



School: Music and Performing Arts

Researcher: Silva Semerciyan

Project Title: I and the Village

UOA: 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

Research Timeline

Date	Rationale of research activities and decisions undertaken
2009	<p>Review of the literature: Kelly's <i>Taking Care of Baby</i>, Kaufman's <i>The Laramie Project</i>, Vogel's <i>How I Learned to Drive</i> and Büchner's <i>Woyzeck</i> were key reading towards examples of Verbatim, Mock Verbatim, choric story telling, non linear time, choric content shared by chorus and protagonist and expressionist dialogue.</p> <p><i>Woyzeck</i> and <i>How I Learned to Drive</i> were crucial influences, the first for its structure and the latter for its multi-faceted use of chorus. <i>Taking Care of Baby</i> was a useful example of mock verbatim form which allowed for its briefer application in this stylistically hybrid piece.</p>
2009	<p>Writing and redrafting period for the play: Mock verbatim sections were written and redrafted; choric content was tested; following this, the chorus was configured as 'congregants A,B,C,D and E' to serve as reminders of the dominance of the church.</p>
2010	<p>Completed a critical thesis on the play for MPhil at the University of Birmingham which situated the play among those explored in the literature review and offered further insights into the creative rationale.</p>
2011	<p>The play was a finalist for the Bruntwood Prize for playwriting; feedback from the judging panel observed that the play was weighed too heavily towards the main character at the expense of the rest of the characters. From this, the satire of the interrogation scenes was tempered to allow for a more balanced view of the community. This enabled the theme of individualism vs collectivism to change and gain nuance across the duration of the play.</p>
2012	<p>Further development of the play in conjunction with dramaturgical support from the Bristol Old Vic. As a result of critique received during this process, the theatrical language and style was reduced down to three main modes: the</p>

	<p>stichomythic scenes between the main character and her friends and family that portrayed the ennui of the soulless suburb and her fall from grace. Interrogation scenes between an outside investigator and members of the community in the aftermath of a church shooting; and monologue prayers in which the main character motivation could be evaluated directly by the theatre audience.</p>
2012	<p>The play was read in Chicago by a group of American actors led by theatre director, Elly Green, and feedback was offered from that reading which included observations about the impact of the mock verbatim form--how it seemed to be exposing the simultaneous predictability of theatre of testimony and its unreliability. This commenced a dialogue about the style of the play and the impact of its form.</p>
2012	<p>The play received a staged Reading at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre as part of their Ferment artist development showcase; Audience feedback was requested concerning the impact of the story and its themes. These revealed that the play's critique of gun ownership was apparent and salient. Several audience members also commented that the main character's loquacity was fatiguing and needed editing and tempering to make her more likeable. These edits were judged to be useful towards ensuring that the authorial voice did not replace the dramatic embodiment of the main character's dissent.</p>
May/June 2015	<p>Final Script development and rehearsals in advance of public run of the play. A new scene was added to ensure the structure was consistent in its alternation between stichomythic scenes and interrogation scenes. A complete run through at the end of the second week of rehearsals revealed that the first half was overlong. This gave rise to further cutting of the script to ensure that the time continuum would be as compact and intense as possible and obviate the need for an interval.</p>
June/July 2015	<p>The play received a month-long run at Theatre503, a reputable new writing venue in London who curate their season carefully, selecting new plays that they believe to be culturally salient and timely. From their entire year's season, Theatre503 nominated <i>I and the Village</i> for the James Tait Black Prize which rewards innovation in playwriting.</p>
June 2015	<p>The play was used as a provocation for 'Rapid Write Response' plays at Theatre503 in the first week of production; community writers were invited to respond to its themes, e.g. individualism vs collectivism, in ten-minute plays of their own. These plays received stage readings at Theatre503, thus allowing up and coming writers an opportunity for a public sharing of their creative work and a forum in which to explore their own subjective experience of citizenship.</p>
June 2015	<p>Publication of the play script by Methuen Drama imprint of Bloomsbury. This process allowed the script to reflect the final edits and changes made in the rehearsal room.</p>
July 2015	<p>Play was a finalist for 'Best New Play' in the London Offie Awards alongside key industry writers such as Robert Holman, Rebecca Lenciewicz and Barney Norris.</p>
2016	<p>The play was listed in the 'we recommend' section of the UK's National Theatre</p>

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As a result of the National Theatre's recommendation, the playscript was purchased by Roaming Theatre, an American theatre company and subsequently received a staged reading in Santa Barbara, California.
