

**Matt Jones**

Theatre and Dramaturgy Portfolio

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## Recent Productions

### As dramaturg

- 2018 *Scorched*. By Wajdi Mouawad. Directed by Djanet Sears. Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse Theatre. 7-17 Mar. 2018.
- 2017 *ASMRtist*. By Sarah Marchand and Matt Jones. Directed by Chelsea Dab-Hilke. Robert Gill Theatre, Toronto. 3 Feb, 2017. Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse, Toronto, 7-16 Sept. 2017.
- 2016 *A Moment of Silence*. By Mohammad Yaghoubi. Directed by Mohammad Yaghoubi. Factory Theatre, Toronto. 6-14 Aug. 2016.
- 2016 *Birthday Cake*. By Sarah Marchand. Directed by Simone Brodie. Theatre Passe Muraille, Toronto. 1-10 Jul. 2016.
- 2014 *You Are Invited to the Cast Party Following the Production Formally Known as Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*. By Virginia Woolf. Adapted by the cast. Directed by Baḡuta Rubess. Helen Phelan Gardiner Playhouse, Toronto. 4-15 Mar. 2014.

### As playwright

- 2017 *ASMRtist*. By Sarah Marchand and Matt Jones. Directed by Chelsea Dab-Hilke. Robert Gill Theatre, Toronto. 3 Feb, 2017. Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse, Toronto, 7-16 Sept. 2017.
- 2013 *Death Clowns in Guantánamo Bay*. Directed by Ashley Williamson. Studio Theatre, Toronto. 21-24 Mar. 2013 (also Co-Director).
- 2011 *The Mysterious Case of the Flying Anarchist*. Directed by Matt Jones and Caroline Fournier. Based on *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* by Dario Fo. Théâtre Ste-Catherine, Montreal. 3-7 Aug. 2011; St. Vladimir's Institute, Toronto. 6-16 Jul. 2011 (also Co-director).
- 2009 *Dracula in a Time of Climate Change*. Directed by Matt Jones. Mainline Theatre, Montreal, 12-21 Jun. 2009; Studio Theatre, Toronto, 3-11 Jul. 2009 (Co-Director).

### As film dramaturg

- 2017 *Abu*. Written and Directed by Arshad Khan. Narration by Arshad Khan and Matt Jones. Narration directed by Deepa Mehta. National Film Board of Canada. Feature-length documentary. Premiere: Los Angeles International Film Festival. 18 Jun. 2017. (Also secondary screenwriter).

# ASMRtist

SEPT 7 - 16

*an Alma Matters/Pink Door Production*  
HELEN GARDINER PHELAN PLAYHOUSE  
79 St. George Street

Wed-Sat 8pm / Sun 4pm  
\$15-\$35 / PWYC (Sept 8)

@almattersprod  
#ASMRtistTO



IT'S YOUR FIRST TIME HERE,  
ISN'T IT?



1. *ASMRtist*  
Intermedial theatre, 2017



Figure 1: Sarah Marchand as ANGELE

## About the project

*ASMRtist* is a play about the relationship between anxiety and sound. It began as exploration of an internet phenomenon known as Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR). ASMR refers to the way that certain stimulations can have a direct effect on the body, triggering pleasant “tingling” sensations and soothing a person who is experiencing stress. Today, YouTube is full of videos of young ASMRtists speaking in gentle tones, running their fingers across smooth glass, popping bubble wrap, opening zippers, crinkling paper, pretending to comb hair. People watch them to ease their stress, calm their anxiety, and ease themselves to sleep. We wanted to explore sensations that could have this effect on an audience as well as sensations that might provoke the opposite reaction, raising anxiety, stress, dread. In this way, the play would pull the audience in two directions.

Created by feminist theatre company Alma Matters productions, I was brought on to help realize their vision and create a script for the show. We developed the script using what we called the “hot potato method,” a simplified version of a surrealist exquisite corpse exercise, which involved passing the script back and forth between co-writer Sarah Marchand and myself and then merging our distinct visions. An elaborate soundscape was created by sound artists Loji, based on imagery from the script.

## Excerpt 1

Note: This excerpt gives a sense of how the script used a combination of verbal, video, and sonic imagery to provoke feelings of calmness and anxiety in the audience. ANGELE is the lead character: a young woman who is trying to fall asleep. TINGLE BELL is an imaginary fairy who speaks in the soothing voice of an ASMR practitioner. Later, the audience will encounter her foil, TRIGGER BELL.



Figure 2: ANGELE (Sarah Marchand, left) and TINGLE BELL (Amanda Cordner, right)

## SCENE 6: CANDY APPLES

*ANGELE is lying, wrapped up in blankets. She wakes up suddenly to see TINGLE BELL close beside her, as if she appeared by magic. ANGELE clutches NIC closely.*

ANGELE:  
It's you.

TINGLE BELL:  
You're twelve.

You're sitting in your parents' basement. It must be about 9pm. There's a little room outside your bedroom with a TV and a couch. And no one ever comes down here. It's just for you.

Upstairs, your Mom is baking bread. Can you smell it? I love the smell of fresh bread. Can you hear your brother brushing his teeth and the clink of dishes as your Dad loads the dishwasher?  
The upstairs world is slowing down for the night.

*Faint ambient household sounds. The video shows close-ups of fabric that might be in someone's parents' house in the 1990s. Carpets, couches, etc. Sound of rubbing on fabric. A hand brushes over fabric.*

TINGLE BELL:

You're wearing your bunny pyjamas. The fabric is soft and clean. They just came out of the laundry so they're just a little bit warm on your skin. They smell like dryer sheets. You're lying upside down on the couch because only adults sit right side up. Your hair hangs down towards the carpet. It's clean and wet and it smells like that strawberry conditioner you made your Mom buy. You just came out of the bath. The TV's playing your favourite show.

*Sound of bubbles. Wet hair hangs over the camera. Sounds of Bart and Homer slowed down till they're hardly recognizable. A fluorescent yellow glow momentarily envelops the screen.*

TINGLE BELL:

I brought you a present. I made it today with Mum. I made it thinking of you.

*TINGLE BELL opens a bag, takes something out, and puts it in ANGELE'S HAND. Sounds of unzipping backpack, rustling through a bag, rustling with a plastic bag.*

TINGLE BELL:

I go to my backpack.  
I take out a plastic bag.  
I put it in your hand.  
In the bag is an object the size of a fist.  
It's heavy, like it's made of wood.  
Take it out. It's wrapped in aluminum foil.

ANGELE:

What is it? What have you brought me?

TINGLE BELL:

You peel back the layers of the foil. It crinkles in your hand. You remove one layer, then another. The third layer starts to stick. You use your fingernails to pry it off. Finally, the paper is gone and we're both looking at the gift. You smile.

*Sounds of tin foil unwrapping.*

ANGELE:

You brought us candy apples!

## Excerpt 2

The naturalistic scenes such as the one above were interspersed with partially improvised scenes, in which Sarah Marchand would bake cookies live on stage while telling stories about eating disorders and YouTube, eventually revealing that cookies were a trigger food in her own eating disorders. The material for these scenes was taken from interviews I conducted with Marchand about her history with eating disorders. The scene was staged as if she were making her own ASMR video. She would speak softly into a microphone, which would also pick up the sounds of cookie making (pouring flour, cracking eggs). We wanted the cookies to seem appetizing for the audience, but in the final cooking scene they are revealed to be made not from organic ingredients but from slime.



Figure 3: Sarah Marchand bakes slime cookies

## MAKING COOKIES 2: COOK

*ANGELE goes to the cooking table, SL. She takes some butter and slowly greases a cookie tray. She takes a tablespoon and spoons the cookie dough into a cookie-sized shape. Hopefully the mic will catch the goopy and ploppy sound. She takes a bite of the raw dough.*

ANGELE:

There's a red flag habit. A sign that there's an eating disorder involved is that they obsessively watch people eating food on YouTube. I know individuals when they're starving themselves they'll give me links to people that they watch and it's just people eating food. And then they pretend that they're eating the food and they'll feel satisfied. Or when they're watching the video and the person eating feels sick to their stomach because they've eaten so much, the person watching finds this... it's like an electric shock reminder: you're going to feel sick if you eat this, you're going to feel disgusting. When I see cooking videos, because I used to do this too, I feel triggered by those kind of feelings.

*ANGELE puts the tray in the oven and sets the timer for 10 minutes.*

### Excerpt 3

Note: Scenes were interspersed with short ASMR videos created by TINGLE BELL and TRIGGER BELL. While the first video attempts to mimic the style and tone of real videos closely the others are failed attempts and they become increasingly disturbing and disgusting.



Figure 4: En Lai Mah as TRIGGER BELL

### ASMR VIDEO 3: TRIGGER SOUNDS

*Video projection of TRIGGER BELL. ANGELE turns over in bed, looking at her phone. TRIGGER BELL is wearing a dress and a realistic bunny mask.*

TRIGGER BELL:

Oh hello. I'm glad you could make it. Everyone's here. We've been waiting for you.

*The camera shows a spread of a picnic. Gordon the Gopher, Nicolas the Bunny and Heinrich the Cat are waiting to eat.*

TRIGGER BELL:

We've got all your favourite things. Why don't you try some?

*The camera takes in the spread. He opens a box of pasta and pours it into a bowl. It is hard and uncooked.*

TRIGGER BELL:

We've got a nice little pasta salad. Let's just add a little mayo.

*He takes off the lid slowly. He dumps the full jar of mayonnaise onto the pasta. It plops out grossly.*

TRIGGER BELL:

I'll make you a tasty sandwich. I've got some fresh whole grain bread.

*He takes a stale baguette.*

TRIGGER BELL:

I'll just cut it open for you.

*He cuts into the bread with a plastic knife but it's rock hard. He saws it. Also, his hands are dirty and leave indelible marks of filth on the bread.*

TRIGGER BELL:

Let's put some toppings on. Let's start with this locally sourced organic ketchup...

*He spreads on too much, using his fingers.*

TRIGGER BELL:

And I know you have a sweet tooth, so we'll put a little Nutella on there...

*He adds some Nutella.*

TRIGGER BELL:

And because you've been so good, why don't we just add a little sugar.

*He pauses for a second.*

TRIGGER BELL:

I know you don't usually but you've been good so let's just add a little taste...

TRIGGER BELL:

...and some fresh meat.

*He dumps a bunch of raw ground beef on top. It is bloody.*

TRIGGER BELL:

And finally, a little bit of *lait de vache* for a special flavour.

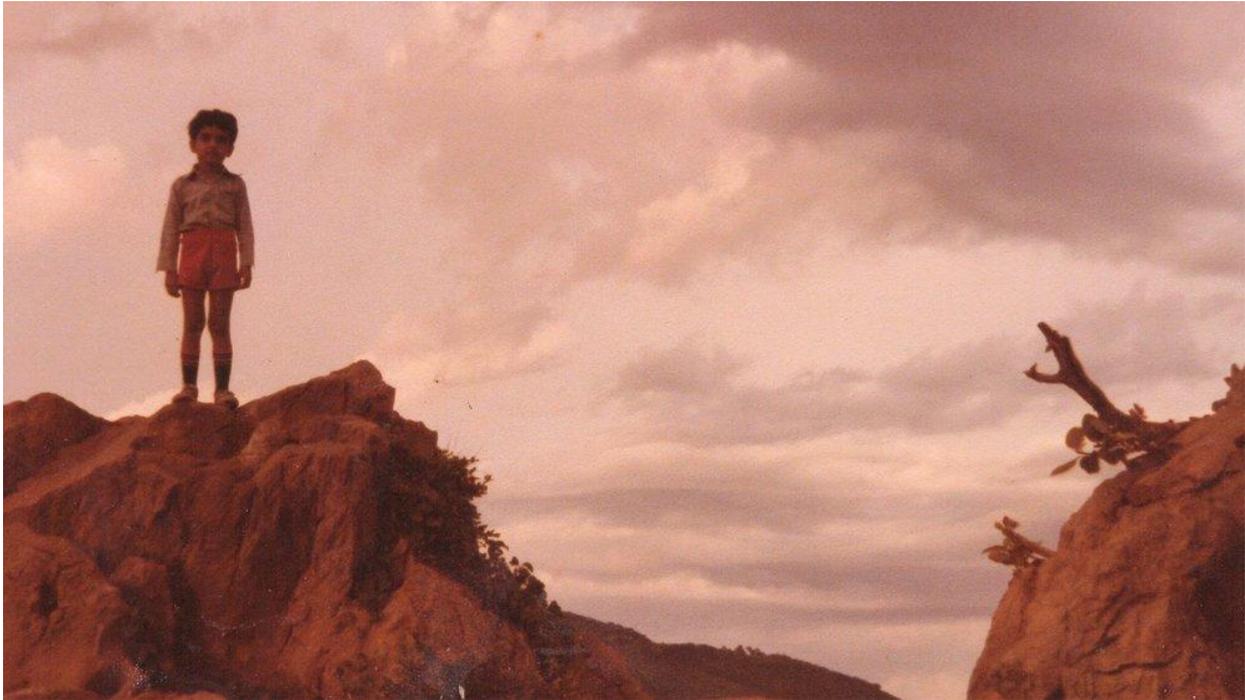
*He pours milk on top and then plays with the sandwich with his fingers. He offers it to the viewer. It makes an atrocious mess. Sound of someone horking.*



*Figure 5: Amanda Corner (left) and Sarah Marchand (right)*



2. *Abu*  
Documentary film, 2017



*Figure 6: A young Arshad Khan climbs a mountain outside of Islamabad, Pakistan in the 1980s*

## About the project

*Abu* is a feature-length documentary film about writer-director Arshad Khan's difficult relationship as a gay man with his father, who adopted an increasingly conservative and intolerant firm of Islam towards the end of his life. The film is constructed almost entirely from found footage taken from Khan's childhood in Lahore, Islamabad, and Toronto. I was brought on as a dramaturg to help structure the film's narrative and write parts of the narration. We did this through interviews with Khan and his family, freewriting exercises, and storyboarding work.

The film premiered at the 2017 Los Angeles Film Festival and won the following awards:

- WINNER Audience Award Florence River To River Indian Film Festival
- WINNER Audience Award Image + Nation Montreal LGBTQI Film Festival
- WINNER Jury Prize - TWIST Seattle Film Festival
- WINNER Best Feature - Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival
- WINNER Jury Prize - aGLIFF Austin LGBTQI Film Festival

## Excerpt

Note: When we began the project, Arshad was extremely angry at his father, who he was also mourning, and at many members of his family. This risked giving the film a tendentious feel. In interviews I conducted with him, we tried to isolate key scenes of his childhood that could be used in the story. In doing so, we unlocked some very difficult memories but we were also able to see his father in a more generous light. In the end, the film is about reconciliation and its limits. We see each of the characters come a certain way towards understanding each other but there is a limit they cannot cross. This scene gives a sense of how reconciliation was explored in the script.



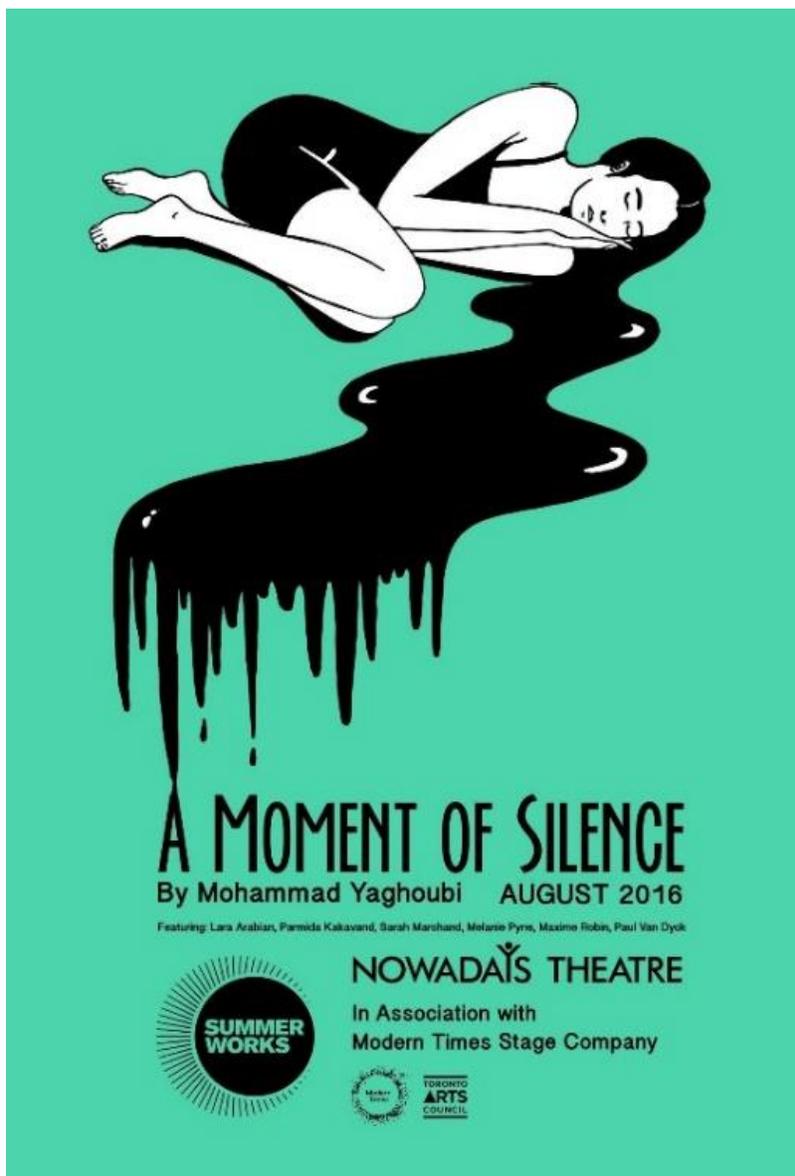
Figure 7: Arshad Khan and his father "Abu" in the 1990s

ACT 1		
Title: Once we too were beautiful, like the fragrance in old books – Faiz Ahmed Faiz		
Audio	Visuals	Time
Abu used to say that his children Arshad (that's me) and Asma (my eldest sister) would bring him either great fame or great shame.	Picture of Abu, Asma and Arshad	:20

Audio	Visuals	Time
<p>I spent years rejecting my father but after he died I realized that my identity is intricately woven with his life journey whether I like it or not.</p> <p>Despite my desire to be nothing like him, the fact is, Abu was an art lover just like me. He loved music, he loved cinema. He was an avid photographer. In his youth he always carried a camera around his shoulder. That's a passion I take from him. Abu loved technology and always bought the latest gadgets and cameras. It was as if he wanted to capture beauty and keep its memory forever.</p> <p>We were the first family amongst our friends in Islamabad to buy a VHS movie camera in 1981. That's me, age 7, directing my brother.</p> <p>Our family archive includes photos going back to the 1930s. I discovered VHS tapes, Hi8 tapes, VHS-C tapes, mini-DV tapes and flipcam and iphone videos. It opened a Pandora's box of intrigue.</p>	<p>Shannon Harris shoot in condo. Photos on the floor. VHS and other media on shelves.</p> <p>Janay Kahan Gayee who din - SONG</p>	<p>1:00</p>



Figure 8: Animation by Davide Di Saro



3. *A Moment of Silence*  
Theatre, 2016

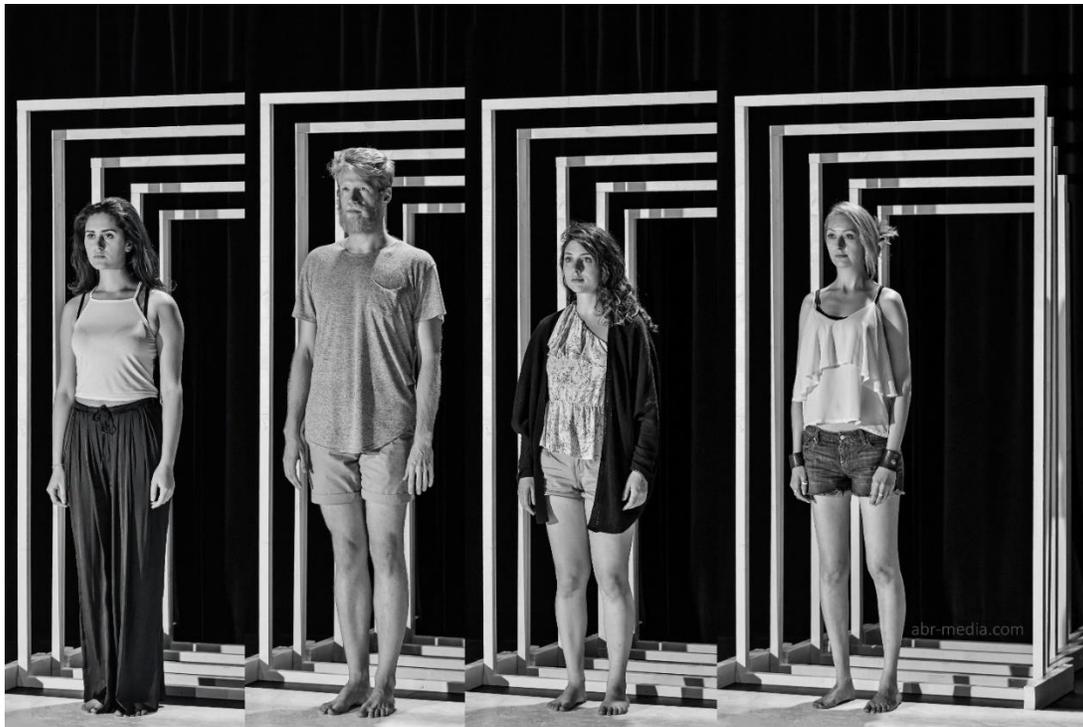


Figure 7: From left to right, Parmida Kakavand, Maxime Robin, Sarah Marchand, Melanie Pyne.

### About the project

*A Moment of Silence* is a well-known play in Iran, originally written by Mohammad Yaghoubi in 1990. It was the winner of the Playwrights' Society of Iran's Best Play prize and was voted the second most popular play in Iran since the 1979 Revolution. Having re-located from Tehran to Toronto, Yaghoubi needed a dramaturg who could anticipate what a Toronto audience would know about the political situation in Iran. Additionally, Yaghoubi's writing explores political problems through oblique poetic symbolism and this has allowed him to deftly navigate censorship in his own country and speak to an audience that knows how to read between the lines. Balancing these aspects was a challenge that we met in a variety of (imperfect) ways.

We added scenes of exposition in which characters spoke about the sounds and sights and traumas of the Islamic Revolution. We also added surtitles with stage directions for certain scenes that are ambiguous about whether they are happening in fiction or reality. These stage directions began as literal explanations of the action occurring on stage, but soon began to diverge, creating an alienation effect that suggested that they may not be reliable. Sometimes the surtitles would offer footnotes with information about specific cultural references and other times they would tell a different story from what was being shown. In these ways, the audience could be fed just enough information to be able to follow the story but without didactic overload. My other task was to adjust the idiomatic language of the script, which had been translated by a speaker non-native speaker of English. The challenge was to make the language flow for Canadian actors without entirely losing the flavour and the poetic tone of the original Farsi syntax.

## Excerpt

Note: This scene shows our attempt to mix political details into the personal stories of the characters. Throughout the play, the character Shiva keeps falling asleep for multiple years at a time. Each time she awakens, the country has transformed as has her family.



Figure 8: Maxime Robin (left) and Parmida Kakavand (right). The subtitles indicate thoughts not expressed by the characters.

### SCENE 5. WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING

*SHIVA is sitting between her sister SHIRIN and JIMMY, SHEIDA is standing a little far away from SHIVA. They are talking simultaneously.*

**JIMMY:** The Shah is gone...

**SHIVA:** Where's Dad? I called Shahram's house-

**JIMMY:** Didn't you hear me? We don't have a royal family any more. We are a Republic now, no more Shah. The head of the government is some religious guy.

**SHEIDA:** (*Immediately after SHIVA's question, overlapping JIMMY*). SHAHRAM and his family left for America, they took father with them. Hey, Jimmy, will you be quiet and let me talk?

**SHIRIN:** Dad wanted to take you with him but you didn't wake up in time to apply for a passport.

**SHEIDA:** We'll call them tonight and tell them you've woken up.

**SHIVA:** Where's Kayvan?

**SHIRIN:** He'll be here in an hour or so.

**SHIVA:** You've changed so much.

**SHEIDA:** Sweetheart, it's been three years since the last time you saw us.

**JIMMY:** (*Overlapping from: "Where's Kayvan?"*) I wish you were here to see what happened. The people flooded in to the streets shouting: "Down with the Shah!" (*Laughing*) The Shah burst into tears!

**SHIRIN:** Queen Farah cried too.

**JIMMY:** But it was the Shah who took a fist full of Iran's soil not the Queen.

**SHIVA:** Oh, my God! What does it mean that I was asleep for three years?

**JIMMY:** Well, maybe you needed it. You were tired.

**SHEIDA:** Did you ever dream during these three years?

**SHIVA:** I don't remember anything.

**SHIRIN:** I've been waiting so long for this day, to take you out. I'm dying to see your expression when you look at everything. Jimmy, let's take her out right now. I really want to see her stunned face. Look, darling; don't be surprised when you see all the women wearing a veil.

**SHIVA:** Why are they all wearing a veil?

**SHIRIN:** There's an Islamic government now, sweetie. No woman is allowed to go out without a veil. You remember Ebi, who you adored so much. She hated it so much she left for America. You'd be amazed when we go out now. Jimmy, would you take us for a ride?

**JIMMY:** (*Overlapping*) The revolution came! They closed all the bars. All the singers left. Everyone who left took a fistful of the homeland's soil, even Ebi, the singer. The homeland almost ran out of soil!

**SHIVA:** Whose house is this?

**SHIRIN:** This is ours. Real estate dropped; we could afford to buy our own place.

**JIMMY:** (*Overlapping*) The old owner took a fistful of the homeland's soil too!

**SHIVA:** (*To SHEIDA*) What's wrong with you?

**SHEIDA:** I'm just happy you're awake.

**JIMMY:** SHIVA?

*SHIVA turns toward him but JIMMY stares at her without saying a word.*

**SHIVA:** Yeah?

**JIMMY:** Just keep looking at me like this so I can figure out which animal you look like.

**SHIRIN:** Jimmy, come on! This is not the time.

**JIMMY:** Behind every human face, there's an animal that you can't recognize. But because I am an animal expert, I can figure it out immediately (*continues to stare at SHIVA*).

**SHIRIN:** At least tell her the whole story. Jimmy used to study zoology, but they closed all the universities after the Cultural Revolution.

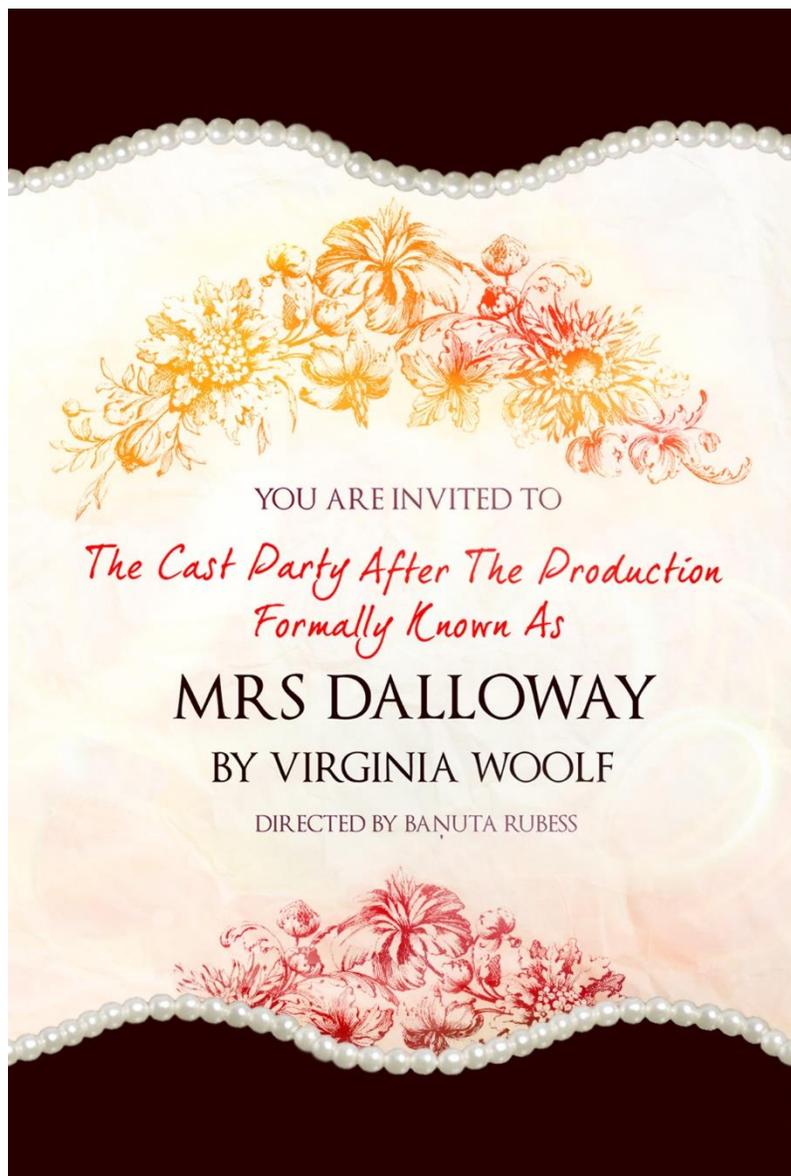
**JIMMY:** And now I'm a taxi driver. What's wrong with that?

**SHIRIN:** No one said anything.

**JIMMY:** Keep looking at me.

**SHIRIN:** Why don't you tell us which animal you are first, Jimmy.

**JIMMY:** A donkey. And sometimes, a dog. I'm alternating between the two.



4. *You Are Invited to the Cast Party Following the Production Formally Known as Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*  
Theatre, 2014



Figure 9: The ensemble at Mrs. Dalloway's party

### About the project

*You Are Invited to the Cast Party...* was a student production by the graduating acting class at the University of Toronto. Professor Bañuta Rubess had long been interested in adapting Virginia Woolf's great modernist novel *Mrs Dalloway* for the stage. As the Teaching Assistant for the course, I became the dramaturg for the play, conducting research and providing production dramaturgy. To arrive at a script, we broke down the novel mechanically into the stories that get told. We would then take sections and the cast would improvise around them, discovering characters, lines, and images. Somewhere along the way, the students decided that the show was less of a pure adaptation and more like a cast party in which actors are re-living their favourite moments of the show, playing each other's roles and improvising costumes and props from their surroundings. That idea allowed for a departure from realism and gave the show a ludic sensibility. With an ensemble of nine actors contributing ideas in addition to the director, rehearsals risking becoming a frantic cacophony of creativity, making frequent consultation with a production dramaturg all the more necessary.

## Excerpt

This scene gives a sense of how the script was built out of the language of the novel. Actors shifted from narrating lines from the novel to diegetic dialogue, playing one character in one scene, and other in the next. This allowed them to move fluidly across multiple roles, crossing gender and race lines. In the text, lines of narration are attributed to the actors' own names while those uttered by the people they are playing are under the characters' names.



Figure 10: Rion Chow, Megan Ready-Walters, and Madeleine Swinkin sip cocktails in improvised costumes.

### SCENE 46: MEMORY - THE FOUNTAIN (46) (F1)

*CHELSEA and MADDY on the couch. JOEL standing on the SL platform. AVIVA, ERIC, LIZ and MEGAN playing cards. PAIGE at the piano. RION sitting down on the SR platform.*

CHELSEA

The final scene, the terrible scene which Peter believed mattered more than anything in the whole of his life happened at three o'clock in the afternoon of a very hot day.

YOUNG PETER

It's got to be finished one way or the other.

CHELSEA

He said to himself.

LIZ

*(getting up to get the note from JOEL)*

He sent a note asking Clarissa to meet him by the fountain at three.

YOUNG PETER

Something very important has happened.

*MEGAN pushes the card table away. Creation of the fountain.*

RION

The fountain was in the middle of a little shrubbery, far from the house. There she came, even before the time, and they stood with the fountain between them, the spout (it was broken) dribbling water incessantly. How sights fix themselves upon the mind! For example, the vivid green moss.

MADDY

She did not move.

YOUNG PETER

Tell me the truth, tell me the truth--

MADDY

He kept on saying.

RION

He felt as if his forehead would burst.

LIZ

She seemed contracted, petrified. She did not move.

YOUNG PETER

Tell me the truth--

PAIGE

He repeated, when suddenly that old man Breitkopf popped his head in carrying the Times--

ERIC  
Stared at them.

AVIVA  
Gaped.

PAIGE  
And went away.

YOUNG PETER  
Tell me the truth.

RION  
He felt that he was grinding against  
something physically hard--

MADDY  
She was unyielding.

CHELSEA  
She was like iron

LIZ  
Like flint

AVIVA  
Rigid up the backbone

ERIC  
And when she said

YOUNG CLARISSA  
It's no use. It's no use. This is the end.

RION  
After he had spoken for hours, it seemed, with the tears running down his cheeks.

ERIC  
It was as if she had hit him in the face.

PAIGE  
She turned, she left him, went away.



*Figure 11: Megan Ready-Walters and Joel Chico at the cast party*

YOUNG PETER  
Clarissa! Clarissa!

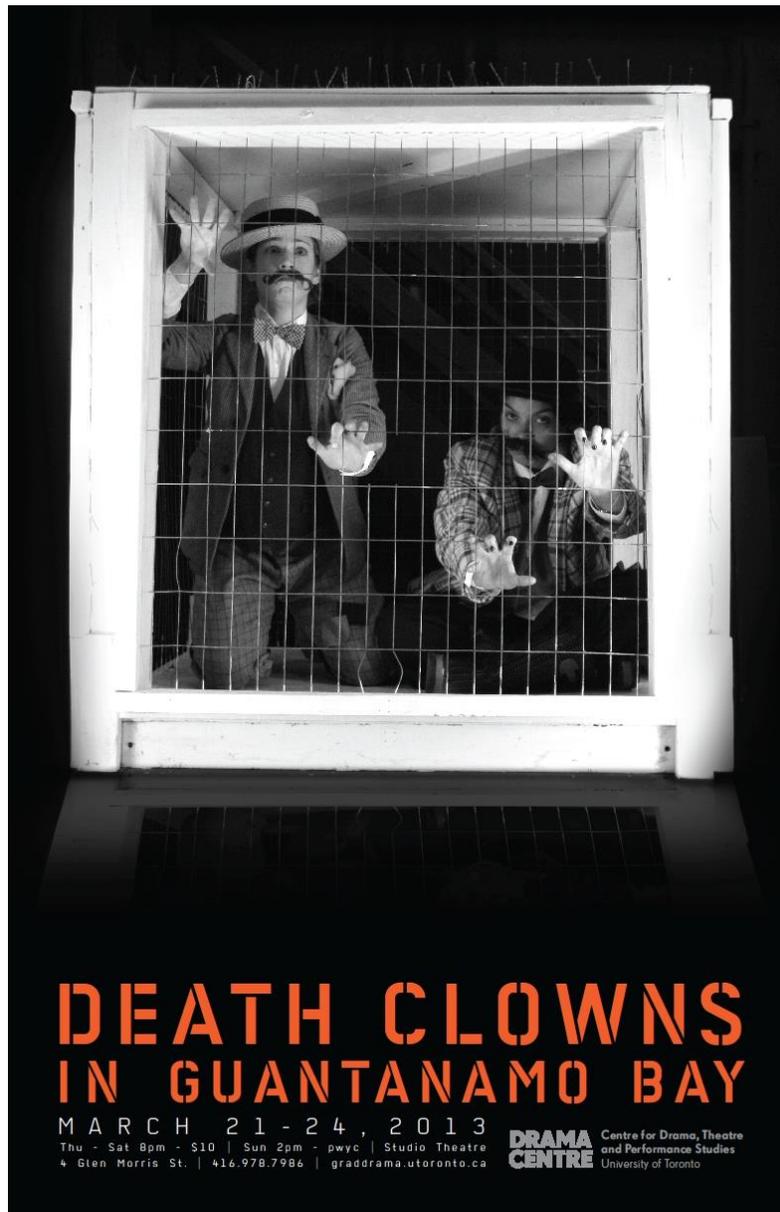
CHELSEA  
But she never came back. It was over.

LIZ  
He went away that night. He never saw her again.

PETER  
It was awful, awful, awful! Still, the sun is hot. Still, one gets over things. Still, life had a way of adding day to day.



*Figure 12: Joel Chico looks on at a funeral*



5. *Death Clowns in Guantanamo Bay*  
Devised theatre, 2013



Figure 13: The ensemble performs "stress position yoga"

### About the project

The idea for *Death Clowns in Guantanamo Bay* emerged from a practiced-based research project in the first year of my PhD at the University of Toronto. For that research, I was interested in exploring what Hans-Thies Lehmann calls a "politics of perception," which he sees as part of the way that postdramatic theatre has displaced more the overt models of politics that characterized political drama or epic theatre. I was curious to test what it would look like to stage a play about an explicitly political subject connected to my dissertation research using postdramatic methods. The following year, I assembled a team of about 40 people to produce the show. Our dramaturgy teams included four writers who devised scenes. The play soon came to be about the politics of representation in the context of a subject shrouded in secrecy and complicated by cultural difference. We used a form of clowning as a way to gesture towards the failure of representation in our work. The play was assembled much like a collage, using images from drawn from our research and repurposed for theatrical ends.

## Artistic Director's Note

We stayed up all night, my friends and I, reading, watching, listening to reports about Guantanamo Bay until the prison camp infected our dreams. When our dreams became nightmares, we felt we could say something about it that wasn't just another report. We looked at the camp as foolish witnesses, as clowns who cannot tell you what goes on there, only what it's like to be outside it, to wonder, to need to know. Guantanamo Bay is so close to the sea. The detainees hear it at night, they write about it in poems etched onto Styrofoam cups, but they are never permitted to see it. Reading the words of the detainees in translation we try to reconstruct their world in our minds like they reconstruct the sea.

Mani al-Utaybi, Yasser al-Zahrani, and Ali Abdullah were the first prisoners to die at Guantanamo in 2006. They were former hunger strikers who had been force fed during their detention. A government report concluded that they had hanged themselves in their cells in a suicide pact. They had made mannequins of themselves using clothes to distract the guards and made nooses from their bedsheets. A later independent investigation wondered how they had managed to tie their hands and feet together, stuff rags down their throats, climb up on the sinks in their cells, jump off and hang dead for two hours, unnoticed by guards.

In this play, we do not reveal the truth about these men's deaths. Rather, we are telling you our story, a story about looking into Guantanamo Bay and not being able to see. In the spirit of secrecy and revelation, we divided into cells to create the piece. The cells worked autonomously from each other. Information was passed strategically between them. As images passed between the cells, they lost literal meaning and began to gain the kind of significance that images have in dreams. The effect is something like a collage made from poems by the detainees, from songs taken from the Guantanamo Torture Playlist used to humiliate the detainees and keep them awake, and from the euphemistic language of the GITMO authorities. The connection we have with Guantanamo Bay is political, especially because of our government's uncritical attitude towards it, but it is also a part of the world that our psyches must adapt to. As long as it remains open we cannot dream in peace.



Figure 14: Peter van Wart and nine other clowns crammed into a box

Matt Jones, Artistic Director

## Excerpt

This scene demonstrates how we repurposed found images from Guantanamo Bay. In the prison camp, detainees would be forced to assume stress positions for hours on end. They were often kept awake by bright lights shone into their cells or by music blasted at them. The musical selections were often very carefully chosen for the amusement of the guards: Rage Against the Machine's anthems to rebellion and the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive" were meant to seem cleverly ironic. In this scene, a chanteuse sings a lullaby version of "Baby One More Time" by Britney Spears, a song that was used for its erotic undertone (understood as an affront to the detainees' commitment to modesty) and the irony of the line, "Hit me baby one more time."



Figure 15: Peter van Wart, Alex Contreras, and Alan Belerique try to sleep. The SLEEP FAIRY (Grace Poltrack) blows sleep dust in their eyes

## SCENE 14: SLEEP NO MORE

*Three DETAINEES stand on blocks behind the fence. They are chained up with their arms behind their back.*

*The third CALL TO PRAYER is indicated. The DETAINEES seem to lose themselves in it.*

*PROJECTION: "Oh Night, I am a bright light that you will not obscure."*

*A lullaby is played by the musicians. It is an dreamy, slowed down version of "Baby One More Time" by Brittny Spears, but that will only likely be apparent when the singing starts.*

*The DETAINEES are weary, their bodies and eyelids heavy as they stand. They stare vacantly into the audience and try to hold their heads up. Finally, DETAINEE 1 lets his eyes slowly shut, DETAINEE 2 falls asleep and his chin falls forward, DETAINEE 3's head falls back.*

*SFX: Instantly "Welcome to the Jungle" blasts over the house speakers at an excruciating volume.*

*The DETAINEES open their eyes, snap their heads to attention and the music switches back to the lullaby. They both stand up straight and stare straight ahead for several seconds. Behind them, projections of sleepy images appear (sleepy babies, cartoons of people going to sleep). They are getting sleepy again. A CHANTEUSE appears and walks up toward the stage singing the lullaby. They can barely resist falling asleep. They fall asleep again, each detainee exchanging their previous position with another.*

*SFX: "Welcome to the Jungle."*

*They snap back to their original position. The CHANTEUSE comes up to them and serenades them through the fence. Enter the SLEEP FAIRY from backstage. She sprinkles sleep dust over them and wraps them in cozy blankets. They look at her begging her with their eyes to stop tempting them to sleep. She gives them reassuring looks as if to say, "It's OK, go ahead and sleep, you know you want to." The DETAINEES try not to sleep but they fail.*

*SFX: "Welcome to the Jungle."*

*The DETAINEES awaken again. The CHANTEUSE and the SLEEP FAIRY continue their work. Some GUARDS appear and set up some fans to blow freezing cold air on the DETAINEES. The music picks up: it is no longer a lullaby. STROBE LIGHT. A TRUMPETER appears on stage and starts playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" into the DETAINEES' ears on a trumpet. Suddenly everything pauses and the fans are turned off as GUARD E on the BALCONY shouts out.*

*GUARD E  
Stop!*

*Everyone on stage stops what they are doing and looks at GUARD E.*

*GUARD E  
(waving a sheet of paper)*

A message from the doctors!

EVERYONE ON STAGE

Oh, a message from the doctors. From the doctors? Oh, the doctors!

*The DETAINEES look relieved. GUARD E folds up the sheet of paper and puts it back in his pocket. He runs down the stairs and through the aisle to the stage. He takes a pointlessly long route. When he arrives he forgets where he put the note, pats himself down, then finally discovers it in the same pocket he put it in. He unfolds it, turns it right-side up and reads it.*

GUARD E

The doctors say keep going.

*Everything picks up where it left off, with the CHANTEUSE singing the lullaby, the MINSTRELS playing Britney, the SLEEP FAIRY sprinkling sleep dust, the GUARDS turn back on the fans, the TRUMPETER plays the anthem and "Welcome to the Jungle" plays over top.*

*Darkness and silence.*



Figure 16: Myrto Koumarios as the CHANTEUSE