

A Ridiculusmus Virtual Trilogy: Grief, Laughter and the Performance. In *Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!*

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a) Watch Session 3 Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!

<https://vimeo.com/428154211/e11adf3392>

b) Watch the clips via a Youtube playlist archived by The New Adelphi Theatre, here:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLu26zjyowg4N5lcvL1iL57XGi2JYntDev>)

Introduction

In May 2020, David Woods and Jon Haynes, performers and artistic directors of Ridiculusmus, presented the trilogy '*Dialogue As The Embodiment of Love*' in the form of a three-day online seminar series, via the online conference platform Teams. It featured a live online 'directors' commentary', of each of the productions in the trilogy, alongside a screening of extracts on Youtube with David Woods in Melbourne and Jon Haynes in London.

On the final day of the series, Woods and Haynes discussed the content of four out of seven extracts in the above Youtube Playlist, taken from the 82 minute 'epic' performance of *Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!* (DDDOPD), the longest play in the trilogy.

Just as the other two plays in the trilogy, *The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland* (2014) and *Give Me Your Love* (2016) have addressed the diagnosis and treatments available for conditions defined in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM 5, 2013), the play was concerned with the interpretation of 'complicated grief', defined as a 'disorder' by the manual, in which bereavement is experienced to an extent and duration that is psychologically overwhelming and debilitating, inducing other conditions associated with stress and anxiety. Defined as such 'complicated grief' becomes an object of medical treatment with designated pharmacological treatments as well as counseling therapies. David and Jon had already been in conversation with Professor Peter Kinderman a clinical psychologist at the University of Leeds during the making of the previous two works and with Dr Anne Cooke a Psychologist at Canterbury Christ Church University.

In 2010 Martin Amis caused some outrage when he announced his fears of a 'silver tsunami' and a potential 'civil war' between generations as society as people fight over limited resources (Davies, The Guardian). 10 years after the article, the issues around elder care still focus on questions of resources, and this has been especially heated as a consequence of the Coronavirus Covid-19. But Kinderman has argued that conditions manifesting as stress and mental anxiety are too frequently diagnosed as mental health, or rather, mental illness conditions, in preference to investigating the sociological or psychological conditions that may also be factors. In the terms of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (2013), or DSM-5, 'Normal grief', he points out 'will become a "major depressive disorder", meaning people will turn to diagnosis and prescription as a response to bereavement'

The play is an appropriate focal point for the discussing the outcomes of trilogy as a whole, because it marks a shift in the preoccupations in the previous two works. There is a slight shift in respect of the purposes defined by Wellcome Trust funding at least, of disseminating innovations in medical and clinical treatment towards a preoccupation with the event and space of the performance itself as a moment or site for engagement with a wider discourse. Public engagement activities surround this project as others including my panel presentation with Jon Haynes at Battersea Arts Centre and at the Sick! Festival Manchester.

In DDDOPD though, the focus is arguably on the challenge of creating the theatrical event itself as a space and starting point for a kind of communication and connection that is not satisfied by the pharmacological 'offer' or by social, psychological and cultural approaches to bereavement in the UK and Australia (where the work has been presented). This is not to say that drug treatment is unnecessary in some cases, but that the theatrical space and Ridiculusmus' dramaturgical approach offers an important element in provoking affective responses as part of the 'treatment' of issues associated with death and bereavement.

The Virtual Trilogy Format

The Virtual Trilogy was produced and hosted by myself and reached 150 people over three days, plus a further 750 visits to the playlists via The New Adelphi Theatre Youtube site. It is presented as an 'alternative format' output representing the culmination of this project, as a media asset in three parts.

This is the only production where this accompanying commentary and summary list of topics is additionally presented as 'complementary writing', because the other plays have been discussed in other publications. A closed link (a) to the seminar, stored in Vimeo, and accompanying Youtube playlist (b) is provided as part of this Project Collection on the University of Salford Figshare repository.

This supporting document contains a summary list of points in the directors' discussion around each clip. The reader will probably appreciate listening to the accounts of the creative process directly from the directors in the Vimeo seminar recording above. The video clips of the production that I edited are not available on the Vimeo link but have been released as evidence of the Trilogy format.

The rationale behind the Virtual Trilogy requires little explanation in the context of the Coronavirus Pandemic. However it should be noted that the seminar took place at a point when the preference was still for long form streaming of unedited productions, by organisations such as The National Theatre. These formats remain popular but I proposed instead a combination of director commentaries of selected highlights, inviting the audience to step 'out' of the online meeting room for a synchronised viewing of clips on their own browsers via Youtube, to preserve the streaming bandwidth and allow optimum quality screenings for viewers. The sessions were additionally enhanced by Front of House support from The New Adelphi Theatre staff who could manage the audience interface via Facebook messenger, that is, 'behind the scenes' and without interrupting the seminars. These considerations are familiar to many producers by the Autumn of 2020, but at the time, were complicated and demanding and some audience members were also uncertain and lacking in experience with online streaming. In principle the intention was to avoid presenting a version that highlights the impoverished phenomena of the theatre experience, such as the intimacy, viscerality and co-presence of the live atmosphere and theatre space. I proposed that showcasing the opportunity for direct interaction with the makers of the work and a limited access to screenings of carefully selected video clips could be seen as a benefit of a new theatre environment.

DDDOPD had been made over three years with support from the National Lottery through Arts Council England; a Wellcome Trust Arts Award, and its presentation within the culminating Virtual Trilogy event was to be an alternative fulfillment of a funding obligation, that is as an alternative to touring to Sheffield, London and Salford. It is not a substitute to a conclusion of the trilogy and it remains the

intention to present the work live. However, touring had become impossible due to the first national lockdown during the Coronavirus pandemic.

At an economic level the company still has to consider the potential revenue of works that are waiting to be seen live. The potential for audiences to download the whole production also presents an opportunity for people to consume performance work, to fast forward through clips, rather than to engage with them deeply and slowly in live performance, or worse from the company's point of view, rather than going to see them live at all. This public engagement format might build a following for the work and its themes and a desire to see it live, but either way income from bookings and income from touring remain urgent concerns for the company. Promotion of the Virtual Seminars and an invitation to view the clips may also undermine the idea arrived at by the company by the end of the trilogy that the theatrical event itself has therapeutic benefits, through a combination of catharsis, comic relief and provocation in a carefully framed forum.

Audience Responses and the Representation of Ageing in DDDOPD

The Virtual Trilogy may however operate as a way of preparing the audience to appreciate the terms of this framing and the intentions of the performance rather than being preoccupied by issues of offensive and representation, which are recurring theme of the discussions in the final seminar. In May 2020 The title *Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!* unexpectedly carried additional potency as a provocation to cultural attitudes to ageing and death (in the UK and Australia at least) amidst widespread fear, loss and grief in the context of rapidly rising death rates across Europe in the initial wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. The first piece *The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland* (TEOSWL) had presented a challenge to publicists, according to the initial Producer Jo Crowley, due to the inclusion of the word 'schizophrenia'; and there were also concerns over title of DDDOPD, from co-commissioners Battersea Arts Centre, according to Woods and Haynes. One literal reading might interpret a desire to exclude older people, played into a potential cultural bias and ageism in society. This was not the intention of the Woods and Haynes, and this would be at odds with the ethos of the previous two works of course, which draw attention to the limited social and medical provision for some mental health conditions and to the subsequent marginalisation of people living with stress and anxiety. People did 'walk out', and offending the audience is a concern, particularly as it is counter to

the relationship of comical performers. As David says, he is able to relax and be still and explore the possibilities of a moment if the audience appreciates and enjoys the work. In a fascinating conversation in the last half hour of the seminar, Kinderman points out that some of the aggressive reactions that were triggered are similar to the response of people to consultant who are not able to offer an easy medical solution to debilitating pain that a person carries for years. Wood and Haynes point out their deep respect and sense of responsibility towards the elders that have helped to shaped the characters and scenes in the play, and David and Jon point out that they are prepared the change the name of the play following the pandemic, to respond to the new sensitivity to the vulnerability of older care and also to accommodate diverse cultural approaches to elders if the work is to tour beyond the UK and Australia.

As well as suggesting the format for the symposium and producing with support from The New Adelphi Theatre team, my own contribution to the creative element has been to facilitate a three-day residency in 2017 by Ridiculusmus, plus an additional performer, Rupert Jones, and a group of five students of Theatre and Performance Practice at the University at Salford. A recording of the scratch performance resulting from the residency is available to view here: <https://youtu.be/n6uBMXldrjk>. The scratch is notable for two elements discussed in this seminar. The first is the first inclusion of the fast-forward movement scene initially created by Patrizia Paolini (at 20':30"), and the second is the build up to a sex scene, what is called the 'faux job' in the discussion (at 25':10"), which is cut prematurely short by a blackout. Both of these get a big laugh in an otherwise quiet performance. There is some laughter around the squeaky quality of David's voice as Norman. David and Jon argue that the representations are not imitations, generalisations or stereotypes and are at pains to identify how they built the 'jigsaw' of the characters from multiple specific sources and influences. There is a continued preoccupation of audiences from this scratch performance and in the performance in the playlist and in the questions of audiences in the seminar about whether or not they should be laughing at ageing. Creating this discomfort is claimed as one of the devices that allows the audience to respond individually to the work, to be drawn into it as is mentioned or, depending on a persons individual background, to reject it. I'll return to the discussion around permission to laugh, in a moment.

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From showing research to creating theatrical experience

I also contributed to devising at points after a scratch performance had already been presented in Australia where the production was developed in partnership with, Artists Arts House, Melbourne, standing in for David/Jon, and devising new material for a call to the energy supplier following the death of the character 'Violet'. In rehearsal I called British Gas as her husband 'Norman' and the call handler waited patiently while I walked very slowly to and from the phone to get the details they were asking for. The dialogue with a person in a call centre stayed in the production and it is important to remember that as the production has been developed through experimentation with numerous and diverse participants they will have raised questions that the audience at public performances also raise. Participants included Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's theatre, Komedia, Afro-Caribbean Elders Group at GLYPT as well as myself and students at the University of Salford.

As I have discussed in other publications in this project, the fluidity of the company, and its agility in quickly setting up rehearsals around opportunities is remarkable because it is not a symptom of a pop-up approach to production values. Where possible full production support is drawn on, at other times David and Jon are very 'relaxed' about substituting actors. Collaborators who had some role to play in the series of scratch performances, and rehearsals and residencies as the work developed include: Renee Lim, Clancy, Onion, Patrizia Paolini, Jacob Williams, Pheline Thierens, Arend Tjepkema, Arthur Bolkas, Minsun Park, Rupert Jones, and Janie Booth.

In the first phase of devising *Ridiculusmus* worked with keening practices, and at one point in Salford, we were experimenting with two large speakers relaying long, long recordings of loud keening recorded in Scotland. Jon Haynes observed that an early phase in rehearsal started with keening but that the performances became a lot more about pleasurable moments for the audience.

Acknowledging the comfort of singing took precedence over communicating the experience of 'complicated grief'. The keening and strange comfort of tears was perhaps absorbed in the long performance of sobbing by Jon as Arthur, which Jon discusses in relation to questions of performing real emotions and catharsis. This as an example of moving away from disseminating the research *per se* in which a performance of keening becomes evidence of an investigation, in favour of an interest in multiple smaller and technical devices embedded in the whole production, that will have an overall affective impression on the experience for the audience.

The other two productions imposed constraint of performing a choral piece with four performers in TEOSWL, or of remaining permanently off-stage, or in a box in GMYL. It seems that by the end of the trilogy, this almost silent, and highly physical format, without a script and with scope to improvise at selected moments, allowed Woods and Haynes to explore direct affective interaction and communication with the audience and between audience members in ways they had not done in the past. In the discussion Woods mentions Onion the dog who appearance in one performance introduced unexpected liveliness and affection but was fussed and petted so much by the audience that he had to intervene as Norman and bring the audience back to the play. They still imposed constraints in this production, such as not moving onto fresh business until one phrase of business had been full completed through a complex of physical techniques, but the piece is more open and free than the other two, and usually the performance space is larger.

Set Design and the impact on audience response

An indication of the attention to the visual impact of the piece is that the set is described in great detail in the seminar. Just as in *The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland* (2014) and *Give Me Your Love* (2016) the design of the set is an important element in framing ideas in the piece and situating the audience. In TEOSWL, a central partition marked off two separate playing spaces and facilitated a simulation of listening to voices. In GMYL one performer remained in a cardboard box, within a box set in which the flats and their uprights were visible to the audience, to draw attention to fragile constructed realities of PTSD and the internalised dramas of visualisations caused by stress. For DDDOPD the grandeur of the North Melbourne Town Hall (filmed by Takeshi Kondo for the extracts used in the seminar, with lighting design by Richard Vabre) and the faded grandeur of the Battersea Arts Centre ballroom reflect the longevity of the characters and allow numerous effects of scale, from shadows and proxemics and because the journey across the space for the elderly couple is an endurance feat.

On a tiny Edinburgh Festival stage, however, this important element of the space could not be created, and the scale of the space was reduced so much that the representation of physical struggle and meditation on effort was lost on the audience, leading to some complaints that the actors were

doing 'nothing'. David notes that the character movement was lost against black backdrop and so the work on the movement was not observed. I also performed with Jon at the Mental Health Conference and Performance Festival, Liverpool in January 2017, during which we practised the very long and slow entrance, but again the noisy venue and the set up of the event did not permit the full concentration needed from the audience to make this scene effective.

Performance Techniques: Clowning and Butoh

A reduced summary of the play's narrative describes a 'love triangle' and the attendant feelings of desire, love and loss. In *Die!Die!Die!Old People Die!* Ridiculusmus present their 120 year-old selves, imagining 'an age where death and the forgotten art of grieving have been medicalised out of existence' (www.ridiculusmus.com). David Woods is Norman, and Jon Haynes is his wife Violet. Pills seem to be keeping Norman alive, but death and grieving are not absent from this performance. As Woods says 'have to get to know the characters before they experience loss' and the loss of Violet is more than a dramaturgical event, since she has directly addressed and praised the 'lovely' audience. Physical manifestations of the 'complicated grief' defined in the Diagnostic Statistic Manual 5 (2013) are evident in the performance and its affects. Haynes is also Arthur, a close friend who was in love with Violet as a younger man, relinquishing her to Norman. Following Violet's death, Norman delivers a speech at her memorial, and Arthur, sobbing, attempts to communicate and reconcile with Norman.

The futuristic conceit of the play, that is the embodiment of David and Jon in old age, is in contrast to features that evoke clown figures dressed in the disheveled evening wear typical of the early 20th century 'Auguste' clowns such as Pipot performing the clown *entrée* *The Broken Mirror* (Remy, 1948; Bouissac 2015). Although Jon Haynes rejects the idea that they are clowning, because they are not intending only to make people laugh first and foremost, the characters can be read as clownish, as David asserts in the discussion. The combination of fragile decorum, undercut by silliness, and crudeness, alongside expressions of profound pain evoke Beckettian existential ambiguities and contradictions, although the tone of *Ridiculusmus* and the hope for Norman is more optimistic. The antics of the three characters, disproportionate and durational as they are, foreground human physiology and failure, subverting the convention of the ritual, emphasising instead the bodily urges, intellectual distractions, excess of affect and terminal decay. The three characters in the piece circle a geriatric birthday, and a wake. Their trajectories of movement are faintly and achingly drawn and

before they can be completed there are several distractions and repetitions. There is one deliberate theatrical trick, a falling lantern, but it is as if all the objects in the piece are also wayward: a forgotten letter, a forgotten handbag, a lost phone, pills rolling into the auditorium. A wake, and a geriatric celebration are exceptional and temporary events and yet in the company of these centenarians they seem eternal and entropic. In an otherwise almost wordless play there is an opportunity to deliver a eulogy but it could go on and on, generously indulged by the audience as it collapses.

The first entrance of Norman and Violet takes anything from 4 to 15 minutes.

Norman, and Violet come in very gradually and the effort of their journey to a table in the centre of the stage leaves the characters hardly any energy to pay attention the audience. They continue to the table regardless. Woods and Haynes worked with Tom Bradley, Movement Advisor and with Butoh technique learned from Yoshito Ohno. The physicality becomes a task, just as for the older couple, who must struggle in real life due to physical ailments.

The durability of Norman, Violet and Arthur renders them precious and fragile at the same time. The characters are in a state of suspended animation, contrasted by the fast-forward scene from the scratch at Salford, that is suddenly played out, like a scrubbed digital video, or an early silent movie. So the performances embody the serious physical challenge and endurance of ageing.

The performances demand attention to the minutiae of movements typical of Butoh and strange and memorable forms appear to emerge in the shadows of the space when Haynes drops his head and reveals his shoulders with his back to the audience, looking like a Geisha or a Bacon painting. In this final piece in the trilogy Ridiculusmus wanted to make '[s]omething that would embody the themes and allow audiences to project their feelings and thoughts onto it' (Ridiculusmus Website, 2019), and this is, arguably, what occurs in such moments.

This is also the tactic of clowns: at once nebulous and concrete, they are exceptional but also universal absorbing audience projection. Woods' clown training with Gaulier, deployed in shows such as *Yes Yes Yes* (1999), is evident again here. Norman checks his wristwatch and spills his drink; a finger gets caught in buttonhole; after hunting absentmindedly in several pockets, Norman produces an extraordinary and unexpected object – a table crank. Objects have a mind of their own and are also

animate: a cuckoo makes a regular interruption with a noisy grinding not unlikely Norman And Violet's bones (from a sound design by Marco Cher-Gibard).

Scrambled language, foreignness, otherness are comic 'material' in clown performance, historically reduced to gibberish and *grammelot* to evade censorship. And in this production when Norman does speak he seems 'out of step', using desperately exaggerated compliments. His idealistic statements about youth, architecture and the future are grandiose. He uses archaic and peculiar phrasing, ornate words are interrupted by sudden rude words or puerile naughtiness, and the contrast naturally makes people laugh. Woods' voice is a high-pitched bird-like squeak that draws attention to the strain of speaking, exaggerating a weakness that would be difficult to accept in a more serious mode. Rather it underscores ponderous thoughts, and Norman's Stan Laurel-like bewilderment in reaction to giggles from the audience.

Comedy and Permission to Laugh

In recent clown performance training (Gauiler 2006; Davison 2015) clown performers are advised to use laughter as a 'barometer' that indicates permission to remain in front of audience. But laughter at clowns can be an unreliable sign: of bafflement, nervousness, or conformity (Bouissac 2015). A clown's 'stupidity' may be frustrating; or they may only make us laugh 'inside'. The laughter response may be very quiet, delayed, or absent. During a clown performance, and certainly in performances that I have seen of DDDOPD (in two performances in Summerhall Edinburgh and three at BAC, London) people look around, apparently to check whether others are laughing too. Clowns work with uncertainty and ambiguity and they try to get people to laugh at each other in order to build up communal hilarity, because laughter can be contagious, but in this production the opportunity for responding directly to the audience is limited. Woods has moments of connection because he talks with the audience and responds to their outbursts during Norman's eulogy. The performance feels its way carefully, physically and in its communication with the audience, triggering 'empty' gasps, perhaps laughter, perhaps surprise when expectations are interrupted.

[Continued/...]

Conclusion

By labelling the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder explored in *Give Me Your Love* an individual's painfully anxious condition is reduced to an internal disorder. Drugs companies and medical practitioners can treat the disorder 'in' the person, rather than structural and social challenges faced by armed service veterans. The box in *Give Me Your Love* speaks to this internalised problem as part of a simulation of PTSD experiences. The play asks whether self-medication by desperate veterans, using MDMA, is going to be more damaging than the delusions and affects of other self-medications used by PTSD sufferers. In *The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland* delusional experiences are simulated through the use of multiple voices. The audience experience the journey from chaos to clarity as competing voices settle and begin to make sense. For *Kinderman, Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!* also creates an 'uncomfortable' experience, in this for the performers, or are under physical strain and scrutiny, as well as for the audience, who don't know whether to laugh or not. 'Epistemic Justice' advocated by collaborator Dr Anne Cooke encourages individuals to thinking about their mental state in whatever way makes sense to them, rather than in terms of diagnosis. If people are not told and do not expect to be told where the boundaries are between bereavement and 'complicated grief', they will decide for themselves the extent of their suffering and the need for medical support.

During the making of the play, David Woods' father died suddenly and Ridiculusmus suspended rehearsals. David talks about the important of allowing time to be with the grief, to experience the exhaustion of bereavement and to recover. The efficacy of the production in opening a dialogue through the form of theatre, is arguably that it creates a space and time for individual audience members to examine the impact of Violet's death on Norman and Arthur and to feel their own response. The play celebrates the individual 'spirit' and feeling of the characters as they confront old age and death. As well as anger, the play provokes tender responses from the audience. Individuals often stay behind in 'post-show absorption and meditation'. So in spite of the discomfort - and Kinderman points out that anger or frustration for some audience members is a necessary response based on their own experience of bereavement - the play looks for human connections and advocates the social inclusion of characters rather than medicalising disorder.

A summary of the discussion of each clip is provided here.

a) Vimeo Discussion (Woods, Haynes, Kinderman)

<https://vimeo.com/428154211/e11adf3392>

b) Youtube playlist clips (numbered with duration):

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLu26zjyowg4N5lcvL1iL57XGi2JYntDev>

*There are 7 clips on the Youtube playlist but only **Clips 1,2,3, and 6** discussed in the presentation. Clip 6 was accompanied by a running commentary so you could attempt to set that up by playing the Vimeo and Youtube clips simultaneously (sorry they have not been edited for you this is due to release rights for the extracts)*

Introduction

Discussion from 0:00 on Vimeo

- About complicated grief
- The need to get to know the characters before they experience loss.
- The set

Clip 1: Youtube (from 09.50 on Vimeo)

Discussion from 18:09 on Vimeo

- The slow entrance
- Physical training and influences: Freddy Jones; Tom Bradley; Butoh and visualisation
- Remembering and feeling again the physical pain of performance
- Compensating for each other's movement in the early performance
- Offended audience members in Edinburgh

Clip 2: Youtube (from 25:02 on Vimeo)

Discussion from 28:30 on Vimeo

- The opening speech and the first fart
- The cupboard design by Rominie Harper
- Offensive? Wanting to provoke a tension when audience members feel like they shouldn't be able to laugh
- Wanting to share the fragility and spirit of the character
- Respect, observation of real people – not an impersonation
- The use of the real names of elders
- The character as a jigsaw
- Origin of the title
- Offering to change the title for promoters following the Pandemic.
- Bodily needs and the scatological three line gag
- A snail-paced farce that endears us to the character, develops plot etc.
- Finding the child within the adult (related to Give Me Your Love)

Clip 3: Youtube played from 37:30 on Vimeo

Discussion from 46:54 on Vimeo

- Managing Onion, the dog
- Permission and laughter, giving the confidence to go slower
- When somebody walks out, not being able to respond and trying to manage them
- The need for the audience to understand 'the frame'
- The influence of Stan Laurel, and using a bewildered expression
- Silent movie movement from Patrizia Paolini
- The sex gag, the faux job
- The plan to do the show until Woods and Haynes are old
- Clown show techniques (breaking the fourth wall, questioning the laughter)

Clip 6 Youtube (played from 56:00 on Vimeo)

Discussion from 58:40 on Vimeo

- Butoh technique with the late Yoshito Ohno (son of Kazuo Ohno)
- Food as comfort
- Eating food in performance
- The genuine feelings of the actor: determination, happiness, channeled through the character
- Devices to hold gag focus: not starting a new routine until the previous one is played out
- Crying for real and becoming more subtle with practice. Butoh influence on contortions, the use of the right toe by Hijikata Tatsumi.

Discussion with Peter Kinderman on Vimeo from 1hr 06

- Woods: How this play came from discussions with Kinderman
- Kinderman: in DDDOPD the 'disorder' is not the concern but a societal *problem* with processing grief.
- Wellbutrin, a Prozac-like drug for which drug companies are looking for an illness that is can be matched with, including the 'illness' is grief.
- Self-medication by drugs and alcohol to cope with stress
- Audience Discussion and Questions:
Can grief be thought of as an injury?

Picking up audience typed comments on Vimeo from 1hr 21

- Finding connections between the plays in the trilogy.
- Ideas about presenting the work to more diverse audiences and cultures
- Feedback from the audience: the work as a trigger
- End of life choices
- Finding permission to laugh, as an audience member
- The impact of individual lived experiences

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