



# 21 Faces of **BORDER CROSSINGS**



How can we mark the 21st birthday of an organisation committed to the transformational potential of performance, the sharing of public space, the imagining of fresh new worlds through the joint creations of people from wildly distinct cultures and backgrounds? Not through the words of any one person. Border Crossings has from its inception been about creating an equal space for creative dialogues and dynamic interactions. It accepts and embraces the human realities of multiple truths, the catalytic energy of difference, the theatrical intensity of ferocious and tender contradiction.

So for our 21st birthday, we have asked 21 people who have in various ways been involved with the company to say something about that experience, and what it has meant for them. They include performers, participants, and political activists. They come from seventeen different countries. They are not a representative sample of the thousands of people who have engaged with our work, nor are they necessarily the most significant or celebrated. But they each have a story to tell, and each of those stories is different and compelling. As you look at our 21 faces, you will find them looking back at you.

The 21st century is unravelling itself as a time of unprecedented, intimate connections across our fragile planet; and simultaneously as an time of terror, of alienation and the politics of hate. More than ever, we need cultural spaces in which we can come together as equals and celebrate our common humanity. Not just as an idea - but as a palpable truth, something we touch and taste and feel.

That is the essence of Border Crossings.

**Michael Walling - Artistic Director**





# BORDER CROSSINGS

Waseem Khan

“Drama has been a subject that has greatly influenced me both personally and academically. I have found that through drama, I have been able to free my mind and my heart. It has helped me to grow as a person and, through acting and character work, I have been able to understand emotions and states of mind more clearly. Thank you so much for the hard work and giving us confidence. Looking forward seeing you soon again.”



## REFUGEE THEATRE

Waseem Khan is a young refugee from Afghanistan. He now lives in London, where he is supported by the charity CARAS (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers). CARAS aims to offer a range of learning opportunities and environments which build people's confidence, knowledge, skills and personal autonomy; and to provide spaces, activities and opportunities that facilitate the development of supportive relationships, communities and networks, and contribute to improved wellbeing. Many of the young people supported by the organisation have arrived in the UK with no family, and speak very little or no English.

Border Crossings has been working with Waseem and other young refugees at CARAS since 2014. In 2015, they created their own devised performance, using a combination of their native languages and English to engage with themes around identity, loss, family, and the process of making a new life.

With significant numbers of refugees fleeing to the UK there is an urgent need to develop strategies that allow them to integrate into society, while at the same time retaining a sense of their own identity, and a pride in their cultural roots. The need is particularly acute among younger refugees, many of whom arrive in the UK with no family or support network.

Border Crossings has a proven track record of delivering meaningful creative integration projects which engender a more inclusive, intercultural space and promote wider benefits / skills development. Our unique approach encourages participants to retain a strong sense of their own culture and its value, while also recognising cultural differences and learning how to operate safely and respectfully within the host culture. These processes are inherently performance based and so are ideal material for creative exploration and learning through theatrical techniques.

Successful projects include a programme with young refugees for CARAS developing a play in English, French and Somali; and running workshops for Moroccan and Arab women from the Al Hasaniya group, looking at what makes them angry! The demand for our work has been high and has grown as the refugee crisis develops. In January 2016 alone we worked with over 100 recently arrived young refugees with the British Red Cross and South London Refugee Association.

Border Crossings has taken a central role in the European Union's Cultural Response to the Refugee Crisis. Michael Walling wrote the introduction to the Voices of Culture Working Party's Report, and presented the report to the OMC Group in Brussels.





# BORDER CROSSINGS

Peter Sellars



“In the wake of Brexit, the most important agenda that looms before the United Kingdom is to crawl back into its snail shell as quickly and completely as possible. Links with the outside world are unnecessary and risk diluting the purity of British culture. I am alarmed to note that for some inexplicable reason, Border Crossings continues to function as an organisation with a mission to build bridges across cultures, theatrical traditions and contemporary problems. They seem to be pursuing this mission with a single-minded devotion, developing work that is artistically sophisticated and potentially high-impact. I am greatly distressed at the deluded ideals of these sorry people. With a small shake of the head I can only wish them well on their hopeless quest.”

# RADICAL THEATRE

Opera, theatre and festival director Peter Sellars has gained renown worldwide for his groundbreaking and transformative interpretations of artistic masterpieces and collaborative projects with an extraordinary range of creative artists across three decades. Whether it is Bach, Mozart, Handel, Shakespeare, Sophocles, or the 16th-century Chinese playwright Tang Xianzu, Peter Sellars strikes a universal chord with audiences, engaging and illuminating contemporary social and political issues.

Peter has been a driving force in the creation of many new works with longtime collaborator composer John Adams, including *Nixon in China* (on which Michael Walling was Assistant Director), *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *Doctor Atomic*, and *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*.

Peter has led several major arts festivals, including the 1990 and 1993 Los Angeles Festivals; the 2002 Adelaide Arts Festival in Australia; and the 2003 Venice Biennale International Festival of Theatre in Italy. In 2006 he was Artistic Director of *New Crowned Hope*, a month-long festival in Vienna for which he invited international artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to create new work in the fields of music, theatre, dance, film, the visual arts, and architecture for the city's celebration of Mozart's 250th birth anniversary.

Peter is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA and Resident Curator of the Telluride Film Festival. He is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the Erasmus Prize, the Sundance Institute Risk-Takers Award, and the Gish Prize, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Peter has been Patron of Border Crossings since 2006. He advises Michael on the company's Artistic Direction, and has given a number of talks for us on his visits to London.

"Most people in the world today have much of their fate decided in London and New York. So we sit here, thinking 'Oh my god, what can we do for people, wherever?' - but in fact London is the place. So we're not actually distant at all. Just re-organising people's inner geography.

The Greek plays, and the Japanese plays and the Chinese plays - most early theatre - most plays begin with a long section of geography. Euripides or Sophocles will describe the journey from here to there, will describe what you have to encounter, will actually make the geography immediate and personal for the theatre audience. Every Japanese play, the Noh plays, begin with this long journey of the principal character - and the first two pages of a six page play are devoted to how to get from here to there, and link where we are now with the place we're talking about. That idea that theatre actually has in its DNA - Travel. This act of expanding our inner geography as well as our outer geography and connecting through time and space and recognising that time and place are, of course, not simply material, but lead to moments of moral urgency.

So suddenly we are in solidarity with the farmers of Chiapas. We are in solidarity with Egyptians in Tahrir Square....

We forget how intimate we are with the fires in the Bangladesh factories. How intimate we are with a system that won't let people live on their land. How intimate we are with the flooding in Bangladesh or Honduras. We forget how intimate we are with all these things that are taking place in the world supposedly at a distance - but in fact there is no distance at all.

So for me this idea of Border Crossings is - of course, there are no borders. At all. We wish there were - but the world is interpenetrating in ways that can't be stopped, can't be pushed back, that are permanent and only getting more intricate and more intimate. And this idea of extremely intimate relations with people and events that are at great distances is the reality of our time in globalisation."

Peter Sellars speaking at Border Crossings' event  
**Radical Theatre** - February 2015



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Iman Aoun



“I got to know Michael Walling and the Border Crossings team when ASHTAR Theatre co-produced THIS FLESH IS MINE and I had the honour and privilege to act as Hecuba in Palestine and UK. The encounter with the team and the work on the play was a great, deep and rich experience on both the artistic and humane level. Border Crossings is a true bridge between cultures and a genuine spirited organisation. I congratulate them and wish them more decades to come.”

# THIS FLESH IS MINE

Iman Aoun is Artistic Director of ASHTAR Theatre in Palestine, which she and Edward Muallem established in Jerusalem in 1991. Working across Palestine, with bases in Ramallah and Gaza, ASHTAR offers theatre training programmes, Forum Theatre, and professional productions. Landmark productions have included: 48 Minutes for Palestine, The Gaza Monologues and Richard II at the Globe to Globe festival. Iman has co-written two books on theatre training. She also initiated the 2003 Euro-Palestinian project 100 artists for Palestine, and the 2010 Global project The Gaza Monologues.

ASHTAR first worked with Border Crossings in 2014 on the co-production THIS FLESH IS MINE, with Iman as Hecuba, performing on the West Bank and in London. In 2016, the project developed further, with WHEN NOBODY RETURNS, in which Iman played Penelope.



Brian Woolland's play THIS FLESH IS MINE brings together Homer's Troy and the contemporary life and politics of the Middle East. Themes of war, death, grief, honour and (a lack of) reconciliation resonate thunderously in this joint production by the UK-based company Border Crossings and the Palestine-based Ashtar Theatre.

Michael Walling, the director and Border Crossing's founder, originally thought ("Perhaps rather naively," he concedes) that the play would end as the Iliad does: with Priam's visit to ask Achilles for the return of his son Hector's body. But things changed on the theatre-makers' trip to Lebanon.

During development workshops in Beirut with the theatre company Zoukak, they realised this ending would not cut it if the play was to reverberate with the contemporary Middle East, specifically Israel and Palestine. This marked the play's dividing line: "Mythology should be [what came] before – and something much closer to a complex and very confusing contemporary reality should arise from that." The play's second act is set in the modern world, with hefty automatic guns, car bombs, and ringtones fit for Jack Bauer's CTU.

Scripts and plots continued to shift through working with Ashtar in Palestine and observing the everyday lives of the people there. One of the actors winced at a line about not wanting to go to a refugee camp; her mother had been born in one. "In Palestine, going to a refugee camp is a badge of pride," explains Walling.

Political tectonics crept in again: they were in Ramallah the night that Hamas and Fatah signed a unity pact, and the chats between Hector and Priam about the best ways of resisting a siege, whether with immediate action or a more cautious approach, took on greater significance. "That sense of ... how people who are under siege navigate the needs of leadership and articulate their resistance became very central," explains Walling.

As the play was making its way to London, the 15-year-old brother of one of the Palestinian actors was shot and injured by Israeli forces on Nakba day. It is in the scenes with Hecuba (played affectingly by Iman Aoun, co-founder and artistic director of Ashtar), "mother to a brood of ghosts", that the play truly breaks down barriers. She lights candles under pictures of her martyred sons, stuck along the walls of the space – as they are in refugee camps in Palestine and Lebanon. She sanely questions the madness of war: "What will it take, this all-out assault?"

Ellie Violet Bramley - **The Guardian**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Andrew French



“As an actor, as a collaborator and as a lover of theatre, Border Crossings challenged, inspired and confounded all that I thought I knew about what it means to be an actor and a member of the human race. Never simplistic, always theatrical, being a member of this company is perhaps the highlight of my career. Their work is important, erudite and passionate.”



Andrew French is a leading British classical actor, having performed with the RSC, National Theatre, Globe, Almeida and Royal Court. He first worked with Border Crossings in 2014, playing the role of Achilles in *THIS FLESH IS MINE* by Brian Woolland. He went on to play Odysseus in the companion play, *WHEN NOBODY RETURNS*.



## THIS FLESH IS MINE

*THIS FLESH IS MINE* is a radical adaptation of The Iliad ..... The first act is situated in the ancient world before a 'booming explosion' brings us into the modern world of the second act. Dark lighting and menacing soundscapes create the foreboding atmosphere of a besieged city almost destroyed by a decade-long war. Visually, there is little to situate the play in either Troy or Palestine. However, in keeping with its contemporary setting, the second act has Achilles dressed in modern army fatigues, carrying a revolver and using a mobile phone.

Performed by six actors (two female and four male of which three were Palestinian and three were British) in multiple roles, the play begins in the foyer of Ashtar, with a quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon over Briseis, the former's war-prize and concubine. Whereas The Iliad presents Briseis as a marginal character, even though her kidnapping drives its plot, this version places her at the centre of the text. We learn more about her through her own monologues, her frenzied arguments with the ghosts of her father and brother, in which she appears to be having a nervous breakdown, and her dialogues with Achilles and Hecuba. As this strand of the narrative develops into the modern world of the second act, the performance becomes less about Achilles' loss of honour to Agamemnon and more about whether or not Briseis will accept his offer of safety in exile.

Yet, *THIS FLESH IS MINE* is also as much about the despair of the ageing king and queen of Troy, Priam and Hecuba, and the vainglory of their son Hector who is intent on defeating Achilles. At the end of the first act, when Hector is killed in battle, Priam must humble himself to Achilles for the return of his son's mutilated body.... The question of who 'owns' whose body is a recurring motif throughout the play, and how characters refer to their own and each other's bodies signifies ownership, autonomy, selfhood and presence. They also signify who gets to be included in the national body and who is excluded to those 'unliveable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life.

Gabriel Vargehese - from *Homer in Palestine* in *Contemporary Approaches to Adaptation* edited by Kara Reilly, London: Palgrave Macmillan 2017



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Rosanna Raymond



“ORIGINS allowed me to create a space in London where I could continue to practice as an artist from the Moana Nui A Kiwa, the great ocean of Kiwa, sometimes known as the Pacific. Through the festival I was able to nurture my own creative practice, I exhibited as an artist, curated a Matariki (Maori New Year) celebration, shared my knowledge of Te Ao Maori with school children, as well I was able to work with my own Moana community allowing us to share experiences and cultural heritage with other great First Nations artists that ORIGINS bought over. No other Festival supported my work as an ongoing relationship that built up together and for this I am truly grateful, ORIGINS offers London a view from the past... active in the present...reminding the UK of her colonial past through the arts, and with love.”

Rosanna Raymond was born in New Zealand of Samoan descent. A 'Tusitala' (a teller of tales) at heart her art practice takes a variety of forms ranging from installation works, spoken words and body adornment, fusing traditional Pacific practises with modern innovations and techniques.

A published writer, with art works held in museum and private collections around the world, she has forged a role for herself as a producer and commentator on contemporary Pacific culture, both in Aotearoa NZ, the UK and the USA working within museums and higher education institutions as an artist, performer, curator, guest speaker and workshop leader.

Rosanna has undertaken art residencies at the De Young Museum San Francisco, University of Hawaii Manoa and the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology UK, where she curated the internationally acclaimed Pasifika Styles exhibition with Dr Amiria Salmond.

Rosanna was Indigenous Associate for the first four editions of Border Crossings' ORIGINS FESTIVAL.

## BORDER CROSSINGS

# ORIGINS

Cultural events and festivals are typically about bringing people together. However, Border Crossings' ORIGINS FESTIVAL OF FIRST NATIONS takes it a step further; bringing people who have generally been sidelined by modern discourse back into the limelight.

The term 'First Nations' is used by the festival's Artistic Director, Michael Walling, when referring to the indigenous peoples at the heart of the festival.... Through theatre, comedy, film, art, music and workshops, ORIGINS aims to spread the message that we have much to learn from indigenous cultures.

And what is the significance of having a festival to celebrate 'First Nations'? Walling reasons that it is of utmost importance: "I became more and more aware that there was a lot going wrong in London and the Western world; particularly the financial collapse in 2008". It was this contemplation of the environment, family and community difficulties in the West that led Walling to realise that other cultures have more to offer than just novelty. There was also a huge wealth of enlightening concepts to be found. "We need to learn from people who do things a little differently from us, and we need to stop pretending we've got all the answer to the world's problems," Walling explains, emphasising his appreciation for "cultures which are much more about community, respect for land, living in a continuity, being aware of your past and therefore being aware of your future."

Walling appreciates that London maintains a status as the world centre for theatre, which he describes as being "almost justified". However, he believes theatre can do a lot more to repair faults in society: "There's an act of reparation that has to be done. So much destruction was reaped on these lands and these people, and they have not recovered from it." He believes that we can do something to honour them by creating a space where people can start talking to each other as equals. "Theatre can do that," he concludes. "Economics and politics can't, because you don't meet as equals in those situations. But in culture you do. We're trying to create a space where people can actually know each other."

Lara Akinawo – A Younger Theatre





# BORDER CROSSINGS

Aaryan Uriakhil



“People from all over the world came to our school for a week to tell us about the different ways they live. We were able to learn a lot of their songs and dances. In this picture, my face has been painted like a Maori tattoo. We learned the haka, which is a Maori dance. It’s very exciting when people come who are proud of being different - it makes girls like me feel proud of who we are as well.”

## BORDER CROSSINGS

# ORIGINS

Aaryan Uriakil is an Afghan British girl, attending Cavendish Primary School in Hounslow, West London. Cavendish is a small community school with a diverse range of pupils from many different parts of the world. One of its key aims is to bring the diverse school population together and help them to understand how they fit into today's multicultural Britain, expanding their understanding of other people's backgrounds and cultures, so as to make the community and the school a better place.

The picture below shows Aaryan and her friends performing a haka, under the guidance of Maori expert Bruce Simpson.



Cavendish Primary School is an established partner for Border Crossings: a high level of trust has been established over time, so that the school was daring enough to take all its pupils off timetable for the entire first week of Border Crossings' ORIGINS FESTIVAL 2015, allowing them to experience a week of indigenous cultural activities. A huge range of artists appearing at the festival visited the school, offering both performances (e.g. didgeridoo, traditional dance, Native American flute, storytelling, Scissor dance) and workshops (e.g. embroidery, haka, lacrosse, cookery). The children from Years 3-6 saw the Maori film *Whale Rider* as part of our Film Hub London Community Screening programme, and the whole school visited the British Museum, where they saw the Indigenous Australia exhibition and had a curator talk, as well as being guided through other indigenous exhibits by artists and experts in the field.

The range of activities was such that it was possible for the week to be fully inclusive. Nursery age children could be engaged in music, dance and storytelling, while the embroidery proved particularly successful as a way to engage some children with special needs. The embroidery project led to the creation of a school tapestry around indigenous culture.

At the end of the week the entire school performed a haka, which also involved parents and teachers!

The Deputy Head said: "This has been the best week of my teaching career. This is how education should be."

A mother reported that her son had come home in tears on the Friday evening because the week was over.

The kitchen staff were seen pressed against the windows to watch the Zugubal Dancers performing in the playground.

Lucy Dunkerley – **Associate Director**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Claudia Tommasino

“When I approached Border Crossings looking for an opportunity to learn more about intercultural organisations in the professional way, I never thought I would find a new family. Since I started working with Michael and Lucy they believed in me. They didn’t only care about what my interests were, they also saw my potential and pushed me to do things I never thought I could. With them I have organised events, played theatre roles and managed volunteers - but most importantly I have met amazing people. Working with kids, with refugees, with indigenous artists, with volunteers and with the general public has opened my mind to new ways of believing in the importance of culture. There is no doubt in my mind that the faith that Border Crossings has shown in me and the opportunities they have given me made me a better professional but above all, a better human being.”



# HIDDEN HISTORIES

Anthropologist Claudia Tommasino Suárez graduated from the Central University of Venezuela, before coming to London to study the MA in Cultural Policies and Management at City University. She first joined Border Crossings as an intern from this course, and this led to a range of paid placements with the company, particularly around the ORIGINS Festival and associated Heritage Projects. Claudia was Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Border Crossings' ORIGINS Festival 2015 and the accompanying participation and learning project HIDDEN HISTORIES.



As with all our projects, Border Crossings' ORIGINS Festival is accompanied by an innovative and high-quality programme of Participation and Learning. Programmes take place in schools and with community groups, drawing on the themes of the festival. They include performances, workshops, museum visits and exhibitions made in collaboration between artists and participants. For ORIGINS 2011, the programme introduced an oral history element that contributes to learning both within those UK-based communities represented in the festival and between these community groups and the interviewers: school children in 2012 and London based volunteers in 2015-16. These histories are collected as a legacy of each Festival programme and are testament to the ongoing relationship between the UK and indigenous communities around the world. They offer a contribution to a record of Britain today and to the oral traditions of storytelling that characterise First Nations and indigenous cultures.

The ORIGINS 2015 programme explored the relationship between London and indigenous communities around the world further by adding more interviews to the archive and by producing a documentary film. Narrated by Oscar-winning actor Mark Rylance, HIDDEN HISTORIES maps the indigenous presence within and around London both historically and presently.

In the West, tradition is regarded either as a fixed reserve of knowledge and practice or an explicitly inauthentic political invention. Western history is traditionally recorded in a written form. For First Nations communities, neither tradition nor history are separable from living in the everyday. Tradition is a vital way to articulate a community's presence in the world. History is a critical medium of oral storytelling and embodied performance for sustaining that presence through adaptation and change. Past and present intertwine, as the one constantly creates a vision for the other. As historian James Clifford puts it, "Loyalty to a traditional past is, in practice, a way ahead, a distinct path in the present."

**BORDER CROSSINGS**  
**ORIGINS**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Song Ru Hui



“This year is the 21st anniversary of Border Crossings, so I send my sincerest congratulations to Michael and the company. Theatre practitioners are obsessed with the huge possibilities of the form, and Michael, I believe, is someone who can truly open these. That is why people from so many different countries and races want to collaborate with him. That was how we were able to create RE-ORIENTATIONS and the unparalleled CONSUMED . Thanks to his efforts, we had the opportunity to know each other and to create these gripping performances. The process of devising was unforgettable - it will live long in my memory.

I hope Border Crossings will be always creative and thriving.”

Song Ru Hui is one of China's most celebrated performers, with film credits including Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*, *Shanghai Lunba*, and the 1989 film *Women's Story* as *Jing Xiang*. She has twice won Zuolin Dramatic Arts Awards, and won the first Henan Television Outstanding Performance Award for *The Rivers*.

A resident artist at Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, Hui first worked with *Border Crossings* on *RE-ORIENTATIONS* in 2009-10, devising the play in Shanghai and London, then performing at Soho Theatre, at SDAC as part of Shanghai Expo 2010, and on tour in Sweden. She suggested to Artistic Director Michael Walling the idea of a more compact devised piece for three performers, one of whom spoke no Chinese, herself speaking no English, and a third performer who spoke both. This led to the 2013 production of *CONSUMED*, co-produced with SDAC and Tara Arts, devised in Shanghai and performed on tour across the UK.

## CONSUMED

A tale of lost love, miscommunication, betrayal and money, *CONSUMED* is theatre for grown-ups. It stands light years above the usual rinky-dink ghettoised East Asian offerings seen in British theatre, with layer upon layer of meaning suffusing this devised multi-media play.

Director Michael Walling, whose conception this is, brings a delicate Tarkovskyesque pace to the stage; its slow full emptiness is a refreshing palate-cleanser for audiences bored with productions that skitter along the surface.

Set in modern-day Shanghai where fortunes are to be made through ruthless enterprise, British businessman John Bartholemew (Serge Soric) strikes up a fancy for Su Chen (Song Ruhui) and pursues his "shanghai dot beauty" on Skype with the connivance of business acquaintance Tong Zheng (Ning Li) acting as interpreter.

Su and Tong are of the generation that lived through the Cultural Revolution, and the emergence of their shared history as students in the immediate post-Mao era explores how far they have come and what has been lost.

All three actors give gripping performances. Shanghai Theatre-trained Song Ruhui is an outstanding presence, exuding beauty, intelligence and sensitivity – my favourite combo. Special mentions must also go to Dori Deng for the multi-media design which was well-judged, helping the story along without dominating, and to Nick Moran for his simple stark black and white set.

*Border Crossings* has cannily placed itself on the progressive side of history and represents one powerful way forward for East Asian themes and actors.

Anna Chen – **Morning Star**





# BORDER CROSSINGS

Tony Guilfoyle



“What a pleasure it has been for me to divide my time in recent years between the excellent work achieved with Border Crossings and my other long term collaboration with Robert LePage’s company Ex Machina. The two companies share a vision, to take the particular and the personal and then communicate it internationally, consequently highlighting our similarities, common needs and desires. Both companies achieve this through international collaborations with highly skilled performers from across the world. It was a particular pleasure in RE-ORIENTATIONS to work with the actors from Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, who taught me so much both professionally and culturally.”

# RE-ORIENTATIONS

Actor Tony Guilfoyle is known for his long collaboration with the Quebecois theatre director Robert Lepage and his company Ex Machina. Included in this association are Kindertoten Lieder (Lincoln Centre NY and world tour), The Geometry Of Miracles performed at The Royal National Theatre and world wide, The Dragons Trilogy performed at the Barbican Theatre London and internationally plus their latest collaboration Cartes (Cards/ Pique) which played at the Roundhouse in London and then internationally. His other theatre credits are numerous and varied from Shopping And Fucking for the Royal Court Theatre in the West End to The Iceman Cometh at the Almeida Theatre in London with Kevin Spacey. It encompasses political, experimental theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (Hanif Kureishi's play Outskirts).

Tony first worked with Border Crossings in 2005, playing Julian Lucas in DIS-ORIENTATIONS at Riverside Studios in 2006. He further developed the same character in RE-ORIENTATIONS (2009-10) and was part of the devising team for CONSUMED (2013).

Starbucks, wheelie suitcases, airport lounges, emails, Four Seasons hotels are identical, wherever you are. But the people drinking coffee, pushing their cases through passport control, into cabs then into international hotel chains are each unique; they connect and overlap with unexpected consequences. RE-ORIENTATIONS takes an international cast speaking four languages and explores globalisation in a deeply felt, powerfully performed, beautifully staged production.

A couple take their Swedish language Miss Julie to Shanghai, where English manager Julian is running things; he is also looking for missing daughter Alex. Alex's mother Marie is in India, running aid projects for tsunami relief, unaware her assistant Linda resents her and is resigning. Sammy is seeking his fortune in Shanghai; his sister meanwhile suffers for the Chinese preference for sons. Alex's old friend reappears with news for Julian. If you've enjoyed multiple viewpoint films like Babel or Magnolia, the criss-crossing characters and overlapping stories shouldn't trouble you, though being the third part in Border Crossings' ORIENTATIONS series, some details are glossed over or expected to be taken for granted.

Scenes are performed in English, Swedish, Mandarin and Kannada with no difficulty for the audience to follow - this is an impressive achievement as is the seamless mix of video, music and live acting. Though it could easily lapse into self-congratulatory "isn't multiculturalism GREAT?" clichés about how we're all different but also all the same, the characters and their stories are not treated with such simplicity. The relationships are sophisticated and complex, the characters are deep and multi-faceted, not everybody learns something in a neat, conclusive ending. Such a broad range of culture, experience and language should be confusing, to the audience and between the characters but in some exquisite scenes, we are shown how we can transcend language and cultural difference to connect with one another. The world can be a small, sometimes painful, often puzzling but ultimately uplifting place and RE-ORIENTATIONS confirms that.

Hazel – **Londonist**





# BORDER CROSSINGS

Leontine Ndombe

“Before I joined the group I used to be a very narrow minded person...I had my own ways of thinking, I didn't have an interest in different types of people... I didn't mix with people of different races and I didn't think outside the box. [Since working with Border Crossings] I see everyone is one, you shouldn't judge people because of what they look like, accept everyone the way they are and it's ok to be different.... It has also changed the way I look at myself. I have more confidence. I like standing out and dressing different. I am comfortable with myself.... It will help me with social skills and communication skills, not judging other people and treating everyone fairly.”





Leontine Ndombe is a young refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, living with her family in Plymouth - a city designated as a dispersal centre for refugees. In 2012, Border Crossings worked with the Creative Learning department of the Theatre Royal, Plymouth to deliver a programme of drama workshops for young people from refugee backgrounds, in a group called Dare to Be Different. Two months of workshops built up to a performance, DIVISION, at the Drum Theatre.



## DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

What's very salutary about this group is the complex and fluid nature of the identities they are exploring. In some ways, they are defined by their past and by their refugee status: they have fled from persecution, and many of them have lived through far more in their early years than most people do in a lifetime. We had one very powerful session based around the participants sharing personal stories about how their lives had changed - and many of them were astounded by what others had lived through. And so was I. On the other hand, they feel an intense need to move beyond that restricted identity, and to create a new way of living in the new space they have come to. They are young people, with much to give and much to expect; so they cannot and must not be defined solely by a past over which they had no control. DIVISION was a terrific piece of theatre, because it was able to include a sense of what had been left behind, or perhaps absorbed - but also a sense of the lightness, the comedy present in young lives, and the aspirations and challenges of living in a new space.

What's more, they were wonderfully eloquent about all this when we had a post-show discussion, and that discussion involved not only theatre people and friends, but also public figures like the Police, the Racial Equality Council and other public agencies. In fact, this work became a study in how theatre can become an attribute of participatory democracy. Something we are sorely lacking in our society right now.

Michael Walling - **Artistic Director**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Dzifa Glikpoe



"If there has ever been a moment in my professional theatre practice that I would always cherish, it is the five, very fruitful months I spent with Border Crossings in the United Kingdom.

'A child who has never travelled is the one who boasts that his mother is the world's best cook', says a Ghanaian proverb. Working with and watching Michael Walling at work during the several workshops he ran and other productions he directed during my time with the company, all enriched 'my mother's recipe'. The biggest eye opener being the 'non-existent' set in which he planted the production. Being a Ghanaian theatre practitioner, I had seen several productions of DILEMMA OF A GHOST, but Michael Walling's was different in every way - casting, costuming, set.

One of the driving forces of the Fellowship, as a self-improvement programme for me, was to learn all I could about European Theatre as practiced in the UK - actor-training techniques, directing styles, Theatre for development, and Drama in Education - all these Border Crossings took me through. The programme gave me a privileged opportunity to sit in rehearsals with the world renowned Royal Shakespeare Company in London, for a couple of weeks; I was ecstatic! My time with the Barbican Theatre in Plymouth was also memorable! I loved the 'Arts Challenge Day' programme for school children. I have since trained performers of the National Theatre Company in the methodology.

Not many theatre professionals in my country have been this fortunate. I owe it all to you, Michael, and Border Crossings. May I congratulate you then, on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the Border Crossings Company! I wish you success in all future endeavours."

Dzifa Glikpoe is one of West Africa's leading performers, and former Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Ghana. She worked with Border Crossings on the 2007 co-production between the two companies, THE DILEMMA OF A GHOST by Ama Ata Aidoo. After the production, Border Crossings hosted Dzifa on an Arts Council International Fellowship. Dzifa won the EGRAG Best Actress Award in 1993. Several other awards followed until she was recognised by the state and was awarded a Grand Medal at the first National Honours Awards in 2006 for her contribution to Drama in Ghana. In 2010 Dzifa was the recipient of EMPEG's Life Achievement Award.



## THE DILEMMA OF A GHOST

Watching THE DILEMMA OF A GHOST is like seeing your mama and aunties on stage. That is the greatest compliment I could pay to this exquisite play where modern values clash with traditional beliefs. Ato, the first born son of a Ghanaian family, is sent to America to study. When he comes back home, he is welcomed as the prodigal son. It is until he shows his family what he brought back home after years away; not money, not blessings, but an African-American wife whose name, Eulalie, his mother cannot pronounce, that all hell breaks loose. In their naivety, Eulalie and Ato expect to slip easily into the Ghanaian way of life but things do not go according to plan and drama soon ensues.

The rough and derelict reception room of the Africa Centre was the perfect backdrop to the story. Michael Walling, artistic director of theatre company, Border Crossings, recreated an atmosphere particular to Ghanaian concert parties, where itinerant comedians set up stage in court yards and tell stories in a vibrant style, mixing music, comedy, dance and magical displays. We - the audience, sat around the stage, eavesdropping on maids mocking Ato and his wife or being directly talked to by Ato's grandmother lamenting about his ungratefulness. We were drawn into the play and even became part of it as members of the family. We were witnesses to Ato and Eulalie's misfortune and allowed to laugh, dance and sing with them when they were in high spirits. We were all Ghanaians, if only for one night.

Adeline Ama Buabeng in her role as Nana (Ato's grandmother) proved once again, why she is a seasoned actress, switching seamlessly between her native tongue and English, inspiring fear and respect. While Dzifa Glikpoe was brilliant in her role as the cheeky and overbearing African mother, dropping in on her son to bring food and urging the couple to give her grandchildren. The entire cast gave a superb performance to the production, bringing an authenticity that I have rarely seen onstage in recent times.

THE DILEMMA OF A GHOST was indeed an engaging and refreshing production to watch and proved to be a real African Classic.

Alice Gbelia - **Say It Loud**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Heath Bergersen

“Working with Border Crossings means many things to me and not just the opportunities that it brought my way. In 2004, four Australian Aboriginal actors (including myself) were invited to London to be involved in a stage play called BULLIE’S HOUSE, which is a story of tribal aborigines who expose their precious Ranga, totems which hold the secret of the world, to the eyes of their white mentors in the belief that the white world in return will exchange its wisdom and technology. The experience, the tour and getting to know Michael Walling and Border Crossings was life changing and gave me a huge insight into theatre other than that I had previously been involved with.

In 2015 I was invited by Michael to participate in Border Crossings’ ORIGINS FESTIVAL in London. It was such a privilege work with a company who is so dedicated to showcasing First Nations peoples and to meet and work with these artists from all over the world.

I found Border Crossings to be a very ethical company, breaking down barriers between cultures and passionate about what they do.”



Heath Bergersen is an Aboriginal man from Western Australia. Adopted at two months by a white family, Heath has worked through theatre and music to retain his link to indigenous culture and tradition. He is a leading actor in Aboriginal theatre and film, having worked with companies including Yirra Yaakin and appeared in films such as Rabbit-Proof Fence and Secret River. He first worked with Border Crossings in 2004, playing the role of Bullie in Thomas Keneally's play BULLIE'S HOUSE. More recently, he has given didgeridoo performances at Border Crossings' ORIGINS FESTIVAL, including at the British Museum. His music features in Border Crossings' film HIDDEN HISTORIES: DISCOVERING INDIGENOUS LONDON.



## BULLIE'S HOUSE

In Aboriginal culture, it's customary for women to woo men with supernatural love songs (and, less romantically, for cuckolded husbands to club their rivals to death). White Australian culture of the 1950s couldn't have differed more, and it's this monumental clash of lifestyles - still unresolved to this day - which powers Thomas Keneally's captivating new play.

Bullie is a young Aboriginal on a government reserve whose house was singled out for destruction by a renegade wind. His elders insist it's the work of an angry god punishing him for cheating on his late wife. Bullie is inclined to believe the government official, who proffers a more scientific explanation. But he delays building his home, just in case. Heath Bergersen's determinedly open-minded Bullie experiences the moral dilemma at the heart of Keneally's drama - torn between two ways of life, he's always making the wrong decisions for the right reasons, the most catastrophic of which being his unveiling of the sacred Aboriginal totems, a breathtaking gesture of unity which all but one of the white men fail to comprehend.

Keneally, a Booker Prize-winner, has created a compelling piece of political theatre. Without burdening his characters with worthy speeches, he tackles some burning issues of the day, not least: how do two polarised communities co-exist? It's a global question and one which this playwright answers with a bleak, heart-breaking conclusion.

But there's much dry humour here, too, and Michael Walling's production barely hits a dud note. Kevin Costello's languorous Aussie drawl stamps its mark on the well-meaning Professor and the four Aboriginal actors - two of whom appeared in the film Rabbit-Proof Fence - are superb, particularly Natasha Wanganeen as the sultry, hard-as-nails Doolie.

A real eye-opener.

Madeleine North - **Time Out Critics' Choice**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Nick Moran



“The joy I get from making work with Border Crossings comes from the openness to ideas in the rehearsal room – no matter where those ideas come from or where they take us. This leads to a clear shared understanding of what our story is and how best to tell it which transcends spoken or written language, but which retains a respect for the many cultures and heritages in the room. Egos are put to one side and the choices we make – as performers, writers, directors and designers – are tested in in a supportive and trusting environment. With Border Crossings, I can bring lighting ideas into the rehearsal room, and they can be shaped by others to make them stronger for the production as a whole. And I can bring ideas from beyond lighting into the room too, influences from my work all over the world.

Making theatre with any group of talented and dedicated people is always an education for me – and the productions I have learned most usefully from are all Border Crossings projects.”

Nick Moran first worked with Border Crossings as the Lighting Designer for BULLIE'S HOUSE in 2004. Other lighting designs with the company include THE DILEMMA OF A GHOST, RE-ORIENTATIONS, and CONSUMED. In 2016, he lights THIS FLESH IS MINE and WHEN NOBODY RETURNS. Nick is also Course Leader in Theatre Lighting Design and Production Lighting at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, and has been instrumental in the school's collaborations with Border Crossings to offer training placements for students. Nick is the author of Performance Lighting Design (Methuen), Electric Shadows (ET Now) and The Right Light (Palgrave).



## BULLIE'S HOUSE

As was only to be expected from a work by Thomas Keneally, whose Booker-Prize winning novel was filmed by Spielberg as Schindler's List, BULLIE'S HOUSE is a piece of theatre that demands to be taken seriously. It more than merits such treatment, too, as it unfolds to under-informed audiences a fascinating yet doomed world of Aboriginal culture and beliefs.

The time is the 1950s, and the instantly involving setting is an Aboriginal "mission", overseen by a young white paper-pusher from the Department of Native Affairs. An anthropologist prowls around with his camera; a priest grapples valiantly with conflicting religious systems.

Michael Walling's spare and forceful production shows this to be an oppressed yet tranquil existence. However, Bullie, one of the tribal elders, is naively convinced that all could be perfect if only he displayed to the white men the sacred ranga, the ritual totems that hold the secrets of their universe. This is a monumental decision, and one whose scale we are perhaps ill placed to appreciate fully.

As well as the gripping forward thrust of the ranga-revelation narrative, Keneally subtly worries at a host of broader cultural issues. Should assimilation be the aim, or should a native way of life be kept strictly separate and therefore undeveloped? How can a government cope with such wildly diverse sets of values?

Tremendous performances from the four Aboriginal actors in the seven-strong cast ensure that these questions are never allowed to turn into a dry academic debate. The stand-out turn comes from Natasha Wanganeen, already much lauded for her role in the film Rabbit-Proof Fence, whose Doolie is far too opinionated for the liking of the fearsome Jimmie (Dennis Simmons). A powerful evening of all-too-rare theatrical stimulation.

Fiona Mountford - **Evening Standard**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

## Radhakrishna Urala

“It is difficult to explain my special experience with Border Crossings in a few words. More than words, it is a special world of feelings, knowledge, lessons for me. It is an unforgettable moment in my cultural career.

I have been involved with Border Crossings for almost 13 years. Because of these productions I have experienced worldwide the different acting styles and skills, and learnt a lot about theatre, directorial aspects, use of art forms to convey the feelings in a play, commitment, artists’ dedication, choreography, theatre games...

Yakshagana is a traditional art form of Karnataka. Michael used this art form in his own way in his productions of ORIENTATIONS and RE-ORIENTATIONS, and I am very proud to say that I was also part of these productions.

Border Crossings is a committed team which brought together unique theatre productions with foreign artists and subjects. I think it’s only possible for Border Crossings. I am waiting for the next production!”





Radhakrishna Urala has been a performer of female roles in the traditional South Indian dance theatre form Yakshagana since the age of five. He is now Artistic Director of the Kalakadamba company, based in Bangalore. Radhakrishna first worked with Border Crossings in 2003, devising **ORIENTATIONS**, and continued to develop and perform **THE ORIENTATIONS TRILOGY** until the project's end in 2010, visiting the UK, China and Sweden, as well as India.



## ORIENTATIONS

It's a long journey from London dance classes to a Bangalore hijra house - home for these quasi-religious "third sex" dancers who live, half-feared, half-venerated on the fringes of Indian society. The geographical distance, however, is nothing compared to the personal one. For Amrit, a student sent to Britain to study, the revelation of the female dancing style of Yakshagana upsets his entire life. He leaves behind a girlfriend to find stardom and then violence back home in India, before finally accepting his true nature as a woman, undergoing castration to become a hijra.

This is a rich theme for Border Crossings and conceiver / director Michael Walling, and he and his team match it with a versatile production, as many-limbed as a Hindu god. Video, baroque music, episodes of Hindu mythology, and, of course, dance, traditional and contemporary, are all used to tell or reflect on Amrit's story. Our entry to it all is Linda, his abandoned British girlfriend, who travels to India in the naive hope of finding him.

Border Crossings' style, so open to varied ways of showing and telling, shows the influence of Robert Lepage. And the participation of Radhakrishna Urala, a true Yakshagana performer, acts as a guarantee of authenticity.

Jonathan Gibbs - **Time Out**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Sabine Frank

“Border Crossings has all the attributes you would wish for in a collaborator: nimble in the how and when, straight in communications, working to high professional standards, full of innovative energy. It’s an organisation that stands at the intersection of artistic creation and policy-making - a really potent combination.”



## PLATFORM FOR INTERCULTURAL EUROPE

Sabine Frank was from 2009-2014 the Director of the Platform for Intercultural Europe: an organisation which developed as a civil society response to the European Union's Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008. It was launched with the support of the European Culture Foundation and Culture Action Europe. The Platform linked people and organisations promoting intercultural dialogue at a grassroots level with those who work in policy, working with agencies both within and beyond the field of culture. It was recognised by the European Commission as a 'Structured Dialogue' partner – which offered the opportunity to influence cultural policy making in the EU.

In September 2008, based on consultations throughout the year, Platform published a manifesto: *The Rainbow Paper – Intercultural Dialogue, From Practice to Policy and Back*. This described approaches and aspirations towards meeting the challenges of diversity and outlined a series of recommendations: educating; building capacity by organisations; monitoring for sustained policies; mobilising across boundaries; and resourcing of Intercultural Dialogue. Alongside this, the Platform campaigned for a continuation of the work begun in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

Sabine is now the Head of Campaigning for the "Fair and Sustainable Economy" Programme - Schöpflin Stiftung.

In December 2010, Border Crossings and the Platform for Intercultural Europe presented a Practice Exchange event at Rose Bruford College. With participants representing 8 countries across Europe, and many more ethnic groups within those countries, the event suggested:

- The experiences shared by participants revealed that work in the field of Intercultural Dialogue was a positive force in breaking down barriers and prejudices. As was stated by Jatinder Verma, cultural work had the ability to engage the heart as well as the head.
- Globalisation and rapid shifts in forms of communication require us to develop a greater engagement with complexity, uncertainty and the unknown. Intercultural work is a way of understanding and dealing with the impact of change and the increasingly complex world we live in. This is particularly true of life in urban centres, where cities produce (and encourage) more fluid identities and the characteristics of human populations change fast.
- Intercultural work is a way of 'experiencing the Other', eroding stereotypes and increasing understanding and empathy through personal engagement. We are changed by our interaction with other people. Exposure to other cultures and different life experiences enriches our own lives and perspectives. Our social and intellectual mobility is increased through this stimulus.
- Participants felt that policy often focused on how well something was managed rather than asking, 'Was it any good?' Participants wondered if there were ways to evaluate which didn't involve monetary (or other quantitative) measures? There needed to be hybrid and more sophisticated ways to express why the arts matter: the value of arts in terms of education, of giving the voiceless a voice, of the health and well-being benefits it bestows etc.

Brendan Jackson - **Practice Exchange Report**





# BORDER CROSSINGS

Dev Virahsawmy



”As a writer I owe Michael Walling and Border Crossings a lot. Thanks mostly to their work (translation and production) I became known outside Mauritius (lot kote dilo). Indirectly they also helped me in my language planning work as suddenly Mauritians started to realise that creative writing in Morisien (Mauritian Creole) may lead to international recognition. After the English version by Border Crossings came a French and Japanese version. Mersi Border Crossings.”



## TOUFANN

The characters in TOUFANN bear names from a medley of Shakespeare plays, with Miranda appearing as Kordelia, Alonso as Lerwa Lir, Sebastian as Edmon, but also Gonzalo as Polonious and Antonio as Yago, interacting with Prospero, Kalibann, Aryel and Ferdjinan and with the Mauritianised versions of Stefano and Trinculo, renamed Kaspalto and Dammarro. It is not just *The Tempest*, but 'Shakespeare', that is being miscegenated. Prospero's magic books and wands are replaced by computers, radars and video projections; his airy spirit by a robot. His cell is the computer control room from which he projects a virtual reality in which anything may happen, both to the fauna and geology of the island, to its inhabitants, and to the Shakespearean subtext/s and their afterlife. Yago revolts against his destiny as a stereotype of evil, invented by Shakespeare and perpetuated by the literary critics. The union between Ferdinand and Miranda is replaced by that of Kordelia and Kalibann, the future king and queen.

Dev has been working on Mauritian Creole, which he calls 'Morisien', the national language of Mauritius, since 1996. He writes exclusively in Morisien - thousand poems, 24 plays, 20 short stories, 5 novellas and a novel. He has translated seven Shakespeare plays into Morisien, as well as many other texts. Dev has been politically very active for more than 20 years, and currently devotes his time to the promotion of Morisien as the national language of his country. In 1999, *Border Crossings* translated his play TOUFANN into English, and performed it in London.

In TOUFANN the "Full fathom five" song has been washed away, and with it Ariel's sea-change. Yet metamorphosis and regeneration continue to pervade the text, originating in Prospero's computer control room and - despite their limits - the new alliances the play proposes. As the Wallings write in their article on Toufann and Translations, "Kordelia's rejection of 'royal blood' in favour of 'human blood' is a plea for an inclusive politics which overturns the concept of 'batar'. Kordelia, Kalibann, Ferdjinan and Aryel all reject the doctrine of inheritance in favour of a new pluralism." Virahsawmy's version of Shakespeare's solution to political and dynastic conflict is another example of what he has called "the miscegenation vision" - the "cross-fertilization of dynamic cultural elements from Europe, Africa and Asia" already apparent in the Creole language that provides the vehicle and, surely, the major inspiration for the author's transcreations. Significantly, speaking of Creole as "the language of cohesion" in an interview with Danielle Tranquille, the metaphor he chooses for its future is "toufann": "There is a groundswell: when it surfaces, the tempest will be unleashed" ("Èna ène lam de fon, kan sela pou fer sirfas, bel toufann!").

Jane Wilkinson - **introduction to *Border Crossings'* edition of TOUFANN**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Serge Soric



“Border Crossings has always been my cup of tea. Multilingual, multicultural and structurally devised projects on a journey to question the current state of affairs, looking for truth, sophisticated beauty and style. It has been a rare place that, as an actor from a different cultural background, made me feel stronger and welcomed.

I was a proud member of cast in two shows (DOUBLE TONGUE and CONSUMED). Each one developing in you that childish desire to learn, giving you a feeling you have traveled to some distant lands returning with some great tools and new friendships made.

It has made me a better actor.”



Croatian actor Srdjan (Serge) Soric trained at Charles University in Prague. His theatre work includes the Royal Court (Naturalised), and Kaos Theatre (Mine, Midsummer Night's Dream). He has also worked extensively in film and TV. Serge first worked with Border Crossings in 2001-2, playing Milan in Brian Woolland's *DOUBLE TONGUE* - a production that toured the UK and Hungary. He returned in 2013 to play John Bartholomew in *CONSUMED*.



## DOUBLE TONGUE

As the former Yugoslavia struggles through the tumultuous aftermath of 10 years of war and revolution, with the effects being felt throughout Europe, it is a timely moment for a play focussed on these issues.

Brian Woolland's *DOUBLE TONGUE* is set near the Serbian border in southern Hungary, in a place called Szeged and follows a young American student, Robert Lee, studying his PhD, looking at the changes of religion. He goes on a language course and falls for the young, beautiful teacher, Anna Kovacs. Together, they unwittingly become embroiled in antique smuggling and gun running, orchestrated by Anna's English boyfriend, James, and the sinister Serb, Milan.

Occasionally, fringe theatre is really outstanding and it is so here. The relationship between Robert and Anna works well, and the inner conflicts which both face are strongly brought to the fore.

Robert is played by Ben Pitts, who deftly captures the young American's pure naivety, while Krizstina Erdelyi is excellent as the feisty yet insecure Anna. Serge Soric as Milan is very powerful and scary, his anger at the policies pursued by America and NATO is almost genuine in its ferocity and many of the political points that were raised had much significance.

The play also tackles religion in a most unusual fashion. James (Giles Foreman) is trying to export an original Black Madonna image, and he undergoes a conflict with an image of the Madonna, eerily played by Christopher Simpson, who also doubles as James' prostitute boyfriend. Sub-plots can often work against a play, yet on this occasion it fits in effortlessly.

Substantial sections of the play are performed in Hungarian and Serb, yet none of this detracts, it adds a greater sense of realism to the whole proceedings. Video was cleverly interwoven with theatre in this innovative production; it has to be one of the most effective and thrilling plays around at the moment.

Joel Taylor - **Camden New Journal**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Alastair Niven

“Border Crossings is the least self-obsessed arts company I have ever known. Its gaze is outwards, not on itself. This dynamic and passionate organisation understands better than any in my experience the great relevance of indigenous peoples to cultures around the world and the value of sustaining creative partnerships between continents.”



# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dr. Alastair Niven LVO OBE was Principal of Cumberland Lodge 2001-2013. He held the unique double of being Director of Literature at the Arts Council of Great Britain (later Arts Council England) for 10 years and Director of Literature at the British Council for four. He was President of English PEN from 2003 to 2007.

He was Director General of The Africa Centre from 1978 to 1984. He has been an academic, with positions at the Universities of Ghana (where he had been a Commonwealth Scholar), Leeds and Stirling.

He is now a Fellow of Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford. He has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Aarhus in Denmark and has held honorary positions at the Universities of Exeter, Warwick and London.

He is the author of four books and over fifty articles on aspects of Commonwealth and post-colonial literature, and has also written extensively about the welfare of overseas students. A judge of the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1994 and of the Man Booker Prize in 2014, he was also for Chairman of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize.

Alastair joined the board of Border Crossings in 2012, and became Chair of the board in 2013.

As a registered charity, Border Crossings is governed by a board of Trustees, who oversee the company on a voluntary basis. They are a very active board, advising the Artistic Director and staff, overseeing the company's finances and charitable purposes, advocating for its mission, and raising funds to support its work.

Trustees usually serve one or two four-year terms on the board. At the time of the 21st birthday, the other trustees were:

Malú Ansaldo - Producer of the 2012 Globe to Globe Festival and World Hamlet.

Prakash Kurup - Chartered Accountant

Kristine Landon-Smith - founding Artistic Director of Tamasha Theatre.

Maddy Pickard - Independent Arts Consultant.

Shelagh Prosser - Equality and Diversity Consultant.

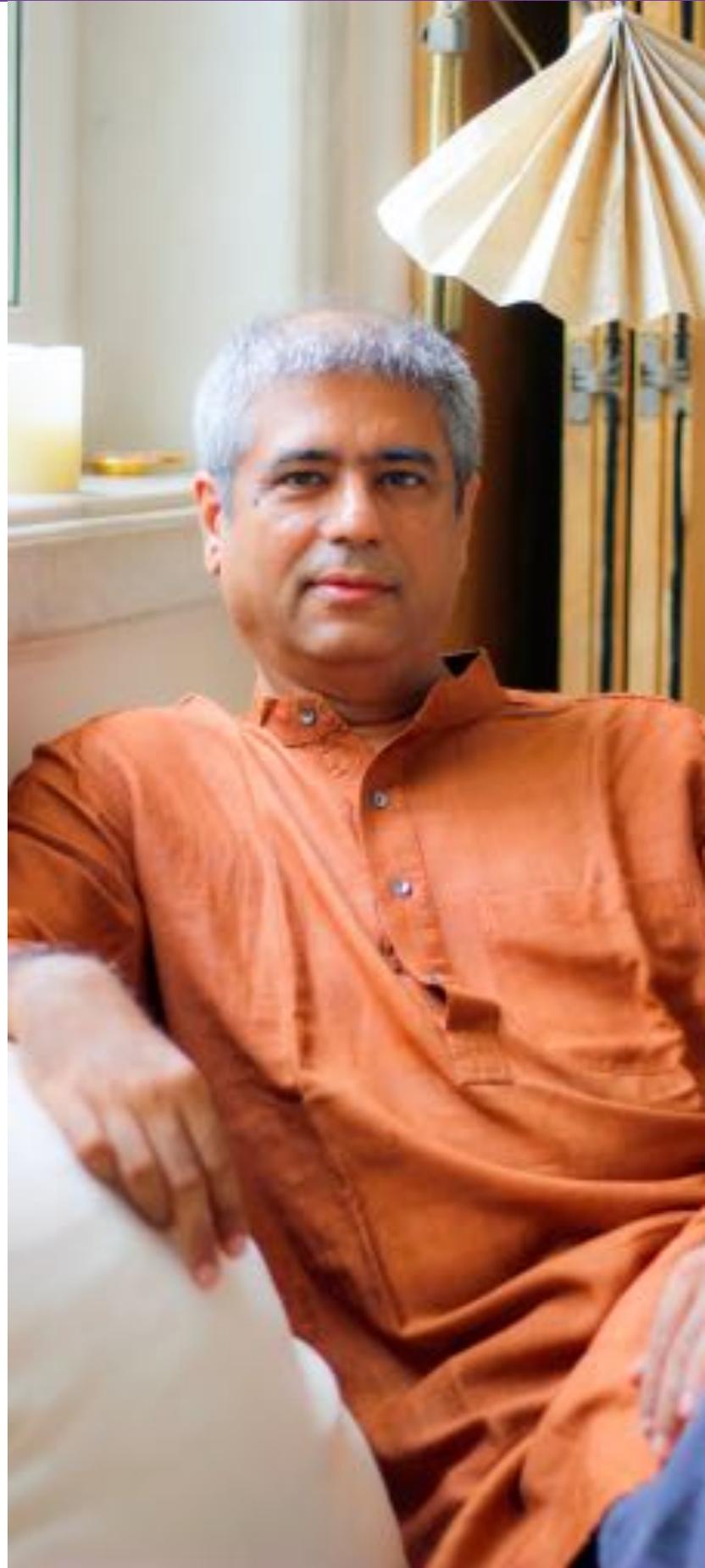
Evgenia Sorokina - Investment Banker.



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Mahesh Dattani

"Border Crossings does what it sets out to do - cross borders. I am proud of my association with the company, one that started even before they produced my play BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN in 1996. The company's Artistic Director, Michael Walling and I crossed paths over three continents, including a chance encounter in the UK! Our various departures and arrivals took us to yet another country, China, with the last of Michael's ORIENTATIONS TRILOGY - a piece that can only be defined as path breaking. On its 21st year of existence, I can only say thank you Border Crossings and Michael for those crossings. May your revels never end."



# BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN

Mahesh Dattani is one of India's leading contemporary playwrights: the first writing in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi award. His plays, including *Final Solutions*, *Dance Like a Man* and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* have been staged to critical and public acclaim all over the country and abroad, and his radio plays, *Seven Steps Around the Fire* and *Do the Needful*, have been aired on BBC radio. Mahesh is also the writer and director of the films *Mango Soufflé* and *Morning Raga* (starring Shabana Azmi). Mahesh's play *BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN* was given its UK premiere by Border Crossings in 1996, co-directed by the writer and Michael Walling. More recently, Mahesh has worked as a dramaturg on *THE ORIENTATIONS TRILOGY*.

The play is set in Bangalore of the 1990s. The narrative is "centred around an Indian family, in which two brothers, the co-owners of an advertising agency, have married two sisters. The women remain at home much of the time, where they look after the men's ageing mother Baa. The fact that both sexes are living lives based on fantasy is cruelly exposed when the characters confront each other, and the realities of their lives emerge. The homosexuality of one of the brothers, the crippled daughter of the other marriage, Baa's continued presence - all of these facts are concealed in the uneasy world which the characters inhabit. The play becomes a plea for humanity and for tolerance". It is equally a cry for the acceptance of Indian values that are shifting, where tradition and contemporary clash, confuse and create a new social landscape. Dattani writes with a pungency that is skilfully disguised, employing language that resorts to clarity and sharpness, one that pushes the limits of the spoken word and the silences between.

At the Battersea Arts Centre in London where I saw the play, the squarish stage space used was in fact a small studio with the audience viewing the action up-close at a level just below the sight line. This created a sense of extreme intimacy with the actors, and in the scenes of high drama, a feeling almost of being overpowered and engulfed.

A variety of theatrical and technical modes are effectively employed. The sacred space of the stage is defined, redefined, and altered simultaneously by superb lighting design and by the actors who map out different territories, both central and peripheral, as they slow-march on the edges of the frame whilst the parallel narrative continues on the centre stage. Stylised movements, clearly inspired by Bharatanatyam and Kucchipudi dance forms are used to convey movements, transitions, continuations within the text and the sub-texts.

Dattani and Walling have teamed up fluently, without the pitfalls and clichés of an East-West union, to provide a creative work that is powerful, tightly written, produced with a craftsman's care, one that evokes feelings that are both funny and sad, but ultimately human and moving.

Sudeep Sen - **The Gentleman**



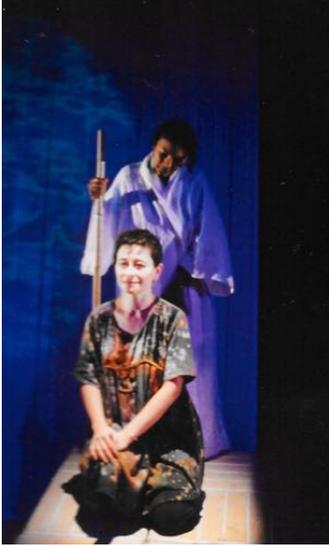


# BORDER CROSSINGS

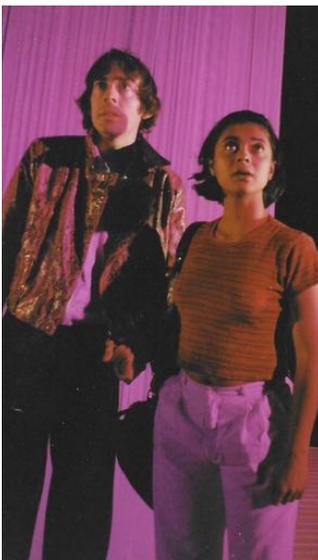
Veronica Needa

”Those early days... I have warm remembrance of our devising process at the retreat. MAPPA MUNDI. Hereford. Weaving our own stories with each other’s. On tour, I recall that see-through box space, simple strong images. I loved my costume - that long gown! Exploring inter-culturality was then, and even more so now, such an important, rich and healing creative endeavour. Am so grateful for having been part of all this! Keep on moving forward...”





Veronica Needa is an actor, storyteller and workshop facilitator. Born in Hong Kong of Eurasian ancestry, she was one of the founder members of Yellow Earth Theatre, and is a graduate of the School of Playback Theatre (NY, USA). She has a particular commitment to community arts & cross-cultural bridging; and maintains close professional and personal links to Asia. She travels extensively as an international trainer in Playback Theatre - an original form of improvisational theatre which re-enacts real stories from the audience. Her solo show - Face - was commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Centre for their 1998 Festival Now, and has toured in Europe and Asia. Veronica worked with Border Crossings on MAPPA MUNDI in 2000-1, touring the UK and Mexico. She has also led community workshops for the company.



## MAPPA MUNDI

This collaborative production with the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust and the Courtyard Theatre confirms Border Crossings' reputation for spectacularly innovative, imaginative theatre.

MAPPA MUNDI invites us into the creative consciousness of a great medieval cartographer in an attempt to penetrate the secrets of his enigmatic masterpiece. In startling juxtaposition of the medieval and the modern, the play explores some key moments of 20th century political and ethnic turmoil in terms of the vision and imagery of the 14th century masterpiece.

On a bare stage, a shimmering pavilion of silk, a brilliant sequence of video images and a rainbow palette of music from medieval plainchant to contemporary urban rap dissolve time and place, only to reissue them transformed by the alchemy of light and sound.

Add to this the immensely assured acting and dancing of a multi-ethnic cast of six and the effect is mesmeric thanks to Nisha Dassyne, Mauricio Elorriaga, Lifati Harimedi, Anjali Jay, Veronica Needa and Ben Pitts.

One of the evident sources of strength in this wholly compelling production is that the cast are creators, not merely performers. Mauricio Elorriaga, for instance, moves with lyrical conviction on the set that he designed, while Dassyne's costumes are a visual feast. The whole enterprise has such rich ethnic authority that the cross-cultural movement is effortless.

Much of the production's driving momentum and coherence stems from Michael Walling's tightly controlled direction. The tempo is never manic nor the tone hectoring. And some moments of warm humour allow MAPPA to breathe. An exhilarating evening.

Ian Barge - **The Stage**



# BORDER CROSSINGS

Benny Wenda



“In the global political context West Papuan voices are marginalised. ORIGINS creates an environment where there is a willingness to learn, to listen, to engage on equal terms. This unique context has enabled us to share the struggle and stories of our people, particularly through our freedom songs. I have been deeply encouraged by the solidarity we have experienced through the festival and the knowledge that our voices have had a meaningful impact on those who hear us.”

## BORDER CROSSINGS

# ORIGINS

Benny Wenda is a West Papuan independence leader, International Spokesman for the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), and founder of the Free West Papua Campaign. He lives in exile in the United Kingdom. In 2003 he was granted political asylum by the British Government following his escape from custody while on trial in West Papua. He has acted as special representative of the Papuan people in the British Parliament, United Nations and European Parliament. In 2014 he was appointed as the spokesman for the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), a new organisation uniting the three main political organisations struggling for the independence of West Papua.

Benny and his family - the Lani Singers - have performed at every ORIGINS FESTIVAL, and he tells his story in HIDDEN HISTORIES.

Everywhere I walked in West Papua, the land was resonant with song. People yodel greetings from one mountainside to villages over the valley: "Aiieeeee" ("Put away your bows and arrows, we're friends," it says). Playing mouth harps, drums and guitars, people sing village songs, tragic songs, live songs, flirting songs and songs of independence.

Benny Wenda, a Lani man from the highlands, is a Papuan leader now in exile in the UK, and a singer. There are songs for everything, he says: songs for climbing a mountain, songs for the fireside, songs for gardening. "Since people are interconnected with the land, women will sing to the seed of the sweet potato as they plant it, so the earth will be happy." Meanwhile, men will sing to the soil until it softens enough to dig.

West Papua is a land of contrasts: mountains in the clouds and fringes of coastlines; the gleeful chutzpah of the penis gourd (long or short, curly or straight, some topped with feathers, some used as a pocket for a wad of tobacco or a bit of cash) and the miserable degradation of human rights abuses by the Indonesian military. Mud and music. Guns and ukuleles.

"Music is our life," says Wenda. "Indonesia oppresses us and kills us, but song brings the human spirit alive. It is an act of resistance. Never surrender." The Indonesians may kill the singers but they cannot kill the song.

Jay Griffiths – **extract from a programme note for ORIGINS 2011**



# FUNDERS

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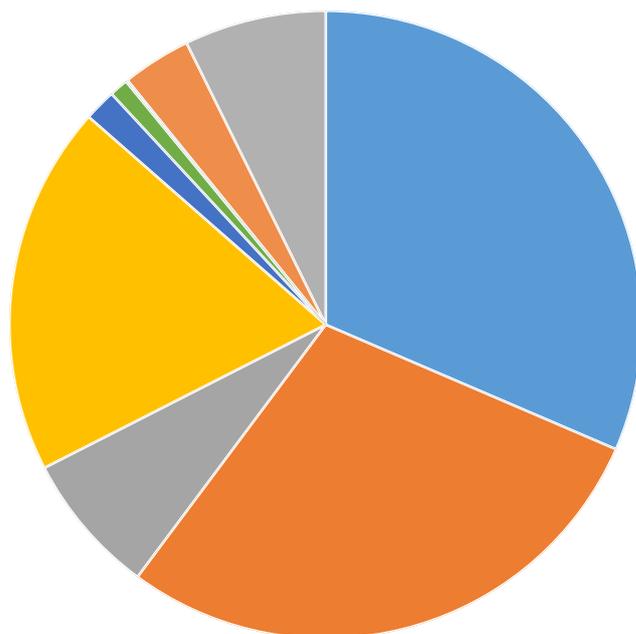
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Border Crossings - breakdown of income 2015-16



During the year leading up to our 21st birthday, earned income represented only 11% of Border Crossings' turnover. As a registered charity, we cannot rely on commercial income alone to support our work, especially as our ticket prices have to be kept low in order to benefit diverse audiences around the world.

Our Arts Council grants constituted only 31% of turnover: far lower than for most arts organisations.

The support of partners, trusts and foundations, commercial sponsors and individual philanthropists is crucial to our ongoing success.

- Arts Council
- Statutory
- Overseas
- Trufts & Foundations
- Education
- Donations
- Sales (books / cds)
- Fees
- Ticket sales

# THE 21 CLUB

Formed in our 21st birthday year, the 21 CLUB is a group of special supporters who have donated at least £500 to support Border Crossings' work in intercultural theatre, combined arts, education, heritage, community development and building a better world. Members of the 21 CLUB enjoy special access to the company's working processes, with the opportunity to visit rehearsals and workshops, to meet the cast and production team at special performance events, and invitations to opening nights of shows and festivals. There is an annual dinner with the Artistic and Associate Directors for 21 CLUB Members.

Border Crossings works closely with donors to ensure maximum value is obtained from each donation. We are able to claim Gift Aid and Theatre Tax Relief. Many donations are eligible for Match Funding Schemes.

Contact [21Club@bordercrossings.org.uk](mailto:21Club@bordercrossings.org.uk) for further details.

## A FEW WORDS FROM OUR AUDIENCES

"Thank you for changing my life" - ORIGINS

"Completely brilliant at every level, a profound and magnificent achievement that I found utterly enthralling, very deeply moving indeed, and easily the finest theatrical experience of which I've had the pleasure in a long time." - THIS FLESH IS MINE

"A wonderful message to our world. Moving and inspiring, powerful, thank you." - ORIGINS

"The show blew me away – the standard of the performances and the ambition of the piece were awe-inspiring – this is important work." - CONSUMED

"Loved it! I don't go to plays often but I will make a point of looking out for Border Crossings shows in the future" - RE-ORIENTATIONS

"I've not seen two very different cultures and a world as diverse as Shanghai presented on stage in such a convincing and deceptively powerful way as this production did for me. It is the best show I've seen all year. There is something for everybody. And it was really good to see such a mixed audience as well, about half the audience were Chinese or Asian. Is this the future for theatre? I really recommend it!" - DIS-ORIENTATIONS

"Funny (no, hilarious), sad, thoughtful, true perfect recreation of a rural life, people and culture in Ghana. I cried and laughed, gasped and cried and laughed and gasped. Loved, loved, loved it." - THE DILEMMA OF A GHOST

### PHOTO CREDITS

Janie Airey: Alastair Niven. Patrick Baldwin: Re-Orientations. Mahesh Bhatt: Bravely Fought the Queen. Bill Bradshaw: Lani Singers. Dominic Brown: Benny Wenda. Jales Cheung: Tony Guilfoyle. John Cobb: Michael Walling, Aaryan Uriakil, Voladores de Papantla. Christopher Corner: Double Tongue, Mappa Mundi. Richard Davenport: This Flesh is Mine, Consumed. Mark Doubleday: Orientations. David Ennis: Bullie's House. Neil Libbert: The Dilemma of a Ghost. Steven Lopez: Claudia Tommasino. Nick Wall: Serge Soric. Ruth Walz: Peter Sellars. Jamie Wiseman: refugees.

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