It gives me great pleasure to present the World Premiere of Noelle Janaczewska’s Third Person.

Presenting a new play to the world for the first time is always terrifying and pleasurable. The terror comes from the responsibility to try and honour the writer’s intent and the potential of the script. The pleasure is all about discovery. What you read on the page at first may delight you with metaphors, excite you with ideas, and charge your imagination with ideas but it’s not until the performers start giving those moments flesh that the play really begins to emerge.

Third Person is a wonderful, challenging and potent script. As soon as I read it I was attracted to the merging of realities, the potent metaphors, and the wonderful roles it offers. As we have explored it we have also discovered other layers under the surface ‘rubble’. Noelle’s open script has allowed the performers to develop their own characters out of our ‘research’ into the world of post-War Berlin and other similar conflicts since, so that the unattributed lines could then being assigned to appropriate personalities. Along with the fascinating way in which the play slips from poetic stylisation to naturalism to heightened realism, this has made rehearsals a fascinating journey.

One of the great pleasures of my job is the chance to work with extremely talented artists at the very beginning of their careers. The four main creators of the world of Third Person: Ashlee Clapp, composer; Ellen Strasser, co-set and costume designer; Nicola Andrews, co-set and lighting designer; and David Haidon, AV designer are all either very recent graduates or still students but their work speaks for itself.

Enjoy the show.

The play was originally a commission from Eleventh Hour, a Melbourne-based theatre company. We were interested in debt and notions of indebtedness, not only financial, but other kinds of debt—political, moral, emotional, familial. Our ‘springboard texts’ were Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice and the musical Cabaret.

Instead of 1930s Berlin, I was more interested in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War—a time of displacement, chaos, grief, and guilt. A time we see less often on our stages and screens. So Third Person is set during the winter of 1946/7. Mostly. And the Berlin of Third Person is a place in the way that Shakespeare’s Venice is a place.

The Merchant of Venice ends with Antonio’s debt dismissed, with Shylock stripped of his fortune and faith, and with two marriages. Portia marries Bassanio, and Shylock’s daughter Jessica marries Lorenzo. There’s a passing reference to the fact that the servant/clown Lancelot Gobbo has fathered a child with a Moorish girl. Third Person begins roughly 10 years later. Nothing else that happens in Shakespeare’s play is necessarily relevant to what unfolds.

I was delighted when Tom Gutteridge and Union House Theatre decided to produce Third Person. It is ideally suited to a large cast. The play has 7 named characters plus an ensemble of soldiers and rubblewomen picking through the ruins of the city. On the page, the play is a mix of attributed and unattributed lines; as a writer, I like to let the director and performers make their own discoveries.

Third Person was short-listed for the 2011 Griffin Playwriting Award.
CAST
Isabella Vadiveloo  
Jessekah  
Sarah Fitzgerald  
Portia  
Elyssia Koulouris  
Yamina  
Clancy Moore  
Anton  
Ronnen Liezerovitz  
Chris  
Shawn Tan  
Mister  
Sara-Tabitha Catchpole  
Missus

ENSEMBLE
Liam Bellman-Sharpe  
Rachael Besselink  
Camilla Best  
Nick Campbell  
Hannah Dallas  
Claudia Hong  
Madeleine Johnson  
Scout Kain-Bryan  
Jai Leeworthy  
Georgia Marett  
Nikky Nguyen  
Adam Porrett  
Alex Scott  
Sophie Waddy  
Pallavi Waghmode  
Laura Wilson

BAND
Gabrielle Castelluccio  
double bass  
Lizzie Eng  
piano  
Emma Morrison  
bassoon

Director  
Tom Gutteridge
Writer  
Noëlle Janaczewska
Composer  
Ashlee Clapp
Lighting and Set Design  
Nicola Andrews
Set and Costume Design  
Ellen Strasser
Assistant Director  
Ruben Clark
Sound Designer  
David Porteus
AV Designer  
David Haidon
Makeup Designer  
Megan Hall
Production Manager  
Gus Macdonald
Head Technician  
Clynton Jones
Stage Manager  
David Kelly
Assistant Stage Manager  
Christa Jonathan
Assistant Stage Manager  
Cherry Cai
Sound Operator  
Faith Sim
Lighting Operator  
Rhiannon Down
Promotion and Marketing  
Erin Adams
Front of House Manager  
Ben White
Photography  
Vikk Shayen Wong
Rehearsal Photos  
Christa Jonathan
Graphic Design  
Daga Mikolaj and Christian McGilloway
Video Documentation  
Angus George
At the culmination of the Second World War, the Soviet invasion of Berlin left the already crippled city in ruins. “Burnt out interiors, lift-shafts stranded, a hole in everywhere you turn.” Having already been subjected to many devastating air raid bombings, the street-to-street Soviet push towards Hitler’s Chancellery brought more suffering including starvation and rape. Upon her surrender, Berlin was “cut up like a cake”, divided into four zones, with the eastern sector governed by the Soviets, and the rest for the “Yanks, the Brits and the French”. Due to underlying tensions between the Soviets and the other Allied forces, this arrangement proved to be more of a balancing act than a governance structure, and the stage was set for what ultimately grew into the Cold War. In all four sectors though, Berlin was a city of wreckage and debris, and it was left for the most part to the women to clean up the mess and try to rebuild what they had lost. These trümmerfrauen, or rubble-women, as they came to be known, tore down ruined buildings and cleared away the debris, giving some order to the post-war chaos. Rubble was heaped together into hills, and on these makeshift mountains grew patches of flora, new life, tough and hardy like the trümmerfrauen themselves.
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