TEACHING AND THEATRE IN OUR SACRED SPACES

Janinka Greenwood
Christchurch College of Education

Abstract

This article explores the use of drama in areas that might be called 'sacred space'. It lines up curriculum statements in both Australia and New Zealand that promote the use of the arts as ways to express cultural and personal identity, with the need to develop awareness of the issues regarding values, ownership, experimentation. It examines three theatre events within that area of specialness that is here called sacred space, with particular attention to how their participants regard them. It aligns the themes that emerge with those debated in the literature of intercultural theatre. In this way it seeks to offer an initial platform for further research and scholarship in the field.

Janinka Greenwood *is a Principal Lecturer in Teacher Education at Christchurch College of Education, New Zealand. She has been a teacher at primary, secondary and tertiary levels for over 20 years. She has an active research interest in the use of theatre processes for a range of learning purposes and in postcolonialism and the nature of cross-cultural drama. Her recent publications include:* Mapping the terrain: A History of Bicultural Theatre*;* I could feed the reindeer: using drama in Junior Classes*, and articles in RIDE, IDEA Publications, NJ (Drama Australia) and NZADIE Journal. She gained her doctorate in drama in education at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia.*

Keywords: *INTERCULTURAL THEATRE; IDENTITY; SACRED SPACES; CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES; DRAMA CURRICULUM.*

Introduction

Curriculum statements in Australia and New Zealand assert the importance of the Arts in terms of identity and culture. The arts 'are powerful means of personal, social and cultural expression', the New Zealand Arts Curriculum tells us in the first paragraph of its overview statement (Ministry of Education, 2000:9). As such, they constitute 'unique *ways of knowing*'. As it elaborates the role of drama in the curriculum, the document lays down the need for students to 'appreciate that drama, whether intended for audiences or not, provides significant opportunities for expressing cultural and personal identity' (p.37). In exploring the strand *Understanding Drama in Context*, it explains that 'students investigate how people use drama to express identity and to comment on personal and cultural values' (p.39).

As far as curriculum statements go, this is a brave one and it has the potential to allow drama teaching that is challenging, relevant and liberating. It also has the potential to lead teachers and students into places where they may tread on cultural sensitivities or may glibly appropriate and perhaps betray performative styles and spiritual values that they do not understand.

This article is written in the belief that, in order to teach richly and freely within the scope allowed by the drama curriculum, we need to develop understandings not only of the art forms that express cultural and personal identity but also of the issues regarding value, ownership and experimentation. At this stage, we lack a body of research, literature and even debate to support the evolution of such understandings. This study of sacred space and theatre does not attempt to fill that void. It does offer one small building block and invites the making of others.

Scope and Focus

This article examines the underlying characteristics of that space that some or others of us, for some reason or another, consider *sacred*.

The term sacred, as it is used in relation to performance and performativeness, initially appears to carry a range of different and perhaps contradictory meanings. For instance, both Schechner (1988, 1993) and Bharucha (1993) talk about the sacred in relation to ritual, to rites of passage and to the celebration of profound and esoteric mysteries. On the one hand, the connotation is of something that needs to be protected, held in reserve, approached not only with caution but also with permission. On the other hand, a number of contemporary practitioners who use theatre processes for personal exploration refer to their area of engagement as 'sacred theatre'. One such process is described in Beryl Chalk's article *Becoming crone: of bodies and embodiment* (2001). The emphasis here, it seems, is not so much on restricted entry as on the acclamation of personally assigned significance.

The pages that follow explore the area where these meanings may overlap, and seek to identify not only some commonalities but also some useful markers that we might take into working in theatre within those sacred spaces. As a point of entry, three quite different theatre events are examined, with particular attention to how their participants regard them. In two of these, ***Te Mauri Pakeaka*** and the **Easter play**, I was an active participant in the projects as well as a researcher. For the third event, although I had a strong engagement with the material, I was an 'outside' investigator.

The material discussed comes from investigations that were part of a larger research project that examined the ways theatre allows us to interpret the emergent space between cultures. Although the primary focus of my research was the cross-cultural interaction between Maori and *Pakeha** in New Zealand, some of the investigations took place in Australia, where the issues regarding cross-cultural uses of theatre are as relevant and loaded with contestation as they are in New Zealand. Two of those investigations are reported here.

---

* Maori, as many readers will know, are the indigenous people of New Zealand. *Pakeha* is the term most commonly used for New Zealanders of colonial or immigrant origin.

In all three investigations I describe here, I relied largely on open-ended interviews with participants and on observations. In the case of the two Australian studies, elements of those interviews are quoted directly. The New Zealand study, that of the programme called *Te Mauri Pakeaka*, was a more extensive one that finally formed a major part of my doctoral thesis. It is more fully reported in that thesis (Greenwood, 1999) and in subsequent articles (Greenwood and Wilson 2003; Greenwood, 2001, 2002), so to a great extent I have summarised the material for the purposes of this article. A large part of the data for this study came from analysis of material records but it also grew out of discussions with Arnold Wilson, the director of the project. Although I have seldom quoted him directly here, the statements made come out of those discussions and out of the feedback I received as I returned successive copies of documents to him.

Before looking at these three theatre events, I examine some of the issues regarding sacredness and theatre as they are found in the literature, for it is in the field of intercultural theatre that they are most extensively debated.

Concepts of intercultural theatre

In the debate, internationalists like Barba (1995) and Brook (1988) record their exploration of 'other' theatre forms as a part of the process of finding 'supracultural' fundamentals.

Brook, writing of his motivation in working with the *Mahabharata*, acknowledges 'the more we saw of Indian classical art forms, especially the performing arts, the more we realised they take at least a lifetime to master, and that a foreigner can only admire, not initiate' (p.161). Nevertheless, he was looking for an access into the work, 'to find a way of bringing this material into our world and sharing these stories with the West'. What he wanted to share was not 'the symbolism of Hindu philosophy . . . [but rather] in the music, in the costumes, in the movements, we have tried to suggest the flavour of India without pretending to be what we are not' (pp.161, 162). Bharucha castigates his action: 'If Brook truly believes the epic is universal, then he should not exclude or trivialise Indian culture as I believe he does . . . He needs to ask: what does this epic mean to me? But this question, I believe, can only be responsibly addressed after the meaning (or meanings) of the *Mahabharata* have been confronted within their own cultural context' (1993:70).

These two positions are echoed in debates throughout the world where cultures intersect. 'Art is universal,' one position claims. 'It's appropriation,' claims the other, invoking issues of cultural property. The two sides are often most polarised in situations where the source culture is one that is still struggling to free itself from the ravages of colonisation and where it perceives the borrower to be operating from a position of privilege that effectively continues both an economic and intellectual colonisation. 'It is bad enough', Bharucha (1993:146) writes, 'if a ritual from India, for example, is travestied in the West, but it is worse if this ritual loses its significance in India itself'. Yet Bharucha himself is interested in working across cultures and within that very intimate space that deals with beliefs, values and perceptions of oneself within the fabric of the universe. His own work (1993:90-155), with three actresses from three very different cultures of India in presenting Kroetz's *Request Concert*, is a journey into the spiritual and often 'reserved' territory of how each woman construes her reality, personally yet within her

culture. What is different, Bharucha claims, is that Kroetz has not arbitrarily uprooted this material for its purely theatrical value: '*Request Concert* taught me not to take the familiar for granted, but rather to absorb its cluster of auras which, in turn, contain layers of history' (p.148).

Richard Schechner, a prolific explorer of cross-cultural theatre forms in his search to more fully understand the ritual and transformative power of performative acts, acknowledges that the borrowing can often be destructive. He talks about commercial borrowings of the Yacqui Deer Dance, quoting Anselmo Valencia, ritual leader of the Yacqui of New Pasca, Arizona: 'Everything is different. The deer head is different, the gait is different. It doesn't harm us, it frustrates us. So our people stopped doing it'. Schechner concludes: 'Not only does the change betray the original form, but in the process the essence is destroyed'. He again quotes Valencia: 'You have to be Yacqui, or at least an Indian, to understand the mysteries . . . to understand that the spiritual benefits of that song are withdrawn if the song is commercialised' (1985:5).

Similar questions arise in New Zealand and Australia. Who should do the haka? Who may play the didgeridoo? What liberties can we take with traditional stories? When we discuss cross-cultural theatre, questions related to 'appropriation' and 'reserved' areas immediately arise, and with these questions comes an array of attendant eggshells that we either walk carefully across or assertively crush.

Three theatre events, three considerations of sacred space

These kinds of questions were ones that shaped my initial approach to the three events I investigated. As I began to sift the information that came from talking to the participants, further considerations also gained importance. But, first, a description of the three events, and a brief statement of my own position with regard to the cultures they celebrate.

The **first** is the performance by the children of an Australian Catholic School that was part of the liturgy during Holy Week, or Easter. The performance overlayed an account of Jesus' last days and death with such children's stories as *The Rainbow Fish*. I was the visiting drama specialist in the school, and I had been brought up with the Catholic Church.

The **second** event is the performance of an Australian feminist play described in its programme as 'a collage cabaret celebrating the mature woman.' It both celebrates and laments the coming of menopause. Although my experience as a woman and as a feminist gave me a strong interest in the issues, I came to the performance as a spectator and approached the research as an outsider.

The **third** is the collection of performances by secondary and tertiary students that took place during *Te Mauri Pakeaka*, a cross-cultural community involvement programme in New Zealand. Although the project began in the mid 1970s and was set up in a wide range of places across New Zealand, I am concerned here particularly with the work that took place in Forum North, in Whangarei, 1981–1988. The *Pakeaka* programme had been set up by Arnold Wilson, Maori artist and educator, to counteract the absence of Maori resources within schools, both in terms of teachers and of materials, and to develop a Maori perspective by putting the schools into contact with the elders who held the knowledge. Students from a number of schools and their teachers, together

with a large number of community teachers, elders and artists, came together in a week-long live-in, during which each school developed a drama relating to a Maori legend or history associated with its region. I came into the project as a resource person in drama. The programme significantly influenced the way I, as a *Pakeha,* came to understand bicultural relations in New Zealand.

While very different, the three events share an approach to theatre that is openly exploratory and overtly 'engaged', whether it is in cultural, religious or feminist terms. Commercial success, art and entertainment, while not irrelevant, are secondary in importance. In each there is an implicit claim that the material dealt with is of some fundamental and spiritual significance. Those involved in making each event have a common focus on collaboration and collective ownership, and each of them expects a response from its audience that goes beyond that of passive appreciation, or even criticism. They share an approach to form that is eclectic and informal in its structure.

They also bestride the division between 'ritual' and 'theatre' described by Schechner (1988:120). Ritual, he explains, is characterised by an audience who participates, who believes; theatre, by one that watches and appreciates. In theatre, criticism flourishes and creativity is individual. In ritual, criticism is discouraged and creativity is collective.

So, to some extent, all invite the questions of whether theirs is privileged or 'special' material, whether it is open to everyone and whether it carries with it implicit sanctions or restrictions.

The Audience's Role

¨ **The Holy Week play** was performed in a church by Catholics to a Catholic audience. Many of those who were present would not have described themselves purely as audience — in terms of the spiritual context, they were as active as the children who performed. The devised dramatic narrative constituted just one layer of the Easter Thursday liturgy. A further layer can be found in the group's participation in the religious ritual — the sacrament of reconciliation — conducted by the priest, that formed the climax of the liturgy.

What was involved within the devised performance was, in the words of the assistant principal (religious education), 'a kind of induction'. He saw its value as 'bringing to life these stories and these messages that we want the kids to understand'. The principal acknowledged that 'there's another layer to all this, and that's the evangelisation of the community', while the Year 1 teacher valued the way 'working in drama gives the children a chance to be creative in the wider community'.

¨ **The women's play** set out to 'use women's stories in women's voices'. While the play was not specifically aimed at women audiences, it was not particularly concerned with accommodating male viewpoints. 'If that wasn't acceptable to the men in the audience', stated its director, 'we weren't going to change the way we were doing it to appeal to them'. Yet the venue was a public one and, while there may have been an expectation of a predominantly women's audience, there was no expectation of homogeneity. Some women actually walked out of the venues 'visibly shaken up'. 'We were pushing the edge a bit with some of the stories', said one of the collaborators, 'and being maybe a bit confrontational'. Inasmuch as there were many friends and family

members in the audience, there was perhaps an element of complicity, similar to that in the audience in the Catholic church. But there was also room in the audience for those who were less sympathetic. 'I came to the show feeling mentally resistant to the whole experience', said one person, 'I didn't feel at all part of that group'.

The opening up to others as a way of seeing was a significant aspect of the content. 'We want to communicate what it was like for us', said the director and originator of the project, 'and if there was any hope of bringing about any change of understanding, then it would be contrary to that if we set up a negative experience for any men'. But it was not just men who were given the opportunity to see, from the inside, a new territory. 'I was overwhelmed', said a woman in her mid-20s in the audience, 'by the fact that they were having experiences that I don't understand at all'. Learning to celebrate a rite of passage also was an important element of the work. 'There is no ritual that celebrates this rite of passage for us', said its director. 'In some societies they do honour the crone, but we don't'.

¨ In ***Pakeaka***, engagement with the Maori material was a primary objective of the work. For a large part, the audience to the performance was made up of those who were involved in the process — co-learners viewing one another's work. But the performance night was also open to the community at large, and often the work presented on stage provoked reaction. That Reitu and Raepae, ancestresses for much of the North, should be shown travelling north in a broken-down jalopy rather than on the usual enchanted bird, or that Hongi Hika, warrior chief and hero to Ngapuhi, was shown in a questionable light, led to heated debates among the elders that stretched long into the night.

As in the other two events, participation in ritual, in rite of passage, was an important part of the content and of the learning. On the one hand, the rite of passage here was one of induction to a whole new field of knowledge and to a way of viewing the universe. On the other, it was a participation in the lifestyle of the *marae*, with its attendant rituals of welcome, of care for visitors, of *karakia*, of collaboration and of oral histories. The performance became a variation of the *hakari*, the feast that feeds the visitors on the last day of any *hui.*

¨ Only in the woman's play — and then to a limited extent— were conventional commercial relationships operating. There were, nevertheless, commercial factors in each. All had their costs to pay. The women's play had a set ticket price but it was significantly lower than other commercial theatre — a 'woman-friendly' price matching the 'woman-friendly' 5 p.m. time slot. The school's Easter play and *Pakeaka* also needed to produce commercial validation, the first in terms of future enrolments, the second from the purse-holders of the Department of Education. But the works were not primarily commercial in their intention. In each, the focus was on engagement. Thus, each, in its way, might be considered activist theatre — theatre for change.

Spirituality and Permission to Enter and Explore

To what extent was spirituality a common thread in the three events?

¨ Exploration, affirmation and practical application of spirituality provided the key to the *Pakeaka* workshop process. *Wairua*, the word in Maori that is usually translated as spirituality, includes both the significance of an action — its connection to the web of

creation that starts with *Io Matua Kore*, the eternal divine essence, and proceeds through *Rangi* and *Papa*, Sky and Earth — and the active affective attitude with which it is performed. Throughout the workshops, there was emphasis on *wairua*.

The programme began with the schools being called into Forum North, the community centre, by elders whose lineage connected them with the land, so that the welcome was not just to the physical complex but to the geographical-cum-spiritual location that the participants were going to live and work in and to the ancestral stories that they were going to explore. Visitors were welcomed with the same solemnity — either by the whole group or by a small party on the side — as the schools had received on their arrival. Each person's spiritual connection to the place and the event had to be acknowledged. Within this context, both the stories and those who bring them are *taonga tuku iho* — gifts, treasures carefully handed down. But the students are explicitly given the freedom to explore them, play with them, rediscover them, with the proviso that first they go to the right sources and find out what the story means to those who had brought it.

¨ The Easter story dealt overtly with sacred events — the redemptive death of Jesus Christ, the fundamental basis of the Catholic religion. In addition, the children's rehearsal and presentation took place within a church. Throughout the preparation, the children observed the rituals that reconnected them with their spiritual sources — the use of holy water, genuflection to the altar. The material used was also very definitely 'treasure handed down'. One of the teachers commented that 'the sacredness of the story makes us keep as close as we can to the theology of the event'. Yet in this case, too, permissions are given. What does Sabbath mean in the context of the infants and the storybooks they read as part of their contemporary mythology? What does justice mean? But, while the permission is very definitely *for* the children, in this case it is their adult teachers who exercise it on their behalf.

¨ According to the explanation given by its director, the women's play was an explicit response to what was seen as a denial of women's spirituality in the institutionalised society we live in: 'We have been excluded from the spirituality that is essentially fertile — that's an ancient fertility goddess — you know, nature . . . child, mother, crone . . . I was really looking at this thing of spirituality — how women are excluded from it, from the mainstream religions, and I found this line from this play. I found God in myself, and I love her fiercely, and that's where my spirituality is. But I'm mourning the loss of an institutionalised place to share it'. For us — contemporary women in mainstream situations — spirituality is not a 'treasure handed down'. It needs, as in this play, to be recreated. As a result, permission to play with the material is not so much given as taken within the process of rediscovery.

Collaboration in the Making

In each of the three events, the final performance was realised through a collaborative process.

¨ In the women's play, collaboration was, as the participants said, 'absolutely important'. The stories came from the group of women and also were filtered through the consciousness of all the women. 'The stories that are in there are all stories we have had personal experience of in some way', one explained. 'We gave each other things . . . We

said, well, we both like doing this, but you do it because you'll enjoy doing it'. Her colleague commented that, 'In fact, it's going to get to the stage where . . . no one will own any particular bit, and that's real ensemble work'.

¨ The *Pakeaka* programme was designed around the concept of interaction between students and teachers and the elders and artists in their surrounding community. The first task was learning to set up a dialogue so that knowledge could be asked for and given. All were learners; all were teachers. The elders came in with their knowledge of things Maori, but many had also been 'taught' that they and what they had to offer was irrelevant to the school system. Artists — if they were Pakeha — came with strong process skills but often with little knowledge of a Maori conceptual framework. Teachers came in believing that they had to be responsible for formulating the answers and the direction of the work and only slowly, but mostly with enormous relief, they found a more useful role as facilitators. Among the students it was often surprising to discover who could give natural leadership, who had previously unacknowledged skills that they could share not only with their own group but with other schools.

¨ The Easter play also was designed collaboratively — by the teachers. This situation reflected, to a large degree, the pressure all felt in making the work both theologically correct and relevant to the children performing it.

Audience as Participants in Rites of Passage

¨ There was little opportunity for specific feedback from the parents and community who were the audience for the Catholic children's play. The comments they did make suggest that, as family of the performers, they were a partisan and indulgent audience. However, their role as audience went beyond that of support or pleasure. The liturgical context of the work meant that they were co-workers with the actors in making actual the sacramental function of the work. The sacrament was completed at the moment left in the structure of the performance when the priest said the words of absolution and the participants— actors and audience — moved from a state of sinfulness to that of grace. Inasmuch as it was a rite — a ritual that marked passage — the work engaged audience and actors as absolute collaborators.

¨ The separation between audience and actors in the *Pakeaka* programme also was smudged. First, with about 200 students participating, the schools formed a significant percentage of the audiences for one another's work and the movement from auditorium to stage and back again during the evening underscored the connection between the two spaces. Second, it was a new experience for many older Maori to see their traditional stories told in this way. Their reaction was similar to what it might have been to a provocative speaker on the *marae*. The work elicited discussion and argument. The critical engagement of these older Maori invested the work with importance, making it clear that there was nothing facile or patronising in the way they viewed the school's experimentation with their traditional stories. Finally, the weeklong live-in was also a rite of passage that culminated in the final performance that shared the work done — there was an expectation that the schools would come out of the process changed, and the audience were co-celebrants in that change.

¨ Defining the relationship between audience and actors in the women's play is perhaps harder. As discussed earlier, even though the audience offered a strong emotional response to the work, not all of it was comfortable or positive. In a different way from *Pakeaka*, the work was potentially confrontational. And perhaps, because of the emotionally confrontational edge to the material, familiarity outside the theatre between the audience and the actors created a complexity of response. A number of people, as they left the hall, spoke of the warmth they felt because they knew the women and were able to share their stories. But one actor described the response of an ex-student of hers. 'He said, "I couldn't handle you doing the piano player", which was me doing a sexual thing'. She concluded, however, 'that [it] was more about his relationship with me than anything else'.

Despite the ways in which the women's play was a celebration of a rite of passage into cronehood — a rite that the actors had shared in making the work — there was no explicit structure that allowed the audience to participate in its ritual dimension. 'I think the piece could have done with some kind of clearing session at the end', said a woman in the audience. As I sat in the audience, I, too, found the clapping of hands and the raising of house lights an unsatisfactory conclusion to the experience. Was this because of the way the show was for some of us a potential rite of passage — something that could empower us in the new territory we as women would sometime enter — and we felt alienated by not being able to enter into the ritual in some way? Conversely, one male member of the audience said he was glad the play ended with the lights coming up — he had been moved by being allowed to share intimate stories and he would have been put out by any further encounter. Was this because, inasmuch as the play was a rite of passage, it was not his rite of passage?

Eclectic Form

¨ The women's play was an open weaving of individual stories, individual reflections and moments of feeling. The director related the form this play found to concepts of form that are emerging as distinctive of women's theatre: 'I like the notion that we're spinsters — that we spin, we weave, we tie, we untie and so on — there is no linear structure to it'.

¨ The way the *Pakeaka* programme was designed also led, in many of the pieces, to an eclectic form. For example Tikipunga High School worked on finding a contemporary relevance to the story of Maui capturing the sun. The initial work done by the students and their teachers was a series of improvisations around the theme of the pressures of time. A few days into the week, Huri Callaghan, an exponent of *haka*, came over and offered a *haka* he had written after he had watched the work, while Carole Davies, a batik artist, came with a suggestion of a simple but extremely striking way of dying fabric as costume for the sun.

Because the *Pakeaka* work crossed cultural boundaries, there was perhaps an unspoken imperative for eclecticism — for use of Maori language as well as English, for layers of story that bridged the traditional with contemporary experience, for integration of not only performance arts like *haka* and *poi* but also weaving and sculpture into European theatrical forms.

Special? Sacred? Restricted?

As can be seen, each of the works discussed here has a relationship to its material and with its audience that — to a greater or lesser extent — differs from that of the commercial theatre. To what extent might that material be described as 'sacred', as 'special', as 'restricted'?

¨ Some of the women involved in the women's play rejected the term 'sacred' as applied to that play. For them, sacred implied something closed, prohibited, forbidden and they wanted their stories open to anyone. True stories, authentic stories, were terms they preferred. A member of the audience echoed the distinction. 'They feel like stories of truth almost — the most truthful stories you can get, in the sense the experiences they are recounting are fundamental experiences of women'. When asked if a man could write about this material, one woman answered, 'I'd be watchful. I'd be sitting there, watching to see'. She extended the question to issues concerning women of whom she might have no knowledge. 'We don't include Aboriginal women or lesbian women because that's not our experience and we respect their experience enough to say, we don't know your experience . . . I don't want to patronise people. They don't need us to tell their story — they can do it themselves, and they are doing it perfectly well.'

¨ The Easter story was explicitly sacred. For the assistant principal at the school, the pressure was 'to be authentic and to make sure you're theologically precise as well'. Another pressure was 'not to be too grandiose . . . To keep it precious, we do have to keep it simple'. The Year 1 teacher considered 'sacred' more widely, as embodying an attitude, an awareness of the spirituality of all things. For neither was there reason to place these Easter mystery stories in a 'restricted' area. When discussing the concept of taking liberties with the stories, the Year 1 teacher said, 'I think that as long as you have the children at the centre of your focus . . . then you can take whatever liberties you like'. The assistant principal added, 'We're not a secret society. We've all got to get in touch with our God'.

¨ Sacred stories, sacred space, are concepts that sit comfortably with a Maori consciousness, but that invite further examination. *Tapu* is a quality that is not necessarily godly — rather, it has a danger and a potency that needs to be approached with appropriate caution. Visitors who come for the first time to a *marae* are *waewae tapu* — sacred feet — those whose energies have not yet been reconciled with those of the home people. The act of carving is itself, in traditional terms, *tapu*. From before the living tree is first cut to its final erection in a meeting-house, the process is filled with dangerous energies that need to be contained within careful protocols. *Mauri* is the innate spiritual quality that everything has to some lesser or greater extent. What the poet Gerald Manly Hopkins describes as the 'inscape' is perhaps a useful English approximation. A person, an artefact, a rock, a dance — each has its own particular *mauri. Wairua*, discussed above, is a more general concept of spirituality and of the affective behaviour that acknowledges that spirituality.

And because the concepts have no, or limited, resonances within the institutionalised education system, the *Pakeaka* programme set out to create an alternative, though temporary, environment where all activity could take place within an awareness of these charged energies. So, awareness of sacred space — or *wairuatanga* — was deliberate

and pervasive in the programme. But so was permission for the participants to freely explore. *Tapu*, such as the participation of women in carving, was specifically put aside. Thus on the one hand, there was permission; on the other, was the expectation of due observance — flax off-cuts from weaving were returned to the parent bush and histories were carefully checked with those who owned them.

Reference to a Plane of Experience beyond the 'Daily'

¨ In the women's play, the final choral number, with its exhortation to 'sisterwomen' to celebrate their new stage of womanhood, made explicit a framework of significance outside that endorsed by our mainstream. That framework was also implicit in the satiric edge that divided the women's dawning experience of themselves from how they felt they were perceived by the outside world.

¨ *Pakeaka* invited its participants to enter a Maori value system. Because this is a system that is often completely incongruous with a mainstream, western, commercialist way of operating, there is frequently a strong element of protectiveness of its values and of its materials. Whether relating to histories, art forms or land, there is a fear that they will be absorbed into the values and operations of the dominant system. *Pakeaka*, as an arena for cross-cultural experimentation, was able to work so freely because its director, Arnold Wilson, himself Maori and a recognised leader in the contemporary Maori art movement, could elicit an enormous network of support for the project. The turf was Maori and so threat of assimilation or appropriation was not an issue. In the wider field of Maori-Pakeha art experimentation, it often is.

¨ The Catholic play is perhaps in the most privileged position in terms of the way its cultural values and spiritual perspectives are legitimised in terms of mainstream institutions. Catholicism stands, of course, to one side of the dominant material dialectic of the mainstream world, but it holds a firm place within it as an orthodox religion that operates openly and overtly. In Australia, it even has its own education system that is almost as big as the state system and is state-legitimised and state-funded. It is perhaps in the position that Maori would like to get to. So its sacred space, in this age, is open and accessible to any who wish to enter. It feels, it seems, safe. Outsiders who dabble with its materials may learn something — they are unlikely to do any damage.

Sacred space and 'social drama'

The suggestion is, therefore, that ethnically sensitive material, such as Maori or Aboriginal, shares a specialness that could be called 'sacred space' with that of other 'cultural groups' who assert a spirituality and a value system outside that of mainstream commercialist society. The degree to which this space allows outsiders in — and, even more importantly, the degree to which it allows them to experiment with its materials — depends on a complex set of variables that have something to do with its acknowledged legitimacy and its security within the mainstream system.

An insight into the extent of that security may be offered by Turner (1988:34) who, in his theory of social drama, suggests that events in public real life follow a sequential dramatic structure. The first is that of breach of regular norm-governed social relationships; the second is that of crisis, when people take sides; the third brings

application of redressive or remedial action; the fourth sees reintegration or irreparable schism. Perhaps the degree of protectiveness around each of these sacred spaces depends, at least in part, on which stage is being played out in the social drama that separates each group from mainstream society.

The Catholic education system can be seen as having established its own independent and respected identity. It has little need to be defensive. Feminism in Australia and New Zealand today, it might be argued, also is in the third or fourth stage. On the other hand, in both Australia and New Zealand, a degree of crisis characterises the relationship between indigenous people and the mainstream, with resultant protectiveness by the indigenous groups about their cultural property. It could be said the *Pakeaka* programme actively engages in redressive action and so, within certain bounds, it invited outsiders into its sacred space.

For those who perceive themselves to be less enfranchised in the exchanges, the risk, as Bharucha sums it up, is the 'draining of source cultures through arbitrary, non-negotiated and essentially one-sided modes of transportation' (1996:160).

Yet Barba, Schechner, Brook, and even Bharucha himself, are committed to the richness of collaboration that crosses cultural borders. 'It is not only love of the other', Barba writes, 'It is the need to know oneself' (1995:147). For Brook, 'Each culture expresses a different portion of the inner atlas . . . and the theatre is the place in which the jigsaw can be pieced together' (1988:129). According to Schechner, 'The best way to . . . understand, enliven, investigate . . . the elusive and intimate *I-thou* . . . is to perform and to study performances and performative behaviours in all their different genres, contexts, expressions and historical processes' (1993:1). And, finally, Bharucha: 'Can we begin to share the rivers of our cultures . . . through a new tuning in to each other's temperaments and the vulnerabilities of our locations?' (1996:166).

The incentive is there — theatre, like perhaps no other process, allows access into another's experience, into his or her inner and most 'sacred' space. The challenge is to find ways to enter the space without destroying it. It is a challenge that the Arts Curriculum, albeit perhaps naïvely, invites us to accept.

Works Cited

Barba, E. (1995). *The paper canoe: a guide to theatre anthropology*. London and New York: Routledge.

Bharucha, R. (1993). *Theatre and the world: Performance and the politics of culture.* London: Routledge.

Bharucha, R. (1996). Negotiating the river. In J. O'Toole and K. Donelan (Eds.) *Drama, culture and empowerment: The IDEA dialogues*. Brisbane: IDEA Publications.

Brook, P. (1988). *The shifting point: Forty years of dramatic exploration 1946-1987.* London: Methuen.

Chalk, B. (2001). Becoming crone: of bodies and embodiment. *NJ*, *25*:1, 105-115.

Greenwood, J. (1999). *Journey into a third space: A study of how theatre enables us to interpret the emergent space between cultures*. Ph.D thesis, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. www.gu.edu.au/ins/lils/adt/

Greenwood, J. (2001). Within a third space. *Research in Drama Education*, 6:2, 193-205.

Greenwood, J. (2002). *Mapping the terrain: History of a bicultural theatre*. Christchurch: Christchurch College of Education Research Monograph Series.

Greenwood, J. and Wilson, A. (2003). *Shifting the Centre*. Paper at ALARPM Congress, Prretoria, S.A.

Ministry of Education. (2000). *The arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Schechner, R. (1985). *Between theatre and anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schechner, R. (1988). *Performance theory*. New York and London: Routledge.

Schechner, R. (1993). *The future of ritual*. London and New York: Routledge.

Turner, V. (1988). *The anthropology of performance*. New York: PAJ Publications.