

TRIBUTARIES

AN ELECTRIFYING EXPLOSION
OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Flowering Tree
Primary Blue
Drowned Sailor
Basket Baby

Fire Horse

Red Rice

Storm

13 Idiots

Dung

Fog Riddle
Seed



Flowering Tree
Drowned Sailor
Primary Blue

Fire Horse

13 Idiots

Surya

Storm

Red Rice

Fog Riddle
Sea

INTRODUCTION

Tributaries was initiated by TRIANGLE, the Coventry-based company. It marks the coming together of diverse cultural sources and artforms.

Carran Waterfield and Ian Cameron (TRIANGLE) winners of the Fringe First Award for "The Dig", Joji Hirota (INTERNATIONAL MUSICIAN) and Vayu Naidu (BRUMHALATA, Birmingham's Intercultural Storytelling Theatre) met and decided to create a piece that goes beyond the parameters of their individual artforms and the current debate on multi-culturalism.

Tributaries is a ritual celebration of this coming together.

This booklet charts the path from conception to completion.

RESEARCH

May 18, 1993

The first performance session at a Coventry church hall begins with physical games to ensure Carran and Vayu can both work together and develop the stamina for performance.

Without a text, the performers bring only a common interest in exploring the degree to which one culture assimilates another. Ian encourages them to be influenced by images from culturally significant words such as 'fence', 'prejudice' and 'stranger', and a selection of pictures and poetry.

Objects such as a chair, a rattle and a teapot are placed in a performance space, and a variety of garments are presented to Carran and Vayu. They can make use of any item as they wish.

Ian asks the performers to improvise an interaction using voice and movement. The rule is not to plan what to say or expect a response, but to live in the space and in the moment.

Vayu begins to tell a story of how her father instructed her to drink tea. Carran throws a plastic duck at her, which Vayu accepts as a gift... A succession of interactions create images of privilege, envy, love and other emotions and feelings that are recorded for exploration.

*"The first day
and Ian speaks of marks on
canvas and being cubist
and gives us
two sisters"*
CARRAN





"I feel suffocated and diverted on this island where everything must be non-verbal"
VAYU



"I am disorientated and lost
I am in technique
too soon"

CARRAN

DEVELOPMENT

December 15, 1993

Joji first arrives with his assortment of percussion and wind instruments. He and his music will provide an equal input to the performance piece.

More poems and pictures are introduced, together with new objects such as a raffia mat, a Japanese umbrella and a bowler hat. Carran and Vayu are asked to think of themselves as sisters looking out to sea. Their words are 'earth', 'sky', 'creation', and a 'he' figure.

The performers present a story of jealousy and murder. But it is so one-dimensional that the 'he' figure is dropped. Ian proposes using rituals and songs to the sea, and fewer words and greater movement.

There is little interaction. The sisterliness does not show through. Joji feels marginalised, and the bizarre mix of garments and objects creates confusion. Ian suggests a more simple and less psychological approach.

Vayu's ritual and Carran's song remain stubbornly within their own space. A block has developed, and so the colonial themes give way to the mythic and epic. The performers must rely on their subconscious to drive the piece forward.

DEVELOPMENT

January 17, 1994

Carran and Vayu are asked to pursue a journey of interplay and bridging, expressing their individuality but finding links in their differences.

The performance space becomes more tangible. Joji's instruments form the centrepiece, and a sheet and a ladder become a cliff. Objects are confined to two Union Jacks, a pair of goggles, a swimming cap and a bowl of rice.

Influenced by such words as 'night', 'day', 'light' and 'rain', the performers carry out an exercise in music and action that leads to movements that are separate yet unified and balanced.

A theme of searching emerges, and is developed with a story from Vayu about a blade of grass. To avoid illustration, only fragments are allowed. But the adjectives and adverbs are heightened by subtle reflections in Joji's music, and nouns come to life with Carran's spontaneous contortions.

A mass of images is introduced by Vayu's storytelling. Forests, glow-worms, stars – too many for an audience to focus on all at once. Ian suggests limiting them.

Vayu is urged to move when she speaks, perhaps advancing to

whisper a fragment to the audience. Her role is to earth the performance. As an earthy character she has tasks she can perform, mundane as they may be, like sweeping.

Images emerge and develop – a dress becomes an umbrella, a sari becomes a tree blossom, and Carran transforms from a warrior-lover to a blade of corn. These images are reinforced by songs – old tales of the land like *John Barleycorn* and *Searching for Lambs*

Objects too, take on new meaning. Carran tips the bowl of rice into Vayu's sari before joining her in a wedding-like ritual with pipe music, creating a vivid atmosphere of birth and growth.

Each layer of expression begins to form a texture from which the audience can form its own picture of the circle of life.



"The atmosphere Joji creates with sound and music lights up deep caves within"

VAYU

"More intimate connections – I weave a song and dance with Joji, and he sings a German classic surprising us all"

CARRAN

DEVELOPMENT

January 26, 1994

The performance piece begins to take shape. The images from previous sessions are sifted, and the most dramatic and symbolic are incorporated in a series of epic sketches. To form the basis of a continuous story, the images must be capable of being developed and transformed.

The opening requires that the audience be grabbed by the sound of a lively sea atmosphere. Vayu spins a humorous tale of faith that includes a sea crossing and a pile of dung. She mentions a Surya figure and the stone sisters – images left to grow in the audience's imagination.

Carran flits across a seashore stage with a basket looking for cockles. When she releases a red cloth bundled inside the basket, she pours out the sea as if she has become the sea herself. Then Vayu's invocation, Carran's languid repose on the cloth, and Joji's climactic music on cymbals, bells and drums, create a spectacular sunrise.

The journey of a sage is introduced – a character represented by Carran striding purposefully forward on her haunches, and by Joji striking wood blocks. Vayu's story of the sage's encounter with a beautiful woman smelling of fish is accompanied by Carran's flirtatious

then erotic running of the cloth over her own body. Having made love to the sage, she raises her arms from inside the cloth to create a flowering tree.

The suggested presentation of a stick by Vayu to Carran helps make Carran's transformation from fisherwoman to sage more clear. It becomes the sage's paddle, his shoulder carrier and his sexual organ. The basket too is transformed from jug to baby as Vayu places it under Carran's dress.

The performers symbolise the sage's departure by moving slowly backwards, creating a sense of vastness and distance. Joji is left in the sage's persona as his cymbal and drum playing reach a climax then ebb away as the figure melts slowly into the sea.

"At last stories are allowed to live. Now a ritual can be initiated"

VAYU

"Words have been reined in and images remain as golden nuggets around which I can ring and move"

CARRAN



DEVELOPMENT

February 2, 1994

A fresh journey awaits exploration as the performance piece approaches the final phase of development. The crossing of a sea gives way to the entering of a forest as Vayu's lilting monologue and Joji's all-embracing music evoke a magical array of creatures.

A delicate puff of breath through Vayu's cupped hands releases the spirit of the forest into the animal images of Carran. But as darkness falls a hunter's threat is met by the arrival of a flaming winged horse – announced by a fiery outburst of percussion – into whose body Carran is transformed.

A bridge is needed to carry Carran, as the fire-horse, through a time journey to an ultimate celebration of harvest and creation. The artists plan a short poignant exchange involving puppets and the ticking of a clock. The scene will require the cutting of openings in the stage backcloth, so it will be developed once the set is complete.

Meanwhile as Joji allows clockwork-toy-like music to peter out, Carran and Vayu advance in equilibrium on either side of the performance space. Vayu walks slowly carrying a bowl of water on her head while Carran clasps a basket of apples and spins like a puppet. But the physical transfer of apples is

lifeless, and there is a feeling that the action cannot make sense without reference to the passage of the seasons.

The extract is repeated with the basket and the bowl both empty to avoid potentially hazardous spillages. To a crescendo of percussion, Vayu and Carran spin ever faster in opposing circular directions. The story gap is filled, allowing the performers to move on to a climactic finale in which they present the final clues to the enigma of the stone sisters.

"Because it is simpler it becomes more workable. I begin to apply old principles of working. Simply inhabit the image, invoke the picture, be poned by it: this is how it is"

CARRAN

"At last we decide on 'celebration'. He Ho and away we go! I hope! Stories I have researched from Japanese myths + legends, Celtic tales and Hindu mythology and folklore are now entering the space"

VAYU



"There is nothing new under the sun. This has been a journey requiring faith: a belief in the light through darkness. We are reclaiming, reliving and renewing in our expression - the performance - of our quest".

CARRAN

"Tributaries has been a meeting point of several different paths. No one can remain dominant and winds from distant shores have stormed and swept through the process. Now, travellers must take separate journeys".

VAYU

"This has been a unique experience for me. Together we have integrated music, movement and storytelling into an extremely positive expression of creative energy."

JOJI

"I have had this project on my mind and in my body for well over a year. Most of the elements have shown themselves, and we have earned the right to serve them. It is up to us to try to make them very clear. I feel I have been scrubbed by a hard brush".

IAN

DEVELOPMENT

February 8, 1994

The piece has moved to its preview performance space at the Coventry Centre for the Performing Arts for its second run-through.

The set now includes a wooden platform with two pairs of steps, and a blue square-shaped floor canvas painted with a large white and yellow solar image. Both the platform and Joji's instruments are supported by textured metal frames that give a rusty ageing effect.

Throughout a continuous performance of more than an hour, the individual extracts explored in previous development sessions blend together well to create a



logical passage. Themes of a mythic voyage to the sun; of creation, death and rebirth; and of a journey of the human psyche shine through vividly.

The performance looks almost complete in itself, even though some images have become less intense. The symbolic use of red cloth is less expressive than before but Carran's emergence from the sea is as spectacular as a procession to the altar. Timings are understandably hesitant but at the moment when they are razor-sharp the action becomes spine-chilling: one of a series of wild embraces between Vayu and Carran achieves such a level of co-ordination that for a split second the theatre feels almost about to explode.

The run-through shows an already remarkable union between Carran, Vayu and Joji. Each appears part of a whole, so that the attention is on the entire piece rather than the individual. Now even the smallest of the gestures has to be analysed and refined before the piece is ready for performance.

BIOGRAPHIES

CARRAN WATERFIELD was a residential social worker and teacher before becoming a physical theatre performer. The founder of Triangle, she won a West Midlands Arts award to train with Odin Teatret in Denmark. Carran received the Best Actress Award at the first International Festival of Experimental Theatre in Russia in 1991 for her one-woman show *Married Blitz*, and a Fringe First Award at the 1992 Edinburgh Festival for *The Dig*.

VAYU NAIDU is a storyteller who retells Indic mythology and folk tales in English. Her stories have been gathered during travels throughout India, where she has also performed. Vayu presented *The Baul of Bengal* at The Spirit of the Earth Festival in 1992. She has performed at the Crick-Crack Club and at international storytelling festivals in Sweden, Portugal and Ireland. She is the founder of Brumhalata.

JOJI HIROTA is a composer and percussionist. Trained in Japan in both drumming and Western classical music, he performs with his own band Trisan. Its album of the same name was nominated by Tower Records (USA) for Best Contemporary Instrumental Music in 1993. Individual credits include *Onnagata* with The Lindsay Kemp Dance Company and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with The Birmingham Rep.

IAN CAMERON is a visual artist, performer and director. A founder member of Intriplicate Mime, he won the Greater London Arts, Dance and Mime Award in 1984. Ian has performed as a mime artist and puppeteer with such companies as English National Opera, The London Sinfonietta and The Caricature Theatre, Cardiff. He directed *Married Blitz* and *The Dig* for Triangle, and has recently directed for Quicksilver Theatre, London.

RUTH JACKSON is a stage manager and lighting designer. A Master of Arts in Theatre Studies at Leeds University, she has been technical stage manager with the Lewis London Ballet Company, deputy technical and stage manager with The Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury, and part of the stage management team at the New Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent. She has taught Theatre Studies at Newcastle College and runs a technical theatre staff agency, TECS.

ALI MACLAURIN is a set and costume designer. Trained at Edinburgh University and at Croydon College of Art, she has worked with many small-scale touring and fringe companies including The Shadow Syndicate, of which she was a founder member. Ali has been resident designer with the Belgrade Theatre-in-Education Company and has worked regularly with young people's groups and designed community plays for non-theatre spaces.



Carran Waterfield



Vayu Naidu



Joji Hirota



Ian Cameron

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