

come. I sit up the second you think there is peace and this pathetic plea for attention is in turn ignored or administered to. I feel sorry for you having to deal with me. I can't help this childlike state, I cannot bear to be alone with this heavy feeling weighing down on my chest. I feel pain.

Someone thought I was a doll, you see, I have to prove I am human. I find comfort in stillness.

What is it to disobey? To refuse food is one thing. To refuse medicine is another. I know your limits, I have tested them.

The words have dried like an awful skin disease and I flake them off to bring forth newness. My bed is full of sores or evidence of what they were. I have realness in this illness. I ache, I hurt, I am dying again and again and again and again. Repetition till you and I can take it no more.

What is it she writes about? I cannot intrude

into your world. You have found your place by the cupboard - are you not tempted by your own potions? Am I not making you sick? Please hear my thoughts. Please come to me now.

I feel dejected, alien, repulsive. I stink, I sweat, I weep.

Your playfulness brings a faint smile; I want to resist mothering but I can't. I want to take myself seriously by laughing. We are here forever. No daylight, no birds, no grass, no word.

This is it then. I give in.

SOPHIA NEW (Britain) is a solo performer. She has been a theatre editor of *Venue* magazine and contributor to *Live Art* magazine. She has taught at Cheltenham and Gloucester College for the last year on the Performance Arts BA and has just finished a tour of *In The Shadow* with *Reckless Sleepers*.



Glass Beads was created without a play-script in the traditional sense. I was offered "seed money" from Magdalena Aotearoa to create a performance for the Magdalena International Women's Festival in 1999 and I invited Olivia Lory Kay, a film maker, to collaborate with me on the project. We decided to focus on the writings of Janet Frame, a pre-eminent New Zealand novelist who spent many years confined in mental institutions. We read her poetry and novels and I looked for recurring themes in her work, which included whiteness, war, land-

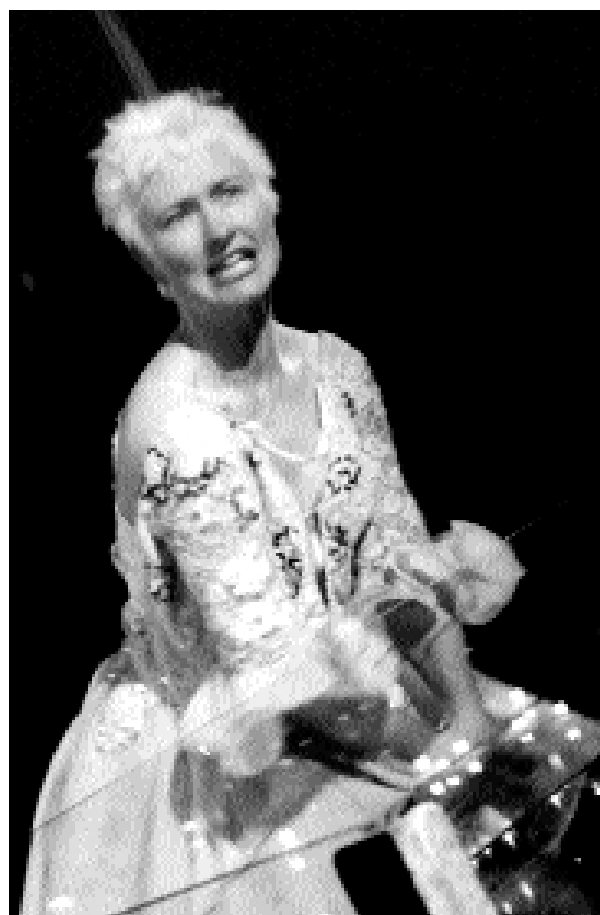
scape, family, loneliness and the socialisation of women.

Olivia and I were thinking of the project in isolation, I was in Denmark and she in New Zealand. I became fascinated by the quality of light on moonlit nights in Denmark, the snow reflecting a bluish eerie stunningly beautiful light, and my desire grew to re-create this light on stage. Meanwhile, Olivia had made an art installation of four large glass screens suspended in space with three television monitors and two film projectors. Independently, I was

wondering how I might use glass between the actor and the audience to represent the day-room of the mental institution, where the patient can be seen and see out, but cannot hear or be heard from the outside world, and I suggested that we use the screens as the set. In a serendipitous way our working ideas were merging.

When I returned to New Zealand we began to rehearse and I asked Olivia to create movement scores with various pieces of Janet Frame's texts. One was about a little girl who was not allowed to go to ballet classes, but must stay home and play war games with her father and his memorabilia from the war: an old suitcase containing a gas mask and a bloody bandage. In these games the girl always had to die, and then get up and re-play the death scenes. Her desire to go to ballet classes with all the other little girls stimulated me to query the role of ballet in New Zealand society, where nearly all mothers push their daughters to learn ballet. My thoughts turned to the confinement of the feet in points and this correlation with bloody toes and Chinese foot binding. At this time my sister was preparing for a white wedding and her dress was a huge puff of a ballet dress, with a white satin top and big tulle skirt. The link between the little girl in the white tutu and socialisation into the white wedding began to fascinate me. Why do women want to dress up in these ridiculous white dresses? In a second hand dress shop I found a hideous yellow ballroom dance dress and held it up to Olivia who shook her head "no" in disbelief, but that became the costume. We then purchased ballet point shoes, which were tied on with bloody bandages. The dream dress was at times incongruously juxtaposed with boots, hard hat and gas mask.

We worked in an old basement and hung the 2x2 metre glass screens in the configuration of a square box with two doorways to a



Olivia Lory in *Glass Beads*
Photo: Sally Thorburn

surrounding corridor of light. Then came the glass coffin, which was made specially to fit Olivia's body dimensions. This was filled with water, on which were floated seven candles. It was related to Frame's trilogy (which is autobiographical) in which two of her sisters died by drowning, and to the title of one of her novels *Faces in the Water*. The final image the audience saw as they filed past the coffin to exit the space was her floating body.

Integrated into the movement score were the film sequences, filmed and edited by Olivia. She had had the desire to make a performance where film was not added at the end as an extra, but which was an integral part of the conception of the whole piece from the beginning, and we worked consistently to make this so. Three video monitors were hung

off the back wall behind the glass screens and two projectors, one focused on the screens and one hung from the ceiling projecting images off the water in the tank, which was placed at the very front of the set. The film score included footage of the town in which Frame grew up and the Maniototo, a high plateau in Central Otago with barren hills and blue skies. *Living in the Maniototo* is the title of one of Frame's novels and is also a central painting theme of one of New Zealand's most renowned painters who uses strong blues and yellows, which colours I used exclusively for the lighting design. Juxtaposed to this there was footage of snow falling in Berlin, railway stations and landscapes filmed through the glass window of a moving train. The sound track featured trains in motion which created connotations of journeying.

To my knowledge two of Frame's favourite authors were Shakespeare and Rilke, and there are many quotes from Shakespeare in her works. I selected pieces of text from these authors and gave them to Olivia as her spoken or sung texts.

Olivia had to rehearse alone during the week as I was teaching in another city. When I was with her on weekends we worked solidly on detailed movement and vocal scores. Then I would leave her to work on her own. She found it very difficult when she went into the glass cage as she lost all sense of time and had to set an alarm clock in order to know when to come out. She would get angry with me for leaving her alone, but this aloneness fed very much into the themes of the performance itself: to live as a schizophrenic, you dance with a ghost, the dead twin that is always with you, invisible. Frame underwent two hundred electric shock treatments over eight years and each time experienced fear like that of an execution. *... and the fear that I might not be able to say anything, because everything is unsayable - and the other fears... the fears.*

Fears, Rainer Maria Rilke,
from *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*

The performance dramaturgy incorporated many different layers: the movement score, a recorded sound score, live sound score, text, video and lighting score. *Glass Beads* began as an installation placed in a theatre space, and the first fifteen minutes were dedicated to this interactive space, where the audience had the opportunity to walk around inside the installation or to sit close to it and experience it for themselves. It then opened out into a performance using the installation as the set with the actress, who could have been mistaken for one of the audience, beginning her monologue. Her appearance with short white hair and white body in brown gabardine coat and boots was reminiscent of a refugee, a Chaplinesque clown, a person of undefined status, androgynous in the mixing of gender signifiers in a space of transparent confinement.

In the darkness candles floated on water, reflected off the base of the glass tank, and back through the glass screens, creating a prism of light. The candles, apart from being beautiful, were a personal tribute to those we wished to remember, we never articulated whom they might be, but for me it was an act of remembrance for Grotowski.

Glass Beads was not based on a play-script, it was created from improvisations by the actor from her own associations and reactions to the stories of Janet Frame. She confronted images of leaving and confinement with her body physically and mentally enclosed in glass boxes. Utilising poetry from Rilke and Shakespeare, with her voice, in speech and song, German and English, she explored dislocations of experience.

I was put in hospital because a great gap opened in the ice floe between myself and the other people whom I watched. I was alone on the ice... I was not yet civilised. I traded my safety for the glass beads of fantasy.

Janet Frame

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An Approach to Cross-cultural Dramaturgy

An invitation to Thespis 2000 - The Seventh International Festival of University Theatre, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem raised the question of what kind of performance my theatre group and I should prepare for this very special meeting at this very special place. The inspiration given by Jerusalem pointed towards a subject of religious plurality, while our spiritual reality gave us in addition a choice of a number of fashionable subjects among various religious concepts, such as syncretism, New Age and different shamanic techniques. On the theatrical and technical level the play needed to refer to a state of postdramatic theatre and its dramaturgical methods, as well as to interactive multimedia techniques including singing, music, dance and video.

An invitation for Germans to join a theatre festival in Israel also involves us in confronting the historic guilt and feelings concerning the relationship between Israelis and Germans. After the recent cases of neo-nazi riots in Germany, we wanted to show that there are other people in this country who try to look at the specific needs of those living in foreign cultures. We wanted to

show that we see their suffering and are aware of our responsibility, and also face the fact that, in trying to help, we often get lost in our postmodern jungle of a plurality of different beliefs and activities.

The culture of the Aborigines is the oldest in the world and therefore beyond any religious and political connection to the German-Israeli dialogue. The philosophy of the "dreamtime" contains such a sublime humanitarian message that it could concern Jews, Muslims and Christians without having a missionary agenda. By making reference to this philosophy, we thought we could dare to touch common ground, without showing too pessimistic a view of our contemporary society, one that longs for spirituality but seems to find no way out of materialism. The beautiful, allegorical and very dramatic stories of the Australian dreamtime heroes seemed to be ideal material for a play.

The play had to work not only as a demonstration of readings in interculturalism, but also to touch on something in our own personalities. To achieve this we remembered an old source of European theatre, the role of the oracle of Delphi in Greek tragedy, and we