CONCLUSION

Far from being an exhausted topic, the multifaceted practice of devising is arguably one of the most under-examined in theatre academia. This research has attempted to identify current omissions or gaps in published devising handbooks through the outcomes of a practical devising project. Approaching handbooks such as Oddey's (1994), Lamden's (2000), Kerrigan's (2001) and Callery's (2001) as the co-ordinator of a first-time devising group, I have sought to address in this thesis the areas of devising that were most pertinent to my practical experiences.

Devising is a complex site for critical investigation. To aid analysis, I have identified two processes inherent within devising – the formation and development of a group, and the creation of a theatrical production. Visibly affecting the outcomes of these processes are personal, theatrical and socio-cultural influences. Each of these is capable of affecting the work in multiple ways. For example, the interaction of individuals when developing a devising group leads to the subtle yet powerful force of group dynamics. The personal attributes of group members have a substantial impact on how the group behaves and its levels of productivity. Factors of composition, such as homogeneity, may even affect aesthetic decision-making. More directly, personal experience may contribute to performance material as the “self”, albeit a contested concept, is drawn upon when constructing characters and their onstage “reality”.

As a basis for examining theatrical and socio-cultural influences, I attempted to delineate a genealogy of twentieth-century experimental theatre in order to establish a critical context for contemporary devising practice. Arguably, as many ostensibly "postmodern" theatrical devices were pioneered by the historical avant-garde, returning to their past usage may inform understandings of current performance considerations, such as
emphasis on process over product. Further, if there is a recognisable postmodern “style”, as Heddon and Milling (2006) suggest, examining the elements of that style and its origins may help in answering what purpose devising has in contemporary theatrical practice. For example, is devising a resistant strategy if its “postmodern” conventions have been defused through overuse? In our devised production, *This Is Not An Exit*, the group sought resistant positions to certain hegemonic discourses, such as homophobia, using a combination of naturalism and a “postmodern aesthetic”. The potential for resistant politics when devising, however, is not limited to performance content. Inspired by the countercultural collectives of the 1960s, I sought to organise the group as an artistic democracy. Our experience illustrated the potential hidden authority structures within such an organisation, raising the question “are artistic democracies a theoretical ideal?” Even so, I believe that artistic democracies deserve further attention as a way of empowering performers beyond the rehearsal room. Like Magnat (2005), I believe devising has a transformative potential for its participants. It may inspire them to question accepted understandings of knowledge and creativity, and even to take more responsibility in both their wider theatrical and non-theatrical practices.

As each devising process is entirely unique, it is impossible to draw invariable conclusions from one example. However, from both my theoretical and practical research, I would like to offer some provisional conclusions. Devising is a complexity of processes best understood through practice. Although involvement in a devising project problematises one’s critical analysis of that project, without experiencing the intricacies of devising first-hand, it is impossible to fathom how devising may enrich one’s understanding of performance. Working without a script forces the deviser to reconsider theatrical communication from both a performer’s and spectator’s point of view. Long-held beliefs are thrown out the window as new challenges demand innovative solutions. Thus I
believe devising remains a legitimate site for theatrical experimentation and that, despite the arguable established "tradition" of "experimental" conventions, real experimentation remains possible. That is, experimentation with both the processes of making and performing theatre. However, future innovation is possible only after past experiments are acknowledged for their influence on contemporary practice. When examining *This Is Not An Exit*, I attempted to combine current critical concepts with my understanding of past practice in order to suggest devising as the ideal practice for investigating how past and present influences constantly interact, visibly and invisibly, when making theatre. In my argument, I identified the body of the performer as the site where these influences converge. Hopefully, I may thus conclude that future devising practice and research should further examine what I have called the "embodied knowledge of devising". Arguably, it is here that innovative practices may reside, and the transformative potential of devising most fully realised to the benefit of both performer and spectator.
Appendix I
Devising "Prototypes": "Theatre without Spectators", Living Newspaper, and Theatre Workshop

Amidst the many conceptions of performance as a valuable destabilising creative practice in the 1920/30s are three examples of improvisatory or collaboratively-devised performance which, in their theory and methods, invite comparisons with more contemporary practice. These examples are Jakob Moreno's "theatre without spectators"; the Living Newspaper which influenced experimental theatre production throughout Europe, England, and the USA; and, later, the UK's Theatre Workshop under the direction of Joan Littlewood.

With his concept of a "theatre without spectators" in 1923, Jakob Moreno introduced a performance situation where process superseded product to the extent that both were arguably indistinguishable. Moreno, developing psychodrama in the earliest example of group therapy, sought "the opportunity of recapitulation of unsolved problems within a freer, broader and more flexible social setting" (Moreno in Carlson, 2004:41). To create a type of performance-led forum for the dissemination and resolution of individual psychological problems, Moreno drew upon current theatre models. Carlson, positioning Moreno within a definition of "theatre", cites Stanislavski, the Living Newspaper and commedia dell'arte as some of the theatrical references made by Moreno and psychodrama. In this theatre of the psyche, the public were active participants, functioning as a "responsive environment" in place of wider normative society (Innes, 1994:50). The theatrical space was consequently designed without seating to encourage movement amongst centres of action. Innes describes how improvised "scenarios", concerning personal psychiatric matters thought relevant to the whole group, were conducted and performed by participants. Following these were alternatives or suggestions demonstrated by the other theatre-goers. All this occurred without scripts, scenery, professional
performers or aesthetic aim, theoretically producing theatre “for everybody ... not an expert actor surrounded by an open-mouthed attentive mass; all must play with it ... must make the stride from awareness to improvisation” (Moreno in Innes, 1994:50). In practice, however, Innes reveals Moreno assembled a core of “case histories” who reappeared nightly to “act out the on-going saga of their personal and sexual relationships” (50), emphasising the stronger claim this psychodrama has to performance over therapy. By repeatedly building on the same examples, thus providing a stable basis for each performance, Moreno was consciously constructing “theatre” although with panacean rather than aesthetic intentions. This does not reduce the theatrical value of his method, particularly as his working model bears structural similarities to later devising methodologies. Innes outlines the method Moreno designed to enhance spontaneity and equality:

First a preparatory phase, releasing inhibitions, finding a common purpose and discovering the most suitable exponent, who would function as a protagonist for the group. Then a series of situations acted out impromptu following (ideally) ‘the free play of the subconscious’, with the protagonists playing out the role of the ‘self’, others co-opted as ‘auxiliary egos’ or antagonists, and the mass giving ‘resonance’ through comparisons and corrections. This was followed by discussion. (Innes, 1994:50)

The design of the “preparatory phase”, releasing inhibitions and locating a common group problem or concern, can perhaps too conveniently be compared to devising methodologies where early rehearsals are devoted to a similar process of reducing inhibitions, building the group and discovering a shared interest, idea or issue from which to begin constructing a performance.\(^{35}\) This phase can then extend into improvisations later refined and discussed. Undoubtedly the striking difference is that Moreno was working

towards therapeutic ends while devising groups are working to build a theatrical production. However, depending on the specific aims of the group, therapy or resolution of a concern may also be the purpose of their performance. Perhaps more intriguing are the resonances of Moreno’s intentionality and methodology in the recent work of Augusto Boal whose Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre both intend “to transform the spectator into the protagonist of the theatrical action and, by this transformation, to try to change society rather than contenting ourselves with interpreting it” (Boal, 1992:224). Another comparison may be made with applied theatre where spectators become participants in dramatic enactments or scenarios. Like Moreno’s “theatre without spectators” and Boal’s work, applied theatre is a transformative theatre, seeking to raise awareness, pose alternatives, heal psychological wounds, challenge contemporary discourses, or voice marginal or silent views (Taylor, 2003). These three examples are comparable in that they reposition spectators as performers, use improvisatory techniques, and encourage the “spect-acting” group to provide solutions or ideas for effecting wider social change.

Despite this approximation to later interactive political theatre, Moreno operated within the thinking of his time. Innes (1994:49) evaluates his work as doing “little more than [extending] current expressionist practice”. Working from his conclusions that megalomaniac concern for the self is normal and that spontaneity is the fundamental human trait, “Moreno’s theatre offered a psychological value for the egoistic focus of expressionism and its elevation of ‘Seele’ (Soul) … to the essential constituent of art” (50-51). Moreno built on the premise that “acting is healthier than speaking” which rationalised replacing “the logic/verbal emphasis of traditional theatre” with “improvisational situations” as therapy (50). Improvisation is thus given a value beyond perceived artistic spontaneity or performance training. Emergences of unscripted emotions become
legitimate performances capable of providing insight into socio-psychological reality. It is
telling that Moreno maintained use of the word “acting”, revealing the distance between
his performers and the vulnerability of true group therapy patients, unprotected by the
impersonality of improvisatory mimesis. However Moreno, seeking “real” psychological
or social re-evaluations amongst his spectators, was presenting performance – consisting of
constructed improvisatory processes – as a catalyst for individual change.

The use of theatre to instigate change was already established by the numerous
political theatre groups operating in post-Revolutionary Russia. Arising from these
political agitations, the Living Newspaper movement became popular in Russia, Germany,
the USA and England, adapting theatrical techniques to disseminate political information.
In Russia, the movement began to convey information on the latest government decisions
or current events to illiterate audiences (Bradby and McCormick, 1978). Ley-Piscator
(1967:33) identifies the montage techniques of Eisenstein and Meyerhold as stylistic
influences, with the short, fast moving scenes of film documentaries inspiring a “narrative
editorial manner”. Examples of Russian Living Newspaper include the Terevsat, or
Theatre of Revolutionary Satire, formed in 1919, and later the Blue Blouse movement,
circa 1923-29, which influenced the development of twentieth-century political theatre.
Blue Blouse has been described as “the largest movement in the history of the theatre in
which the avant-garde participated” (Deak in Bradby and McCormick, 1978:47). Groups
of about a dozen actors travelled Russia with few theatrical accoutrement, relying almost
solely on the performer’s body as an expressive instrument through dance, movement, and
acrobatics. One interesting component of Blue Blouse performances was the “kino review”
where a strobe light gave the impression of a flickering film when presenting sketches.
Reports from Russia about the impromptu performances spreading information in lieu of
newspapers or radio reached Germany as early as 1919, and in 1927 a Moscow Blue
Blouse troupe toured Germany. As a result, numerous imitative groups formed throughout the country (Bradby and McCormick, 1978). Piscator was one director who developed the Living Newspaper technique in Germany (Ley-Piscator, 1967). With such a vast amount of political theatre produced in Germany, particularly with the formation of many groups patterning themselves after Blue Blouse, it was that towards “the end of the 1920s it was hardly possible for any left-wing or Communist meeting, however unofficial, to be held without some sort of performance” (Bradby and McCormick, 1978:72).

Despite originating in Europe, the Living Newspaper is perhaps more famously associated with the American Federal Theatre project, established by the government to alleviate American theatre unemployment following the Depression. Under the Project’s auspices, many innovative grassroots theatrical productions were mounted, although the instigating purpose was not to bring theatre to the people but combat unemployment and for the “conservation of theatrical skills” (Ley-Piscator, 1967:31). What resulted, however, was a flourish of topical performance from or about people’s daily experiences, social issues, or political commentary. An example of the type of work developed within the scheme was that of Herbert Price who founded a series of community theatres in the South with the aim of drawing “plays from the people themselves”, often through dances, ballads, or recitations (Bradby and McCormick, 1978:106). Another performance saw a group of West Virginian miners improvise a play from their own stories. It was the Living Newspaper, however, which drew the censorship of the House Committee on Unamerican Activities. Berthold (1972:633) describes the American Living Newspaper as characterised by “epic, episodic, and pedagogic passages, speaking choirs, commentaries, lyrics and musical inserts”. It first emerged with unemployed members of the Newspaper Guild of New York. Their first edition, *Ethiopia*, made use of direct quotation from news items (Bradby and McCormick, 1978). The first significant production, *Triple A Plowed Under*
(1935), addressing current agricultural problems, established the Living Newspaper as “a distinct genre in its own right” (108). This edition added the use of devised dramatised scenes to the presentation of documentary material, and included the representation of ordinary people to comment on the impact of agricultural decline on their lives. Bradby and McCormick note Injunction Granted, Power and Spirochete as other significant editions, although the most popular was One Third of a Nation (1938). Titled after “that third of the American people which Roosevelt had said was ill-housed” (Berthold, 1972:633), the production called for government intervention on a pressing social situation. Structured around a central Everyman figure, One Third was set “against a backdrop of rubbish, drains and dustbins, and making full use of back-projection ... and vividly theatrical images” it was “a powerful evocation of slum-living and an indictment of a system which allowed people to live under such conditions” (Bradby and McCormick, 1978:108-9). In moving beyond reporting on the news to contextualising and dramatising current events, the New York Living Newspapers were creating productions with echoes in contemporary devising practice. Version 1.0, an Australian company, works with media representations of topical socio-political issues to create performances which comment on and question those representations. A recent production, The Wages of Spin, sought to “read between the lines” of media commentary on the Iraq war with the mission that “it’s time political theatre got real” (Williams, 2005). Founding company member David Williams has described a research process that involved reading two years worth of newspaper articles reporting on the Iraqi conflict and other media concerns of the time (Williams, 2005, pers. comm., 28 October). Version 1.0’s previous production, CMI, investigated transcripts of the “children overboard” Senate inquiry, in an act of “re-publicising documents” that Williams likens to “documentary theatre” or “theatre of fact” (ibid). What characterises recent news-based performances is that they seek to critique
representation as well as political and social conditions, whereas the American Living Newspaper spread a reformist message by using news items as a source of awareness.

It was this politically reformist message, however, that saw the termination of funding to the Federal Theatre Project and, consequently, the end of the Living Newspaper in America. This does not mean, however, that the genre vanished. It could be found in the work of English political activist theatre groups before, during, and after World War II. Ley-Piscator (1967:33) describes the use of Living Newspaper in England “for adult education and propaganda in the armed forces during World War II” – a highly simplified summary failing to take into account the huge influence of the theatre groups engaging in it. Unity Theatre first introduced the Living Newspaper technique to England with *Busmen* (1938) and in September of that year produced *Crisis*, an edition assembled within forty-eight hours to promote Britain’s potential role as peace-keeper in the Munich crisis (Bradby and McCormick, 1978). This script was altered daily to keep account of changes in the situation just like a printed newspaper. Unity and its touring groups continued producing Living Newspapers in response to important situations including the crippling effects of coal shortages (*Black Magic*, 1947), upheaval in Hungary (*World on Edge*, 1956), and two anti-Vietnam War productions: *Say Uncle!* and *Vietreview* (1968).

Arguably the most influential English group to adopt the Living Newspaper technique was Theatre Union, later to become famous as Theatre Workshop. As Theatre Union they produced what company member Howard Goorney (1981:22) described as their “most ambitious Living Newspaper”, *Last Edition*. This edition critically examined national and international events between 1934 and 1940, drawing on a range of theatrical styles including satire, music hall, folk song, fantasy, dance, and agit-prop, culminating in a plea to workers “not to sacrifice themselves to the capitalist system” (22). Previously, as
the Red Megaphones, founded by Ewan MacColl, the group performed committed street
theatre to dole queues and striking workers in England’s North. As Theatre of Action, and
shortly after the arrival of Joan Littlewood, they staged Newsboy (1934), a montage-style
play first produced by New York’s Worker’s Laboratory Theatre. The stylisation of this
production, requiring a high degree of movement ability, was to become a feature of
Littlewood’s work and instigated the incorporation of actor training into the rehearsal
process. This training was to intensify during the group’s next incarnation as Theatre
Union, with productions like Last Edition (1940) laying the foundations for techniques
later used in the Theatre Workshop. Throughout the evolution of these early groups,
Littlewood and MacColl undertook a feverish study of theatre history including the work
of Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, and Reinhardt (Goorney, 1981). Also influential
were the writings of Appia on the usage of stage lighting as an element of setting.
Consciously adopting and adapting elements from these sources, coupled with a
politically-inspired commitment to communal working practices, Littlewood and MacColl
worked to create an engaging “theatrical language and style that people understood, which
would move them, but not talk down to them” (MacColl in Bradby and McCormick,
1978:147). As Theatre Union they sought to “face up to the problems of their time” and
ensure “the future of the theatre, a future which will not be born in the genteel atmosphere
of retirement and seclusion, but rather in the clash and turmoil of the battles between the
oppressors and the oppressed” (Theatre Union Manifesto in Goorney, 1981:25). This sense
of a theatrically inventive people’s theatre was to be a guiding principle, with Bradby and
McCormick (1978:146) deeming Littlewood’s work “the only professional theatre to have
maintained a consistently left-wing viewpoint.”

It was as Theatre Workshop (formed 1945) that Littlewood’s production techniques
were to have their greatest impact in preparing the way for the “community-based engaged
drama” later arising in the 1980s (Carlson, 2004:195). With the company’s move in 1953 to the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, and MacColl’s active participation “now virtually ceased” (Goorney, 1981:92), Littlewood’s direction became the company’s flagship, however undesirable a position to her. By now, continual performer development through movement training was established within the company’s regime. Barker (1977) recalls the use of games and exercises as pre-rehearsal warm-ups, as well as technical movement classes conducted by a Laban-trained teacher, which eventually lead to his own development of a highly influential book of theatre games. This emphasis on physicality was an important feature of Littlewood’s rehearsal techniques, even when working with a pre-written text. Initial approaches were “through the movements of the characters, exploring their relationships and the atmosphere of the play, moving only gradually towards the dialogue” (Goorney, 1981:167). Often when rehearsing a new play, Littlewood would have actors “improvise a situation which extended the relationship of the characters they were playing and provided dialogue that could perhaps be incorporated into the script, or provide the author with ideas and stimulus” (168). Brendan Behan’s The Hostage (1958) was one script the company worked to shape in rehearsal, with the published text a result of group collaboration (Bradby and McCormick, 1978). Even when rehearsing plays requiring no alteration, improvisation and movement exercises were conducted before concentrating on the script. Text was avoided in early rehearsals “with the aim of opening up the situation and the lives of the characters. This would enable the actor eventually to relate more truthfully to the specific action of the play” (Goorney, 1981:168).

After departing the company in 1961, Littlewood returned in 1963 to produce Theatre Workshop’s “most famous success, Oh What A Lovely War. This was a collective creation, a montage in the Living Newspaper tradition based on the events and significance in terms of the lives of ordinary people in the First World War, using projections of period
photographs accompanied by sobering captions indicating the huge numbers killed in specific battles over a few hundred yards of ground” (Bradby and McCormick, 1978:148). Built and conceived around the songs of the World War I era, the original production had the cast dressed “as a pierrot troupe called ‘The Merry Roosters’ who had actually been performing at that time” (Goorney, 1981:125) whilst singing, dancing, telling jokes, and performing some battle scenes. By eschewing traditional soldiers’ uniforms, a distance was established between the actors and their roles to satirically undermine positions of authority. Bradby and McCormick (1978:148) trace this technique to Meyerhold’s Magnificent Cuckold, and describe its application in Lovely War as “one of the best examples of the application of critical realism in the British theatre”. Further, by adopting forms of popular entertainment comparable to music hall, the material was presented in a manner familiar to the desired popular audience. Rejecting naturalistic portrayals of trench life, the production’s underlying concept was to contextualise the songs rather than enact events from the War, although company member Brian Murphy describes how

Some of the scenes were dealt with very realistically, we had to work for hours and hours pretending to be in the trenches, getting the feeling of real boredom.

The cast were completely involved in building up the script. We improvised lots of different scenes, read books and came up with ideas. I read one of the few books written about the Great War by a Private, and out of it came the scenes of the French Cavalry retreating in full glory with trumpets blowing. (Murphy in Goorney, 1981:126)

Littlewood downplayed her role in creating Lovely War to emphasise the thorough collaboration by the group. What makes this production so remarkable was not only its creation, but the success it achieved for the left-wing, experimental company. Critically acclaimed and transferred to the West End, Lovely War was a financial success – a noteworthy accomplishment for a group devised production. Not only did the show play Broadway for six months, the published script “has been and continues to be produced by

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schools and colleges all over Great Britain and, indeed, all over the world” (Goorney, 1981:184). *Oh What A Lovely War* is a singular example of a devised show which, finding deep resonances with its audiences, continued its life and influence through reproducible text. This illustrates the ability of the devising process, when undertaken by a well-formed and coherent group, to produce a work as potentially successful – theatrically and financially – as any authored by a single individual. Created in the 1960s, just as devising was beginning to gain currency amongst politically-charged experimental theatre groups, *Oh What A Lovely War* stands as an instructive prototype for later conceptions of the devising process.

Although director-led, Theatre Workshop’s productions of pre-scripted and devised works incorporated many techniques arguably standard within contemporary devising including individual research, games, and improvisations, with ideas continually encouraged and accepted from performers. The exact influence of the group is hard determine, although Goorney (1981) attempts to establish it through tracing the spread of ex-Workshop company members into wider theatrical practice. For example, innovative Workshop designer John Bury went to work with the National Theatre and Clive Barker became a lecturer in Theatre Studies. Goorney relates the inclusion of songs, dancing, and music into “straight” plays as one influence of Theatre Workshop, as well as how plays are now produced to never allow a production’s components “become more important than the whole” (183). Harold Hobson goes as far as doubting “if there would have been any fringe without Joan” (Hobson in Goorney, 1981:184). In the 1970s Bolton’s Octagon Theatre sought to create its own plays in the manner of the Theatre Workshop, while Goorney lists Peter Cheeseman at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, John McGrath’s 7:84 Theatre Company, and Albert Hunt’s student and community work as other practice directly influenced by Littlewood’s techniques. Not only did the Theatre Workshop generate
interest in community-based production, it drew attention to how theatrical elements inspired by popular entertainments could critically explore ideas whilst remaining engaging and enjoyable. Pioneers of director-led devising, the working practices of the Theatre Workshop are still of interest to contemporary devising as the challenges faced by the former remain familiar to the latter, and the methods conceived to overcome them still as inspirational as they were to their more direct successors.
Appendix II
Theatrical Auteurism and Devising Processes

While my interest is in group devising, the work of theatrical auteurs provides important insights into the transition of an idea or theme into a performance text. Of particular interest is their utilisation of non-verbal media which may privilege either the body or visual spectacle (Cody, 2002). Schechner (2002:217), summarising the work of Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman, defines “auteur”: they “source, design and direct their own works, thereby controlling every detail of what the partakers experience.” Attempting to encapsulate the work of theatrical auteurs, however, is problematic as “auteurism is a term which accommodates a plurality of intentions, performance strategies, and reflections on culture” (Cody, 2002:127) – a practice based on the subjective process of perception. Cody, however, identifies as auteurism’s “overarching impulse the will to fuse historical events and narratives into a diorama of synthesized images, sounds, and non-linear temporalities” (127). She positions its emergence in theatre as “relative to the trauma caused by two World Wars which generated a deep distrust in the reliability or truth-value of textual remains. In abandoning the ‘play’ … these auteurs can be interpreted as responding to the unspeakability of twentieth-century trauma through phenomenological means” (125-6). Thus, the appearance of auteurism has comparable origins to group devising, with both often favouring “the plurivocal fragmentation of image-text-sound over realism’s seamless, unified and outwardly ‘intelligible’ staging of experience” (126). Unlike with group devising, however, the creative autonomy of performers is often severely restricted to the extent that Schechner likens them to Craig’s Ubermarionettes. An example of early auteurism is the work of Richard Foreman, founder of the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre in 1968. His productions comprised sketches and fragments of words or sentences, tableaux, various objects, sound effects and recordings, repeated movements, and “all sorts of framing and pointing devices, such as boxes, windows, frames, and
Foreman's recurring subject is process, requiring the spectator to notice not only the art that is produced, but that its production is performance (Davy, 1974). The abundant overlay of performance elements and materials drew "attention to the constructedness of Foreman's work and to the process of reception itself" (Carlson, 2004:120). Consequently, Foreman did not seek to produce imaginary ideas or emotions but to incite awareness of how the theatrical process is both presented and viewed. The audience was to see what was being performed, and themselves seeing it (Carlson, 1984). Encapsulating his view of process, Foreman believed that art should produce a spark of antimatter, with matter being "the on-going ideas which are the world, which are the dead husks of far earlier creative moments" (Foreman in Carlson, 1984:463). In this concept, where the work is subject to immediate annihilation, art is only "an instant vision into immanent reality" (Carlson, 1984:463). Thus, there can be no art or theatre "product", only ever its generation which, once realised, leaves the empty remains of the process. Foreman's formulation of performance provides a glimpse into how performance was conceived as pure process in the 1970s. His ideas influenced other American avant-garde directors such as Robert Wilson and Lee Breuer. In other director-led performance, "attention is attracted to the very moment at which the actions are performed" (Fischer-Lichte, 1997:254). Ariane Mnouchkine has said that "theatre is the art of the present for the actor. There is no past, no future. There is the present, the present act" (Mnouchkine in Féral, 1989:260). Mnouchkine's work is an example of a director leading actors in the devising of a production without taking the all-controlling auteurist approach. As Louis Samier, actor with Théâtre du Soleil, says: "Here an actor is required to be a creator in the production" (Samier in Williams, 1999:30). Director-led collaboration has well-known precedents in The Living Theatre, Eugenio Barba, Joseph Chaikin, Peter Brook, and Richard Schechner, but must be distinguished from group devising with a director in collaboration. Where a director leading a group would plan and implement a strategy for
the development of their own production, a collaborating director is more likely to act as a
guide. Kerrigan (2001:102) records that the directors she interviewed “placed their power
structures along a continuum between the autocracy common in traditional theaters on one
end and the formal anarchy of certain collectives on the other”. Terry O’Connor of Forced
Entertainment suggests “the role of director [in devising] is ... about helping the
performers keep in touch with what they were originally doing” (Oddey, 1994:44). A
similar view is found in Schmor (2004). The strategies of groups collaborating with a
director are often similar to those of performer-led collectives, and are thus useful in the
examination of devising processes.
Appendix III
Script of This Is Not An Exit

Devised, written and performed by
Rosemary Parsons, Brenda Logan, Paul Karton and Richard Goodwin

Script prepared by
Rosemary Parsons

Characters
Michael Flinders / White Suit 1 (WS1)
Lesley Johns / White Suit 2 (WS2)
Melanie Johnstone / White Suit 3 (WS3)
Lars O / White Suit 4 (WS4)

Preset
USC Screen
USC 3 milk crates stacked as a seat
USL Pipes
SL Bin A
DSL Trestle lying down
DSC Bin B
SR Ladder lying down
USR Trestle
USR Bin C
Dummy and flowers strewn around stage

Audience Arrives. All four WS stand along edge of stage as audience enters auditorium. Sound of static. On screen, advertisements from the futuristic “Happy Endings” company are playing. Once audience seated and houselights out, image of “Happy Endings” building appears on screen.

Birth. Static cross fades into baby crying as WS1 births through DSL trestle. WS1 pulls down hood to become Michael Flinders, who begins collecting dummy torso and arm to put together on milk crates stacked as a seat CS. He is followed by WS4 (who births into Lars Olafsson) who collects leg and arm, WS3 (who births into Melanie Johnston) who collects leg, and WS2 (who births into Lesley Johns) who collects head. All join in assembling dummy.

The Set Up. Once dummy is assembled, Michael goes to DSL trestle, Lesley to SR ladder, Melanie to USR trestle, and Lars to pipes USL. Static out. Michael prepares and smokes bong. Lesley medicates. Melanie pours the water up the ladder. Lars collects flowers
which are strewn over the stage and puts them into pipes. When Lesley takes a step, air raid siren sounds. Characters cover heads and line up along edge of stage - WS1 and WS4 DSL, WS2 and WS3 DSR.

**Nuclear Testing.** Countdown on screen. White Suits turn and cover faces. Atom bomb explosion. Lesley goes to sit at foot of dummy as male voice-over sings “You Are My Sunshine.” WS3 exits and brings on wheelchair. WS1, WS3 and WS4 begin to disassemble dummy, putting him back incorrectly into wheelchair. Lesley and WS3 exit.

**Climbing the Tree.** As twelve year olds, WS1 and WS4 begin climbing trestle as a tree. Melanie, aged 12, enters with backpack and sits on crates to read a book. They call to her and try to get her to climb the tree with them. She resists, but goes over, putting her backpack and book in bin. She climbs tree.

**Conscription.** Melanie covers head to become WS3, WS4 becomes Lars. Lars takes cricket bat and floppy white hat. They mime a game of cricket. WS2 enters with pack of cards and offers them to WS1 who takes it, looks at it, then returns it. WS3 goes to take a card but WS2 refuses her and offers them to Lars. Lars takes a card and shows WS1 who shakes his hand then takes his bat and hat. Lars shows card to WS3, who hugs him. WS1 grabs WS3 and they exit via the US bin, dumping the hat and bat. WS2 hands Lars a camouflage shirt and hat, which he puts on. WS2 hands Lars a pistol. They salute. Lars exits, WS2 goes to wheelchair and pulls down hood to reveal Lesley.

“**You Are My Sunshine**”. Lesley goes to dummy in wheelchair and begins to sing “You Are My Sunshine”. WS3 enters and begins to dismantle dummy throughout song, taking pieces and dumping them in garbage bin under SL ladder. Once dummy is gone, WS3 places Lesley in wheelchair and stands behind as Lesley continues singing happily. WS3 pushes Lesley off SR.

**Vaccination.** WS1 enters with syringe and takes position US. The screen is divided with two signs – “Volunteers” and “Insubordinates”. Lars enters and is injected. One by one the other WS enter and either have their injection or go to the brig under the USR trestle. After a few rotations, all WS are in jail, and the signs switch positions. WS1 comes over and violently injects WS through ladder.
"Happy Endings" Human Development and Manufacturing. *Projection of department door on screen. Sound of static. WS3 stands at bin by SL trestle, WS1 at DSC bin, WS4 USR trestle. WS3 takes out baby torso from Bin A and fits arms, throws baby to WS1 who fits legs from Bin B, then throws baby to WS4 who fits head, then rejects it. Action is repeated with a second baby. Throughout, WS2 empties Bin C and sets backpack, playing cards, crates and bat. Once completed, WS1 and WS2 line up in front of legs of DSL trestle. WS3 becomes Melanie, takes backpack from Bin C.*

**Elevator 1.** Melanie, age 15, with backpack. SFX of shopping centre noise. Lights up on SL lying down trestle. Melanie takes backpack and goes to wait for lift. SFX of lift ping. WS1 and WS2 open as doors. WS4 enters lift with Melanie and harasses her. Lights down, countdown on screen, SFX of lift ping, WS4 leaves. Lights up finding Melanie slumped on floor of elevator obviously in pain. Backpack remains in trestle.

**Leaving Home.** Michael's Audio Piece 1 starts. Michael and his mother (WS2) are on the floor playing with cards in front of a chair (stack of milk crates). WS3 and WS4 alternate in entering from SL side of screen, stand behind Michael and mother, then exit SR side of screen. Mother moves from floor to chair as WS continue to enter and leave. WS3 takes Mother's arm and pulls her SR, while Uncle Frank (WS4) appears SL by trestle. Michael is angry and upset, but joins WS4, and they sit on US leg of SL trestle. Michael and Uncle Frank relax, compare arms, then smoke a bong together. Uncle Frank begins to harass Michael then exits. Michael moves to DS leg of trestle with bong. Uncle Frank enters, grabs Michael by the neck and throws him across the stage. Uncle Frank exits unfazed. An infuriated Michael grabs a plank of wood from inside SL trestle and follows after Uncle Frank to behind screen. Michael enters with dummy and violently assaults it with the cricket bat.

**In Jail.** Michael sits on CS milk crate. WS2 and WS3 enter and escort Michael to USR Trestle, where he is put in jail. WS2 and WS3 exit. Michael paces trapped and frustrated. WS2 enters with an art book which she tries to give to Michael. Michael eventually accepts book and reads it. Blackout.

**Dun Ban.** WS1, WS2 and WS3 are huddled in DSL trestle. Lars appears at top of USR trestle with torch. Lars descends ladder and crawls around stage like a commando. Lights
up. Lars points gun at WS, crying “Don’t move or I’ll shoot!” WS1, WS2 and WS3 scream “dun ban!” Blackout.

“Happy Endings” Pharmaceuticals. Projection of department door on screen. WS3 moves Bin A to DSC with Bin B. WS1, WS3 and WS4 stand in triangle around bins. WS3 pulls three “happy” objects (flowers, wine bottle, biscuit tin) from Bin A, hands them to WS4 who hands them to WS1 who puts them into Bin B. When all objects in, WS1, WS3 and WS4 take handle of bin and lift it, then turn 6 steps forwards, 6 backwards, change hands, repeat with increasing speed. At the end WS1 pulls out bottled “Happy Pills” from Bin B. At end, WS3 returns Bin A to SL and WS1 exits with Bin B.

At University. 2006. Lecture theatre. PowerPoint Lecture Slide 1 on screen. WS2 sits in front of SL trestle. Melanie sits on SL trestle facing audience, notebook and pen in hand, studiously taking notes. Lecturer (WS4) stands US.

LECTURER: Ultimately, whether a product is new or not depends on how the intended market receives it. If buyers consider it to be significantly different from competitive products – for example, in appearance or performance – then it is a new product. As in other situations, perception is reality!

Michael enters from SR, pushing along the row of students towards Melanie. As he does so, he greets students, apologises for stepping on feet etc. He sits next to Melanie on the trestle. Lines proceeded by a / are overlapped by the following line.

LECTURER: (sotto voce) This leads to the question, / when to produce a new product?

MICHAEL: Hey Mel! Have I missed anything?

LECTURER: There are a number of factors / to consider.

MICHAEL: What?

LECTURER: Shhh!

MICHEL: The first is market demand. / A product will fail if the need doesn’t exist or isn’t important to consumers.

MICHAEL: Why? He’s not saying anything relevant anyway.
LECTURER: Financial considerations / include the product’s potential to generate sufficient profit.

MICHAEL: So what did you get up to on the weekend?

MELANIE: Shut up!

LECTURER: Greenie concerns are in the text book.

Michael drops book and yawns loudly.

MICHAEL: This guy is putting me to sleep. He’s as boring as bat shit!

LECTURER: (to Michael, forcefully) Attendance isn’t compulsory. You know where the door is.

MICHAEL: Gotta go, Mel. Catch ya later.

Michael rises and pushes back along the row of students as Lecturer continues with lecture.

LECTURER: Last, the product must fit the company’s present marketing structure. Specifically, the company must consider whether the product will fit their expertise and experience. For example, the Dulux paint company aren’t likely to be producing ladies underwear anytime soon.

Nobody laughs at Lecturer’s joke. Melanie is embarrassed for him. The Lecturer notices and smiles sleazily at her. PowerPoint Lecture Slide 2 appears on screen. Lecturer clears throat to break moment and continues.

LECTURER: (descending volume) The adoption process is the set of successive decisions an individual or organisation makes before accepting an innovation.

Lights fade down to very low during above speech. WS1 and WS2 become lift doors CS, facing US. Melanie packs bag, gets up and closes legs on trestle. Lecturer steps forward as though waiting for a lift. Lights up CS as PowerPoint Lecture Slide 2 fades out. Melanie approaches Lecturer.

MELANIE: Hi – are you busy at the moment?
LECTURER: *(pleased to see her)* No, I was just on my way up to the office. Did you want to see me?

MELANIE: Yeah, I was hoping to go over some of the comments you wrote on the last assignment.

LECTURER: Alright, we can do it now if you like.

*Lift arrives with a ping. WS1 and WS2 slide apart.*

MELANIE: *(hesitant)* I'll take the stairs.

LECTURER: Don't be silly. You're perfectly safe with me. *(They enter lift and turn US)* See? Nothing to worry about.

*Lecturer puts his arm around Melanie’s shoulder. WS1 and WS2 slide together again. Blackout. Hoods up.*

"Happy Endings" Tea Break. WS2 and WS4 move to DSR, WS1 and WS3 to DSL. On screen, film of a White Suit drinking tea. After break, WS2 and WS1 to position for next scene, WS4 crosses to exit SL, then WS3 moves to USR milk crate.


VOICE: *(repeated throughout scene)* Don’t throw away your future because of one stupid mistake.

DOCTOR: Melanie Johnston!

Melanie approaches lying down trestle with its legs together. She puts one foot on either side, doctor wrenches trestle open. Lights out then up on her returning to her bag by milk crate. Melanie takes out briefcase and throws bag in rubbish bin under trestle. She climbs over trestle with brief case. Cross fade to lying down ladder. Melanie walks over with briefcase and into Lars' flower shop, buys one flower and exits.

**Lars in Flower Shop.** Lars is cutting flowers as he talks.

LARS: You share your feelings with someone,
You wish them well,
You have dreams of love,
You seek reparation,
You give consolation,
You bless a baby,
You cannot express what you feel in words.
These hands translate your emotions into blooms
and bouquets
and boutonnières
and posies
and wreaths.
These hands never cupped the breast of the woman I did not love,
Never felt the growing belly of the wife I never had
As she carried the newborn baby which was never born
and which I never held.
They never held the crying child I never had,
Never led the child along sunlit beaches
Or starbright nights
Or flower-covered meadows
In walks I never had.
These hands never needed flowers for themselves.
These hands were taught so well they cannot forget,
By good men who were skilled artisans.
They were taught to kill on command without thought or hesitation.
They learned to shoot, to strangle, to stab, to skewer, to smash, to cut,
to choke, to pierce, to crush, to break, to disembowel, to eviscerate.
They learned so many ways to snip the thread of a man’s life.
These hands can never forget that they are the hands of a trained killer.

Blackout.

“Happy Endings” Neuromechanics Department. Projection of door on screen. WSI wheels dummy on in wheelchair to CS, accompanied by WS3 carrying Bin B containing white balloons and balloon pump. WSI, WS3 and WS4 stand around dummy and remove head, passing it along to inspect it. They reject it and throw it into Bin C. WSI takes a
balloon from Bin B and pumps it up, but it explodes. He takes another balloon but before he can affix it to the torso it flies away. Dummy discarded in Bin C. WS4 removes wheelchair and WS3 exits with Bin B SL. WS2 empties Bin C.

Lesley Confronts Husband. WS1 is chased around screen by Lesley, who stands CS of screen after WS1 exits behind it. Silhouette of WS1.

LESLEY: Will you please talk to me? You can’t ignore the problem hoping it will go away, that I’ll go away. Or is that what you want? Look, I know you found it hard dealing with my father but this is me, the woman you are supposed to love. You don’t, do you? You are disgusted at the very thought of it all, aren’t you? Look at me. Look at me. Oh Jesus. I don’t want to end up like him either. I don’t want to end up a drooling mess unable to do anything for myself. (Silhouette begins to walk off) Please, please don’t walk away. You can’t – don’t – please! Come back! You bastard. You coward.

Chasing Lars. Lars is working in flower shop. WS1 bangs ladder, Lars is transported into his subconscious where WS1, WS2 and WS3 are making loud, frightening noises. He moves from ladder to ladder to find a haven but is constantly intimidated by the White Suits. When he comes to he is back in his shop working with the flowers. Blackout. Lars and WS2 exit.

Coming Out. Michael stands SL, Katie (WS3) sits on CS milk crate.

MICHAEL: Um, did you know, in some ways I have actually been waiting for this to happen? I don’t mean you and him breaking up, or anything like that. More like I’ve sort of been waiting to run into someone from home for a while now. I mean, I don’t know why. It’s not like anyone gave a shit when Bill kicked me out of home, or any of you came to visit when I was staying with Uncle fucking Frank. Didn’t even warrant a visit from my dear old mates when I was in jail. But now – now, when all of a sudden some bloke kicks you and the kids out, it’s back to Michael. “I’ve always loved you!” By the way, thanks for telling me about the kids, Kat. I can’t believe this – it’s been ten years and nothing, then bang. “Hi, I need somewhere to stay. Sorry I haven’t seen you since you got kicked out but ... I’ve always loved you!”
How did you even find me? Actually, forget it, I don’t care. I don’t know what to say, Katie. I mean, so much has happened since we last saw each other that you are just like another stranger in a lot of ways. My life is just so different now. Maybe the best thing that ever happened to me was going to jail. I learnt a lot about myself in there. Actually, learnt a lot about a lot of things. I mean that in the formal sense, too. Actually got my school cert, and can you believe it? I qualified for uni. I am going to do an arts degree which gives me options into business, law, or even history and literature. That still seems a bit strange to me saying that, knowing that it is going to happen. There were some days there when I felt I was never going to be normal again. Normal – what an awful word. I mean, who or what is normal these days? I guess I mean just being part of the world, waking up, leaving your house, opening and closing doors, meeting people, looking to see what’s around that next corner. Are you even following what I’m saying, Katie? No. I guess not. I’m not sure what you were hoping for when you tracked me down and lobbed on my doorstep, but I’m not it. The funny thing is Katie, all this time I have been trying to tell you one thing and it’s like ... I don’t know. I’m scared even though there’s no rational reason for it. Maybe because you’ll be the first person I’ve told who knew me before I went in. I’m gay, Katie. Blackout.

“Happy Endings” End Of Life Management. Projection of door on screen. WS4 wheels on dummy with black sheet to CS. WS1 and WS4 carefully remove dummy from wheelchair and lay him on SR ladder. WS1 takes black sheet and syringe. They lovingly comfort him as he receives a lethal injection. Soft lights and lovely music. After his death, they cover him in black sheet. WS2 takes wheelchair and sits in position for next scene.

Melanie On Phone/Lesley Protests. Melanie takes phone from Bin B. Lesley is holding protest sign in wheelchair that reads “Give me the right to die when I want.” WS1 and WS4 are rushing back and forth like people in a film on fast-forward. There is a vibrant sense of busyness and urgency. Melanie stands DSC, oblivious to the rush of the city as she speaks to Roger.

MELANIE: Hi Roger, it’s me. A client gave me a couple of tickets to the symphony tonight as a thankyou ... Yeah, I clinched it! ... Of course! And I thought we
could get some dinner first ... Oh, she’s back already? I thought you said she wasn’t due back until next ... Oh, right ... Yeah, I understand – you want to spend time with the family. That’s fine ... No, no, I’ll be alright. I understand ... I don’t want her to find out about us either ... Yeah, I’ll talk to you soon ... Ok ... Yeah, love you too. Bye. (Hangs up) Bastard.

*Melanie, WS1 and WS4 exit.*

**Suicide Attempt. Lesley CS in wheelchair.**

**Lesley:** God, I’m scared ... Perhaps if I believed in an afterlife it would be easier. Maybe not ... suicides go straight to hell, don’t they? Hell ... I am already there. No, no I’m not, there are plenty much worse off than me. So why am I doing this ... now? Because if I don’t do it now, when I really do get my hell I won’t be capable of it. No one will be able to help me then. I asked my doctor – huh! Jim couldn’t or wouldn’t. Fuck, he didn’t even want to live with me any more. What sort a marriage did we have? I kept asking myself that question for weeks. If it was him that was dying slowly, could I have nursed him, would I be able to take care of him as if he were a helpless baby ...? Isn’t it funny how all those intimate things you are prepared to do in the search of pleasure somehow seem dirty and unclean when there is no sex involved. And when it all became too much for him, too much indignity, too much pain for him to bear, did I love him enough to help him end it, hold a pillow over his face? And my son ...? No. I keep thinking of little Amy and Jonathon ... but if I can’t touch them, hold them, kiss them ... There’s going to come a time when I might not remember their names. I probably won’t even know who they are, what they are ... I thought about my friends but you can’t ask them to risk jail. And anyway, how would they do it? Carry me out to the driveway and run me over with their car? Hold me under in the swimming pool? Push my wheelchair over “the gap”? Invite me over for a BBQ and poison my sausage? Do you know it can take up to fifteen, fifteen agonising minutes to die from cyanide? Some people say that only cowards commit suicide. I never believed that. I always thought it must take incredible guts to throw yourself off a bridge or cliff. Imagine setting fire to yourself. I often wondered how someone *that* brave...
couldn’t summon up the courage to fight anything that life had to throw at them. To me, the fear of dying painfully always seemed much greater than the fear of living. So I guess I’m a coward. I want an easy death and I want an easy life. I don’t want to spend my last years in a nursing home. I don’t want to suffer indignity at the hands of strangers. I don’t want to be fed by tubes. I don’t want to become a vegetable ... I don’t want to not remember the people I love. Blackout.

“Happy Endings” Lunch Break. All WS stand watching a White Suit on screen eat a sandwich. At end, WS2 removes sheet from dummy as WS2, WS3 and WS4 exit. WS1 takes sponge and bucket from Bin C and becomes Michael.

By Gary’s Side. Michael sponges Gary (dummy) who is lying on DSR trestle. Gary’s family (WS2, WS3 and WS4) enter, and remove Michael, then stand around Gary’s bedside. Michael tries to get back to Gary, but the family won’t let him. Throughout the scene, a recording of Michael’s gay activist speech is heard.

MICHAEL: (voice over) People often ask me why I am still doing this, what drives me to continually speak out on homosexual rights in this second half of the twenty-first century. The truth is, while homosexual relationships have enjoyed the same protection and rights under the law as heterosexual relationships and have done so for many years now, this was not always the case. Perhaps the time and need for people like me has passed now, but I fear, as I always will fear, that without people to remind humanity of its past actions and mistakes it may forget its new compassionate outlook. I have never forgotten that in 2020, fifteen years after gay marriages had begun to gain legal status in nations and states around the world; I was still forced to take the family of my partner of ten years to court just to retain the visitation rights to my own husband. It is this fear and the knowledge the laws can’t change peoples’ prejudices that keeps me doing what I do. Even though we are now another twenty years on from that point in time it is always important to remember where these rights came from and the sacrifices made by the people who fought for these rights and acknowledgements in an era filled with prejudice and narrow thinking. Remember at one point in time being homosexual was seen as a choice or a
mental problem and an abomination of nature. While we now understand some people are gay as some people are tall or short we must, like the women who battled for and eventually won equal rights for women, remain eternally vigilant.

*WS2 and WS4 exit. WS3 becomes Melanie.*

**Melanie in Therapy. Age early 30s. Melanie is talking to therapist (WS1). Therapist blindfolds Melanie. Behind the screen, silhouetted figures are pulling the dummy apart and putting it together again incorrectly. Melanie is stepping through DSR ladder as she speaks, blindfolded.**

**MELANIE:** I’ve been having the dream again. It’s always the same. I’m sitting in the waiting room and it’s like being underwater. Somebody calls my name, and I get up. I feel so heavy. Walking into the room is like walking through a waterfall. Sometimes I hear the water when I’m awake. I should be listening, but the water gushes through my ears and I have to ask people to repeat themselves. They think I’m insensitive, that I don’t care anymore, but I’m ... I walk through the waterfall into the room, and get up on the bed. There are all these half faces staring at me – sweaty foreheads and dark holes for eyes. They gather around, and the lights shine down brighter, and the water gushes louder, but before they can do anything I wake up. Then I can’t get back to sleep. Hours later the alarm goes off and I get out of bed, but I don’t want to. The promotion came through – over double the salary. I bought a car to celebrate. It’s red. Saw an advertisement the other day for new units right on the Harbour. Absolutely fantastic view. I thought of checking them out but they’d probably all be gone now. Anyway, Roger’s place has a better view than I need at the moment. Yes, I’m still seeing him. And before you ask, no, I haven’t called my mother since last time. *(Takes off blindfold and hands it to the therapist)* Listen, I know we booked an hour but I have a 1.30 that I really shouldn’t miss so if you could just write the prescription now I’ll have time to get a sandwich on the way ... *Blackout.*
Lars Contemplates Suicide. Lars sits DCS and lights three candles, and does joss stick manoeuvres. WS1, WS2, and WS3 stand at triangle points around him around the stage. They step towards him at each ring of a bell. He aims a gun at his head. WS chant “Don’t shoot” softly. Lars puts the gun away. Repeat.

“Happy Endings” Organ Harvesting. WS1, WS3 and WS4 return to the postures of “End of Life Management”. Music out, and WS1 and WS4 line up stage behind WS3 who rips limbs off dummy one at a time then throws over head to WS1, who throws to WS4, who throws them over screen. WS1 and WS4 exit. WS3 sits on milk crates, becomes Melanie.

Picking Up. Age early 40s. Melanie is sitting in a bar, back to audience. A WS enters, approaches Melanie and offers her a glass which she accepts and drinks. She refuses another, WS exits. This continues with all the WS until Melanie randomly selects a WS, puts hood up, and they leave together.

Madame Fortuna. Enter WS3 and WS1, sit on crates. Lars enters. He hesitates before making a phone call to Madame Fortuna (WS3). Madame Fortuna reads aloud from cards randomly chosen by WS1. They both sit on crates SR.

MALE V/O: Now that we have your credit card details you are able to talk to Madame Fortuna. Madame Fortuna, the amazing psychic who has confounded the sceptics. Madame Fortuna, whose predictions show an amazing 99.9% accuracy, Madame Fortuna will astound you as she names your one true love! You will be astounded as the secrets of the universe unfold before you. Madame Fortuna sees all, knows all.

LARS: My name is Lars.

M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)

LARS: I’m fifty-five years old.

M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)

LARS: I’m a business man. I have a florist shop and a catering business.

M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)

LARS: I’m single. I’ve never been married, although I was once in love, a long time ago.

M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)

LARS: I was conscripted into the army and I served in Vietnam.
M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)
LARS: I recently met a lady, a very nice lady.
M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)
LARS: She’s about my age. She has lovely eyes, and a beautiful laugh. She has an irreverent sense of humour. We were listening to a guest speaker at a convention, and she told me he was full of shit! I just laughed and laughed.
M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)
LARS: She’s single as far as I know, but I assume she probably she has had relationships. A woman as self-confident and as full of zest as she is would have attracted some interest.
M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)
LARS: I’ve had affairs – sometimes deeply-felt and very passionate – it’s just that the women concerned didn’t know anything about it. They were all in my mind. This is different, though. When I’m with her, I feel alive! I feel like there may be some chance for something to develop.
M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)
LARS: I’m embarrassed to say it, but she said I was a very interesting man.
M. FORTUNA: (reads from card)
LARS: She did say that she would like to have a cup of coffee sometime soon. Madame Fortuna, do you see a future for us together? Do you think she might possibly be interested in someone like me?
MALE V/O: If you wish to continue talking to Madame Fortuna you will have to agree to a further deduction from your credit card at the agreed rate. Do you wish to proceed with Madame Fortuna’s bold and accurate insights?

Blackout. Lars and WS1 exit. WS3 becomes Melanie.

The Escort. Age early 50s. Music. WS1 enters and Melanie dresses him in a leather jacket. A spotlight appears and they dance together in spot. The dance turns into physical, twisted shapes that somehow combine their bodies like “Twister”. When they are finished, Melanie counts out money and gives it to WS1, and takes back her dinner jacket, putting it in Bin C. Melanie exits SR and WS1 exits SL.

“Happy Endings” Ethics Department. On screen, projection of door to department. Stage is deserted. SFX knocking at door and phone ringing, but nothing happens.
Feeding Time in Nursing Home. WS4 wheels out Lesley and positions her CS. A WS enters, places tray in front of Lesley then exits. Lesley tries to eat but can't get the spoon to her mouth. She gives up. Another WS enters and takes tray, making a comment such as, "not hungry today." WS enters with another tray, places it front of Lesley and exits. Lesley tries but can't manage to eat. From now on she doesn't even try to eat. Another WS enters to take tray, saying something like, "not hungry again, you'll fade away." This cycle continues until Lesley slumps further and further down into wheelchair, obviously very sick. Eventually the circle movement of carers becomes smaller until they eventually stop, and take out clipboards from the back of the chair. They help themselves to a cup or plate from Lesley's tray and start a meeting over Lesley's head.

WHITE SUIT 1: She's not eating or drinking.
WHITE SUIT 3: She's not responding to stimulus.
WHITE SUIT 4: Her needs have exceeded our capacity to provide.
ALL: Happy Endings!

All exit, pushing Lesley. Blackout.

The Exhibit. Michael welcomes a small number of patrons to his art exhibition which includes landscapes (DSC), male nudes (SR), a yacht series (CSL), still life (US), and a teary eyed self portrait streaked in thinly applied black paint (DSL). WS2, WS3 and WS4 enter and look at nudes. WS2 and WS3 do an amusing movement representing how people look at paintings. WS2 then goes to still life, W3 goes to landscapes, while WS4 stays at nudes.

MICHAEL: Thanks for coming down this afternoon folks. If you have any questions about any of the paintings I will be more than happy to answer them.

WS4 looks questioningly to Michael.

MICHAEL: Yes, that's right, I am the artist. I have been painting for over five years now and this is my third exhibition here.

WS3 is studying the landscapes.
MICHAEL: I did that series of painting on a two week camping trip I took with partner through outback Queensland and the Northern Territory. A country of such true contrast as you can see with harsh barren rocky deserts suddenly giving way to the most beautiful of gorges and valleys with amazing flora. It truly was a magnificent experience.

*WS2 has moved over and is staring intently at a painting then back to Michael. WS3 goes to join WS2 while Michael turns to answer another unspoken question from WS4.*

MICHAEL: *(laughing)* Yes, that's right, I'm sorry. You won't find any female nudes here. I find that to get the best out of my art I need to paint something that inspires me.

*All WS look at self-portrait. Michael realises which painting they are gathered around and seems to mentally steel himself.*

MICHAEL: I wasn't sure if I should bring that one down to the gallery but I could not longer bear to have it in the apartment. As you can see that is me. It was at a time in my life when I had just lost my partner. In fact you were looking at him just before *(smiles at WS4)*. That was my attempt to, in some way, express my grief in a physical form. Even now, after all this time, I can hardly bear to look at that painting as it reminds me so vividly of that time in my life.

*WS2 looks questioningly.*

MICHAEL: *(wry laugh)* An art student, I see. No, don't apologise, you question is perfectly ok. That thin streaking effect on the painting that fascinates you so much. That was created by my tears. Now if you'll excuse me a moment. *Michael exits. Blackout.*

*"Happy Endings" Siesta Break. All WS watch image of White Suit asleep. Afterwards they all shake out shoulders and arms. Blackout. WS1 and WS4 exit. WS2 becomes Lesley and lies on DSR ladder.*
Social Worker Calls. Lesley is lying motionless on DSR ladder. WS3 as Social Worker takes out clipboard from Bin B. On screen are projections of explanations to abbreviations.

WHITE SUIT 3: Right. Your doctor won't tell me how long you've got left. It's really most annoying. You see, once you become terminal, the DH (Department of Health) steps in and you enter our HE (Happy Endings) programme. Doesn't that sound pleasant? You will no longer have to pay for your CGs (care givers) as we award you part of the cost under the EoLC scheme (End of Life Care). Then, once you reach your LFD (last few days) (which hopefully your doctor will warn us about), you will be transferred to what we call Easy Peasy (E.C.P.C. – Palliative Care). Now this scheme is CF (completely free) isn't that wonderful? Unfortunately, each of these transfers can cause HITS (hiccups in the system) but hopefully you can look after yourself during these MD (minor delays). We understand it is important at this SOYL (stage of your life) that you feel comfortable with your CGs, so we will endeavour to provide you with the SP (same people). As they are working for the DH it shouldn’t be an HP (huge problem). Still, they will need to return to their Ds (departments) and find the RFs (relevant forms) with the CHs (correct headings), and sometimes this can LTC (lead to confusion). Luckily, I am only a PCA (phone call away), so if you find yourself AWNS (alone with no support) JCTN (just call this number). (Places card on Lesley) If I don’t answer it will be because I am IAM (in a meeting) but I promise you I will call back ASAIAAA (as soon as I am able). Weekends and AH (after hours) may be more difficult, and don’t expect a reply on Thursday. Thursday is my day off. But don’t worry you can always call 000 in an emergency. Any questions? No? Excellent. ISYNWT (I'll see you next week then).

WS3 goes to USR trestle and becomes Melanie. WS1, WS2 and WS4 assemble DSL.
The Meeting. 2046. Melanie is CEO of “Happy Endings” who are currently marketing a new range of genetically engineered babies for women who “forgot” to have children. Melanie is sitting on USR trestle. DSL are WS1, WS2 and WS4 who are meant to be co-presenting a marketing campaign for launching the babies, but are more interested in one-up-manship and undermining each other which turns their once coherent presentation into an absurdity. On screen is a projection outlining important business data. They speak at lightening speed, cutting each other off, and pulling the baby back and forth. It gets thrown across the room, and Melanie obtains baby and begins to cradle it, singing “Hush Little Baby”. Melanie continues singing lullaby as lights fade down.

WHITE SUIT 1: Our trend analysis …
WHITE SUIT 2: … for the next four years …
WHITE SUIT 4: … and the comparison …
WHITE SUIT 1: … should eventually ensure …
WHITE SUIT 2: … a literature of …
WHITE SUIT 4: … sales force composite.
WHITE SUIT 2: Extermination could be …
WHITE SUIT 4: … an issue of …
WHITE SUIT 2: … growing concern …
WHITE SUIT 1: … but in pricing is salvation …
WHITE SUIT 4: … the solitary invention …
WHITE SUIT 1: … models the sustainability of …
WHITE SUIT 2: … profit shifting …
WHITE SUIT 4: … in multinational companies.
WHITE SUIT 2: Whilst it’s tempting …
WHITE SUIT 4: … the privacy of consumers …
WHITE SUIT 1: … however a happy assessment …
WHITE SUIT 2: … of the planning modules …
WHITE SUIT 1: … might eventually lead to an …
WHITE SUIT 4: … evaluation of the global perspective …
WHITE SUIT 2: … that litigates long range planning deals.
WHITE SUIT 1: Corporate takeover, and …
WHITE SUIT 4: … tactics and strategy might possibly …
WHITE SUIT 1: … be financial loss.
WHITE SUIT 2: External microenvironment …
... or trend, without a doubt, ...
... is the basis of all ...
... forms of utility.
The sales, of course,
... and percentage of total may never project ...
... how it affects the vertical ...
... and horizontal business market.
Money, if tallied, with the ...
... activity indicator of buying power ...
... by way of business will conceivably ...
... produce a spreadsheet ...
... relating to social class and subcultures.
The marketing significance ...
... of income data ...
... is accuracy.

Happy Endings. Projection of "Happy Endings" building on screen. WS1, WS2, WS3 and WS4 take up opening positions around edge of stage as static sounds, staring at screen.
Projection out. House lights up.
A new theatrical production, "This Is Not An Exit", will be staged from April 21 to 23 at the Peninsula Theatre.

Devised by local actors Rosemary Parsons, Brenda Logan, Paul Karton and Richard Goodwin, the production has the support of Woy Woy Little Theatre Inc, Laycock St Theatre and Macquarie University.

"Unlike a conventional play, This Is Not An Exit did not begin from a script," Ms Parsons said.

"Instead, the actors used methods of character building and improvisation to create the play from scratch.

"The result is a dynamic and innovative work of theatre, combining realistic characters with a highly visual style.

"This Is Not An Exit" weaves the past, present and future into a surreal journey examining the ramifications of choice throughout the lives of four very different characters.

"Exciting multimedia effects complement the abstract style as the actors explore a variety of controversial social issues with both humour and pathos.

"This Is Not An Exit will appeal to all lovers of contemporary theatre, as well as being of particular interest to theatre and drama students as it is the result of group collaboration."

This Is Not An Exit was first previewed as "Fragments of Lesley" at the Cultural Laboratory in November last year.

"Due to its style and themes, This Is Not An Exit is probably best suited to an audience aged 16 and over," Ms Parsons said.

Performances will take place on Friday, April 21, and Saturday, April 22, at 8pm.

A performance will also take place on Sunday, April 23, at 5pm.

Tickets are $10 and are available at the door.

The performance will take place at the Peninsula Theatre on the corner of Ocean Beach and McMaster's Rds, Woy Woy.

For more information, contact 0401 392 371.

Press release, March 27

Rosemary Parsons, Peninsula Theatre
COVER STORY with Kate Moore

This is not an Exit

Where: The Peninsula Theatre, Woy Woy
When: Tonight and tomorrow at 8pm and Sunday at 5pm

When the curtains go up on This is not an Exit, at Woy Woy's Peninsula Theatre tonight, actor Rosemary Parsons will throw herself into the character she created 18 months ago.

Parsons and three other Central Coast actors will introduce the characters of their imaginations in three performances tonight, tomorrow and Sunday.

For Parsons and the co-writers and directors of This is not an Exit, the show is like giving birth, not only to the characters they've developed but also to an experimental form of theatre rarely seen on the coast.

"It's been so intense," Parsons said. "It's our baby. What it's going to be like next week when it's all over, I don't know," she said.

Parsons, 24, of St Huberts Island, collaborated with peers Brenda Logan, Paul Karton and Richard Goodwin, to create theatre without a script, characters or elaborate set.

The group developed four characters of their own choosing: an ambitious young woman, a Vietnam veteran, a young gay artist struggling to care for a sick partner and a terminally ill woman deciding whether to end her own life.

Theo has these threads that run through it but it is logical, a bit of an experiment
- Rosemary Parsons

"We started with a character the same age as ourselves and let fiction take over," Parsons said. "It has these threads that run through it but it is logical, a bit of an experiment and it's so totally different to what goes on at the Peninsula Theatre."

Parsons said while the method of creating a work for theatre was unorthodox, she hoped the audience would be able to engage with the characters and think more about the process of developing characters and a story.

"I'd like them to consider what makes theatre," she said.

"Theatre is a combination of elements and we've pared it down to the absolute basics of how to portray something theatrically."

Tickets for This is not an Exit are available at the door and are $10.
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