

EnsembleImpact's 2012 Schools Tour

Touring May / June 2012



IN
SPITE OF
HIMSELF



THE SEEyD SEASONS:

- SEEyD
- inSalt
- SAnD
- +
- THE REMEDY SYNDROME
- THE BRILLIANT FASSAH
- TURBINE
- +
- PAUA
- THE DECEMBER BROTHER
- THE SPY WHO WOULDN'T DIE AGAIN

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SEED

An organic seed farmer and his wife are confronted by an invasion of genetically modified crops. And, if mutated bees and the multi-national on his patch weren't enough, there's the issue of Graham's own sterility and the overly attentive hired hand who's keen on a very different kind of ploughing.

inSalt

1850's. An English couple, Sara and Gabriel Plowright, arrive on New Zealand shores, bringing with them the desire for a new life and the body of their recently deceased father...our colonists soon discover they are not the only Europeans to have come this way.

SAnD

It's 2039 and the death rate is now significantly lower than the birth rate. Gabriel Plowright has Alzheimer's disease but is refusing medical intervention despite the fact that his daughter, a Nanotechnologist, can now rebuild his brain from the molecular level up.

The Remedy Syndrome

Rebecca and Joe face the issue of vaccinating their baby girl. Overwhelmed by all the information they receive, they negotiate their own blueprint for parenting while personality differences force them to question their couple compatibility.

The Brilliant Fassah

Nathan Clenick, sceptic and math teacher, discovers he can channel an ancient spirit called Fassah. With the help of his neighbour and his wife, Nathan starts to make some serious money. Suddenly, however, his spirit fades and Nathan has some choices to make.

Turbine

Wind farming provides the backdrop for The SEED Theatre Company's sixth play Turbine. Mark Lachlan from the electricity company visits the self-sufficient Gusten household in Ohaunui to complete his consultation process before seventy turbines are erected in their 'backyard'.

Paua

A serial killer is stalking paua poachers. When government turns a blind eye to the killings, questions get raised about what townspeople will tolerate if there is a financial benefit to the community. Set in the small town of Waiwhero, it is part environmental wake-up call, part whodunit, part thriller and part slasher movie.

The December Brother

The extraordinary story of how Tim Spite's father, Tony, found his birth family in 1995 (Based on Tony's memoir The December Brother) and secondly, an event that shocked New Zealand in 1994, that of the Bain family Murders.

The Spy Who Wouldn't Die Again

Stephen Sinclair, secret agent, part time Hobbit and animal psychologist is in New Zealand and spying for us. Weapons, women, a dastardly villain and nothing - not even attack trained killer robots - can stop St Claire from unearthing this evil.

From the Author(s)...

The inaugural production of this play, SEEyD, gave birth shortly after to The SEEyD Theatre Company in 2000; we, the creators, were buoyed on by the play's surprising success. For me, at the age of thirty, I was finally making work that I was really happy with, work that I wanted to make. I was finding my voice at last, but I was also acutely aware of the benefits of having a good team. I needed good teamwork to help me find that voice. **The production grew out of a frustration with conventional theatre.** Firstly, I had been involved with many new New Zealand plays that had very little development time with the actors before rehearsal; secondly, I had been in a few 'physical theatre' companies that I thought hadn't paid enough attention to narrative and scripting; and finally, I had been in many conventional theatre shows with perfunctory design and little sense of style and spatial awareness. It was therefore my ambition to produce a work that had a three-month devising and rehearsal period (as opposed to the standard four to six weeks) where design, character development, scripting and narrative were all developed equally together with plenty of time for refinement. **It was also my ambition to be more politically involved and debate New Zealand issues more thoroughly than they had been previously in theatre work.** But I knew I couldn't write it on my own—I still had a chip on my shoulder about getting thirty-five per cent in School C English! So in January 2000 I brought together some actors and we forged a process that I have since used for nine SEEyD Theatre Company plays.

The process starts with an idea; in this case, an organic farmer dealing with genetic engineering. **Then comes the research. We read all we can on the subject matter and interview relevant people;** in this case, geneticists, ethicists, organic and conventional farmers, and so on. We transcribe all the interviews so that we have conversations on file. The research gives rise to a more developed idea: organic seed farmer discovers there is a secret GE field trial planted nearby which may affect his organic certification. We find a space or theatre; in this case, an unused room in the basement of Te Whaea: National Dance and Drama Centre (the room later became known as The SEEyD Space and is used as a performance venue). **Then we begin doing some improvisations on the subject matter.** That immediately gives us a more human story to develop: organic SEEyD farmer who can't get his partner pregnant. **We work for a month developing the story and characters,** scripting all the improvisations. **The second month is loosely dedicated to arranging and editing the material,** workshop-ping the script on our feet and hammering out the design. **The final month is for conventional rehearsal time and refining the script...**

■ ■ ■

...I am extremely grateful to Creative New Zealand for recognising, supporting and funding this process for the subsequent nine SEEyD Theatre Company shows. This first show, however, grew out of hardship. We all committed to the three-month process and to another four weeks of performing for little remuneration. I must therefore thank again Scott Macky, Richard Edge, Genevieve McClean, Peter Edge (sound design) and Nyree Andrews (lighting design) for their reckless dedication to this project. This first group, in particular my close friends Scott and Richard, showed me the future. We made two vital discoveries which have remained with the company. **Firstly, it doesn't matter how serious the subject matter is, it must be garnished with humour and told with balance. Secondly, the three-month time frame for writing and rehearsing is essential for refining the work.** The SEEyD Theatre Company personnel has changed many times over the past eleven years—it is made up of whoever comes together for each project—but as a company we have kept this simple manifesto of humour and required time frame. SEEyD was followed by two closely related plays, inSalt and SAnD: inSalt, set in 1850s New Zealand with a backdrop of colonisation, and SAnD, set in 2039 with a backdrop of nanotechnology. All three were turned into a five-hour production, The SEEyD Trilogy, which has adjoining themes of frontier annexation or control. The three plays share a genealogy in which characters who feature in SAnD have ancestors in SEEyD and inSALT; this unfolds further themes of fertility and family. This published script of SEEyD is a combination of both the original script and the more refined but much shorter trilogy script.

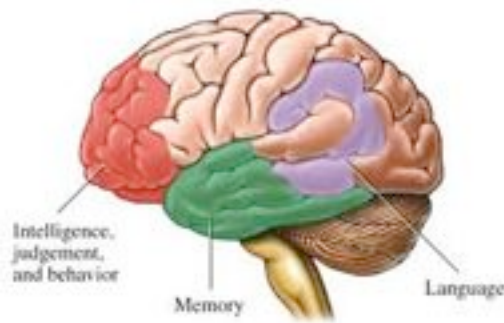
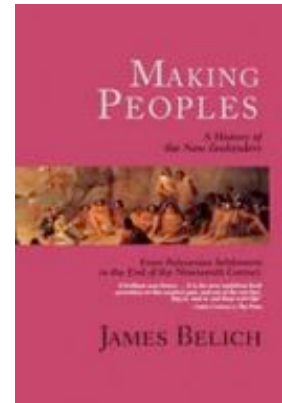
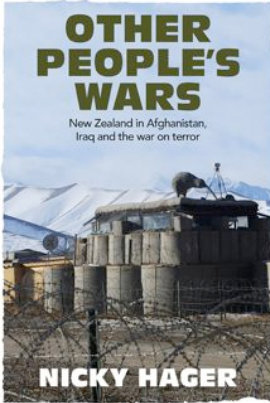
It is strange to be preparing SEEyD for publication so long after it was first produced. It is now a period piece; GE issues are largely behind us and the Corngate scandal is almost forgotten. I hope it will be cherished as a period piece, but for me SEEyD is a reminder of the remarkable synchronicity that a new play always has with the current issues of the time, but also a reminder of how writing this play taught me valuable lessons in processing complex issues, taking an objective overview of any debate and building a sustainable company.

Tim Spite
Director of The SEEyD Theatre Company Wellington 2011

This introduction to SEEyD has been sourced from No.8 Wire, a publication in Playmarket's NZ Play Series.

All emphases EnsembleImpact.

Which photo best supports each of the nine plays in “In Spite of Himself.” Why?



SEEyD, Paua, Turbine, The Remedy Syndrome, The December Brother, The Spy Who Wouldn't Die Again, SAnD, inSalt, The Brilliant Fassah

Staging

5 types of Stages: Traverse, Round, Thrust, End, Proscenium

Identify the staging for each picture.



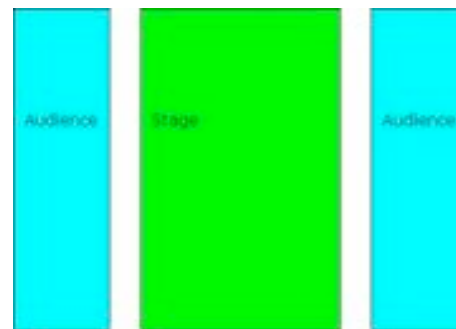
(1) Type of stage:



(2) Type of stage:



(3) Type of stage:



(4) Type of stage:

DISCUSS:

In Spite of Himself was played on a traverse stage. Were you to direct another way to stage this play, which would you pick?

One advantage of Traverse Staging is that it allows the audience to sit close to the action of the play.

Name a distinct disadvantage.



(5) Type of stage:

Conventions

The SEED Company uses many conventions (devices) to tell their stories. And while the plays may appear as *naturalistic*, there are many theatrical devices that remove it from the realistic and into the stylized. You'll notice that the use of the Italian language crops up in a couple of snippets (*in Salt & The Brilliant Fassah*) and slow-motion, choral work, narration, spoken thought, deliberate costume changes and music (albeit hummed) are incorporated in the story telling.

Multiple characters are another fixture of a SEED presentation as are stereotypical characterizations and sudden transitions from one scene to another.

Given the plays under consideration and the theatrical effects you've witnessed - comment on two of those effects from the Conventions listed below, the plays they appeared in and how you felt it added to (or detracted from) the story being told.

Presentational Conventions:

- A deliberate attempt to be "theatrical"
- Use of a Narrator or Chorus
- Script written for actors to play multiple roles
- Seeing Actors change costumes and sets in view of the audience
- Personification/Figures taking on abstract non-human qualities
- "Theatre Magic" is shown and/or obvious

Conventions used by directors:

- Suggestive scenery or costuming
- Pantomime
- Stylized movement/repetition/*gest*
- Deliberate tempo of scenes
- Split scenes / Conversations

Conventions used by Playwrights:

- Narration
- Flash Backs/Forward
- Song and Music
- Personification
- The passage of stage time vs. plot time

- 1) In SEED, a depressed bee-keeper runs to his neighbor's seed farming business. He's angry because:**
- the bee-mite (varroa destructor) has been found in his hives
 - the Town Council has augmented new zoning restrictions which restrict apiary construction
 - crop contamination from GMO plants has affected his bees
 - area's Manuka trees have failed to flower in a drought
- 2) In Salt features an Italian missionary named Roselli who warns Maarire, a native girl: *Kei rere ano he toto!* There will be more blood shed! Why?**
- Maarire has been playing with a loaded pistol
 - The "English" are talking about land ownership
 - Maori don't know how to play poker
 - Roselli is afraid of the chemicals involved in photo development
- 3) Nathan Clenick suddenly speaks fluent Italian and assumes the identity of a "channelled" being called Fassah. Which one can't be explained in terms of speech pathology?**
- Glossolalia - speaking in tongues
 - Foreign Accent Syndrome
 - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
 - Asperger Syndrome
- 4) What is nanotechnology?**
- building machines on sub-atomic levels
 - eliminating cancerous cells using radioactive isotopes
 - generating energy from white cell diffusion
 - reconstructive plastic surgery using recombinant DNA
- 5) Wind power currently produces how much energy in New Zealand?**
- 32 per cent
 - 20 per cent
 - 12 per cent
 - 4 per cent
- 6) Vaccinations are the theme of The Remedy Syndrome. According to the Centre of Disease Control, these diseases can be prevented by immunization. Which one can't?**
- rubella
 - poliomyelitis
 - HIV
 - H1N1
- 7) There have been several famous murder investigations in New Zealand. Which one *isn't*?**
- David Bain
 - Ben Smart and Olivia Hope
 - Meriwether Lewis and William Clark
 - Kahui Twins
- 8) In *Other People's Wars*, author Nicky Hager suggests New Zealand has been far more involved in Afghanistan than previously announced and that successive Governments have clouded public knowledge of *real* events. Which acronym relates to spying in New Zealand?**
- C.C.D.H.B.
 - I.R.D.
 - N.Z.S.I.S.
 - N.C.E.A
- 9) Paua (known as Abalone in other countries) is part of a major black market operation in New Zealand. In 2005 the Ministry of Fisheries expected more than 1,000 tons of paua would be poached that year. How much of the paua would be, by Fisheries limits, undersized?**
- 20%
 - 30%
 - 50%
 - 75%

“People who understand everything get no stories.”

— [Bertolt Brecht](#)

In thinking about plays, whether we're talking Aristophanes or Jean Betts, the genre “Political Theatre” comes to mind. Certainly that's one way of describing the work of the SEEyD co-operative.

But before we go any further, we'd like to say this about the nine plays collated here for *In Spite of Himself*: they're good, they're current, they're funny, they make you think.

“Political Theatre” isn't new, nor really are the many conventions frequently employed by the authors to “make their point.” We see it in Aristophanes as the Chorus introduces us to the women of Athens who have seized power (and stopped having sex) with their men in *Lysistrata*; it's there in Brecht's *Mahogany* as characters step out of role and sing a song (Alabama - The Whiskey Song); and there's a definitely barbed message when Liz, in Thomas Sainsbury's *Loser*, explains to us her long (and un-extinguishing) history of suicide attempts.

But if we're talking “politics”, what isn't political about George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* (whose central character is a long-time courtesan) or even Arthur Miller's re-telling of the McCarthy era in his *The Crucible*?

Whether borrowing from Brecht or stealing from the Greeks, many theatrical devices are employed in a SEEyD production and they're the better for it; wigs are swapped in front of us, actors change parts in an instant, dialogue is performed in English, Italian, Latin and (very specific to us) Te Reo Maori. And, true to each play here, we're asked, through humour and solid research to re-think an issue that has a special importance to New Zealand and its people.

Brecht envisaged an “Epic Stage” (borrowing from Erwin Piscator) as a place for discussion and consciousness raising. Yes, he wanted us to have fun; but first, he wanted us to think. The audience is presented with a topic of social or political relevance and an opinion or message on said topic. That's what we have here ... be it organic farming, power generation, inoculation, espionage, paranormal activity or the process of justice; points of view are raised, argued and it's left to us to say “we should do this.”

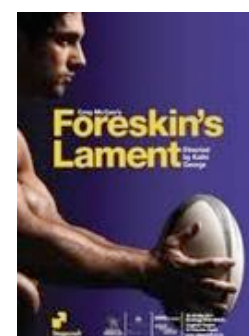
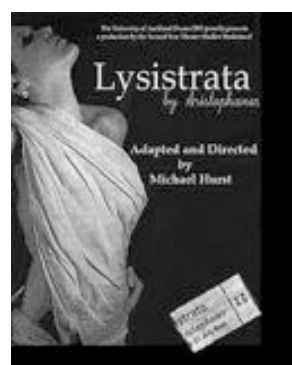
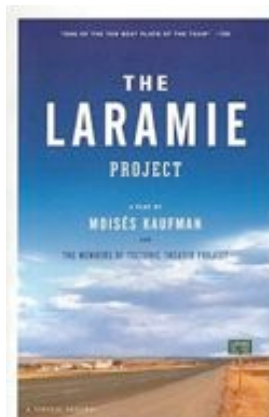
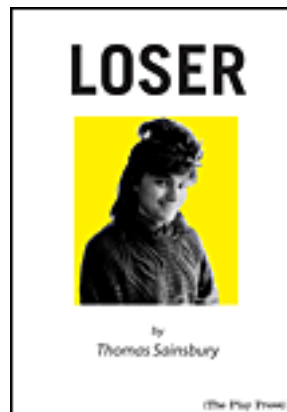
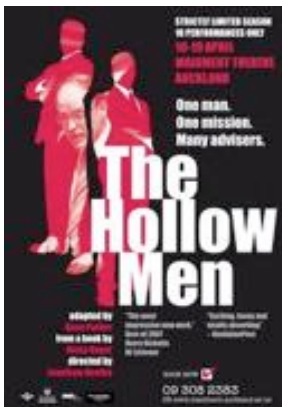
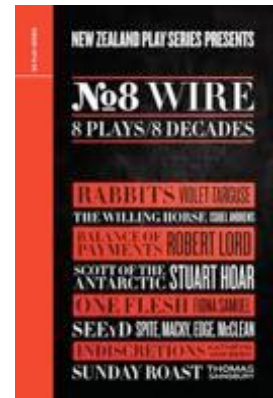
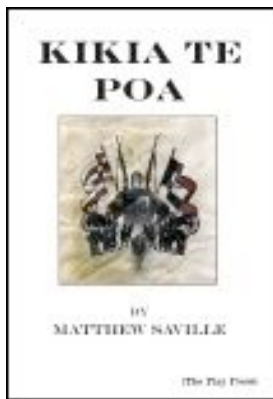
In a pixelated landscape of sports, cooking shows, X-Factors and the like, TV seldom operates as a medium to inform and suggest real alternatives to practical problems; movies (especially those from Hollywood) spend their attention on “Epic” by devising 3-D effects and improbable action sequences. Only the theatre remains “open” as a space for us to discuss, investigate, examine and share the humour and and hard work - the real issues - of contemporary living.

Here, then, with a sense of purpose and a sense of fun, are the collected works of a truly unique New Zealand theatre company: SEEyD.

Enjoy them. Think about them. Identify your own values. Act upon them.

K.C. Kelly, Director
EnsembleImpact Educational Trust

Here are some other plays you might be interested in ...



... here are the playwrights



Tectonic Theatre Project



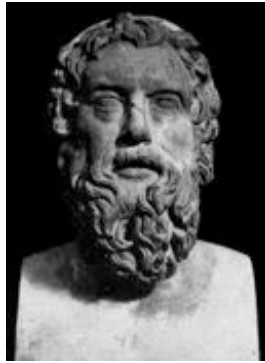
Lauren Jackson



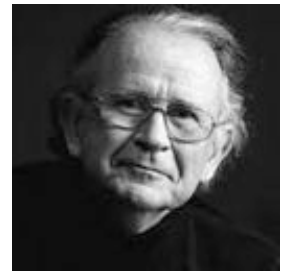
Tim Spite



Dean Parker



Aristophanes



Vincent O'Sullivan



Briar Grace-Smith



Matthew Saville



David Hare



Thomas Sainsbury



Greg McGee



Jean Betts