

INTRODUCTION

I

Having successfully worked on two contrasting performances during my practical semester at The University of Aberystwyth, the following proposal began to take shape. I participated in the Theatre in Education (TIE) module, under the instruction of Emma Lucia, which involved creating a performance devised for children in the local schools between the ages of eight and eleven. The module also involved, amongst other things, devising a participatory workshop for the children after the performance, to extend the material beyond simply presentation in performance. The workshops were greeted with enthusiasm and created real excitement among the children. They revealed the depths of their young, creative minds and their willingness to delve into the historical material that provided the backdrop to the piece.

My other practical module involved playing the lead female protagonist in Arthur Miller's *Playing for Time*, directed by Richard Cheshire. The play concerns the true story of a French prisoner of war, Fania Fenelon, and her experience in the women's orchestra at Auschwitz in 1944. Her reputation as a singer in Paris saves her life, as she is placed within an orchestra of eleven other women, under the instruction of Alma Rose. Their survival rests upon the success of their frequent concerts for the camp commander, Commandant Kramer, and his peers. It is a dramatisation of Fenelon's harrowing experience of the Polish camp that explores friendships, sexuality and morality. In my attempt to create my character as truthfully as possible I turned to historical research concerning the Holocaust. I was, to my shame, struck by my ignorance about such an important historical event. Reflecting on fifteen years of education, I was unable to recall a time when the importance of such an event to today's society had - if ever- really been driven home to me.

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The arts have always played a very significant part in my life. As a spectator of - and more often a participator in - various areas of the arts at school, from Caribbean music workshops to The National Theatre's Shakespearian Drama Workshops, these events have left lasting imprints in my memory, that have never failed to lose any of their clarity or impact. I believe this is a consequence of learning gained through active participation, of being challenged with something fresh and exciting to a young and impressionable mind. My proposal thus began to take shape. Could my ignorance in important historical matters - such as the Holocaust - have been prevented had it been presented in a way that involved active participation requiring me to grapple with this challenging historical material? Would a scheme that involved the arts in association with history prove a more lasting lesson?

In the introduction to Learning through Drama, McGregor recognises the need for and the benefits of incorporating arts in education:

"The arts are not supported as widely as they used to be and the level of culture, of which the arts are a part, is receding. What is required, it is argued, is a vigorous programme of cultural education that must be in schools and continue throughout adult life ... If theatre can play a useful part in the creation of a cultural democracy and in doing so increase the perceptiveness and numbers of its own audience, what more can we want?" (8).

A production of a challenging piece of theatre such as Miller's *Playing for Time*, which deals directly with a historic event in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, presented in a format like that used in TIE productions, can do just that. Exploring and reflecting on the central issues of the play - which include: racism, bigotry, sexuality, morality and alienation - a performance and workshop can raise awareness of issues in the lives of young people today. Furthermore, *Playing for Time* can be appreciated for being a great piece of theatre in its own right: one that is entertaining, educating, and stimulating for its audience.

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

Sunday the 27th of January of this year marked Holocaust Memorial Day in the United Kingdom. Fifty-seven years on, it commemorates the day of liberation from those imprisoned at Auschwitz concentration camp. It is also a day of reflection and remembrance for those who lost their lives during Hitler's reign in Germany.

The day lends itself to educational purposes with events throughout the country. A two-day conference takes place annually at The London Imperial War Museum on practical classroom activities. It aims to offer stimulating

approaches to educating young people about the Holocaust. In another venture, The University of Leicester commemorated the day this year by inviting poet Ann Kind, who was evacuated from Hitler's Germany as a young child, to read a selection of her work to mark the day.

Visual arts as well as literary arts are incorporated into this memorial day. Nottingham Education Sinfonia and Nottingham's Education Theatre Company collaboratively performed various performances throughout the day at the Nottingham County Council Town Hall. Various representatives of the city community proceeded to light candles whilst Holocaust survivor, Lisa Vincent, shared some of her moving recollections.

Across the globe, Holocaust Memorial Day is commemorated with national ceremonies in Belgium (May 8th), Denmark (May 4th) Holland (May 4th) and Norway (May 26th) to name but a few.

In America, a youth organisation – B'nai B'rith Youth Organisation (BBYO) - in recent years created the *Holocaust Expression Theatre*. Through a series of dramatic presentations, they express their goal as being:

'...to encourage audiences to think about the dangers of intolerance, ethnic prejudice and bigotry in their society, and to examine individual responsibility towards democracy and social justice. The holocaust, as an example of modern day genocide, is the vehicle through which individuals will make the connection between history and their own lives.'¹

In America, the Jewish population is estimated to be about 6.9 million people, a huge amount in comparison to 300,000 which is the current estimated Jewish population in the United Kingdom.² The B'nai B'rith recognises the importance of the Jewish heritage to the American nation. Their idealistic mission is, "to unite Jews in service to their community and to the world".³ By exploring the Holocaust through drama they aim to reach out to young people and build bridges of understanding throughout their country. Since their work began in 1923, they now serve 30,000 young people world-wide. Their inspirational work provides hope and promise that a proposal of my kind could work in Britain and be a fundamental part of the Memorial Day commemorations in this country.

The events surrounding the Holocaust directly and indirectly affected Britain. To shrug off responsibility and sweep it under the historical carpet of 'forgetting', is to neglect a very significant and tragic part of our heritage.

In his essay Britain, the Holocaust and its Legacy, Professor David Cesarani of the University of Southampton, reflects on the reasons that the Holocaust is such an important part of our history:

"The Holocaust is a part of our national story because it impinges directly on the history of these islands and its peoples. Thousands of Jews found refuge in Britain during the 1930's and several hundred survivors of the death camps came to Britain after the war.

The Holocaust and the war against Nazism is part of the British national story. It shaped the lives of millions of British people, including thousands of Jews who found refuge here and their descendants who today are British Citizens.'

The Holocaust isn't just something that happened to Europe a long time ago with no relevance to us."⁴

The same government web page that offers Cesarani's essay also offers a Statement of Purpose which suggests the fundamental reasons for commemorating such a day. Looking at just three of the thirteen statements, I can see how successful a TIE project could be in achieving the goals set out by the organisers of this annual event. These three statements are to:

¹ B'nai B'rith Youth Organization: Holocaust Expression Theatre 29 Jan. 2002. 1/1
<<http://bnaibrith.org/bbyo/natprogs/het/>>.

² Jewish Population of the World 27 March. 2002 1/1
<<http://www.usisreal.org/jsourc/Judaism/jewpop.html>>.

³ B'nai B'rith Youth Organization: Holocaust Expression Theatre 29 Jan. 2002 1/1
<<http://bnai.brith.org/bbyo/natprogs/het/>>

⁴ Cesarini David. Britain, the Holocaust, and its Legacy : the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2002
26 Mar.2002 <<http://www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk> > 1/3

- reflect on recent atrocities that raise similar issues
- provide a national focus for educating subsequent generations about the holocaust and the continued relevance of the lessons that are learnt from it
- provide an opportunity to examine our nations past and learn for the future⁵

Playing for Time, used within a TIE format, can fully embody these three statements through dramatic methods of presentation. These particular statements are concerned with the need to educate people about the Holocaust and reflect on past mistakes in the hope that they will never be repeated.

To **'reflect on recent atrocities that raise similar issues'**, a TIE team could turn young people's attention to recent media coverage of events such as the Stephen Lawrence case in 1997. This example of a racial attack highlights the fact that such terrible events still persist, and draws young people's attention to current affairs. Drawing on a more recent case can offer young people an example that they may feel they can more closely relate to, and deepens their level of understanding.

Using this recent example, and the outcomes that flowed from it shows the **'continued relevance of the lessons learnt from it.'** A TIE company could, for example, work with groups of young people in a preparatory workshop to create 'freeze frames' in an attempt to capture how Stephen's death affected his family and indeed, the nation. Cuttings from the newspaper coverage could be used as resource material. Getting 'bums off seats' and minds into action can assist young people in coming closer to realising the knock-on effects racial attacks have on those hurt directly or indirectly; such a presentation can encourage discussion on how similar attacks might be prevented in the future. Stephen Lawrence's death searingly reminds us that racial attacks like those witnessed in the Holocaust are being repeated in our own time. Linking these two events together can help make young people aware of the ever-present dangers of racism, so helping to **'provide an opportunity to examine our nation's past and learn for the future.'**

In a world that is fortunately becoming more multi-cultural with the increased mobility of ethnic groups, and with classrooms (particularly in our inner cities) containing children with a diversity of backgrounds and cultures, it is more important than ever to explore with young people the tragic implications that can arise from prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping and negative peer pressure. In a BBC talk-time concerning Holocaust Memorial Day one contributor, Will Faulkner, opined:

'The Holocaust was a long time ago now – let's just forget about it. The people that died are long gone, nothing can bring them back. Let's face it most people in the UK have never even heard of the Holocaust' - *Will Faulkner, Cheshire, UK*⁶

Looking at the Holocaust through *Playing for Time* - exploring its relevance to today's young people, and bringing history alive on the stage - one can hope that ignorant comments typified by Will Faulkner will represent an increasingly minority view.

THEATRE OR EDUCATION?

A detailed look at the nature of TIE reveals why this means of communication is so effective in cases such as Holocaust awareness. The following chapter proposes to look at the aims of TIE and what it seeks to do. My experiences with recent TIE productions, both as spectator and actor, reveal the difficulties in attempting to devise a suitable piece that fits into the dual criteria of Theatre and Education.

TIE has often proved hard to categorise. Its diverse, ever-evolving, flexible nature proves problematic in depicting specifically what TIE is or isn't. In his book, Learning through Theatre: Essays and Casebooks on TIE, Tony Jackson describes TIE as, 'a territory that overlaps the domains of the theatre and education in ways that are important and unusual.'⁷

⁵ Statement of Purpose 26 Mar.2002 <<http://www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk/sections/aims/purp.htm>> 1/1

⁶ Holocaust Memorial Day 30 Jan., 2002

<<http://BBCNewsTalkingPoint/HolocaustMemorialDay.UK>>3/4

⁷ Jackson Tony. Learning Through Theatre: Essays and Casebooks on TIE (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1980), p.1

Theatre in Education is a unique mode of communication that seeks to embrace these two terms in imaginative, creative ways. A good piece of TIE should highlight the importance of incorporating its audience in the very structure of its piece. No other theatrical form so unselfishly attempts to share the adrenaline rush and thrill of performing with its audience in the way that TIE does. Its related workshops and discussions invite the audience 'behind the scenes' and can offer insight into the play's major themes and the characters' motivations, and - on a more specifically theatrical note - the technical workings of a performance. TIE can help strip away the glamour and distance of the actor and reveal to the participatory young people that they too can engage directly with issues of importance and that actors too are human beings who wrestle with ideas in very different ways.

TIE aims to make the learning experience fun. It lends itself to learning through doing, encouraging young people to form their own views on what they see, and on any issues that arise from the watching or participatory elements of TIE. Jackson describes the aim of TIE in the following way. It aims, he says, to 'harness the techniques and imaginative potency of the theatre in the service of education. The aim is to provide an experience for children that will be intensely absorbing, challenging even provocative, and an unrivalled stimulus for further work on the chosen subject in and out of school.'⁸

Theatre in Education, suggests Jackson, is a springboard for further learning: it can provoke thought within its audience, which will go beyond the playing space. TIE confidently reveals that it can engage and affect its audience, and attempts to open up young minds to new debates and ideas which can be discussed long after the TIE team have departed. The young audience must feel they can lose themselves in the theatrical experience and not feel they are being 'taught' as such.

In seeking such a goal, TIE must examine the methods it adopts in shaping a piece of theatre. Devising for TIE entails recognising where the emphasis should lie: Theatre or Education? Furthermore, it involves understanding what is lost or gained in the emphasis of one of these terms at the expense of the other. The approaches to TIE in the past, both on a professional and amateur level, have been extremely diverse. A look at the two contrasting TIE pieces performed by groups of 3rd year drama students in semester one – under the direction of Emma Lucia and Gill Ogden - reveal two very different ways of working within this genre. The work of Ogden and Lucia reflect what they individually feel is at the heart of the TIE experience.

Having acted in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, Emma Lucia's TIE piece, I was soon made aware that the emphasis of the piece would lie in the *Theatre* of Theatre in Education. The play concerned the Welsh Poet Dylan Thomas' reflections of past Christmases spent in a Welsh sea-side town as a child. His poem *A Child's Christmas in Wales* became our script as we turned the poem into a piece of theatre. In an all female cast we acted the parts of the young village boys whose voices we found in Thomas' work. What Lucia saw as fundamental in the creation of a TIE piece was the entertainment factor, the enjoyment that should come for young children in a piece that was light-hearted and fun to watch. It was frequently stressed that the children must believe in the characters, and the environment we created. Our aim was to imaginatively transport them out of their school hall and back in time to another world. The demands on our acting abilities were high and techniques employed by Stanislavski, such as discovering one's 'character motivation' were frequently used in the rehearsal process to ensure our work was truthful from moment to moment.

What was required, said Lucia, was a piece of high-quality theatre, with a professional standard of acting, to feed young imaginations. It was not intended, as Lucia noted, to point out the moral of the play and force an educational lesson through the work. What we created was a piece of un-interrupted, living, breathing theatre, which delighted, amused, and engaged its young audiences.

Lucia is not alone in her belief that the *theatre* should be paramount in this line of work. Jeremy Turner, artistic director of Arad Goch, an Aberystwyth-based TIE Company, also believes that it is the *Theatre* in Theatre in Education, which must come first. In a recent lecture about the work of Arad Gogh, he argued: "if the theatre is good the education is good.' For him, theatre in itself is an educational experience. In December 2000, I watched a piece of Arad Gogh theatre entitled 'Winter Pictures' performed at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre. The

⁹ Jackson Tony (1980), p.1

piece was aimed at four to eight year-olds, performed by two actors and one musician, and told the story of two mice preparing for winter hibernation.

The piece employed simple and effective imagery: the young audience were simply entranced by the sense of 'magic' that pervaded the piece. For example, leaves on a real tree in the foreground of the stage fell to the floor to represent the changing seasons. It was simplistically achieved by an actor controlling the subtle movements of a very fine transparent fish wire that was entwined in the branches on which the leaves were balanced. The play's success lay in its ability to speak to its young audience through visual images, and the experimental way it employed simple devices to create a theatre of illusion. The magic of theatre was at the heart of this experience, and although the play explored several themes - including those of violence, jealousy and betrayal - it was the lasting visual images that delighted the children upon leaving the theatre space, as was clear from their excited chatter as they left the studio.

Jeremy Turner made his key point about the importance of images another way. He brought a drawing into a lecture which his three year old daughter had drawn that weekend. We were asked to suggest what we thought it was. After much deliberation we agreed it was either a sunset stretching across a mountainous landscape or a Rocket® lolly. It was, in fact, a picture of Jeremy's bald head and shoulders, because for the child, at only a few feet high, that was how she saw her father. This simple example reveals that children see the world differently; a TIE team must recognise this and find ways that speaks to them accordingly. Furthermore, visual pictures must be clear whilst allowing room for the imaginative interpretations of young minds.

David Pammenter, recent director of the Community Theatre Arts Course at Rose Bruford College, argues 'TIE teams have a responsibility to the education system but a greater responsibility to the children.'⁹ The responsibility to the children is essentially to offer a piece of theatre that is entertaining and engaging. If the piece is clear and informative, the associated issues may not necessarily need to be drawn out explicitly at all. An engaging story line will be enough to communicate the vital messages to its young audience.

The work of Arad Gogh and Emma Lucia aims to speak to children in a language they can understand, through clear, imaginative, visual means. Ian Yeomen - artistic director of the Welsh TIE company, Theatr Powys - also believes in the power of theatrical images, as he stated in a recent lecture at the university: "The images of theatre endure in the mind when facts are long forgotten." The theatrical experience and the fantastical make-believe element in the theatre is what characterised both these pieces. But was it educational enough? Did it rightfully fit the criteria - suggested by Jackson - as being 'challenging even provocative'? Is the experience of an entertaining play enough to speak to its young audience, in the hope of educating and inspiring them? To answer these doubts, I will turn to what I feel represents the other end of the spectrum: the work of the other 3rd year TIE group in their performance at the Aberystwyth Museum.

This piece, untitled, was directed by Gill Ogden and had a small cast of five actors. The emphasis was clearly weighted on the importance of the *education* in Theatre in Education. The environment of the piece, set as it was in the museum, was a constant reminder to the fact that we were there to learn. The action was continually broken up by freeze-frames which were interspersed with questions regarding the plot, development and the characters' dilemmas. The young audience were continually being asked to comment in response to the questions and reflect on the piece. The piece was very informative regarding Welsh history, and particularly the history of Aberystwyth. Despite this, I believe the constant quizzing and re-stating of what we had just witnessed reflected the company's doubts about their young audience's capacity to understand the material. It also undermined the notion that theatre alone can communicate important truths. Essentially, what was missing was 'the magic' - that mysterious entry into other worlds - which the theatre can offer. We were unable to believe in the overly-caricatured personae who continually alienated us from the action, with their out-of-role posed questions.

Attempting to adapt theatre enough to deliberately incorporate a level of learning thus proves a difficult task. The desire to maintain the magic of theatre against the need to inform, educate and provoke thought requires careful structuring of a TIE piece.

⁹ Pammenter David. Learning Through Theatre: Essays and Casebooks on TIE (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1980), p64

The difficulties in the adaptation of theatre to serve as an educational tool were most famously recognised by Bertolt Brecht who, as Jackson describes, was “faced with not a dissimilar resistance to his own experiments with ‘teaching plays’ in the 1930s.”¹⁰

Today in 2002 it still has relevance:

‘Generally there is felt to be a very sharp distinction between learning and amusing oneself. The first may be useful, but only the second is pleasant....Well, all that can be said is that the contrast between learning and amusing oneself is not laid down by the divine rule; it is not one that has always been and must continue to be....theatre remains theatre, even when it is instructive theatre, and in so far as it is good theatre it will amuse.’ (Brecht 1936: 72-73)¹¹

The two terms, Theatre and Education, should ideally not become mutually exclusive. Some sort of equilibrium must be achieved if the piece is to prove a success. There is a danger for TIE companies to hide beneath the umbrella of their genre and produce work that has all the good intentions of educating, though the quality of the acting is somewhat mediocre. But there is an equal danger in the belief that if you can hold the attention of your young audience, the piece has been educationally successful. The success of a TIE project is measurable by the quality of the child’s experience: the performance must strive both to educate and to entertain, so these two terms need not prove incompatible partners.

HANDLING SENSITIVE MATERIAL

In the following chapter I will be making suggestions as to how to handle sensitive material within the context of TIE. I propose to consider the various risks and opportunities that may be involved in this process and in Chapter Four to understand how *Playing for Time* could be adapted to suit a TIE project.

Playing for Time is not the easiest of plays for any audience, regardless of age. Many adult audience members, who watched the performance, said they appreciated it though didn’t enjoy it. The material is decidedly uncomfortable to watch with scenes of a violent and sexual nature, and of course that ever-pervading sense of the environment of the women’s camp at Auschwitz. Targeting an appropriate audience is of the utmost importance. The issue at stake here is not the level of understanding; for the play in itself is adequately self-explanatory with frequent expositional monologues from the character of Fania Fenelon. The play requires a certain level of maturity from the members of its audience, and demands that they are adult enough to appreciate the circumstances of the Holocaust and have already, to some degree, achieved some grasp of the enormity of the issues involved.

An appropriate age group would be teenagers aged between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. Teenagers are more likely to have been exposed to scenes of violence -including those of a sexual and gruesome nature - through the media, especially television, film and video. Using sensitive material in the context of TIE does place certain restrictions on the age ranges to which it would be suitable. Any attempts made to adapt the material, and shape it into something suitable for a younger audience range, could risk sacrificing the true resonances of Miller’s play and manipulating the piece out of its original, intended design. The age restrictions must be enforced if a TIE team is to put the safety of their young audience first: several risks lie in the assessment of the target audience of this piece. Without close work alongside teachers aware of the National Curriculum, a TIE company could run the risk of dealing with material that has not been previously explored before by the youngsters with their teachers.

The risks in performing a play such as *Playing for Time* lie predominantly in the fact that it is a piece of harrowing theatre that has the ability to touch a young audience on many raw nerves. Preferably, a TIE team would spend time going into schools and talking to their forthcoming audiences about their awareness of the Holocaust and answering questions they might have concerning the events that took place.

Even the most detailed of research, however, cannot guarantee the audience’s response to the piece. Reactions will inevitably differ from one audience member to the next, as young adults (like children) grasp

¹⁰Jackson Tony (1980), p.34

¹¹ ibid

concepts and develop areas of understanding at different levels and speeds. A TIE team would need to be prepared to deal with every eventuality, from tears to disgust amongst their audience, and the follow-up workshop would need to offer some time to the audience to comment on their reactions to the piece. Ideally any follow-up workshop should take place several days after the play, so the content has time to be reflected upon and digested. Sensitive material in a TIE context will always be risky, but as Pammenter points out:

“The TIE programme or play is not a watered-down version of adult theatre...it is an experience provided for children or young people in their own right...adults and children alike are capable of understanding intellectually, physically and emotionally the world of which they are a part.”¹²

Theatre in Education projects can afford to be hard hitting, if the structure of the piece is well developed with creativity and sensitivity. Harrowing material will inevitably expose its young audience to a melting-pot of new ideas, and provoke challenging debate. If handled correctly, however, the material can not so much prove damaging to a young person as eye-opening. Pammenter recognises the measures that must be observed if the material is even slightly risqué, to ensure the young person’s safety and enjoyment of the project.

“The devising team must have a clear perspective and function of their work before they start devising at all – They must have a clear understanding of the forces at work both on themselves and on the children they wish to work with, and a real awareness of the parameters or confines set on their work by the morals, values and ethics of the society we live in – whether or not these are subsequently to be challenged”¹³

There may be barriers erected and opinions formed prior to watching a performance, such as this, and a devising TIE team must be prepared to overcome such barriers with care, caution and objectivity. The function of performing a piece of sensitive theatre such as *Playing for Time* is to educate and entertain and bring about some awareness of a tragic yet significant part of European heritage. What should lie at the centre of this proposal is that *Playing for Time* is a story of survivors, of human courage, and perseverance. Working with young people using *Playing for Time* as a springboard provides opportunities for discussion, and can highlight the importance of understanding, and combating, the processes that lead to such a tragedy. The play deals with real event and real people from the past, with central issues such as racism, peer pressure, sexuality and loneliness that young people face in their day-to-day lives.

Miller has created a play that successfully portrays a sense of the horrors of Auschwitz and celebrates human triumph over evil. We return to Pammenter who recognises the responsibility a TIE team has to “raise those issues in the forum of programme in a clear accessible and meaningful way that avoids mystification and doesn’t fail our children.”¹⁴

The opportunity to create a forum that is stimulating and thought-provoking for young people is too great a one to pass up. The question should not be can we afford the risks, but rather can we afford not to?

THE PRACTICALITIES AND THE REALITIES

The previous three chapters have explored the rationale for the proposal, why TIE could prove an important mode of communication, and what are the various risks and opportunities involved in such a proposal. This chapter proposes to look at the practicalities of turning this proposal into a fully functional TIE piece. It will examine an ideal working environment; ways to adapt *Playing for Time* into an accessible TIE project; appropriate workshop ideas; and resources that could be drawn upon in the creation of a follow-up work pack.

A safe, user-friendly environment to stage such a project is an essential element in the experience of TIE. Ideally I would propose to use a playing space not unlike the one used in the University of Aberystwyth production in the Emily Davies studio of the Parry Williams building. This space, with its bare concrete walls and overhead gantry, immediately gave the sense of the bare, clinical nature of the Auschwitz camp buildings. The

¹²Pammenter David. Learning Through Theatre: Essays and Casebooks on TIE (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1980), p53

¹³ ibid p56

¹⁴Pammenter David (1980), p.61

audience were placed 'ad hoc' around the slightly raised edges of the space, which served to isolate them slightly from the security of being immediately alongside friends and acquaintances in the audience, and meant they were, perforce, more involved in the play's action. Using the gantry to represent the world of the Nazis, the height of the gantry symbolically underlined their power and sense of authority. The facilities provided at the University, in terms of sound and lighting, are a huge advantage in trying to get as close to Miller's detailed stage directions as possible. The space can more closely transport its audience to the world of Poland in 1945. (Even the heating problems in the studio helped in making real for the actors and audience this bitterly cold setting!)

I recognise that the availability of such studios across the country on the Holocaust Memorial Day is likely to be rare, perhaps limited only to larger theatres in the big cities or to university locations with studio spaces. Limiting the play to the confines of studio settings raises various technical problems for the team such as: the time needed for set get-in, and requiring experience from someone who knows their way around the space to assist the technical team in their get-in. Using an unfamiliar studio space would also entail further rehearsal time for the actors to adjust to the new surroundings. It would undoubtedly prove a costly venture, but if the playwright's demands are to be respected this piece must be performed in an environment fully equipped to cope with its needs. This would not be, as many TIE projects are, a piece that could easily tour local schools. It would require publicity throughout the schools, with pre-arranged school trips incurring travel costs and possible inconvenience to reach the designated venue.

The usual assumption of TIE work is that it has the flexibility to travel to schools to perform. My hesitation in suggesting *Playing for Time* as a piece that could be staged in any school setting is as follows. Firstly, Miller did not write this play as a piece of Theatre-in-Education that can be easily re-located from the theatre space to a school hall. The play is, in fact, a screenplay and many of the detailed stage directions proved very difficult to translate even into a very adequate theatrical playing space. Miller's precise directions for sound and lighting cannot afford to be ignored if the piece is to be fully realised, and many school facilities are ill-equipped to deal with such technicalities. Furthermore, the actors and technical crew need every support they can get to help realise this play.

The reason I stress the need for the play to be performed in a studio space, however, is not so much for the benefit of the actors and the technical crew but for the young people themselves. School halls inevitably hold a history for each child who has ever spent time in them, from the memory of a past assembly or school play, to the brightly-coloured art work that hangs on the walls. Even the most professional of companies have a difficult task to draw the eye and attention away from the décor and any past connections with the space. I do not belittle the notion that creative workshops and a successful performance can transport an audience to a world beyond the four walls of the environment, but rather suggest that an alien environment - with the atmospheric lighting and set - can attempt to come closer to Miller's vision, proving a more truthful experience for the young people.

There is a further factor in removing young people from their somewhat institutionalised educational environment. If removed from the classroom, the experience becomes to some extent a privilege, and responses tend to be of gratitude and excitement. Away from an environment that evokes traditional lessons involving 'bums on seats', the creative thinking process has fewer inhibitions.

The restrictions I have placed upon where the play should be performed may seem rather severe and restrict the availability of the production to certain areas of the country, but I strongly feel that the play itself must be done justice to and respected in its entirety. Furthermore, the atmosphere created by the use of sound and lighting within a studio space is crucial in the creation of this theatrical world.

Having established an ideal environment for the play, I propose to examine ways in which Miller's *Playing for Time* could serve its purpose as a TIE project. The structure of Miller's play would have to be revised in order to suit the requirements of TIE: artistic and subtle adaptation of Miller's play offers opportunities for peripheral and integral audience involvement.

This involvement would have to be carefully structured so as not to affect the continuity of the play, or their own basic function as an audience. From the onset of the play, audience members could be given the sense that they too were crammed into the boxcar where the characters find themselves in Act One, Scene One. The small rectangle of light upon the floor, used to represent the boundaries of the box-car, could be extended slightly and the young people could be ushered into the small area of light and huddled up against the actors, upon

instruction of the guards. It would make coherent sense of Fania's opening monologue as she could address the audience members within the boxcar. The stage directions demand that *she glances around at the others and looks around her*¹⁵. The presence of the unfamiliar audience members would enhance that sense of confusion and animosity within the boxcar.

The audience, like the actors, could scatter out into the space as the box-car spills out of its original shape on reaching its destination at the camp. The scene's power is mainly attributed to the frightening confusion of the new arrivals, and the audience - like the actors - would simply follow orders barked by the Kapos. The audience are then effectively returned to their seats under the instruction of Doctor Mengele, who could silently point towards the seating area, and then return to his task: forming up the two lines of those who survive and those who are taken off to the gas-chamber.

Immediately the audience have been plunged into the action, their bewilderment and uncertainty as they try and follow barked orders from the guards offering an immediate insight into what must have been the emotions of victims involved in this selection process in the Polish camp.

Further opportunities arise for audience participation throughout Act One. Various young women from the audience could be ordered by the Kapos to join the women orchestra on the stage to 'play their instruments'. In the University production of *Playing for Time*, the instruments were mimed by the actresses, and the sounds of their instruments were made with a series of vocal harmonies. The young female members of the audience could easily imitate the miming of the instruments, and pick up the simple harmonies. Members of the women's orchestra such as Lotte, Helene and Etalina, could welcome the new members and teach them their individual harmonies and how to 'play' their designated instruments. Under the watchful supervision of the conductor, Alma, and being physically close to the frightened characters, audience members may achieve some sense of the panic instilled in the women of the orchestra, who were literally playing for their lives.

Towards the end of Act One, SS guards are heard ordering a group of women to collect shovels and dig the ground. Again these orders could be extended to certain audience members, who too could be ushered into the lines and handed the metal shovels and ordered to 'dig' whilst the guards look on, their guns raised in anticipation of those making a false move or talking whilst working.

The dictatorship and militant manner of the SS guards and the Kapos can ensure that instructions are followed and that the structure of the play is not affected. Act Two proves a little more problematic in attempting to incorporate audience participation, as the dialogue is often solely between two characters in the space, and the ensemble work of the orchestra peters out.

There is, however, an opportunity for further audience participation with the death of Alma. Audience members could be ushered silently into the line of actors paying their respects to Alma, as they file past her motionless body. It is a moving scene and one that has the opportunity to offer the audience, through active participation, a glimpse of the depth of the sorrow felt at the death of this character. The penultimate scene, when the bombs are dropped on the camp, is chaotic and the choreography is complicated, and though the idea of sharing this chaos through audience involvement is appealing, I feel it would endanger and inhibit the scene for the actors involved.

The last scene in the restaurant has opportunities to invite the audience into the action for the last time. Artistically arranging restaurant tables around the centre table at which Fania, Lotte, and Liesle dine together after forty years have elapsed, the audience could watch on as if they too were in the restaurant.

The audience could prove a very important dramatic tool in the creation of the crowd scenes and to suggest the sheer volume of people who were stranded at Auschwitz. Using audience members in the opening box-car scene and then in the closing scene of the restaurant, maintains the continuity of their involvement and underlines their importance. It would also emphasise that they too, from start to finish, have been on an emotional journey with these characters.

Incorporating audience participation in *Playing for Time* can offer a young audience a chance to do some improvisational work as well as drawing them into the ways the characters in the play are feeling. Barked orders, often in German, and militant gestures from the SS guards and the Kapos are unlikely to be ignored by the

¹⁵ Miller, Arthur *Playing For Time* (London, 1985. Nick Hern Books), p.1

audience members if the actors are truthful and in character. The experience for the young audience involved may be frightening and even somewhat bewildering, but certainly rewarding.

Young people's involvement is key to the learning experience of TIE. McGregor in Learning through Drama, refers to Cauldwell Cook, an ex-teacher of the Perse School, Cambridge. He believed: 'children learn best when they are so deeply involved as to become creative.'¹⁶

Young people can benefit hugely from the hands-on experience that a TIE project such as this can offer. The learning comes from within, through putting themselves in another's shoes and realising and reflecting upon how it feels to them. Creatively and imaginatively, with the help of a committed TIE team, they can come closer to the experience of trepidation and horror felt over fifty years ago in the Polish camp.

The risks in audience participation can be great - especially if the invitations for involvement are rejected, or the guards' commands are simply ignored. But I feel this would be extremely rare, as actors who are convincing in the militant roles should instil such fear into the unsuspecting audience that the thought of misbehaving would be far from their minds. Furthermore, with an audience age range between 15-18 the maturity level is relatively high, and the titillation and thrill that come with misbehaving have somewhat diminished.

I return back to my insistence upon the environment in which such a piece is staged, because away from the assumed safety of a school hall and the familiarity of a classroom, young people are unlikely to be quite so self-assured and confident so that orders and commands are more likely to be followed. A useful tool in ensuring the continuity and structure of the piece would be to have an 'undercover' member of the TIE team, dressed in civilian clothing, blending in with the audience. Early on in the proceedings he/she could pretend to belittle the work of the TIE team, and attempt to disrupt the proceedings and be severely and forcibly reprimanded by an SS guard acting in character. Such an event could work as an effective deterrent to any young people inclined to cause trouble.

At the heart of any workshop material should be the recognition by a TIE company that drama is a serious activity for children and young people. The workshop should be a time to have fun and interact socially with the actors. Stimulating games should be played and physical activity that shakes off any inhibitions should be incorporated. The concentration required as the young people watch the play should be channelled into creative, structured improvisations and small scenes or freeze-frames that invite the young people to have a stab at acting themselves. A good workshop should turn the tables around and say to its audience, 'Now it's your turn to show off and have fun with it!' There must be both a task leader and a time-keeper, who work closely together to ensure the pace is maintained and the workshop remains well structured. The rest of the company have a duty to work with their audience and to be actively involved with the games, so the audience and actors build mutual respect.

Three types of learning should be present in the creation of any Theatre in Education project. They are as follows: personal, social and factual. A TIE workshop can ensure that these three learning criteria are met. Having been a task leader for two of the five workshops we devised in association with *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, I have witnessed the excitement and thrill that a creative and lively workshop can provide for a child. In devising a workshop for *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, our company worked on ways to incorporate these three criteria, and made sure the material we offered within the workshops adequately met each one in lively and innovative ways.

Personal learning is a type of learning in which the young audience member empathises with the character. It is related to the personal, inward experience of that young person and their ability to relate to the character's thoughts, feelings and motivations. It is the responsibility of a TIE team to creatively devise ways in which this learning experience can be achieved. This learning is already in its earliest form, if the audience can empathise with the characters and their dilemmas, as they watch the performance. An open discussion with the audience after the performance can offer time to reflect upon their personal responses to the piece and reveal to the TIE team whether their piece has been successful in encouraging this kind of inward learning.

¹⁶ McGregor; Tate; Robinson: Learning Through Drama 1977, p.11

Playing for Time is a harrowing and thought-provoking piece of theatre. Ideally a workshop would take place several days after the performance to allow the material to be inwardly digested and reflected upon. A question-and-answer session between the company and the audience can provide an entry into the audience's reactions to the piece. The danger of a Q and A session with a teenage audience can often be the inhibitions that often exist among teenagers that limit their desire to respond. There exists an unspoken peer pressure amongst a teenage group, which carries an attitude of nonchalance and disinterest that sadly often prevents them from being seen to express an interest in an educational project such as this. A TIE team would need to be aware of this barrier, and their approach to the young people needs to be one of respect and admiration for the young people in their courage in taking part in the activities.

According to Ian Yeomen, artistic director of Theatr Powys, a local Welsh TIE company, TIE seeks to give over status and power to the children. What he insisted in a recent lecture is crucial between a TIE company and an audience, is the offering of that power, and encouraging the sharing of ideas without forcing responses from the young people. So we see that the considerations regarding the approach, how to overcome barriers and earn the young people's trust are fundamental in the devising of a workshop.

The second learning experience is social learning. This type of learning underlines the moral of the piece, if there is indeed one to be taught. An example of social learning would be a general statement such as: bullying goes on in schools. This type of learning appears to be the most obvious, and more often than not the central issues of the play will have already been driven home to the young people through the performance. At risk of appearing patronising, this learning model relies on driving home simplistic, basic truths, which can seem self-evident to an audience. What is important about social learning is not to repetitively drive home a truth, but to use that fundamental truth as a springboard for variations of that truth.

It is important to make a workshop active and physical - primarily because the energy levels amongst the audience will be flat if children remain in their seats, and secondly because a body in action stimulates the mind into action. So, social learning structured within a physical game or activity thus becomes the goal. One active game to stimulate thought and encourage free-thinking amongst the participants, is the game I call *The Half-Way Mark*.

This game asserts the power of the audience and highlights the importance of their decision-making. The primary aim of the game is to rank oneself in a line from one side of the space to the other. Statements of opinion are called out and the participants must run to find a place in the line of people, that matches to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement. The left hand side of the space would be, say, 'agree', the right hand side of the space would be 'disagree', and the space between these two polar opposites is the 'half-way mark', with opportunities to be either side of the middle ground if you agree or disagree not whole-heartedly. The statements are dictated by the actors, in character, and are related to the play. In playing Fania Fenelon, I might call out, "I think Jews were treated unfairly," to which, one hopes, the majority of the participants will run to the 'agree' (left hand side of the space).

Progressively, actors interchange and the statements become more challenging, political and open, and thus harder to answer with a simple, agree/disagree answer. An example might be, "I think the women of the orchestra should refuse to play for the SS". The audience are asked to consider what their personal stance is, and think and vote with their feet.

The advantages of this game are that there is no risk that the young people refrain from being involved. There is no space in the line for this (unless of course they remain at the half-way mark for the duration of the game!) Having only the actors dictating the statements and viewpoints, ensures that the young people are not pressurised to come up with a statement on the spot, and also ensures that the statements remain relevant and directly connected to the concerns of the play.

The third and final learning requirement is factual learning. Self-explanatory in its title, it deals with figures, history and facts. As regards the TIE experience, I feel it is one left best to a work-pack. A workshop is about getting bums off seats and minds into action, not learning the statistics involved. If the factual events that surround the piece of theatre interest the young people, then the information can be available in hand-outs and lesson plans within the work-pack. *Playing for Time* contains enough factual learning in that it documents a very important part in history. The factual learning will be dealt with in the following work-pack suggestions.

A work pack offers opportunities for a TIE company to allow that the learning achieved within their limited time with the young audience to be extended. A work-pack reflects a company's commitment to their young people and to the issues raised. The best thought-out work-packs will not limit their material to that strictly associated with the play, but will seek opportunities to widen the young audience's understanding of the Holocaust. Work-packs are essentially for teachers, wishing to follow up the performance in class time. The material, therefore, must be easily accessible and ensure that teachers do not feel additional time must be spent preparing a lesson plan to structure the work.

Adequate funding could allow visual aids and hand-out information about the TIE Company to be included. A video of Miller's original screenplay *Playing for Time*, and extracts from Fenelon's book also entitled *Playing for Time* could be included, as it is interesting to note the background to the play and its evolution from page to stage.

The exciting new advances in technology can allow work packs to be digital, accessible through a web-page, programmed on CD-ROMs or DVDs. The administration team for the University production, created an excellent web-page on *Playing for Time*, <<http://www.aber.ac.uk/~drawwww.prods2001>>, which contains cast information and suggest links to other web-sites. The address of this web-page should also be included in a work-pack. A well-researched work-pack offers opportunities to explore the Holocaust in many areas of the curriculum, ranging from Religious Education and History to Art and English Literature. A work-pack for *Playing for Time* could fall into any or all the following subjects under the National Curriculum:

- Religion: Research could be made into the Jewish festivals and the roots of the Jewish traditions, how they are celebrated and why. A visit to a synagogue could be organised which might offer a chance to speak to members of the Jewish Community.
- History: Time lines could be created charting the events that led up to the Holocaust, a trip to the Holocaust exhibition at the London War Museum could be arranged for those interested in reading real accounts and witnessing some of the many personal artefacts retrieved from the camps.
- Art: Expressionistic artwork could be done, as if from a character perspective, with an aim to capture on paper or canvas what their inner thoughts and feelings might have been.
- English Literature: Poems and reflections from a character perspective could be an interesting work-pack idea, and exploring through creative writing the experiences of the more sub-ordinate characters who were only glimpsed at in the play. A consideration of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, which often appears in the National Curriculum as a GCSE text could offer insight into the ostracism of the Jews as far back as Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which TIE performances can be extended academically and turned from the theoretical into the practical. Creating a work-pack for the previously suggested audience age range of 15-18 year-olds is made slightly more difficult as much of their classroom time is taken up with the requirements of the National Curriculum, and preparatory work for their GCSE and A-Level exams. Work-packs therefore must be available for use, but a TIE team must recognise that they may often remain unused, following the event. Crucial issues, therefore, must be dealt with in the allocated time spent between the audience and the TIE company, to ensure that what is most important about the play is covered.

CONCLUSION

A proposal of this kind is one that offers opportunities to raise awareness of the Holocaust for young people today. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the issues raised by the Holocaust in exciting, innovative ways through the means of Theatre in Education. Handling sensitive material poses many risks, but these risks are worth taking if we aspire to educate and inform young people. With the rise in France and other European countries of ultra right-wing politicians, the contemporary relevance of *Playing for Time* is clear. I would propose to deal with it as a TIE project, without losing any of its artistic integrity as an excellent piece of theatre in its own right.

History teaches us our mistakes and incorporating a piece such as *Playing for Time* into Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain allows time for reflection, because without that reflection how can we expect to move forward towards a more peaceful society?

Theatre as Pammenter describes is, “the communication and exploration of human experience; it is a forum for our values, political, moral and ethical.”¹⁷

A TIE company working on *Playing for Time* with a young audience, exploring themes and encouraging debate, can create such a forum. It is a type of forum often commonly associated with the work of Bertolt Brecht, where the concerns lie in the causes, effects and nature of the dramatic action, over what happens in the plot.

This proposal has the educational objective of educating young people about a tragic and significant part of European history, within a structure that is safe and yet offers challenging dilemmas and decision-making for the young audience who are invited to be actively involved.

This proposal can help to raise awareness in young people of the dangers of prejudice and stereotyping so they are further awakened to similar attitudes in their own society. Furthermore, there is a need to recognise that changes must start from within and we must look to ourselves, and the way we relate to one another, if we are to influence our wider society for the better.

¹⁷ Pammenter, D (1980), p.59