of imagination might lead to social changes in line with felt experiences. (Prentki)

Both adults and young people relate to theatrical experiences by comparing their lived experience to the imaginary world they encounter in free play and the theatre. Prentki points out that, the “conditions which enable free play to thrive are nowhere to be found among neoliberal concepts of education” (Prentki). Most mainstream education, both in terms of what students encounter in schools and what adults encounter in terms of public pedagogy through media and from community leadership, operates on an industrial model of education which holds important uniform standards and a testing obsession which communicates that the purpose of education is to obtain a job.

Prentki also alerts applied theatre practitioners that theatre can generate a dialectic which causes participants to encounter a space to resist neoliberalism. For Prentki, the dialectic created happens between “reality and imagination”. He writes, “... the learners, bring their own experiences into the learning space where it can interact with the experiences of others.” Theatre participants have their lived experiences they bring into the theatre which they balance against the imaginary world presented within the theatre or free play. What makes theatre a good location to encounter this dialectic is the emotions which are tied to the learning process. Prentki writes, “...the core ingredients are the thoughts, feelings, images, bodies and words through which the participants bring their subjective, inner lives into contact with an external world.” Within the normal confines of a neoliberal-style education, emotions and feeling are not engaged in the learning process. The skills which are most valued are repetition and memorization.

3 - Case Study Examples of Playfulness Creating Spaces outside Neoliberalism from India Project

In both the process and performances of the Indian Intergenerational Theatre Company locations external to the powerful forces of neoliberalism were created. Throughout the workshops, meetings,

and rehearsals of the company and during the pilot projects leading up to the performances of the company given in November 2014 and June 2015 a playful atmosphere of celebration was present which created an oppositional space outside the control of neoliberal thought. In the India project, the created community's ability to find playful spaces for theatrical creation locates itself inside of the theory Prentki presents in that the Indian people used a form of free play leading towards creating theatre. The theatre created by the company invented a theatrical world in which audiences had an encounter between the real and the imaginary. These exchanges all took place in a space alternative to Neoliberalism. In this section, I will first highlight the process of the company and their use of playfulness and free play. Then, I will examine four of the stories presented over the two performances to display the dialectic created by these scenes.

At the site of free play in a theatrical process, play leads to the creation of a community highlighting the value of community support in contrast to neoliberal thought's focus on individual freedom. Theoretically, the best way to conceive of playfulness' emphasis on community support is through a game built by Canadian theatre practitioner Keith Johnstone. His game "Yes, let's..." and its variations are well known throughout improvisational theatrical practices. In this game, participants generally work in pairs. One player will say to the other "Let's..." and they will fill in the blank with some sort of activity. For example, "let's ride a bike", "let's climb a mountain", "let's eat a huge meal", etc. Then, the partner will respond to the first player's request with, "Yes, let's" and then the two of them will pretend to engage in the activity. The two players will go back and forth suggesting activities and playing with each other. This game has many variations including "Yes, and..." and "Yes but..." but my favourite version, and what best theoretically displays what I am trying to communicate about the creation of community, is a variation of the game where you grow from working in pairs, to working in groups of four, eight, ten, and finally the whole group assembled. I have done this many times with a variety of groups. The progression from watching people play as pairs and then onto the creation of a whole room full of people fully committed to imaginative free play is transitional since this game lies in direct contrast to individuality. In this variation of Johnstone's game, the individual in the game grows from playing with one person having the responsibility to commit to the imaginative world being constructed by two minds and bodies focusing on play transitioning to a game where the group grows from two to four to eight to ten and finally, the largest group I have even seen a community of 80 people playing "Yes, let's...". The

experience of being in a room filled with people all committed to the imaginary world of each other's creation is highly fulfilling in that it gives an individual the sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves. The individual cannot play "Yes, Let's..." alone. The individual needs to rely on at least one other person and by growing through this process the individual is placed in a position where they are relying on the whole room full of people. Neoliberal thought and pedagogy places the individual alone. One is responsible for their actions in the world and in the market. You are alone and any decisions you make are your responsibility because you are free to make the decisions you want. Whether they are impacted by external forces does not matter because your individual freedom is held in higher regard. In Johnstone's "Yes, Lets'...", the relationship between individual and freedom is constructed differently. In the game, the suggestions individuals make are taken up by the rest of the group and created into an imaginary world of play. The individual is supported by the community and the community is created by a grouping of individuals. Neoliberal thought's valuing of individual freedom is reframed in playfulness as the freedom to play and be supported by a community.

In the process with the India Intergenerational Theatre Company the game "Yes, Let's..." was never played but the spirit of Johnstone's game was regularly present. One instance which saw a progression from individual to community as in Johnstone's game was through the process of the creation and performance of the Tamil version of the *GerActors and Friends'* song "We're Here". This happened as a process that began with the song being written and performed in English in 2007 by G&F, and then, in July 2013, it was translated into Tamil and finally performed at both the November 2014 and June 2015 performances in Tamil Nadu. During the 2006-07 season, G&F, David Barnet, and I were working on a scene called "Invisible". At the time, we were struggling to create a framework for the entire scene. We had two great stories but we were missing a full dramaturgical structure. Some of the details of how all this came together are foggy in my memory but I remember the rehearsal David came up with the idea for this song. He introduced the words and the tune to the company, they sang it, and we had a song that has ever since been what G&F calls "the theme song for seniors everywhere". The song's lyrics are: "We're here because we are here and we are not invisible." Seniors in Canada struggle with being recognized as individuals since their productivity has declined in old age and seeing a group of them onstage claiming they can still be productive is an important act.

Now, as far the Indian Company was concerned, during the pilot project I did with the Tamaraikulam elders in July 2013, they were introduced to this song by a recording. Originally, when I started working with the elders during this pilot project, we had about eight seniors gathered. On this day, we played some train games and told stories about them. After this activity, I showed them the recording with the intention of teaching them the song in English. After watching the video, Sathiyababu and GPK translated the song for the elders and then they started to sing it. They sang the song in a smaller group and then brought it out to the open air stage in central Tamaraikulam and sang the song for the other elders. Many of the healthier elders joined in the singing. They enjoyed the song and claiming they were not invisible but they were individuals who could contribute. The singing was filled with laughter and smiles so much so at one point an elder fell over because she was laughing so hard. After this song was fully crafted, the elders took the song and taught it to the Isha School. One afternoon late in the July 2013 pilot project, the elders came to the Isha School and they taught the students. The song went from being sung by the elders and, then, the young students from impoverished rural communities in Tamil Nadu were singing the same song lifting the same spirit of claiming ability to be individuals able to make a contribution in the world. Now that the students knew the song and lived spirit of the song they were able to perform it at the company's public events. At both the November 2014 and the June 2015 performances, the song was sung to the assembled audiences. This means that for the Indian community, this song went from being something a small group of elders watched on a video screen in English, progressing along to something they sang for the small audience of workers and fellow elders, onto being a song taught to a school, and finally something that was shared at public performances for hundreds of people. The song took the same course as the individual takes in the playing of "Yes, Let's..." travelling from something that was on an individual video screen to a shared public experience. A small offer went from a tiny group to being an event which was supported by an entire community.

The attitude present within Johnstone's game and the path "We're Here" travelled, show the strength playfulness has in creating a space outside neoliberalism. Neoliberalism's thought and pedagogical construction relies heavily on individual freedom within the market place and the ideal in which the argument "Greed is Good" prevails. Individual freedom is present within Johnstone's "Yes, Let's..." but the attitude is different. First, the freedom expressed within the confines of free

play is outside of the market. The play, both with the game and within the path of “We’re Here”, is outside of the market place and is a communion between groups of people. Being that the transactions within play are outside of the market place, the nature of individuality morphs. In the market, the individual works to fulfill her/his own needs and the community is considered secondarily if at all. Within the community built on playfulness in either Johnstone’s game or within the Indian Theatre Company, individual freedom is expressed through imaginative offers which the community takes and builds upon. The individual says, “Let’s play the xylophone” or “Let’s go to a museum” or “Let’s go play on the slide” and the community responds, “Yes, Let’s”. The individuals’ freedom is expressed and the others accept that expression and build upon it. Within playfulness, the attitude shifts from individuals fulfilling her/his needs and then the community’s second, to the individual expressing her/his needs and the community building upon them. Play is an activity that builds community. Free play of this nature does not fulfill needs for an individual but seeks to fulfill the needs of a community.

Four stories were created as a part of the playful process built by the Indian Company which share a similar theme. The themes are similar because of the process taken to find the stories. When the company rehearsed to devise they engaged in some sort of free play. Either in the form of games with an open structure similar to “Yes, Lets...” or some sort of child’s play or dancing or singing. This free play led to a playful atmosphere which guided the story-sharing to be an expression of how individuals were being supported by a community. The first story was called “Jayamma’s Story”. She shared about her family background beginning on a solid foundation of having a successful farm and how it unravelled to her being stuck in an abusive relationship with her alcoholic sons. It ended up with her neighbours supporting her to enter Tamaraiikulam to escape the abusive relationship. In another story, a few of the elders shared their memories about how the tsunami affected their families, with members dying and with abusive relationships which followed. To finish the story, the elders expressed gratitude for the tsunami. At the outset this may sound odd but this area of the world has needed development for generations. The Southern tip of India has many similar statistical indicators of poverty equal to or worse than Sub-Saharan Africa. The gratitude emerges because the area is finally receiving aid from the world thanks to the tsunami. In a story written by Vadevil, one of the elders, called “When Two Become One”, a community is forced to re-locate and embarks on a journey to find a new home. The old man becomes ill forcing them to ask for help from a

nearby village. At a *Panchayat*, a traditional indigenous community gathering for making decisions, the mayor of the village is swung by public opinion to allow the travelling community to join their village. In the final story, one of the young boys from Isha shared his experience of having a food allergy illness which his parents neglected. His neighbours and grandparents had to pull him away from his parents to ensure he was raised in a healthy environment. In each of these stories, an individual is encountering some sort of hardship and then a larger community comes together to aid the individual.

When an audience views these scenes in performance, a dialectic between the real and the imaginary is created which acts as a site outside neoliberalism. An audience of the Indian Theatre Company is different from an audience of what can be thought of as a typical audience of western theatre. Richard Schechner differentiates two types of audiences by labelling them integral and accidental audiences. An accidental audience engages in a ritual in which they see an advertisement for a play, buy tickets, sit in a specific seat, watch the play, and thus ends the performance; this type of audience is common in western theatre (Schechner 220). An integral audience attends the theatrical event because it is of social significance to them (220). For the Indian Company, the performances were set up as a celebration. The audience is coming to view the theatre as a part of a larger event in which a free meal is given and there are sing-alongs and community dances and games. This celebratory atmosphere gives the integral audience a strong stake in the performance. When it becomes time to encounter the stories shared, the dialectic created between the audience's reality and then the imaginary world is different than in a western theatre event. In a typical western theatre or with the accidental audience, the relationship to the imaginary world is tied to the proficiency of the actors and the witnessed spectacle. Audiences are invited to enter the imaginary world through an elaborate presentation. For the Indian Company, this does not happen. They rely on inviting their community of people to witness the celebratory act of seeing other members of their community act out stories from the community and upon the traditional ways in which their community has been meeting. The accidental audience encounters an imaginary world which is often much different than their own reality. In the case of the Indian Theatre Company's performance, the performance consisted of presentations of stories the audience could immediately relate to. A majority of the audience live in the exact same conditions of poverty and individual need where individuals encounter hardships and their only way out is to have the community help. If the community does not help, it often leads

to severe hardship or death. Therefore, the imaginary world encountered by the integral audiences of the Indian Theatre Company see stories from their community in which individuals are supported by their community. The celebratory atmosphere gives the audience of the theatre a similar relationship to the stories as one would have from playfulness. The celebration leads to a playful atmosphere similar to the conditions under which the theatre company created the scenes. This gives the audience an encounter with the dialectic of the imaginary and the real which occurs under the influence of the attitude of playfulness. The individual hardships encountered in the scenes are not the fault of the individual's bad economic relationship to the market place. The fault is not important. What is important is that the individual needs community support to survive. As a place of public pedagogy, the pedagogy present at a celebratory performance of the intergenerational playfulness of this community lies in direct contrast to neoliberalism. In neoliberalism, the fault is the individual's and the market will go on but in the imaginary world of the theatre the community must support the individual. The hope is now that the audience will connect these thought patterns to their daily life.

4 - Conclusion

Within the playful-celebratory performances of the Indian Intergenerational Theatre Company, a place external to neoliberal thought's version of individual freedom is created both within the company's process and in their performances. Importance lies in giving opportunities for this to arise in many locations. The Indian Company benefitted by having an opportunity to create a location of resistance to neoliberalism and their example can lie as inspiration for people the world over. Often, the powers of neoliberalism make it seem as though it is impossible to live without, think of their assertion that we are at the "End of History", but we have proof that indeed sites outside of its control can happen. As a global community, we need to create more spaces external to this dominant ideology.

Exegesis Chapter Three - Inaesthetic and Applied Theatre: A discussion on “Message-Laden Theatre vs. Real Voices” and “Theatre Magic”

0 - Introduction

During the India Field School, Michael Etherton came and visited our project. Upon Michael’s arrival, Mary (his wife), Sathiyababu, Ramalingam, he and I went for a beer in a gorgeous outdoor restaurant in the French district of Pondicherry. For me, this experience was highly delightful in that I was privileged to watch Sathiyababu, Ramalingam, and Michael reminiscence about the days of constructing Tamaraikulam. At some point during our beer, Michael looked to me to talk about the last time he and I had seen each other when he first saw the *GerActors and Friends* perform. He felt that what he saw in Edmonton was the first time he saw elders performing onstage using their voice and saying “what they really want”. At that moment, he thought the G&F model would work in Tamaraikulam. I took this as high praise but at the time I was also confused as to what this really meant. What does it mean “voices saying what they really want”? A few days later, Michael and Mary visited the village to watch our theatre project. The rehearsals were only a week old and we had not fully developed what exactly would be our working process. Immediately, when Michael and I started discussing the scene work being led by Sathiyababu and the directors from Pondicherry University, Michael used the term “Message-Laden Theatre” for what was transpiring. After he and I chatted, Michael took a moment to advise Sathiyababu to move away from the “Message-Laden Theatre” and to follow the lead of us Canadians. What does it mean: “Message-Laden Theatre”? When Michael uses this term, he is referring to theatre in which the organization identifies a message they want conveyed through the theatre, not a theatre in which the participants truly create the stories presented in performance. From this moment on, my role in the project was to ensure that any performance done by this company would represent what Michael called “voices saying what they really want,” and not be “Message-Laden Theatre”.

When the performance date was nearing, about two weeks before, I had a meeting with Sathiyababu and Ramalingam for which Nikki joined me. The stated purpose of the meeting was to discuss fundraising efforts Nikki wanted to take on for Tamaraikulam when she returned to Canada. At this meeting, we dealt with the fundraising matters quickly but then the unstated agenda for the meeting

came out. Ramalingam and Sathiyababu were highly nervous about the upcoming performance and really wanted to have a solid script. The problem being, no fully formed script had emerged from our process. As a company, we had finally gotten over the hump of gelling as a group. We were playing, having fun and the ‘voice’ of the newly formed intergenerational community was developing if not fully articulated. But now, the *HelpAge India* representatives were nervous and ready for there to be a script. They pointed to some of the earlier plays we had worked on while Michael attended rehearsal as being good for the stage. I struggled to explain to them exactly why we couldn’t perform them and then Nikki piped up saying, “We hadn’t found the magic yet. Now, we’ve found the magic”. She was right. We had found the “Magic”. But what exactly is this “Magic”? I was not totally sure but at the time it helped us get through the discussion. Sathiyababu and Ramalingam were satisfied to trust me to guide the group to a performance.

What are all of these concepts being introduced to me here? “Voices saying what they really want” and “Message-Laden Theatre” and Nikki’s “Magic”...what the hell are any of these things? This chapter will provide a philosophical discussion working towards answers for these questions.

Alain Badiou in his *Inaesthetic Handbook* introduces his interpretation of the relationship between art and philosophy. Badiou’s purpose in writing this work is to update the philosophical discussion on art. He focuses on what he calls the inaesthetic elements of art. His discussions throughout the book and specifically in the chapter on theatre will be helpful while I discuss the puzzling concepts referred to above. The inspiration behind wanting to have some discussion about these is because it will be helpful for Applied Theatre practitioners to have a philosophical framework for speaking with partnering organizations and community members about the “Magic” or about the “Message-Laden vs. Real Voices” debate Michael Etherton brought up. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) love having theatre as a part of their programming. This is true of both international development NGOs and community based education non-profits (e.g. sexual education, health education, anti-Genetically Modified Organisms education, urban farmer initiative, water-well project education, etc.). With these organizations, many see theatre as an opportunity for delivering their organizations’ message. How can we change this perspective? Community-based artists often join theatre groups with wide-ranging aspirations (e.g. enjoyment, try something new, desire to tell life story, desire to be onstage, etc.) Some of these community members’ inspirations are quite

similar to message-delivering theatre; life story or the desire to be ‘funny’ can serve as difficult beginning points for theatre – a desire undirected. Badiou’s inaesthetic analysis lends applied theatre practitioners a tool for explaining theatre’s transformational potential to partnering organizations and community-based artists.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. First, I will describe Badiou’s discussion of the inaesthetic and its relationship to theatre. The second section will contain a model I have created based upon Badiou’s theories which helps my understanding of how the inaesthetic can be employed as a tool for analyzing Applied Theatre practice. Finally, the last section will contain a discussion revolving around the inaesthetic in relation to the India Intergenerational Theatre project.

1 – Alain Badiou’s Inaesthetic

In Alain Badiou’s *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, he begins by including a quotation before the first chapter. The quote reads,

“By “inaesthetics” I understand a relation of philosophy to art that, maintaining that art itself is a producer of truths, makes no claim to turn art into an object for philosophy. Against aesthetic speculation, inaesthetics describes the strictly intraphilosophical effects produced by the independent existence of some works of art.”

This acts as an introduction note to his path to defining the concept of the inaesthetic. In this philosophy, art produces truth which characterizes the relationship between art and truth – for Badiou, art produces truth. He also points out that in the inaesthetic, art has no ambition or assertion that a relationship with philosophy needs to exist. Art is a work that exists separate from philosophy and should be treated as such. Finally, in the second sentence, he shows why he chose the term ‘inaesthetic’ as it pits itself in direct opposition to ‘aesthetic speculation’. Within the considerations of the inaesthetic are the “intraphilosophical effects produced by the independent existence of some works of art”; meaning, the inaesthetic is a philosophy which is concerned with the internal effect brought about by artistic events which exists separate from the artwork’s aesthetic representation.

The inaesthetic examines the elements other than the artwork which have an independent existence to the work. This quote serves as a guide to his concept of the inaesthetic.

Badiou mobilizes a discussion regarding the relationship between art and philosophy. Badiou believes that this relationship is “affected by a symptom – that of an oscillation or a pulse”. In this dual-sided continuum, on one side stands Plato who rejects art in all its forms except military music and patriotic song, and on the other side stands a pious devotion to the arts (1). Badiou discusses three schemata to understand the link between art and philosophy. First, he defines the ‘didactic schemata’ stating the belief that “art is incapable of truth” and “truth is external to art”. In this schemata, “mimesis designates art not so much as an imitation of things, but as the imitation of the effect of truth.” Art’s use of mimesis duplicates the truth which leads Badiou to state that within this schemata “truth of art is false truth”. Also, in this schemata, “art must either be condemned or treated in a purely instrumental fashion” (2). Badiou continues this thought when he states, “The norm of art must be education; the norm of education is philosophy. This is the first knot that ties our three terms (art, philosophy, and education) together.” For Badiou, he sees the didactic schemata’s instrumentalism as a signal of art’s function as a pedagogical tool. Badiou secondly identifies the ‘romantic schemata’ which is acknowledged as a framework in which “art alone is capable of truth” and “art accomplishes what philosophy itself can only point towards”. The romantic schemata has at its core a belief that art is the best way to uncover truth. Thirdly, Badiou identifies the ‘classical schemata’ as the framework which “dehysterizes art” and was identified by Aristotle. Badiou believes this schemata acts as a “peace treaty” between the romantic and the didactic (3). In this, art is not to create truth. The function of art is mimetic and its territory is outward appearance or what he refers to as semblance. Badiou writes, “art is not truth, but it also does not claim to be truth and is therefore innocent”. Badiou points out that Aristotle adds the concept of “catharsis” to art philosophy as a “therapeutic function”. Badiou writes, “Art does not pertain to the theoretical but, to the ethical”. In these thoughts, he ties Aristotle’s catharsis to a potential ethical affect within art. Badiou marks two “great rules concerning art” stemming from the classical schemata. First, the criterion of art is “liking”. Badiou writes, “Art must be liked because “liking” signals the effectiveness of catharsis, the real grip exerted by the artistic therapy of the passions.” Second, “liking” does not relate to truth. Badiou writes, “Liking is bound only to what extracts from a truth the arrangements of an identification.” In this, identification assembles a transference of passion to the audience.

Badiou believes the transference to the audience has “truth constraints within the imaginary” and further describes this as an “imagarization of truth” or “verisimilitude”. He goes on to describe, “the peace between philosophy and art rests entirely on the demarcation of truth from verisimilitude” (4). Within this classical schemata art is not a form of thought, it is an “act” or “public operation” because the concept of ‘liking’ turns art into something more similar to a service – for Badiou “art is a public service” (5).

In Badiou’s mind, we have “experienced the saturation of these doctrines” (7). The purpose of Badiou’s book is to find a fourth Schemata. He writes, “In this situation of saturation and closure, it is necessary to propose a new schemata, a fourth modality of the link between philosophy and art.” To begin this process, he asks the question: What do the ‘old’ three schemata have in common? The answer: “the relation of art and truth” (8). For Badiou, “Art itself is a truth producer.” Meaning, for Badiou, art can generate truth. He writes,

“Art is a thought in which artworks are the Real (and not the effect). And this thought, or rather the truths that it activates, are irreducible to other truths – be they scientific, political, or amorous. This also means that art, as a singular regime of thought, is irreducible to philosophy.”

In this case, art is in itself a truth - a real truth. And the considerations triggered by art have relationships to other truths and the relationship between all of the truths is a complex philosophical relationship. He goes on to write,

“According to this vision of things, what becomes of the third term of the link, the pedagogical function of art? Art is pedagogical for the simple reason that it produces truths and because “education” (save in its oppressive or perverted expressions) has never meant anything but this: to arrange the forms of knowledge in such a way that some truths may come to pierce a hole in them.” (9)

In this, Badiou gives art the purpose of public pedagogy. Education is tied up in truth and with art’s relationship with truth it is impossible for art to not have some sort of relationship with education.

Badiou works to understand exactly how we can discuss art. To start this, he asks the question:

“When one undertakes the thinking of art as an immanent production of truths, what is the pertinent unity of what is called art? Is it the artwork itself, the singularity of a work? Is it the author, the creator? Or is it something else?”

The question hinges on the relationship between the infinite and the finite. Badiou believes that “truth is an infinite multiplicity”. He writes, “The infinity of a truth is the property whereby it subtracts itself from its pure and simple identity with the established forms of knowledge.” And in this relationship, “A work of art is essentially finite” - finite in space and time (10). Badiou argues, “art is in fact the only finite thing that exists”. If any artwork has a truth, it is marked by a “descent of the infinite-true into finitude (11). By this, Badiou is stating that art takes an infinite truth and creates finite artwork. In this theory, artistic truth equals ‘infinite’ and an artwork is an “inquiry about the truth” which is finite. Badiou also refers to an artwork as an “artistic configuration”. Badiou ends this analysis by stating, “the pertinent unit for a thinking of art as an immanent and singular truth is thus neither the work nor the author, but rather the artistic configuration initiated by an evental rupture” (12). An audience is diachronically experiencing time and for a moment the ‘evental rupture’, a finite artistic configuration, synchronically impacts their diachronic experience of time. He goes on to state, “configuration...is an identifiable sequence, initiated by an event, comprising a virtually infinite complex of works, when speaking of which it makes sense to say that it produces...a truth of this art, an art-truth” (13). He ends the discussion on art’s unit of measure by stating “a truth configuration is intrinsically infinite” (14). By this he means, an audience member viewing an artistic configuration will be affected by an infinite truth.

Badiou focuses one of the chapters in his book, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics* on Theatre. In it, he writes, “theater is an assemblage...of extremely disparate components, both material and ideal, whose only existence lies in the performance, in the act of theatrical representation.” He lists off several components including text, bodies, voices, costumes, lights, audience, etc. Badiou sees theatre as an event/ performance that even if it occurs nightly each event is singular. He describes the theatre event as “an event of thought”. By this he means, that theatre is a compilation of components which produces ideas in the audience. He terms these ideas as “theater-ideas” and

believes they cannot be produced in other places and the text from the event cannot reproduce these ideas. He writes, “The idea arises in and by the performance, through the act of theatrical representation. The idea is irreducibly theatrical and does not pre-exist before its arrival “onstage”.” (72). Badiou describes the “theater idea” as a “kind of illumination” which is used “to clarify our situation”. An ability theatre has is to “render the inextricable life legible” (72). He views theatre as an “experiment” which is “mixed and confused”. He writes, “to separate and simplify the inextricable life demands the most varied and forbidding of artistic means. The theater idea, as a public illumination of history and life, emerges only at the apex of art.” He continues on to state “theater thinks, in the space open between life and death”. He writes,

“We possess infinitely more taboos than the Greeks did. It is necessary, little by little, to break them. The duty of the theater is to recompose upon the stage a few living situations, articulated on the basis of some essential types. To offer our own time the equivalent of the slaves and the domestics of ancient comedy – excluded and invisible people who, all of a sudden, by the effect of the theater-idea, embody upon the stage intelligence and force, desire and mastery.”

In this quote, Badiou is granting a huge power to theatre’s ability to shape history. In his mind, theatre is a location where audiences can see new ideas and differing points of view presented in a mindful way. He writes, “The public comes to the theater to be struck. Struck by theater-ideas” (77).

2 - Inaesthetic in Applied Theatre

In my reading of Badiou’s inaesthetic theory, I believe two related concepts will be of interest to applied theatre practitioners and theoreticians. The first concept is that of Badiou’s ‘Theater-Idea’ and the second is his charting of how the ‘Theater-Idea’ is transmitted through the ‘infinite → finite → infinite’ from artist to audience.

For Applied Theatre, Badiou’s ‘Theater-Idea’ is a highly important concept. Whether, as practitioners, we are designing a project to create a play with a community, or planning a theatre in education project within a school, or planning a one-off workshop to take place at a conference of

our peers, a crucial component is the learning outcome that an audience will take away from their encounter with our theatrical efforts. In a school, a classroom drama could focus on having students reflect upon their role in the environment, or a community theatre project could ask the audience to re-consider relationships between races, or a workshop could be designed to focus on the importance of storytelling to regain sovereignty over our lives; any of these examples highlight the centrality of the ‘Theater-Idea’ within applied theatre. When we compare applied theatre to more conventional western theatre, Badiou’s ‘Theater-Idea’ is highly important for both but it takes on a higher level concern within applied theatre. Conventional western theatre is really what Badiou is writing about in his book. Certainly, creative theatre artists always have some level of concern with Badiou’s ‘Theater-Idea’ but the stakes seem higher with Applied Theatre. Applied Theatre uses theatrical means to achieve the extra-theatrical purposes of education, community building, and social justice and the reason why theatre is a useful approach is because of its impact upon ideas. Badiou bestows this great power on theatre and I agree, which is exactly why I use theatre to work towards education, community building, and social justice. If the theatre is a location where ideas are transferred and truths are able to be illuminated, this will be a strategic location to affect an audience’s thoughts on huge issues in our lives. As an Applied Theatre practitioner, having Badiou highlight this singular element in theatre is immensely helpful for considering my work and to assist me in analyzing the work of others.

Badiou’s charting of the ‘Theater-Idea’ through the ‘infinite → finite → infinite’ is helpful for applied theatre practitioners to use when considering their process of creating projects and performances. In Badiou’s model, theatre begins from an infinite concept or question that exists in the minds of humans as a challenge in our existence. Then, a group of artists boil down the infinite concept into a finite performance which is for an audience sharing time and space with the artists. The audience and community based artists re-live or live again or re-experience or simply imagine the infinite concept after the finite performance. This process of journeying through the ‘infinite → finite → infinite’ can help highlight what happens through the creation process of any piece of applied theatre whether it be a classroom drama, a workshop, or a public performance. What I find of particular interest, and hope that other applied theatre practitioners will, is the concept of the infinite as a starting and ending point. In our design of any project, I find that there is a power if Badiou’s concept of the infinite is thought to be the central desired transmission between artist and

audience or artist and student or artists and community. The infinite concepts are really what are central to any artistic or educative transmission and by highlighting these within his philosophy, Badiou shares with Applied Theatre a strategy for creation and a way to communicate with other stakeholders exactly the capability of theatre. In the other part of the simple flow chart I have created from Badiou's philosophy is the concept of the finite; this being the artistic configuration assembled by the artists. This is the profession or the trade or the craft of the Applied Theatre Practitioner. We are able to take infinite concepts, assemble them into a classroom drama, workshop, or a play - a finite creation - and then encourage an audience, classroom, or community to re-consider the infinite concepts. I find having the process configured in this simple flow chart, using Badiou's concepts, most helpful in considering Applied Theatre projects.

3 - Inaesthetic in the Applied Theatre India Intergenerational Project

Michael Etherton's guidance to ensure that the India project focus upon "Real Voices" as opposed to "Message-Laden" theatre is illuminated by Badiou's philosophy. I would contend that when Etherton made a suggestion of this nature to me, he was advocating for a theatrical model in which Badiou 'theater-idea' is communicated within an 'infinite → finite → infinite' framework. In his proposed "Real Voices Theatre" it would begin from an infinite concept or question that exists in the minds of the community members. A theatre practitioner would work with the community to discover what infinite concepts were important to the community. Then, as a group they would boil down the infinite concept into a finite performance which would be highlighting what was exposed through the discovery process with the community. Then, the performance would be offered to an audience who would encounter the infinite concept discovered by the community group and theatre practitioner. On the other side of the binary is the 'Message-Laden Theatre'. In this, Badiou's 'theatre-idea' is manipulated into a continuum which looks like this: 'finite → finite → finite'. The first finite is the message or the desire undirected I wrote about earlier. If it is a message it could be: elders should be respected, or GMOs are bad, or sex before marriage is bad, or raising money to create water-wells in 3rd world is good, etc. If it is a desire undirected it could be: to be funny, to create memoirs, etc. The second finite is performance which is for an audience sharing time and space with the artists. In 'Message-Laden Theatre', this takes on a form more similar to a commercial where a company develops a message to be delivered to consumers and the message is pre-packaged

and given. Within the ‘desire undirected’, I would argue that it takes a form more similar to pageantry. I use the term pageantry because of its relation to the ideas within spectacle and pomp. With these concepts, the ‘theatre-idea’ is tied to superficial ends. In the ‘desire undirected’, community members either are placed in conical scenarios which offer little more beyond a chuckle from the audience or the lives of participants are paraded onstage in a voyeuristic manner from which an audience takes little more than the passage of time. The third finite is the message or pageant delivered successfully (or unsuccessfully) to an audience. The audience now will know what they should have thought in the first place or they will have seen something nice that they can return home and forget about. The tragedy of ‘message-laden theatre’ is shown here as an almost non-artistic medium and more like a commercial-style tactic similar to the neoliberal mind-control many NGOs are working against. In Badiou’s model, the case can be clearly made to move towards “Real Voices Theatre”.

Now, what about this ‘Magic’ that theatre has? In the conversation between Sathiyababu, Ramalingam, Nikki, and I, referenced earlier in this chapter, Nikki was able to soothe the concerns of Sathiyababu and Ramalingam by alluding to the ‘Magic’ we were creating in rehearsal. In her defense, we had to first find the ‘Magic’ in rehearsal so it could be found again in performance. Clearly, if we were to use Badiou’s inaesthetic as a reference point here, the “Magic” is the infinite on both sides of the simple flow chart. Or perhaps, more accurately put, the ability of practitioners to find the infinite within a community’s interactions, and then, to take that infinite, transform it into an ‘artistic configuration’, and then have the audience encounter the ‘artistic configuration’ to (re)-discover or (re)-live the infinite in their experience in that moment and beyond. Easily put, the ‘Magic’ of theatre can be described as Badiou’s infinite and an artist’s ability to take an infinite concept and use it to impact an audience.

To further this discussion, it will be of value to discuss the ‘theater-idea’ within the performances of the Indian Intergenerational Theatre Company. This is where the discussion becomes much more difficult. If, as in Badiou’s philosophy, theatre is a ‘thought event’, what is the thought being shared at these events in India? On October 8, 2015, *GeriActors and Friends* had an open house event and the CBC was there to interview some of the participants. David Barnet, the company’s director, when interviewed said,

If it isn't really enjoyable, then there isn't any reason for doing it. Why should a senior after all these years turn up to something that is morally good for you or that they ought to do or to learn something. No, they turn up not to wait around, to be the focus, to have attention paid – to quote from *Death of a Salesman* – and to have a good time. Gene Cohen, the noted gerontologist/ psychologist, said that this is the liberation phase of life. What do I have to lose? What can they do to me? If not now when? And there's a great truth to that. I feel it about the seniors in the group but I also feel it about myself. I am 74. I just recently started creative dancing and I am afraid I sometimes don't mind what I look like or what my clothes look like because I just do what I do. I feel less bothered by the opinion of my world than I used to. So often it seems to me that some seniors live up to this stereotype that they themselves have accepted. I think that part of our job is to interrogate that stereotype, in fact, smash that stereotype just by the fact of seniors getting onstage and doing difficult material as well as they can proving that the stereotype is a whole lot of codswallop. (Barnet)

In this quote about the Canadian intergenerational theatre work of G&F, Barnet encapsulates what was also happening in India. The 'Theater-Idea' or the infinite concept that is being dealt with in the Indian Intergenerational Theatre work is tied up in this smashing of stereotypes. For David Barnet and G&F, the stereotype that must be smashed is the idea that old age is a period of decline. Instead of living as if the body and mind are in decline, the company spends its rehearsals playing and laughing and enjoying life and the idea is that when the company performs or shares their theatre with an audience, the audience will consider the ideas presented. The added part that the Indian company has is that the only stereotype being smashed is not just the ones to do with aging but also stereotypes of poverty. The elders and young people in the Indian theatre company are all living in poor areas and are currently climbing their way out of poverty situations with the help of aid organizations. This means that the 'theatre-idea' here has a two-fold consideration. In rehearsal, the company plays, laughs, and enjoys life together, despite being in the lowest economic class on earth and despite the fact that half of the group is elderly. Now, as the performance happens, this same atmosphere of celebration of stereotype-smashing is communicated to an audience. This is the

'Theater-Idea' within the Indian theatre company. Despite all the hardship of poverty and old age and any other difficult challenges faced by rural communities in Tamil Nadu, they still dance, they still sing, they still laugh, they still play, and despite how hard your life maybe... you should too.

4 - Conclusion

Badiou's inaesthetic analysis lends applied theatre practitioners a tool for explaining theatre's transformational potential to partnering organizations and community-based artists. My hope is that now, as applied theatre practitioners, we can further this discussion with our partnering communities and supporting organizations. Theatre should contain 'Real Voices' and not be 'Message-Laden' and we must continue to challenge ourselves to bring the 'Real Voices' out in our projects. That is where our 'Magic' lies. I am thankful Badiou entered his philosophical discussions without shying away from the word 'Truth'. I know for myself, 'Truth' is always what I am seeking while I create theatre. With Badiou's unapologetic approach to analyzing truth's relationship with theatre and education, I feel as though I have gained a useful philosophical tool not only to analyze my work and the work of others but also to create a dialogue with communities and partnering organizations which will lead to theatre that can achieve 'Truth'.

Exegesis Chapter Four - The Conversation Doesn't End When They Leave for a Beer: Movement from Critical to Post-Critical Pedagogy

Reader: First, when I consider what you have titled this chapter, I look to the differentiation between Critical and Post-Critical Pedagogy. With Critical Pedagogy, I assume you are referring to the work of Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Franz Fanon, Aimè Cèsaire, Edward Said, Marx and Engels but when you use a term like Post-Critical Pedagogy, I'm wondering, what does this term refer to within Applied Theatre practice?

Editor: I can answer that question, but first I need to reveal to you how I progressed my practice to unknowingly come upon what I now could refer to as Post-Critical Pedagogy. Early in my career as an Applied Theatre practitioner, I attended the Anarchist's Book Fair in Old Strathcona, Edmonton and bought a copy of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This would have been in springtime 2006. That night, I read the book from cover to cover learning from his philosophy on educating for liberation and social change, wanting to apply his theories in my practice (Freire). At the same time, I worked with Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, formulating workshops/ presentations around the binary oppositions of 'oppressor-oppressed' using Boal's techniques (Boal). After regularly using Boal's and Freire's critical pedagogy, I progressed in my practice developing a model which complicated matters, leaning less on binary oppositions and basing the workshops/ performances on the playful celebration of diversity and scene work on intricate situations more relevant to the complexity of participants' lives than 'us-them' or 'victim-offender' scenarios. In Kennedy Chinyowa's article, *Interrogating spaces of otherness: Towards a post-critical pedagogy for applied drama and theatre*, he criticizes critical pedagogy for resting upon simple binaries, "black and white, male and female, rich and poor, straight and queer, and self and other", and advocates for a post-critical pedagogy which is "an alternative... that can transcend such rigid boundaries" (8).

Reader: Tell me more about your personal practice's transformation from early in your career.

Editor: In 2006, in the weeks after reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I went through a process of creating workshops which led me to begin a movement towards a Post-Critical Pedagogy. *Canada World Youth* hired me to act as a community educator in a position where I would work with community groups using theatre techniques to move people to focus on issues of globalization while exposing these groups to the exchange programs of *Canada World Youth*. I was taught how to use Boal's techniques by my Professor Paul Johnson. He taught us forum theatre and had the class read *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. I had used forum theatre and image theatre with multiple community groups throughout 2003-2006 mostly focusing on the binary relationship between 'Oppressor-Oppressed'. When I started the position with *Canada World Youth*, the first two groups I booked workshops with were at a Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Transsexual (LGBT) Summer Camp and a tour of Native Friendship Centres in Northern Alberta. As I began the planning process for creating these workshops, I noticed a fundamental flaw in my use of Boal's pedagogical binary of 'Oppressor-Oppressed'. With both the LGBT and Native groups, if I were to use this binary, I would put myself as facilitator in a difficult position. In the 'Oppressor-Oppressed' binary, when considered within the LGBT community, the binary would take the shape of 'Straight-Queer' and, within the Native community, the binary would be 'Indigenous-Nonindigenous'. As a facilitator, if I was to use Boal's 'Oppressor-Oppressed', I would fall into the position of Oppressor in both binaries as a heterosexual man of European decent. I had to shift my focus in the workshop planning. I moved to a model built on celebrating the diversity in the groups in which I would facilitate various playful activities leading to story-sharing with the end goal to share the stories as short scenes. With both groups, the model worked in that stories were shared and a celebratory atmosphere was created. With the LGBT group, they quickly engaged in play, singing songs and laughing. In the end, many of the youth told stories of how they 'came out of the closet' to their parents or friends. The stories were celebrated even though some were painful or awkward. The First Nations youth did not engage as quickly with the playfulness. I discovered a slower more contemplative energy was necessary to come to a point where stories were shared. In the tour of Northern Alberta, I worked with five different Native Friendship Centres and in three of them an elder was present. In these instances, the workshops better achieved a celebratory story-sharing. In each instance, the elder performed a spiritual act of either a smudge or a prayer welcoming me to their community. In one case,

the elder joined in the workshop and helped the young people perform their stories. Most of the youth's stories were about spending time with their family and friends with a tie to their First Nations culture. Some stories included a grandfather or grandmother teaching them about plants in the wild or teaching them Dene or Cree. In this project, I learned much about my cultural history and the history of the young people I was encountering.

Reader: Did this lead into the Intergenerational work?

Editor: Let me talk about the Intergenerational Theatre work when we're further along in the analysis.

Reader: Well how about enlightening me further about the Chinyowa article?

Editor: Kennedy Chinyowa works at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa which is of particular importance to note because of the region's history of apartheid and racial conflict. I actually briefly met him at IDIERI in Singapore recently. I tried speaking to him about his article but he was more interested in speaking about Canada and sharing a good laugh. His article is the first place I viewed the term Post-Critical Pedagogy. He frames the article as a search for "an appropriate critical framework for interrogating such a practice-based pedagogy" as applied theatre (7). He finds issue with binaries within the framework stating, "The transformational learning process deployed through applied drama and theatre demand an equally liberating pedagogy that does not create divisions between the 'oppressor' and the 'oppressed'" (8). He looks to some of the advocates of critical pedagogy like Paulo Freire, Henri Giroux, and Ira Shor and identifies their unifying goal for critical pedagogy as being "to empower individuals and communities to understand the link between knowledge, history and power, and to use such knowledge to resist dominant ideologies and structures" (8). Chinyowa sees a fault in critical pedagogy in that it constructs a divided world in binaries like "black and white, male and female, rich and poor, straight and queer, and self and other" (8). For Chinyowa, and I agree with him, critical pedagogy "glosses over more complex relations of power in which these binary categories are fluid rather than fixed" (8). Chinyowa wrote his article as a call to practitioners to move towards "an alternative post-critical

pedagogy” in order to “transcend such rigid boundaries” as those created within critical pedagogy’s reliance on binaries (8). He views the challenge for practitioners attempting to do this as being “to create dialogic spaces where both ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’ groups can identify, engage with and interrogate their troubled knowledge without fear of judgement, dismissal or censorship” (8).

Reader: Where did he see a need for this pedagogical shift? I know you alluded to his placement in South Africa.

Editor: In the Chinyowa article, he cites Jonathan Jensen who shares his experience on a bus tour with University of Pretoria students which visited the Voortrekker Monument commemorating the 1902 Anglo-Boer War and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. During a feedback session after the tour, a white Afrikaner female student asked the question “It was all well and good taking us to the Apartheid Museum; now tell me, when will they build a museum for all the whites who died in farm murders in South Africa after 1994?” (10). Chinyowa sees this question from the student as the problem of educating within binary structures. A comment like this young women’s has no place within Critical Pedagogy. What had occurred was the bus tour had served to reinforce racial divide. Chinyowa also cites a forum theatre performance which was carried out in March 2011 at the University of Witwatersrand (11). Chinyowa is critical of the forum theatre piece as relying on the binaries of ‘black-white’ and ‘oppressed-oppressor’ and ‘victim-perpetrator’ (13). He believes that “both sides of the racial divide carry the burden of contending histories and memories” (13). He is particularly critical of the joker’s role in forum theatre stating, “The jokers are often regarded as overly controlling towards both the target audience and spect-actors, while the poetics tend to be restricted to a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ at the expense of a ‘pedagogy of the oppressor’...Boal treats the ‘oppressor’ as a dominant system stripped of human qualities” (14). Chinyowa sees this as the ultimate shortfall of critical pedagogy. Within a post-conflict situation, innate complications which were hidden constantly emerge and cannot be dealt with within simplified binaries. He sees a need for Post-critical pedagogy in conflict/post-conflict situations like the Arab-Jewish in Israel, Catholic-Protestant in Ireland,

Hutu-Tutsi in Rwanda, or white-black in Post-apartheid South Africa (I would add to this list Indigenous-Nonindigenous in Canada/USA/Australia).

Reader: Freire spent a lot of time calling for a humanizing of both Oppressed and Oppressor.

Editor: Yes, but I would argue Critical Pedagogy has been more successful in raising the voices of the Oppressed while essentializing the Oppressor in much the same way Chinyowa argues. The essentialized Oppressor is represented as an evil entity with no soul and despair as its goal. I would say the inverse is true. The Oppressed becomes essentialized as well. Care is needed to ensure people are not essentialized in the pedagogical models we use. Complexity of experiences need to be expressed.

Reader: You've spent a lot of time on criticisms of Critical Pedagogy but less describing Post-critical pedagogy. What would you, or Chinyowa, state as a definition of Post-Critical Pedagogy?

Editor: Chinyowa writes this, "Post-critical pedagogy seeks to interrogate spaces of otherness without reproducing narratives that are oppressive to the other's narratives...The first task of those in authority is to understand the social, psychological and emotional effects of the memories carried by the different racial and ethnic groups. The second task is to create safe spaces within which both groups can speak openly without fear of judgement, reprisal or censorship. The use of applied drama and theatre as a mode of post-critical performative pedagogy creates dialogic spaces that enable students to identify, engage with and interrogate their troubled knowledges...applied drama and theatre can allow space for interpersonal engagement, rather than direct confrontations that are likely to fuel antagonism, aggression and fear" (10-11). He also goes on to write as the final sentence of the article, "In the same way that binary identities are socially constructed through lived experience, they too can be deconstructed through a more balanced and less one-sided humanizing pedagogy" (15).

Reader: What about you?

Editor: I certainly agree with Chinyowa in everything he says. The faults which he sees in Critical Pedagogy I see too but when I conceive of how to transform Critical Pedagogy into Post-critical pedagogy I feel overwhelmed with a sense of an unexplored concept. I believe many past projects have been able to operate in a pedagogical framework which would achieve some of the goals Chinyowa lays out for Post-critical pedagogy but I have encountered few practitioners explicitly operating in this mode of education. I believe the definition of this Post-critical Pedagogy is emerging.

Reader: You must think Freire, Fanon, Boal, Marx, Cèsaire, and the other Criticalists are all idiots.

Editor: Absolutely not. The work highlighting marginalized voices is instrumental in my understanding of our field. I just think there may be a second step in our pedagogy.

Reader: Are you special to think you have invented a new pedagogy which will change the world? Are you and your practice the monument to Post-critical Pedagogy we should all turn to?

Editor: I am not even sure Post-critical Pedagogy is what I would call this work. I am searching for a definition and conversation about my practice.

Reader: Where do you look for a theoretical framework to develop this Post-critical Pedagogy then?

Editor: I place the key concepts identified by Chinyowa as being: binaries, deconstruction, and dialogic approaches. To examine some of this I have started looking to post-structural and post-colonial theories of meaning and the thinkers in those areas like: Homi Bhabha and Subaltern Secularism, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Subaltern Subjectivity, Mikhail Bahktin and the Carnavalesque, Nietzsche's attack on binaries in "Beyond Good and Evil", and Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction process.

Reader: Derrida?

Editor: Yes, Derrida.

Reader: Tell me about how you are tying applied theatre practice with these post-structural and post-colonial thinkers. You should start with Derrida.

Editor: With Derrida, I look to his deconstruction process and consider how it could play out in practical terms. Derrida describes the deconstruction process as having two phases (Lawlor xii). In an interview appearing in *Positions*, he calls the “general strategy of deconstruction” a “double gesture” - “a unity that is both systemic and in and of itself divided”. The first phase in the deconstruction process is “a phase of overturning”. He writes, “in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other...To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment” (41). He warns, analysis time must be spent here because if one proceeds “too quickly to a neutralization” this “would leave the previous field untouched” (41-42). For him, the first phase is structural in that it employs the teleological binary by inverting the hierarchy to display some of the inadequacy in the structural formation of the binary.

Reader: This just describes the work of Critical Pedagogy. No difference here.

Editor: Please let me finish. As I said before, Césaire, Fanon, *et. Al* . have done a wonderful job of raising these voices but I think another step needs to be taken here.

Reader: I’m listening.

Editor: In the second phase, “the deconstructed system” has “the irruptive emergence of a new ‘concept’, a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime” (42). Derrida further describes this second phase in *Voice and Phenomenon* where he writes, “In the ideal value, the whole system of the ‘essential distinctions’ is therefore a purely teleological structure... “the possibility of distinguishing between” either distinction in a binary is “deferred to infinity” (86). He goes on, “This does not mean that we know nothing, but that we are beyond absolute knowledge...” (88). In the deconstructive process, the goal

is to find a space beyond the teleological binaries to uncover a dialogue which finds stronger concepts to further increase the capacity for knowledge leading to deepening channels of communication.

Reader: You said, “find a space beyond the teleological binaries to uncover a dialogue which finds stronger concepts to further increase the capacity for knowledge leading to deepening channels of communication.” How can this play out in practical terms within Applied Theatre?

Editor: If I look to the work of the *GeriActors and Friends* in Edmonton, or *Roots and Branches* in New York, or the India Intergenerational Project, I can interpret the act of usually disparate generations coming together as a deconstructive process. In each of these cases, a young generation (students) come together with an older generation (community member actors for G&F and R&B and elder residents of Tamaraikulam for the India work). This coming together is an act of creating an ‘inter’. In these cases, an intergenerational meeting. At the site of this “inter” a collision happens which can be viewed through a lens of deconstruction. Within Derrida’s analysis of ‘expression-indication’ or ‘speaking-writing’, he reverses the hierarchy in this binary. Seeing someone speak is better than reading their writing or reading the indication of their work. Through his work, he inverts this binary raising the written word over the spoken word. After inverting this binary, the new concept of arch-writing emerges, a concept which has become central to his work. I would argue that the process we see in Derrida’s deconstruction happens in the meeting between generations. We have the young generation coming into contact with the old. The hierarchy in this relationship is different across cultures but in the three projects I am looking towards the young are in the position of more power. Most marketing is targeted towards the young and youth is a time of vitality and the pursuit of young-ness is driven forward by diets, surgeries, medications, and lifestyles; whereas old is generally thought of as a decline in ability and elders in our society are put off to the side and rejected. In the three projects, I describe the voices of the older generation emerge as important and are honoured in a way that is not usually seen. The voices of the elders of Tamaraikulam were heard in India; both G&F and R&B the elder population’s voice is heard in performance and in the creation process of the theatre. The practical work

becomes more interesting when the voice of the younger generation is heard as well. In the G&F scene called “Am I Invisible?” both generations share moments of invisibility they experience - “Young men don’t flirt anymore” or “My children don’t call” or the opposite “My parents don’t pay attention” or “In a class of 400” - or in the India Theatre project’s Tsunami scene where the two generations share about their lasting impressions from the disaster - “I miss my daughter” or “I miss my parents” or “I am happy it happened because my school wouldn’t exist without it” or “I am happy my home was built to relieve us from this terrible storm”. In both these instances, we are able to see the complexities shared that grow our understanding beyond the binary. Instead of seeing the views from a singular generational point we see the complexity of intergenerational views. The ‘inter’ could be seen as the emerging term in the second phase of the deconstructive process laid out by Derrida.

Reader: I mean, I can see easily how this was done in wealthy areas like Alberta and New York and also how this could happen in a post-disaster area like Tamil Nadu but I struggle to see how it could work the same in a post-conflict zone.

Editor: I see a direct link between the intergenerational playfulness I outline in earlier chapters and James Thompson’s work. James Thompson advocates for Applied Theatre techniques which focus more on celebration. This comes from his work as a theatre practitioner in areas of conflict. He found that people in a war-torn country which had been in the midst of a conflict did not need to focus on oppression but instead craved a focus on celebrating that they survived and their culture/heritage still existed (Thompson 7). In areas of conflict, people needed to focus upon celebration because there was too much agony in focusing on conflict. With the shifted focus, they progressed to a Post-critical Pedagogy where it is more likely people from different groupings can engage in dialogue. At the end of Thompson’s introduction to his book *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect*, he encourages practitioners to have a “commitment to working with groups and communities in dynamic and joyful performance projects - and continue to make everyone’s right to beautiful, radiant things” (11). The fact the people, language, cultures, and artwork exist is a testament to the strength and strong will of people. Celebration, joy, and play should be had to share this reality and to encourage dialogue.

Reader: This playfulness and celebration seems central to everything.

Editor: Playfulness certainly is central. I see Bakhtin's Carnavalesque as important to mention here in relation to this playfulness and Post-critical Pedagogy. This space created within Intergenerational Theatre can nicely fit within the post-structural theory of the Carnavalesque.

Reader: I have heard the Carnavalesque used in Applied Theatre projects before.

Editor: Yes, Bakhtin's theoretical work is wonderful. In a class I took, we referred to the Carnavalesque as "Nietzsche in Practice" or "a Nietzscheian Utopia" which is a way of interpreting the work I think is quite accurate. I like this definition because I really think Bakhtin provides artists with a way to conceptualize how Nietzsche's world would look. Where I see Bakhtin's analysis linking well with the Post-critical Pedagogy and Intergenerational Playfulness is when he brings the concept of ambivalence into the Carnavalesque. Bakhtin, in his book *Rabelais and his World*, establishes his interpretation of the history of carnival performance as being a tradition in which boundaries are disintegrated causing blurry lines differentiating between audience-performer, public-private, and order-chaos while instituting an inverted order in which fools, pranksters, outsiders, mischief-makers, and clowns are leaders, kings-queens, and government officials. Through this literary theory, Bakhtin establishes a form of interpretation where we can read the carnival as more than silly mockery but as a serious challenge to authority which takes the form of a defiant step towards an alternative future. Bakhtin writes, "Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world - the new year, the new spring, the new kingdom" (410). Here is where the link with Post-Critical Pedagogy becomes apparent. The Carnavalesque mode allows for a space where criticisms of authority happen but the lines and boundaries separating the binary opposites are blurred. A dialogue emerges in this space which is not shackled to the structures of society but is created within the Carnavalesque.

Reader: What is the nature of the dialogue? It seems to me that the performers have much control in this situation.

Editor: The performers have control – yes. But so do the spectators. The Carnival has blurred lines in these areas. How often does a clown performance bring an audience member into the performance? Throughout Carnivals, the spectators take focus in the same way a performer will. The meaning in this mode is co-created which is what I find appealing when considering Bakhtin’s Carnavalesque as a form of pedagogy.

Reader: I see the appeal. But isn’t there a huge risk in giving so much control to the audience/ learner?

Editor: I would say there indeed is a huge risk but I firmly believe anything worth educating/ learning should have some level of risk. Risk opens the door to someone changing. I also see importance in what Bakhtin writes about the concept of ambivalence in relation to the Carnavalesque. Initially, when he mentions ambivalence he is referencing how ‘hell’ is depicted in Nuremberg Carnival parades in the 16th Century “...a house, a tower, a palace, a ship, a windmill, a dragon spitting fire, an elephant with men astride, a giant devouring children, an old devil eating wicked wives, a store selling all kinds of rummage, the Venus mountain, an oven for the baking of fools, a galley with monks and nuns, and the wheel of fortune spinning fools. The whole contraption, stocked with fireworks, was usually burned in front of the town hall” (393-394). To describe these different depictions, he uses the word ambivalent and states “the symbols of fear defeated by laughter” (394). Bakhtin goes on, “Folk culture strove to defeat through laughter this extreme projection of gloomy seriousness and to transform it into a gay carnival monster. Folk culture organized the inferno according to its own fashion, opposing sterile eternity by pregnant and birth-giving death; preserving the past by giving birth to a new, better future. If the Christian hell devalued earth and drew men away from it, the carnivalesque hell affirmed earth and its lower stratum as the fertile womb, where death meets birth and a new life springs forth” (395). From this, I can draw from Bakhtin’s theory a performance and pedagogical form which embraces the most powerful negative imagery, in the case of 16th Century Nuremberg Christian Hell, and “defeats it through laughter” or renders the negative less powerful by making it a part of a ritual in which the negative energy loses leaving possibility for a new world to emerge.

Reader: What about ambivalence?

Editor: I am getting there. Bakhtin describes the images appearing within the Carnavalesque as being “dual-bodied, dual-faced, pregnant” and that they synthesize “negation and affirmation, the top and the bottom, abuse and praise” (409). Objects used within the Carnavalesque fit within a “wrong side out” and “bottoms up” logic. Any object used in the Carnavalesque is “turned inside out, utilized in the wrong way, contrary to their common use. Household objects are turned into arms, kitchen utensils and dishes become musical instruments” (411). This logic of dual-readings or ambivalent imagery extends to how time-space is constructed in the Carnavalesque. Bakhtin writes, “the negative pole in this time-space play is not removed from the positive pole” (411). To describe the ambivalence he looks to Rabelais’s world and the Abbey of Theleme, which is an “inside-out monastery” where the priests and nuns are engaged in the lower stratum or a “cult of love”. Of this Bakhtin writes, “In this play with negation, the opposition to the official world and all its prohibitions and limitations is obviously revealed. It also expresses the recreative, festive suspension of these restrictions. It is a carnival game of negation, and this game may also serve utopian tendencies (though expressed in a rather formalistic aspect)” (412). This description shows how Bakhtin believes the Carnavalesque acts as a subversive force. When placed in the Carnavalesque mode, the restrictive institutions of our world are exposed to perversion and the lower stratum. This action causes the problems inherent within the official world or the powerful in society to be revealed. The displaying of the ambivalence of official society’s positive and negative elements exposes the powerful within the Carnavalesque as being fallible and opens the door to new possibilities. Bakhtin further writes, “The play with negation and its time-space expression both combine in one single image old and new, the dying and the generated. Both phenomena are the expression of one dual-bodied world and of that time element which simultaneously destroys and renews, replaces and substitutes” (415). Ambivalence is omnipresent in the Carnavalesque, meaning any performance or process engaged within a Carnavalesque space will allow for dual readings beyond binaries. As artists and educators we should be venturing towards spaces engaging the Carnavalesque if we are searching for a Post-critical Pedagogy.

Reader: Where does intergenerational playfulness fit in with the Carnavalesque?

Editor: I believe the intergenerational playfulness present in G&F and in the India Project is an example of the Carnavalesque. The same encounter with fear happens in these spaces. Aging and death and disease and loss are all associated with old age and one of the main narratives the intergenerational work challenges as false is the idea of aging as a decline. The elders participating in these companies are creating a new future narrative for aging in our society. During rehearsals and performances they are laughing, playing, and having fun with young people. Older generations in these companies are not exempt from the realities of aging but instead of allowing the image of aging to be gloomy their goal is to grab back power over their life and encounter it with laughter – they are defeating what they fear with laughter.

Reader: Earlier, when you were talking about Post-critical, you mentioned safe space for dialogue.

Editor: I see the ambivalent nature of playfulness as being instrumental in the creation of a safe space for dialogue. In the past, when I gave presentations about playfulness as a theatrical technique in Applied Theatre, I was questioned about my assertion that playfulness leads to a safe space. I think here is where the Carnavalesque and ambivalence can help. Looking at the etymology of the word ambivalent, the prefix ‘ambi’ means dual or both and “valent” or “valance” means strength or valued. The word ambivalent can be viewed as meaning dual-strength or dual-valued. This would be a good description for what I see occurring in intergenerational playfulness. When young and old play together, both negative and positive energies are present at any given time. Play allows the two to co-exist, balancing each other in between creating an equilibrium where a form of dialogue can occur. In the situations I have encountered this playfulness, the purpose has always been to utilize the playful energy to allow story-sharing for the purpose of creating plays. This means the dialogue I see is generated to better the performances. Each member has a stake in the quality of the performance. Being that this discussion is within the playful atmosphere, there is a safety experienced by participants. The reason this safety is there is the ambivalence of play. The dual strength within play gives participants space to embrace the complexities of life. Lives

are not simplified into either/or scenarios where there is a right or wrong answer but instead are lifted into a playful world where the intricacies of life can be included and recognized as a part of human experience. The participants are not exposed to the limitations of moral judgements within play. Institutions that impact our lives have no power in playfulness and within the Carnavalesque. Thinking back to carnival's depictions of 'Christian Hell', we see the image of ultimate institutional power - the church's placement for evil souls. In the Carnivals of the 16th Century, the church was unable to control the events within the Carnavalesque. The performers and spectators co-created the morality without institutional influence. The logic used was the logic of the Carnival. A similar space is created within intergenerational playfulness. I see a space where morality is made to be ambivalent. Participants are forced to encounter the human experience in a complex mode. No longer can binaries of old-young, oppressed-oppressor, good-evil, etc. be as easily utilized. Playfulness allows for participants to open to each other. The best example of this I have seen was watching the group in India create their Tsunami scene. Elder members of the company encountered that tragedy full force and were some of the people most negatively affected by the disaster. On the other hand, the Isha students were too young to remember the tsunami. The first performance of this scene within the group was emotionally charged. Vadevil shared the story of losing family members and some of the other elders did the same. While these stories were being performed by the group telling the story, the audience was a mix of emotions. As the stories were told, members were laughing, crying, and waiting for each element of the story to unfold. After the performance was finished, a long conversation followed. Although I did not speak the language, I could tell the dialogue was of an open and respectful manner. Everyone was open to share. I feel as though the space created in playfulness creates an avenue to discuss human experience where empathy and love are the main modes of the emotions which guide the dialogue. Even when the discussion becomes heated, which it can, there is a backdrop of empathy and compassion. When play is engaged between people they become open to one another and the ambivalence of play helps the openness to be utilized as a bridge for change by embracing dialogue in a safe space.

Reader: You are talking about dialogism and discourse and referencing Bakhtin, why haven't you referenced his book *Dialogic Imagination*?

Editor: I have read that work, my supervisor Warwick had me read it. At first I wasn't sure how it fit with applied theatre and the dialogue being created in the intergenerational playfulness. It seemed like Bakhtin was really worried about dialogue and discourse in the novel and the interrelations between the related texts. I couldn't see what relation it had. I went to Wikipedia and read the article on Bakhtin's book and it contained a reference to how Julia Kristeva's intertextuality was inspired by Bakhtin's work. During my Masters study, I was introduced to Kristeva's intertextuality and I often thought this theory fits well with the dialogue that takes place in applied theatre projects. Not only the dialogue but also what would be presented as theatre in these projects. My thought then was the more intertextual elements you could include in a theatrical piece the better an audience could relate to it. Now that I am being re-introduced to the ideas of Bakhtin's dialogic and intertextuality, I am considering it as a part of the dialogue inspired by the intergenerational playfulness both during the rehearsal process and during and after a performance. I often hear both younger and older members of the company and members of the audience telling each other about memories and situations from their lives. Really that is what this theatre is driving towards - to have all people who encounter it, whether as audience or a company member, talking about their lives. I would say it is not enough to talk. What happens within the intergenerational playful atmosphere is special. People see situations onstage or in rehearsal and then are inspired to consider their lives in relation to what is being staged. The onstage work gives participants the opportunity to bring in intertextual elements from their life - onstage action inspires memory and reflection upon their life.

Reader: So you believe that Bakhtin's dialogic and Kristeva's intertextuality is really only relevant to dialogue within intergenerational theatre. What about dialogue within drama education or within a forum theatre piece?

Editor: No, it certainly can refer to dialogue anywhere but the nature of the dialogue in the intergenerational playfulness is different. The reflection I refer to allows participants within intergenerational theatre to improve while considering the intertextual elements.

Reader: This all sounds great in theory. What kind of change or improvements can really happen?

Editor: I have been privileged to see people change as a result of individuals' involvement in Intergenerational Playfulness. John Grootelaar, a member of G&F for 13 years, said this in a CBC radio interview: "When I was still working, I was not a nice person. I didn't really care much for other people. When I retired, I realized I needed to go out and meet other people. Meet them on their terms and accept them as they are. It was quite an awakening for me." I know John well and I was privileged to watch this change in him. He went from being a rigid man whose morality was heavily influenced by western society and his 13 year involvement in intergenerational playfulness has shifted him. In an interview with me during my Masters research project, he told me he was thankful for his involvement in G&F because it opened his eyes to being accepting of divorce. He had been married for over 50 years and thought people who divorced must be lesser. After meeting some other seniors and even some students who had divorced he had become more accepting of them. That interview was seven years ago now and as his world view has changed so have his acting skills and even better his playing skills. When I first met him, he carried into rehearsal a copy of his written memoirs. When we asked him about stories in his life he consulted the book. I remember asking him one day to set it down and to just tell us and he did. After this rehearsal, he stopped bringing his stacks of papers and let play guide him. I know that now he is a skilled improviser and even facilitates groups through games and storytelling activities. Of all the things that inspire me about this work it is instances like this which really keep me motivated to work in this field. Seeing growth in a person both in terms of skill and morality at an older age teaches me of a dedication to life-long learning.

Reader: I can see being inspired by that. Earlier you mentioned Nietzsche. How does his work fit into this Post-Critical Pedagogy?

Editor: I am completely taken with Nietzsche's writing. I have spent much free time working my way through all of his writings. Recently, I am most moved by his *Beyond Good and Evil* and in particular a certain quote. He writes, "Mature manhood: that means to have rediscovered the seriousness one had as a child at play" (94). I think this quote could act as a vision

statement for intergenerational playfulness. The elders truly teach this to the young people in all these companies. I have been truly blessed to watch the seniors in these companies play. In many of them, it is as if they have discovered the fountain of youth and there has been some medical research done by the late Dr. Gene Cohen which speaks to the fact that they may have. In Dr. Cohen's research, he found that seniors who engage in artwork which is trying to achieve mastery have generally better health than those who engage in other recreational activities. I have learned I should have, besides a dedication to life-long learning, a dedication to life-long playing. A true value lies in this. I see Nietzsche's quote here as a guiding light for Intergenerational Playfulness; the mixing of ages and the mixing of seriousness and play as being the moral compass of Intergenerational Playfulness. I referred earlier to the 'inter'. This is what I mean. A mixing of binaries to shake up power dynamics. That is what Nietzsche is all about, isn't it?

Reader: Yes, I suppose it is.

Editor: Linking Nietzsche with Applied Theatre is certainly something I am going to work on further.

Reader: You also mentioned Post-colonial theory and Post-critical Pedagogy. What links do you see here?

Editor: In my introduction, I reference Spivak and her article *Can the Subaltern Speak* and the challenge she gives feminists to give voice to subalterns in society. I see an alignment of this strategy to be important to a Post-critical Pedagogy. Voices from outside of the usual power structures need to be active in this pedagogical space. I view this as being a part of the 'unlearning' or decolonization process which will help any future. I have always been aligned with Homi Bhabha's writings on hybridity. In his article *Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism*, he is critical of Martha Nussbaum stating, "the 'identity' of cosmopolitanism demands a spatial imaginary: the 'self' at the center of a series of concentric circles that move through various cycles of familial, ethnic, and communal affiliations to 'the largest one, that of humanity as a whole.' The task of the citizen of the world, she writes, lies in making human beings more like our 'fellow city dwellers,' basing our deliberations on 'that

interlocking commonality” (41). By doing this, Nussbaum dodges nationalism/ patriotism, heading straight for universalism missing major factors in constructing identity. Bhabha asks the question: “who are our ‘fellow city dwellers’ in the global sense?” (41). The answer is, of course: the subaltern – the illegal workers, refugees, etc. Nussbaum, in her cosmopolitanism, neglects the subaltern. Bhabha states his interest in a “cosmopolitan community envisaged in a marginality” (42) or a “marginal cosmopolitanism” (43). He writes, “this realignment of memory and the present as an ‘atlas of the difficult world,’ that articulates a defiant and transformative ‘dissatisfaction,’ a dissonance at the heart of that complacent circle that constitutes ‘our fellow city dwellers.’ For it is precisely there, in ordinariness of the day to day, in the intimacy of the indigenous, that, unexpectedly, we become unrecognizable strangers to ourselves in the very act of assuming a more worldly, or what is now termed ‘global,’ responsibility” (44). By stating this, he means that if we stretch our concentric circle to include the subaltern as our ‘fellow city dwellers’ it will change our identities leading to a “hybridization of identity” (47). He goes on to write, “to vernacularize is to ‘dialectize’ as a process: it is not simply to be in a dialogic relation with the native or the domestic, but it is to be on the border, in between” (48). The act Bhabha is encouraging is an intimate relation which he terms not as “Vernacular Cosmopolitanism” but as a “Subaltern Secularism”. He writes, “What we need to emerge is a ‘subaltern’ secularism that emerges from the limitations of liberal secularism and ‘keeps faith’ with those communities and individuals who have been denied and excluded from the egalitarian and tolerant views of liberal individualism [...] my attempt to ‘translate’ secularism for the specific experiential purposes of marginalized or minority communities who are struggling against various types of race, class, gender, generation...’subaltern secularism” (50). Bhabha is calling for a society which takes seriously the equality demanded by liberalism and extends it to include the marginalized. This equality can be given voice inside a Post-critical Pedagogy. I believe I am looking for what Bhabha calls an “ethic of co-existence...solidarity is not based on similarity but on the recognition of difference” (51).

Reader: Difference?

Editor: Yes, even though everyone is different we can extend the rights and representation demanded within liberalism to people on the margins. Secular equality is not just for certain people.

Reader: I am still lost as to how this fits with Post-critical Pedagogy.

Editor: So much of what Post-critical Pedagogy is reaching for is the humanizing of structures. The binary oppositions and the morality constructed within these binaries serve to de-humanize and the most de-humanized in this process are the people on the margins. I know that one of the early criticisms of Critical Pedagogy was its dehumanizing of the oppressor but it happens for the marginalized as well. What Bhabha is calling for in his Subaltern Secularism would help to humanize the marginalized. The reason marginalized people are oppressed is because they are not valued as fully human. The Subaltern Secularism being called for would serve to humanize refugees and illegal workers. I view the work of *HelpAge India* and the *Isha Foundation* as being an activation of Bhabha's theory. The children attending Isha schools are being extended the same education that is thought to be guaranteed in liberal views that they otherwise would not receive in rural India. The elder residents of Tamaraikulam are being sheltered, fed, clothed, and honoured in the way Liberal views think elders should be treated. Any person who comes into contact with any of the public presentation about the *Isha Foundation* or Tamaraikulam will see Subaltern Secularism in action. The performances of the Indian Intergenerational Theatre company would fit in the definition of Post-Critical Pedagogy in that it exposes audiences to under-represented voices but what is unique is these voices are being given a more equal footing. They are obtaining the rights of education and health and so on. The idea of Subaltern Secularism does not need be a phantasmagoric icon. It exists and the performances of this company show it.

Reader: What about the experience of you and your students?

Editor: When I think of what the 12 students and I were exposed to in India, I see a pedagogical form I struggle to define. We were experiencing so much. Our lives have been changed. We lived alongside people who could be classified as Subaltern but were given what they need to survive so really they were extended outside of this classification. They were humanized for

us and in return we were humanized for them. I talked about the ‘inter’ before. I really think that at any moment we are working through educational or performance means which is occurring at the site of an ‘inter’ whether it be intercultural, intergenerational, interreligious, or any other ‘inter’, we could be dealing with a Post-Critical Pedagogy of some sort.

Reader: You’ve drawn the picture well.

Editor: Thank you.

Reader: It seems to me the main principles of Post-critical Pedagogy would be that educators and artists should work to create dialogic spaces where students/audiences can interrogate their identity to challenge themselves to unlearn the parts of their past which contribute to social injustice. Education should support spaces for interpersonal engagement rather than direct confrontations that are likely to fuel antagonism, aggression and fear when creating dialogue. You suggest looking to Post-structural thinkers for inspiration as to where pedagogy can explore. In this approach modes of pedagogy should be used which reach beyond binaries and explore complex situations. The influence of Critical Pedagogy on this field, Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, and others still serve an important purpose.

Editor: That seems to acknowledge everything I suggest. I would add though, for me, the process should always be fun, playful, and celebratory.

Reader: That’s right.

Editor: Ready to go for that beer now?

Reader: Yes, let’s...

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The following application form is an institutional protocol based on the
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3. Submit one (1) original and two (2) copies of this completed, signed application with all attachments to: Human Research Ethics, Administrative Services Building (ASB), Room B202, University of Victoria, PO Box 1700 STN CSC, Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
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A. Principal Investigator

If there is more than one Principal Investigator, provide their name(s) and contact information below in Section B, Other Investigator(s) & Research Team.

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Email:

Name:

Email:

B. Project Information

Project Title: **Intergenerational Theatre for Development: A Critical Case Study of an Intercultural Applied Theatre Exchange between Tamil Nadu, India and Victoria, Canada**

Anticipated Start Date for Recruitment / Data Collection: **December 1, 2013** Anticipated End Date: **May 2015**

Geographic location(s) of study: **Canada & India**

Keywords: 1. **Intergenerational Theatre** 2. **Theatre for Development**
 3. **Intercultural Theatre** 4. **Seniors' Theatre**

Is this application connected/associated/linked to one that has been recently submitted? Yes No

If yes, provide further information:

All Current Investigator(s) and Research Team:

(Include all current co-investigators, students, employees, volunteers, community organizations.)

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For Faculty Only: Any Graduate Student Research Assistants who will use the data to fulfill UVic thesis/ dissertation/ academic requirements: Include all current Graduate Student Research Assistants

Student/Research Assistant

Email or Phone

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C. Multi-Jurisdictional Research

Does the proposed project require Research Ethics Board (REB) approval from another research ethics board(s)? Yes No

If yes, list the other research ethics board from which you or research team members have sought approval or will seek approval:

Pondicherry University Ethics Approval

(Attach proof of having applied to other research ethics board(s). Please forward approvals upon receiving them. Be assured that UVic ethics approval may be granted prior to receipt of other research ethics board approvals.)

If you have answered “yes” above, please indicate your role in the multi-jurisdictional research project (Check all that apply):

Recruiting participants

Collecting data

Analyzing data (with or without identifiers) collected by you and/or UVic research team members

Analyzing data that *contains* identifiers: Data to be collected by non-UVic research team members as outlined in this application.

Analyzing data that *does not* contain identifiers: Data to be collected by non-UVic research team members as outlined in this application.

Dissemination of results via publications, reports, conferences, internet, etc.

Other (*explain*): █

D. Agreement and Signatures

For further information, on signature requirements, please see the [Guidelines for Signatures](#).

Principal Investigator and Student Supervisor affirm that:

- *I have read this application and it is complete and accurate.*

- *The research will be conducted in accordance with the University of Victoria regulations, policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of research involving human participants and all relevant sections of the TCPS 2.*
- *The conduct of the research will not commence until ethics approval has been granted.*
- *The researcher(s) will seek further HREB review if the research protocol is modified.*
- *Adequate supervision will be provided for students and/or staff.*

Principal Investigator

Student's Supervisor or co-Supervisor (for student applicants only)

Signature

Signature

Matthew Gusul

Print Name

Dr. Warwick Dobson

Print Name

Date

Date

Chair, Director or Dean

(To be signed by the person to whom the PI, or student's supervisor reports, and must not be the same person as the PI or student's supervisor. The Research Ethics Office cannot accept applications with duplicate signatures)

I affirm that adequate research infrastructure is available for the conduct and completion of this research.

Signature

Dr. Sarah Blackstone

Print Name

Date

E. Project Funding

Have you applied for funding for this project? Yes No If yes, please complete the following:

Source of Project Funding	Funding Applied	Funding Approved	Project Title Used in Funding Application (or additional information)
SSHRC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Intergenerational Theatre for Development: A Critical Case Study of an Intercultural Applied Theatre Exchange between Tamil Nadu, India and Victoria, Canada (Doctoral Award)
<u>HelpAge India</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<u>HelpAge India is providing in-kind support of all travel and accommodations for UVic students & instructors and all expenses incurred by the newly formed Intergenerational Theatre Company</u>
<div style="background-color: #cccccc; width: 40px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<div style="background-color: #cccccc; width: 40px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div>
<div style="background-color: #cccccc; width: 40px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<div style="background-color: #cccccc; width: 40px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div>

Will this project receive funding from the US *National Institutes of Health (NIH)*?

Yes No

If yes, provide further information:

If you have applied for funding, have you submitted a funding application or contract notification to the UVic Office of Research Services?

Yes No (*Please contact the UVic Grants Liaison at (250) 472-4986 resprog3@uvic.ca*)

Have you previously submitted an In-Principle Research Ethics Application for release of preparatory research funds associated with this project?

Yes No

F. Scholarly Review

What type of scholarly review has this research project undergone?

External Peer Review (*e.g., granting agency*)

Supervisory Committee or Supervisor—required for all student research projects

None

Other, please explain:

G. Other Approvals and Consultations

Do you require additional approvals or consultations from other agencies, community groups, local governments, etc.?

Yes, attached Yes, will forward as received No

(Attach proof of having made request(s) for permission, or attach approval letter(s). Please forward approvals upon receiving them. Be assured that ethics approval may be granted prior to receipt of external approvals.)

If **Yes**, please check all that apply:

School District, Superintendent, Principal, Teacher. Please list the school districts or schools: **Isha**

Vidhya Matriculation School

Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) if you are UVic faculty, student or staff and will be conducting minimal-risk research under the auspices of the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), involving VIHA staff, patients, health records, sites and/or recruitment through VIHA sites (including recruitment via poster placement), you must use the [Joint UVic/VIHA application form](#). For above minimal risk research, please contact the UVic Research Ethics Office.

Other regional government authority, please explain:

Community Group (e.g., formal organization, informal collective), please explain:

Other Research Ethics Board (REB) Approval, please explain: **Pondicherry University Ethics Approval**

UVic Biosafety Committee Approval. Attach your Biosafety Approval, or your correspondence with the [Biosafety Committee](#), to this application. Note that Research Ethics Approval is contingent on Biosafety Approval.

Other Approval, please explain: **Approval from HelpAge India**

H. [Researcher\(s\) Qualifications](#)

In light of your research methods, the nature of the research, and the characteristics of the participants, what training, qualifications, or personal experiences do you and/or your research team have (e.g., research methods course, language proficiency, committee expertise, training on the equipment to be used)?

I have taken two research methods course in partial fulfillment of my course requirements here at UVic. I also took two research methods courses in partial fulfillment of my Master of Arts degree from the University of Alberta. I have also been involved in a CURA research project at the University of Alberta Are We There Yet?, a CIHR research project on Healthy Aging at the University of Alberta, and a SSHRC research project conducted by Dr. Diane Conrad in the Education Department at the University of Alberta working with Young Offenders in the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre.

My Supervisory Committee includes experienced researchers Dr. Warwick Dobson, Dr. Holly Tuokko, and Dr. Allana Lindgren. All three have experience publishing and conducting University research projects.

I. [Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples of Canada \(Including First Nations, Inuit and Métis\)](#)

The TCPS 2 (Chapter 9) highlights the importance of community engagement and respect for community customs, protocols, codes of research practice and knowledge when conducting research with Aboriginal peoples or communities. "Aboriginal peoples" includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis regardless of where they

reside or whether or not their names appear on an official register. The nature and extent of community engagement should be determined jointly by the researcher and the relevant community or collective, taking into account the characteristics and protocols of the community and the nature of the research.

1. Conditions of the Research

- 1a. Will the research be conducted on (an) Aboriginal – First Nations, Inuit and Métis – lands, including reserves, Métis settlement, and lands governed under a self-government agreement or an Inuit or First Nations land claims agreement?

No

Yes, provide details:

- 1b. Do any of the criteria for participation include membership in an Aboriginal community, group of communities, or organization, including urban Aboriginal populations?

No

Yes, provide details:

- 1c. Does the research seek input from participants regarding a community's cultural heritage, artifacts, traditional knowledge or unique characteristics?

Yes No

- 1d. Will Aboriginal identity or membership in an Aboriginal community be used as a variable for the purposes of analysis?

Yes No

- 1e. Will the results of the research refer to Aboriginal communities, peoples, language, history or culture?

Yes No

2. Community Engagement

- 2a. If you answered "yes" to questions a), b), c), d) or e), have you initiated or do you intend to initiate an engagement process with the Aboriginal collective, community or communities for this study?

Yes No

- 2b. If you answered “yes” to question 2a, describe the process that you have followed or will follow with respect to community engagement. Include any documentation of consultations (*i.e. formal research agreement, letter of approval, email communications, etc.*) and the role or position of those consulted, including their names if appropriate:

3. No community consultation or engagement

If you answered “no” to question 2a, briefly describe why community engagement will not be sought and how you can conduct a study that respects Aboriginal communities and participants in the absence of community engagement.

J. [International Research](#)

4. Will this study be conducted in a country other than Canada?

Yes

No

If yes, describe how the laws, customs and regulations of the host country will be addressed
(*consider research Visas, local Institutional Research Ethics Board requirements, etc.*):

I have consulted a local institution in India (Pondicherry University) and received ethics clearance. I will also apply for a research visa on future visits to India.

K. [Description of Research Project](#)

5. Purpose and Rationale of Research

Briefly describe in non-technical language:

Please use 150 words or fewer.

5a. The research objective(s) and question(s)

In 2004, a Tsunami hit the Indian coast and had devastating effects on the province of Tamil Nadu. In the community's re-building process, elders were forced to live in areas of the coastal region, referred to as "Grannie Dumps," because their homes were destroyed. With the assistance of HelpAge International and guidance from Michael Etherton, the elders are now part of an active, healthy community named Tamaraikulam Elders Village (TEV) that wants to tell its story.

In March 2008, Michael Etherton attended a Workshop/Performance of GeriActors & Friends (G&F), an intergenerational theatre company from Edmonton, AB. I was G&F's Assistant Director. He connected me with HelpAge India and TEV because he thought that methods used with G&F would work well with TEV. G&F uses stories from their lives to create theatre. Central to their approach is intergenerational relationships and the playful energy that is released when young and old come together. This has fostered intergenerational connects in the Edmonton community. A proposal was accepted in which I would facilitate the formation of an Intergenerational Theatre company between the TEV elders and young people.

HelpAge India has helped me facilitate the steps to begin this project. On a visit I took in January 2013, HelpAge India Tamil Nadu Manager Venugopal Ramalingam, TEV Director Dr. Sathiyababu, and I met with Isha School Principals and Dr. Gunasekaran, the Dean of Performing Arts of Pondicherry University, who both committed to be involved in the Intergenerational Theatre Company project. Students from the Isha School will be the younger generation joining with TEV Residents to form the Theatre Company. Dr. Gunasekaran agreed to act as an unpaid consultant to the project and to help select the Intergenerational Company's Director and Playwright from graduates from the University's Performing Arts program.

What can Intergenerational Theatre methods contribute to Theatre for Development models that may extend the range of theory and practice in Applied Theatre in terms of education, social justice, and community building?

This research project will take place in four phases:

1 – Intergenerational Theatre for Development Course – January – April 2014 – UVic Students will work with theatre techniques that will be used to help in the formation of the Theatre Company in India.

2 - Hiring of Directors and Playwrights in India – May 2014 – I will travel to India to assist Help Age India hire their first director and playwright.

3 – Uvic Students Travel to India to Assist with the formation of the Intergenerational Theatre Company and the First Performance – September – December 2014 -

4 – Return to India to See the Companies First Tour – April – May 2015 – I will travel to India to see the company’s first tour and assess the company’s sustainability.

5b. The importance and contributions of the research

This will be an important study for the field of Applied Theatre as it represents the first time that the areas of Intergenerational Theatre and Theatre for Development have been combined. This will extend theory and practice in Applied Theatre Research, potentially opening pathways to future Applied Theatre theory/practice. My past research and practical experience will be the basis for entering this project. I have researched and written about utilizing play and playfulness in Intergenerational rehearsals and performance from my experience with G&F and directing/acting/teaching in multiple intergenerational theatre events.

- 5c. If applicable, provide background information or details that will enable the HREB to understand the context of the study when reviewing the application.

Intergenerational theatre performances using the TEV elders and young people as actors will positively impact the Tamil Nadu community. The template used for the company in India will be G&F because they have been able to help develop their community through educating people on seniors' issues, shifting public perception of aging, and building a healthy community made up of intergenerational actors. They do this by staging stories from their lives to various audiences throughout their community. This research project will seek a way in which the intergenerational theatre techniques used by G&F can be duplicated in Tamil Nadu, India so the TEV elders can have a positive impact on their community in the same manner as G&F.

L. [Recruitment](#)

6. Recruitment and Selection of Participants

- 6a. Briefly describe the target population(s) for recruitment. Ensure that all participant groups are identified (*e.g., group 1 - teachers, group 2 - administrators, group 3 - parents*).

Group 1 – UVic Students

Group 2 – TEV Elders

Group 3 – TEV Staff

Group 4 – Indian Young People from School

Group 5 – School Staff

Group 6 – Intergenerational Theatre Directing Team

- 6b. Why is each population or group of interest?

Group 1 – The students are instrumental in this project. They will help develop an approach to the intervention that will take place in the Tamil Nadu community. This approach will be developed in a course taking place at UVic Jan-Apr 2014.

Group 2 – The TEV Elders are the main focus of the research project. They will be the principal actors in the Intergenerational Theatre Company.

Group 3 – The TEV staff will have important insight into the creation of the intergenerational theatre company and the health and wellness effects it has on the elder population.

Group 4 – The young people that are members of the intergenerational theatre company will be important to this study. They will also be principal actors in the company.

Group 5 – The school staff will have important insight into the creation of the intergenerational theatre company and effects it has on the education of the student population.

Group 6 – The directing team will be hired by HelpAge India to lead the intergenerational theatre company to be trained by me and the UVic students. They will be a highly important component of this company.

- 6c. What are the *salient* characteristics of the participants for your study? (*e.g., age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, position, etc.*)? List all inclusion and exclusion criteria you are using.

There are six different groups that will be involved in this research study. I am including each group because they are the various members or support staff of the Intergenerational Theatre Company that is being created in Tamil Nadu, India.

Group 1 – Senior Undergraduate UVic Theatre Students

Group 2 – Indian Elders – split genders, elderly, low income, mostly illiterate

Group 3 – TEV Staff – mostly men, 30-50 years, middle income

Group 4 – Young Students – split genders, 13+ years, low income

Group 5 – School Staff – split genders, 30-50 years, middle income

Group 6 – Directing Team – 25+ years, unknown genders, middle income

- 6d. What is the desired number of participants for each group?

Group 1 – 5, Group 2 – 5, Group 3 – 3, Group 4 – 5, Group 5 – 3, Group 6 - 2

6e. Provide a detailed description of your recruitment process. Explain:

- i) List all source(s) for information used to contact potential participants (*e.g., personal contacts, listserves, publicly available contact information, etc.*). Clarify which sources will be used for which participant groups:

Each group will be recruited by Personal Contacts

- ii) List all methods of recruitment (*e.g., in-person, by telephone, letter, snowball sampling, word-of-mouth, advertisement, etc.*) If you will be using “snowball” sampling, clarify how this will proceed (*i.e., will participants be asked to pass on your study information to other potential participants?*). Clarify which methods will be used for which participant groups.

I will recruit each group in person with the exception of the Indian Elders who I will contact in person but through the use of a translator.

- iii) If you will be using personal and/or private contact information to contact potential participants (as stated above), have the potential participants given permission for this, or will you use a neutral third party to assist you with recruitment? *Note that this is not a concern when public and/or business contact information is used.*

Recruitment will be face to face contact with each group and they have given permission.

- iv) Who will recruit/contact participants (*e.g., researcher, assistant, third party, etc.*) Clarify this for each participant group.

Researcher will recruit all groups ~~but with the Indian Elders, I will recruit them in person through the use of a translator.~~

- v) List and explain any relationship between the members of the research team (including third party recruiters or sponsors/clients of the research) and the participant(s) (*e.g., acquaintances, colleagues*). Complete item 7 if there is potential for a [power relationship](#) or a *perceived power relationship* (*e.g., instructor-student, manager-employee, etc.*). If you have a close relationship with potential participants (*e.g., family member, friend, close colleague, etc.*) clarify here the safeguards that you will put in place to mitigate any potential pressure to participate.

Group 1 – Uvic Students – I will have a Power-Over relationship

Group 2 – Indian Elders – The TEV Staff will have Power-Over relationship

Group 4 – Young Students – The school Staff will have Power-Over relationship

vi) In chronological order (if possible) describe the steps in the recruitment process. (*Include how you will screen potential participants where applicable*). Consider where in the process permission of other bodies may be required.

For groups 1, 3, 5, and 6, I have been granted permission by their organization to ask them ~~face-to-face~~ if they are interested in being involved through personal contacts. With group 2, the TEV Staff will recruit Elders for me to work with and, with group 4, the school staff will recruit students for me to work with. The UVic students have been recruited to participate in the project through meetings led by my supervisor. They have been informed this is part of my research project.

7. Power Relationships (Dual-Role and Power-Over)

If you are completing this section, please refer to the:

[Guidelines For Ethics in Dual-Role Research for Teachers and Other Practitioners](#) and the [TCPS 2, Article 3.1 and Article 7.4](#).

Are you or any of your co-researchers in any way in a power relationship, including dual-roles, that could influence the voluntariness of a participant's consent? Could you or any of your co-researchers potentially be *perceived* to be in a power relationship by potential participants? *Examples of "power relationships" include teachers-students, therapists-clients, supervisors-employees and possibly researcher-relative or researcher-close friend where elements of trust or dependency could result in undue influence.*

Yes No Varies

If *yes* or *varies*, describe below:

i) The nature of the relationship:

Director ~~Teacher~~ - UVic Student

TEV Staff - Indian Elders

School Staff – Indian Students

ii) Why it is necessary to conduct research with participants over whom you have a power relationship:

-The UVic students are an important part of this research study. They will assist in the development of the intervention in the Indian community and be active participants during the entire process.

-Both the Indian Elders and Indian Students are central participants in this research study. The main subject of research is the creation of the Indian Intergenerational Theatre company and the views of these two groups are important to this study.

- iii) What safeguards (steps) will be taken to ensure voluntariness and minimize undue influence, coercion or potential harm:

-With the UVic students, they will be handed an informed consent letter at the beginning of the course (Jan 2014) and at two separate occasions they will be asked to sign consent forms: One consent form for handing in their course work as research data (April 2014); and the second at their interview (Nov-Dec 2014). Also, all grading will be done by Course Supervisor Dr. Dobson and TA Shona Athey. I will wait to interview the students until after I submit the grades to a third party (Dr. Warwick Dobson, Theatre Department Chair). Then, after the interviews take place, the third party will post the grades for the students to see. All the students' material during the course will be part of the research study.

-With both the Indian Elders and Students, I will invite the groups to the interviews through a translator. The invitation will be verbally given in front of each group and then the interviews will take place the next day. Participants will be instructed to show up to the interview location if they want to be involved in the research study and to not come if they are not interested. They will be informed that no penalties exist for non-involvement.

- iv) How will the power or dual-role relationship and associated safeguards be explained to potential participants:

-The UVic students will be told about the procedures to ensure their grades will not be affected by involvement or non-involvement in the research study. If a student chooses not to be involved their images and name will not be associated with this study.

-With both the Indian Elders and Students it will be made clear to them through the translator that they will not be penalized in any way for non-involvement in the study. I will take time to work with the translators to find the appropriate language to communicate this to these two groups.

Recruitment Materials Checklist:

Attach all documents referenced in this section (*check those that are appended*):

- Script(s) – in-person, telephone, 3rd party, e-mail, etc.
- Invitation to participate (*e.g., Psychology Research Participation System Posting*)
- Advertisement, poster, flyer

x None; please explain why (*e.g., consent form used as invitation/recruitment guide*)

They are already identified by the nature of the project.

M. [Data Collection Methods](#)

8. Data Collection

Use the following sections in ways best suited to explain your project. If you have more than one participant group, be sure to explain which participant group(s) will be involved in which activity/activities or method(s).

8a. Which of the following methods will be used to collect data? *Check all that apply.*

<p>x Interviewing participants:</p> <p>x in-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by telephone</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> using web-based technology (explain): </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Conducting group interviews or discussions (including focus groups)</p>	<p>x Attach draft interview questions</p>
<p>X Administering a questionnaire or survey:</p> <p>X In person <input type="checkbox"/> by telephone</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> mail back <input type="checkbox"/> email</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> web-based* (see below)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, describe: </p> <p>*If using a web program with a server located in the United States (e.g., SurveyMonkey), or if there are other reasons that the data will be stored in the US (e.g., use of US-based cloud technology, sharing data with US colleagues, etc.), you must inform participants that their</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Attach questionnaire or survey:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> standardized (one with established reliability and validity)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> non-standardized (one that is un-tested, adapted or open-ended)</p>

<p>responses may be accessed via the U.S. Patriot Act. Please add the following to the consent form(s):</p> <p><i>“Please be advised that this research study includes data storage in the U.S.A. As such, there is a possibility that information about you that is gathered for this research study may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the U.S. government in compliance with the U.S. Patriot Act. ”</i></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Administering a computerized task (describe in 8b or attach details)</p>	
<p>Observing participants</p> <p><i>In 8b, describe who and what will be observed. Include where observations will take place. If applicable, forward an observational data collection sheet for review.</i></p>	
<p>x Recording of participants and data using:</p> <p>X audio x video x photos or slides</p> <p>x note taking <input type="checkbox"/> flipcharts</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> data collection sheet (attach) x other: Journal</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Images used for analysis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Images used in disseminating results (include release to use participant images in consent materials)</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Using human samples (e.g., saliva, urine, blood, hair)</p> <p><i>Attach your Biosafety Approval, or your correspondence with the Biosafety Committee, to this application. Note that Research Ethics Approval is contingent on Biosafety Approval.</i></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Using specialized equipment/machines (e.g., ultrasound, EEG, prototypes etc.) or other. (e.g., testing instruments that are not surveys or questionnaires). Please specify: <input type="text"/></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Using other testing equipment not captured under other categories.</p> <p>Please specify: <input type="text"/></p>	
<p>X Collecting materials supplied by, or produced by, the participants (e.g., artifacts, paintings, drawings, photos, slides, art, journals, writings, etc.)</p> <p>Please specify: Workshops, rehearsals, scripts, performances, and artifacts.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing secondary data or secondary use of data (Refers to information/data that was originally gathered for a purpose other than the proposed research and is now being considered for use in research (e.g., patient or school records, personal writings, lesson plans, etc.).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Secondary data involving anonymized information (Information/data is stripped of identifiers by another researcher or institution before being shared with the applicant).</p>	

Secondary data with identifying information (Data contains names and other information that can be linked to individuals, (e.g., student report cards, employment records, meeting minutes, personal writings).

In item 8b describe the source of the data, who the appropriate data steward is, and explain whether (and how) consent was or will be obtained from the individuals for use of their data.

Other:

Please specify:

8b. Provide a sequential description of the procedures/methods to be used in your research study.

Be sure to provide details for all methods checked in section 8a. Clarify which procedures/methods will be used for each participant group. Indicate which methods, if any, will be conducted in a group setting. *List all of the research instruments and*

interview/focus group questions, and append copies (if possible) or detailed descriptions of all instruments. If not yet finalized, provide drafts or sample items/questions.

1) Method - Fields Notes, Journal, Video, and Photographs – Throughout my research I will keep a detailed journal and take field notes. I will also take many photographs and videos throughout the process of completing this project.

All six groups will be included in these methods and all will be taking place in a group setting. There will be videos and photographs taken of all the Intergenerational Theatre Company's meetings, rehearsals, and performances. I will keep field notes and maintain a personal journal recording the accounts of all these meetings, rehearsals, and performances.

The data collected in the videos, photographs, journal, and field notes will be used to examine the process of combining Theatre for Development and Intergenerational Theatre techniques and what this means for the larger field of Applied Theatre. All data collected will be used for analysis and dissemination of findings unless individuals opt not to participate, in which case, their image will be blurred and they will not be directly referred to in the study.

2) Method - The workshops, rehearsals, scripts, performances, and any other artifacts of the new Intergenerational Company – data from all of these will be collected and analyzed.

Groups 2, 4, and 6 will be generating this material during the meetings, rehearsals, and performances of the Intergenerational Theatre Company.

3) Method - Interviews – I will conduct interviews with each of the six groups.

Members of all six groups will be interviewed in a one-on-one setting. They will be video/audio recorded and transcribed.

~~4) Method – Membership Check – this is a step in the process where I will allow people who have been involved in this study to comment on the final work. There will be many issues in attempting this through translation but it is important for the Indian students and elders to be allowed to comment on how they will be represented in my study.~~

~~There will be three member checks conducted in this research study: Group 1 – UVic Students, Groups 2,3,& 6 – TEV Elders & Staff, and Groups 4&5 – School Students & Staff.~~

4) Participant Demographic Information – Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 will fill out the sheet at the beginning of their involvement in the study.

- 8c. Where will participation take place for each data collection method/procedure? *Provide specific location, (e.g., UVic classroom, private residence, participant's workplace). Clarify the locations for each participant group and/or each data collection method.*

UVic students will be interviewed in University of Victoria following the Course, Jan-Apr 2014, and the workshops/performances in this course will be videotaped.

Interviews with all groups will take place in India in the field. The workshops and performances of the company will also take place in India.

- 8d. For each method, and in total, how much time will be required of participants? *Clarify this for each participant group, each data collection method, and any other research related activities.*

UVic Course – January – April 2014 3 Hours over twelve weeks

Interviews – 30-60 minutes for each interview

Rehearsals and Workshops in India – 2-3 Hours in length over eight weeks 3-4 times per week

~~Member Check – 30-60 Minutes for each community.~~

- 8e. Will participation take place during participants' office/work hours or instructional time?

No Yes. Indicate whether permission is required (*e.g., from workplace supervisor, school principal, etc.*) and how this will be obtained: **Both HelpAge India and the School have given consent for their employees.**

Data Collection Methods Checklist:

Attach all documents referenced in this section (*check those that are appended. Where draft versions are appended please ensure that final versions are submitted when available. If final versions differ significantly after you have obtained Research Ethics approval, you will need to submit a [Request for Modification](#):*

Standardized Instrument(s)

- Survey(s), Questionnaire(s)
- Interview and/or Focus Group Questions
- Observation Protocols
- Other:

N. Possible Benefits, Inconveniences, and Risks of Harm to Participants

9. Benefits

Identify any potential or known benefits associated with participation and explain below.
Keep in mind that the anticipated benefits should outweigh any potential risks.

To the participant To society To the state of knowledge

All research participants will be involved in the creation of the intergenerational theatre company which will have individual, societal, and intellectual benefits: Individuals will benefit by learning theatre skills and gaining confidence in learning a new form of communication; Society will benefit by having awareness raised to important issues faced by elders and by offering unique education to young people; and the state of knowledge in India, Canada, and the Global Applied Theatre Research community will be positively impacted by this research study.

10. Inconveniences

Identify and describe any known or potential inconveniences to participants:
Consider all potential inconveniences, including total time devoted to the research.

A very small amount of time will be committed by the research participants in the interview process, and in the rehearsals and performances of the intergenerational theatre company.

11. Level of Risk

The [TCPS 2](#) definition of “minimal risk research” is as follows:

“Research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research.”

Based on this definition, do you believe your research qualifies as “minimal risk research”?

- Yes it is minimal risk. No, it is not minimal risk.

Explain your answer with reference to the risks of the study and the vulnerability of the participants:

There is no greater risk at any point during this research project “than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research”. All elders, young people, and UVic students enter this study as willing participants of theatre performance and international travel with the option to be excluded from the research study at any time. UVic students will be travelling in a very controlled and safe environment that I am familiar with and I will include a pre-departure training element before the travel which will prepare them for any potential dangers they will encounter. The themes and stories of the theatre will not focus on their life struggles but will focus on their community’s healthy status.

12. Estimate of Risks of Harm

Consider the inherent foreseeable risks associated with your research protocol and complete the table below by putting an X in the appropriate boxes. Be sure to take into account the vulnerability of your target population(s) if applicable:

Potential Risks of Harm	Very unlikely	Possibly	Likely
i) Emotional or psychological discomfort, such as feeling demeaned or embarrassed due to the research	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Fatigue or stress	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Social risks, such as stigmatization, loss of status, privacy and/or reputation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Physical risks such as falls	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) Economic risk (e.g., job security, salary loss, etc.)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Risk of incidental findings (<i>See Article 3.4 of the TCPS 2 for more information</i>)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vii) Other risks: 	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Possible Risks of Harm

If you indicated in Item 12 (i) to (vii) that any risks of harm are *possible* or *likely*, please explain below:

13a. What are the risks? (*i.e., elaborate on risks you have identified above*)

13b. What will you do to try to minimize, mitigate, or prevent the risks?

13c. How will you respond if the harm occurs? (*i.e., what is your plan?*)

13d. If you have indicated that there is a risk of Incidental Findings (vi) please outline your proposed protocol for information and/or action.

13e. If one or more of your participant groups could be considered vulnerable please describe any specific considerations you have built into the protocol to address this.

14. Risk to Researcher(s)

14a. Does this research study pose any risks to the researchers, assistants and data collectors?

No

14b. If there are any risks, explain the nature of the risks, how they will be minimized, and how you will respond if they occur.

15. Deception

Will participants be fully informed of everything that will be required of them prior to the start of the research session?

Yes

No (*If no, complete the [Request to Use Deception](#) form on the ORS website*)

O. Incentives, Reimbursement and Compensation

16a. Is there any incentive, monetary or otherwise, being offered for participation in the research (e.g., gifts, honorarium, course credits, etc.)

Yes No

If yes, explain the nature of the incentive(s) and why you consider it necessary. Also consider whether the amount or nature of the incentive could be considered a form of undue inducement or affect the voluntariness of consent. Clarify which participant groups will be provided with which incentives.

16b. Is there any reimbursement or compensation for participating in the research (e.g., for transportation, parking, childcare, etc.)

Yes No

If yes, explain the nature of reimbursement or compensation and why you consider it necessary. Also consider whether the amount of reimbursement or compensation could be considered a form of undue inducement or affect the voluntariness of consent. Clarify which participant groups will be provided with which kind of reimbursement or compensation.

16c. Explain what will happen to the incentives, reimbursement or compensation if participants withdraw during data collection or any time thereafter (e.g., compensation will be pro-rated, full compensation will be given, etc.)

P. Free and Informed Consent

Consent encompasses a process that begins with initial contact and continues through to the end of the research process. Consult Article 3.2 of the TCPS 2 and Appendix V of the Guidelines for further information.

17. Participant's Capacity (Competence) to Provide Free and Informed Consent

Capacity refers to the ability of prospective or actual participants to understand relevant information presented about a research project, and to appreciate the potential consequences of their decision to participate or not participate. See the [TCPS 2](#), Chapter 3, section C, for further information.

Identify your potential participants: (Check all that apply.)

Competent	Non-Competent
------------------	----------------------

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Competent adults</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A protected or vulnerable population (<i>e.g., inmates, patients</i>)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-competent adults:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consent of family/authorized representative will be obtained</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assent of the participant will be obtained (note that assent of the participant is always required)</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Competent youth aged 13 to 18:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consent of youth will be obtained and parental/guardian consent is required, <i>due to institutional requirements (such as school districts) or due to the nature of the research (e.g., risks, etc.)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consent of youth will be obtained, parents/guardians will be informed</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent of youth will be obtained, parents/guardians will <i>NOT</i> be informed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, explain: </p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-competent youth:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consent of parent/guardian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assent of the youth will be obtained (note that assent of the participant is always required)</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Competent children under 13 (<i>who are able to provide fully informed consent</i>):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consent of child will be obtained and consent of parent/guardian will be obtained</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, explain: </p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-competent children (<i>young children and/or children with limited abilities to provide fully informed consent</i>):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consent of parent/guardian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assent of the child will be obtained (note that assent of the participant is always required)</p>

18. Means of Obtaining and Documenting Consent and/or Assent:

Check all that apply, consider all of your participant groups, attach copies of relevant materials, complete item 19:

Signed consent (*Attach consent form(s) - see [template](#) available*)

Verbal consent (*Attach verbal consent script(s) - see [template](#) available.*)

Explain in 19 why written consent is not appropriate and how verbal consent will be documented.

- Letter of Information for **Implied** consent (*e.g., anonymous, mail back or web-based survey. Attach information letter, see [template](#)*)
- Signed** or **Verbal assent** for non-competent participants (*Attach assent form(s), or verbal assent script(s)*).

Explain how verbal assent will be documented in 19.

- Other** means. **Explain** in 19 and provide justification.
- Consent **will not be obtained**. See [TCPS 2](#) Articles 3.5 and 3.7. **Explain** in 19.
- Signed** consent from the parents/guardians for youth/child participants (*Attach consent form(s)*).

Explain how parents/guardians will provide informed consent for child/youth participants in 19.

- Information letters** for the parents/guardians of youth/child participants (*Attach information letter(s)*). *If consent will not be obtained from parents/guardians and the parents/guardians will not be informed, explain why not in 19.*

19. Informed Consent

Describe the exact steps (chronological order) that you will follow in the process of explaining, obtaining, and documenting informed consent. Ensure that consent procedures for all participant groups are identified (e.g., group 1 - teachers, group 2 – parents, group 3 – students). Be sure to indicate when participants will first be provided with the consent materials (*e.g., prior to first meeting with the researcher?*). If consent will not be obtained, explain why not with reference to the [TCPS 2](#) Articles 3.5 and 3.7.

Each groups' members will be given an informed consent letter at the beginning of their involvement have to sign the Participant Consent Form to be involved in the Intergenerational Theatre Project. The Participant Consent Form covers each group's involvement in the whole project including journaling, fields notes, video-audio recording, photographs, and interviews. Also, each group will be given a consent form to release use of the photographs and videos taken during the project.

Group 1 – Senior Undergraduate UVic Theatre Students – will sign consent forms at the end of the course to release their course material and again at an interview in India ~~Consent Forms to Signed at interviews and at beginning of course~~

Group 2 – Indian Elders – split genders, elderly, low income, mostly illiterate – Verbal Consent will be obtained at interviews. Verbal will be used here because the elders are illiterate and do not speak English. The invitation will be verbally given in front this group

and then the interviews will take place the next day. Participants will be instructed to show up to the interview location if they want to be involved in the research study and to not come if they are not interested. They will be informed that no penalties exist for non-involvement. Elders will be given the informed consent letter sign Participant Consent Forms at beginning of project in September 2014 and will sign a consent form at the interview.

Group 3 – TEV Staff – mostly men, 30-50 years, middle income – Consent Forms to be signed at interviews. TEV Staff will be given the informed consent letter sign Participant Consent Forms at beginning of project in September 2014 and will sign a consent form at the interview.

Group 4 – Young Students – split genders, 13+ years, low income – Consent forms to be signed at interviews. The invitation will be verbally given in front this group and then the interviews will take place the next day. Participants will be instructed to show up to the interview location if they want to be involved in the research study and to not come if they are not interested. They will be informed that no penalties exist for non-involvement. Isha students will sign Participant Consent Forms at beginning of project in September 2014.

Group 5 – School Staff – split genders, 30-50 years, middle income – Consent forms to be signed at interviews. School Staff will be given the informed consent letter sign Participant Consent Forms at beginning of project in September 2014 and will sign a consent form at the interview.

Group 6 – Directing Team – 25+ years, unknown genders, middle income – Consent forms to be signed at interviews. Directing Team will be given the informed consent letter sign Participant Consent Forms at beginning of project in September 2014 and will sign a consent form at the interview.

20. Ongoing Consent

Article 3.3 of the TCPS 2 states that consent shall be maintained throughout the research project. Complete this section if the research involves interacting with participants over multiple occasions (including review of transcripts, etc.), has multiple data collection activities, and/ or occurs over an extended period of time.

20a. Will your research occur over multiple occasions or an extended period of time (including review of transcripts)?

Yes

No

20b. If yes, describe how you will obtain and document ongoing consent. If consent procedures differ for each group or activity, please clarify each group or activity that you are referring to.

~~This only occurs in the case of group one. The UVic students will be interviewed twice: once, after the Jan-Apr 2014 course and again, after the completion of the Indian intervention. Consent forms will be signed at each interview.~~

With each group, Consent will be obtained at the beginning of each groups involvement in the project and then again during the interview process. with the informed consent letter (UVic Students Jan 2014; Isha Staff, TEV Staff, and Directors/Playwrights May 2014; and TEV Elders and Isha Students Sept 2014). Each group will also sign two consent forms at their interview (Nov-Dec 2014): one for the interview and another for the videos and photographs taken during the project. The UVic students will have an addition consent form to release their course materials (April 2014).

21. Participant's Right to Withdraw

Article 3.1 of the TCPS2 states that participants have the right to withdraw at any time and can withdraw their data and human biological materials.

Describe what participants will be told about their right to withdraw from the research at any time (*i.e., who to contact and how*). If compensation is involved, explain what participants will be told about compensation if they withdraw. *If you have different participant groups and/or different data collection methods, clarify the different procedures for withdrawing as necessary.*

Every participant will be allowed to withdraw at any time during the study. They will be informed of this at regular junctures. Since all meeting will be videotaped it will be important to be sure that if anyone does not want their image to be shown to not take photos of them and to not use any moving images of them in further dissemination of the data.

22. **What will happen to a person's data if s/he withdraws part way through the study or after the data have been collected/submitted? If applicable, include information about visual data such as photos or videos.** *If you have different participant groups and/or different data*

collection methods, clarify the different procedures for withdrawing as necessary. Ensure this information is included in the consent documents.

Participant will be asked if he/she agrees to the use of his/her data. Describe how this agreement will be documented:

For interviews, the data will be destroyed.

It will not be used in the analysis and will be destroyed.

It is logistically impossible to remove individual participant data (e.g., *anonymously submitted data*).

When linked to group data (e.g., *focus group discussions*), it will be used in summarized form with no identifying information.

Free and Informed Consent Checklist:

Attach all documents referenced in this section (*check those that are appended*):

Consent and Assent Form(s) – Include forms for all participant groups and data gathering methods

Letter(s) of Information for Implied Consent

Verbal Consent and Assent Scripts

Q. Anonymity and Confidentiality

23. Anonymity

Anonymity means that no one, including the principal investigator, is able to associate responses or other data with individual participants.

23a. Will the participants be anonymous in the data gathering phase of research?

Yes No

23b. Will the participants be anonymous in the dissemination of results (*be sure to consider use of video, photos*)?

Yes

Maybe. Explain below.

No. If anonymity will not be protected and you plan to identify all participants with their data, provide the rationale below.

The students from Indian will be anonymous in this study. Their identities will be kept confidential. The elders, during the member check, will be given the option to be kept confidential or not. The act of being involved in this intergenerational

theatre company is one of empowerment for the elders and I want to allow them the chance to be identified in this study.

24. Confidentiality

Confidentiality means the protection of the person's identity (anonymity) and the protection, access, control and security of his or her data and personal information during the recruitment, data collection, reporting of findings, dissemination of data (if relevant) and after the study is completed (e.g., storage). The ethical duty of confidentiality refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to safeguard entrusted information. The ethical duty of confidentiality includes obligations to protect information from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification, loss or theft.

24a. Are there any limits to protecting the confidentiality of participants?

No, confidentiality of participants and their data will be completely protected

Yes, there are some limits to the researcher's ability to protect the confidentiality of participants (*Check relevant boxes below.*)

Limits due to the nature of group activities (*e.g., focus groups*): The researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality

Limits due to context: The nature or size of the sample from which participants are drawn makes it possible to identify individual participants (*e.g., school principals in a small town, position within an organization*)

Limits due to selection: The procedures for recruiting or selecting participants may compromise the confidentiality of participants (*e.g., participants are identified or referred to the study by a person outside the research team*)

Limits due to legal requirements for reporting (*e.g., legal or professional*)

Limits due to local legislation such as the U.S.A. Patriot Act (*e.g., when there will be data storage in the United States*). When using USA based data instruments and data storage systems researchers are responsible for determining if this applies.

Other:

24b. If confidentiality will be protected, describe the procedures to be used to ensure the anonymity of participants and for preserving the confidentiality of their data (*e.g., pseudonyms, changing identifying information and features, coding sheet, etc.*) If you will use

different procedures for different participant groups and/or different data methods be sure to clarify each procedure.

- 24c. If there are limits to confidentiality indicated in section 24a. above, explain what the limits are and how you will address them with the participants. *If there are different procedures for different participant groups and/or different data collection methods, be sure to clarify each procedure.*

Participants will be made aware of the limits of confidentiality in the consent forms.

R. **Use and Disposal of Data**

25. Use(s) of Data

- 25a. What use(s) will be made of all types of data collected (*field notes, photos, videos, audiotapes, transcripts, etc.*)?

All forms of data will be analyzed and used as a part of this research project. Field notes, journals, scripts, interview transcripts, photos, and videos will be directly cited in the research study. Videos and photos will be used in public presentations throughout research dissemination.

- 25b. Will your research data be analyzed, now or in future, by yourself for purposes other than this research project?

Yes ~~No~~ X Possibly

- 25c. If yes or possibly, indicate what purposes you plan for this data and how will you obtain consent for future data analysis from the participants (*e.g., request future use in current consent form*)?



- 25d. Will your research data be analyzed, now or in future, by other persons for purposes other than explained in this application?

Yes ~~No~~ X Possibly

25e. If yes or possibly:

- i) Indicate whether the data will contain identifiers when it is provided to the other researchers or whether it will be fully anonymous (*note that “fully anonymous” means that there is no identifying information, links, keys, or codes that allow the data to be re-identified*).

█

- ii) How will you obtain consent from the participants for future data analysis by other researchers? (*If the data will be transferred in fully anonymous form, this request for future use can be made in the current consent form. If the data will contain identifiers or links/keys/codes for re-identification, consider requesting permission to contact the participants in the future, to obtain consent for the use of the data at that time*).

█

26. Commercial Purposes

26a. Do you anticipate that this research will be used for a commercial purpose?

Yes No

26b. If yes, explain how the data will be used for a commercial purpose:

█

26c. If yes, indicate if and how participants will benefit from commercialization.

█

27. Maintenance and Disposal of Data

Describe your plans for protecting data during the project, and for preserving, archiving, or destroying all the types of data associated with the research (*e.g., paper records, audio or visual recordings, electronic recordings, coded data*) after the research is completed:

27a. means of storing and securing data (*e.g., encryption, password protected computer files, locked cabinet, separation of key codes from raw data etc.*):

All data will be stored either in an office in the UVic theatre department or onsite in a HelpAge India office. The data will be kept in locked cabinet in a locked room.

27b. location of storing data (include location of data-storage servers if using web-based technology):

All electronic data will be stored on a hard drive and kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room.

27c. duration of data storage (if data will be kept indefinitely, explain why this is necessary and state whether the data will contain identifiers or links to identifiers):

Data will be kept indefinitely and will not contain identifiers or links to identifiers. Data collected during this research study may influence future research.

27d. methods of destroying or archiving data. If archiving data, please describe measures to secure or protect the data. If the archiving will involve a third party (e.g., library, community agency, Aboriginal band, etc.) please provide details:

Electronic data will be archived in an external hard drive that will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room.

28. Dissemination

How do you anticipate disseminating the research results? (Check all that apply)

Thesis/Dissertation/Class presentation

Presentations at scholarly meetings Published article, chapter or book

Internet (Students: Most UVic Theses are posted on "UVicSpace" and can be accessed by the public)

Media (e.g., newspaper, radio, TV)

Directly to participants and/or groups involved. Indicate how: (e.g., report, executive summary, newsletter, information session): Member Check

Other, explain:



S. Conflict of Interest

29a. Apart from a declared dual-role relationship (Section K, item 7), are you or any of the research team members in a perceived, actual or potential conflict of interest regarding this research project (e.g., partners in research, private interests in companies or other entities)?

Yes

No

29b. If yes, please provide details of the conflict and how you propose to manage it:



Attachments*



*Ensure that all applicable attachments are included with all copies of your application.

Incomplete applications will not be entered into the review system. You will be notified in

Information for Submission

- Applications may be printed and submitted double-sided
- Do **not** staple the original application with original signatures (clips O.K.)
- The two photocopies may be individually stapled or clipped
- Do **not** staple or clip the individual appendices

Title and label attachments as Appendix 1, 2, 3 etc. and attach the following documents (check those that are appended):

Section I - Recruitment Materials:

- Script(s) – in-person, telephone, 3rd party, e-mail, etc.
- Invitation to participate
- Advertisement, Poster, Flyer

Section J - Data Collection Methods:

- Standardized Instrument(s)
- X Survey(s), Questionnaire(s)
- X Interview and/or Focus Group Questions
- Observation Protocols
- Other:

Section M - Free and Informed Consent:

- X Consent Form(s) – Include forms for all participant groups and data gathering methods
- Assent Form(s)
- X Letter(s) of Information for Implied Consent
- X ~~Verbal Consent Script~~

- X Approval from external organizations (or proof of having made a request for permission)
- Permission to gain access to confidential documents or materials
- [Request to Use Deception](#) form
- Biosafety Committee Approval
- Other, please describe:

Appendix B - Photo Credits

All photographs were taken by Matthew Gusul except where indicated below.

Blair Moro's photographs are on pages: 3, 82, 88, 89, 90 (on bottom), 125, 167, 168 (both), & 170

Aisling Kennedy's photographs are on pages: 81, 106, & 158

Laura Buchan's photographs are on pages: 87, 90 (on top), 97, 115, 116, 129, 132, 137, 145, 163, & 169