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Frank Camilleri

Inverting the Formula: Devising through Adaptation

Adaptation in contemporary performance takes on different forms and engages various strategies. In this article, Frank Camilleri explores the subject in terms of compositional devising via his practice as research in the area. He considers adaptation as a process of adjustment and modification that occurs at the level of format or organization, and which results from a change in context. He proposes terminological and structural frameworks, namely types, movements, modes, and phases of adaption. These taxonomies are then subsequently exemplified through three case studies from the author's performance and pedagogical work. Frank Camilleri is Associate Professor in Theatre Studies at the University of Malta, where he is Director of the School of Performing Arts and leads P21 (Performance 21), the research centre for Twenty-first Century Studies in Performance. He is Artistic Director of Icarus Performance Project and co-edits the Routledge/Icarus 'Theatre as a Laboratory' series.

Key terms: practice as research, physical theatre, actor training, improvisation, composition pedagogy, Icarus Performance Project.

IN THIS ARTICLE I present three aspects of adaptation. First, that adaptation is *a process of adjustment and modification*. Second, that adjustment occurs essentially at *the level of format or organization*. Third, that it results from a *change in context*. All three announce a wide spectrum of possibilities when transposed to the phenomenon of compositional devising in performance.

The subject here is the adaptation processes in contemporary performance practice as they pertain to Icarus Performance Project (www.icarusproject.info). In view of the myriad variables at play, a multi-pronged approach is adopted which considers types, movements, modes, and phases of adaptation. This provides the terminology and framework for a subsequent exemplification of some mechanisms engaged in adaptation. My experience as a practitioner and a teacher of devising informs the discussion.

I set up Icarus Project in 2001 as an ongoing research endeavour that focuses on the continuum between training and performance processes. The research is developed by means of two branches, mainly performance structures and technical/experimental structures. Both explore the interplay of training and performance via improvisation processes. Adaptation plays an important part in both branches: while performance structures like *Lamentations of Cain* (2005) and *Martyr Red* (2013–14) engage more recognizable instances of adaptation such as text-based devising, experimental structures like *Tekhnē Sessions* (2003–10) and *Duration 56* (2008, ongoing) explore the dynamics and mechanisms of composition within technical and pedagogical contexts, some of which are then applied in performance adaptation.[1]

Part One: Taxonomies

Types of Adaptation

Adaptation is one of the compositional strategies often employed in contemporary theatre in the sense that many performances are based (closely or loosely) on texts, and, as such, qualify as 'adaptations'. The term 'adaptation' suggests a process whereby a 'textual source' is reworked and transformed into 'performance material'. In this article, a 'textual source' or 'working with text' is understood in the broadest sense of the term, ranging from written material (such as plays, poems, novels, song lyrics, articles), to visual imag-

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ery (photographs, paintings, sculpture, designs), to sound structures (songs, nursery rhymes, melodies, vocal qualities and patterns), to constructs and structures like films, rituals, cultural events, and other performances – any source that is processed and leads to performance is deemed to be *textual*.

For the purposes of this article, I also widen the parameters of adaptation to indicate not only a subset or an element of staging, one amongst others, but the overall category of devising. This means extending the domain of adaptation from a process that implies a bridging of two points (the reworking/modification of a text into another) to one that is synonymous with compositional processes. This strategic shift enables the inclusion of an important aspect in those devising practices that do not immediately suggest or start from a given text, but also involve more complex processes of adaptation. Some of these practices entail:

1 Inversion, or *arriving at* (instead of *departing from*) a textual source, which is then adapted/worked into performance material, thus implying inverting the initial chronology of adaptation.

2 Elision, or omitting a textual source in the generation of performance material; in these cases, the activity that occupies the space vacated by a predetermined text is re-transcribed as a source *after* the event. Elided adaptation can take at least two forms:

   a Auto-adaptation (adaptation of itself), when, in the absence of a text, the generated material (say, from a training exercise) is re-adapted in a compositional process of recycling;

   b Retrospection, when a text is added *after* the event, *after* the performance structure is completed (hence its difference from inverse adaptation) – in this case, rather than a textual 'source' we have a textual '*re*source' in which adaptation assumes a more dramaturgical or hermeneutic role that complements some perceived lack in the performance.

3 Auxiliaries, when other sources are mobilized as tools in the processing of a primary textual source; in these cases, auxiliary texts are integrated within the dominant theme/process. Auxiliary adaptation frequently occurs at the level of individual performer work.

4 Introspection, when a completed performance undergoes a process of growth and change during its lifespan to an extent that can be considered an 'adaptation' of its first published version. This process occurs in various degrees in all performances but is more visible in contemporary devised pieces (for instance when there is a change in performer line-up, or a change in venue).

These are, of course, not rigid categories but porous processes that bleed into each other and overlap with other compositional strategies. However, a provisional classification serves to foreground the complexity of the practices discussed here.

It is precisely the practicalities of the often serendipitous nature of devised adaptation that lend themselves to a proliferation of strategies. The difference between, say, the processes of inversion and retrospection might not seem much on paper but in practice, while working on a performance, it 'changes everything'. That is, in the case of inversion, the movement is towards finding a textual source not only to develop material for performance but, more crucially, to identify a concrete starting point (such as a theme) that will impact the integrity of the performance as a whole. In the case of retrospection, the movement is to revisit material that is already developed in the light of a text. Both processes include the absence of a source, but the place where this gap is located indeed 'changes everything' in terms of the work that it entails (input) and the emergent product (output).

The adaptation strategies listed above and others like them are employed mostly during a knowledge/skill-acquisition process or in an effort to break free from known and assimilated ways of generating material.

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While the former applies mainly to early practitioners, the latter usually typifies those more experienced.

Devising through Adaptation

Such a broad concept of adaptation potentially poses more questions than it answers. However, it is a more accurate reflection of what occurs in devising. Accordingly, rather than 'adaptation through devising' (a category of composition), I propose an inversion of the formula to consider 'devising through adaptation' (an agent of composition), thereby defamiliarizing and proliferating the phenomenon to shed light on adaptation strategies in contemporary performance, as illustrated in the second part of this article through the work of the Icarus Project.

Before exemplifying some of the mechanisms involved, it is necessary to consider other aspects that frame and characterize adaptation.

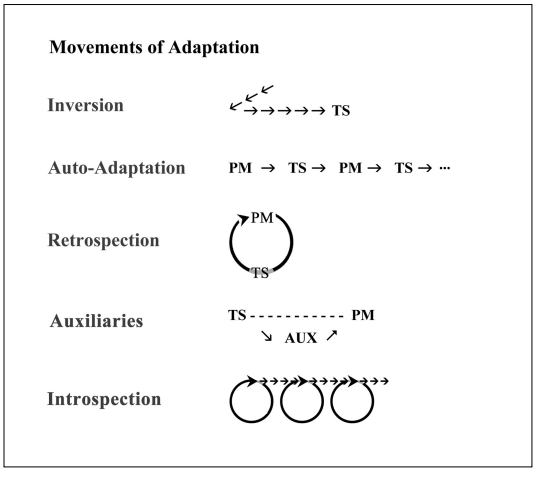
Movements of Adaptation

The concept of movement is useful to locate specifics of adaptation. As a process, adaptation involves movement, the transformation of something into something else – a 'journey' from textual source (TS) to performance material (PM) – entailing a spectrum of possibilities ranging from minimal changes to radical intervention. Movement in adaptation can be classified under two main headings:

1 Horizontal, or shifting sideways, applies in cases where the textual source is still very much recognizable in the resultant performance's form, content, and structure. This ranges from so-called 'faithful' adaptation (for example, staging a play according to its conventional expectations) to more 'adventurous' ones (for example, setting a Shakespeare play in Nazi Germany, or all-female casting of *Macbeth*), but with little intervention on the script and conventional acting styles. In these cases, the movement is horizontal because adaptation intervenes on the surface.

2 Vertical, or transposing levels, applies in cases where radical changes are effected on one or more levels of the textual source, for instance in dramaturgy and presentation. This can range from a complete absence of the source in the movement to performance material (for example, a mime adaptation of a play), to a re-reading of the source in the light of other (including contradictory) sources. Most postdramatic practices, as described by Hans-Thies Lehmann, involve vertical movement.[2]

In cases where specific instances or entire scenes run counter to the predominant mode (such as a devised or an improvised scene in an overall conventional staging), more localized movement occurs at the level of the types already identified (see Figure 1, below):



1 Inversion: reverse–forward movement towards a TS as a starting point.

2 Elision.

a Auto-adaptation: linearly iterative, where the movement *away from* is also *towards* (where performance is textual source is performance and so on).

b Retrospection: hoop, or single cycle, a re-visitation movement of already developed material in the light of a textual source.

3 Auxiliaries: diversion, detour movement.

4 Introspection: spirally reflective movement.

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Practically all types include movements of layering and reworking, which signals an essential reiterative or recycling element in adaptation and devising. The importance of highlighting direction and dynamics of movement in adaptation lies in the nuanced understanding it permits. Indeed, the conventional view of adaptation as a linear progression from textual source to performance material is re-transcribed by a 'linearity' which follows various twists and turns, variables and combinations, in the context of contemporary performance devising.

Modes of Adaptation

Adaptation entails the transformation of one substance or format into another. Accordingly, another fundamental element to consider is the *mode* or *manner* of the adaptation, which can be provisionally considered through:

1 Confirmation: when the various elements of a source are reproduced (confirmed) in the performance material – this is applicable to traditional adaptations of play texts, but also to contemporary reconstructions of performances (such as the Wooster Group's *Poor Theater* based on Grotowski's *Akropolis*).

2 Translation or transfiguration: when the processing of a source involves and results in a different medium; for example, from words to images: when a written text is adapted visually as a spatial configuration in a stage design or is translated into a movement score without the words (or with words from a different text).

3 Blending: when different modal processes are used.

4 Contradiction: when components of a textual source are intentionally and systematically countered in the generation of a performance. This mode can sometimes be conceived as a particular blend that fuses the modes of confirmation and translation.

Modes are similar to types of adaptation in being porous. Moreover, although many performance processes will typically involve a blend of modes, they will also be characterized by a predominant one.

Phases of Adaptation

Adaptation processes happen in time as much as in space (movement) and in substance (mode). It is possible to identify three main constituent phases, each of which can be divided into further stages according to the specific circumstances of each case. The following are an indication:

1 PHASE ONE, or *starting points*, indicates the beginning of the process. Two possible fundamental stages in this phase, which may or may not coincide together, are:

a Initiation of work on a performance *in the absence of a source* – this often overlaps with a training continuum and is (usually) directed towards the selection of a text as a starting point.

b Initiation of work on performance adaptation (for example, devising and rehearsal work based on a text) often characterized by two efforts:

i Identification of possible strands to pursue from a text – the equivalent of practical brainstorming.

ii Developing starting points, which marks the initial selection (and *elimination*) from the brainstormed strands.

2 PHASE TWO, or *departure and turning points*, marks the development and elaboration of material from Phase 1. Strictly speaking, this is where the devising and adaptation proper commences. While Phase 1 marks the essential preparatory and foundational work, Phase 2 signals the actual points of departure for adaptation. It is a process of development which leads to turning points (process-altering solutions).

3 PHASE THREE, or *arrival points*, culminates in the final performance

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structure. The stages in this phase are especially dependent on the mode of adaptation engaged. Concluding a performance process may depend on:

a Running out of material to adapt, particularly in text-based work.

b Running out of time, when dependent on a premiere date, particularly for potentially open-ended devising practices,

c The exigencies of the work itself, particularly for those practices that favour periodic in-progress presentations until completion.

These phases and stages are provisional and dependent on individual cases. However, it is useful to consider 'when' adaptation occurs – starts and ends – because it sheds light on 'how' (mechanics and strategies) and 'where' (location) adaptation operates. Though Phase 2 would typically be the longest and where most of the devising takes place, all three are equally decisive: Phase 1 determines Phase 2, while Phase 3 brings Phase 2 to fruition. All phases are porous and are usually identifiable only in retrospect. The final stage of Phase 3 is what survives the whole process as output: it is the material that is shown to a public.

Thus equipped with the terminology and framework of the various types, movements, modes, and phases of adaptation, the second part of the article addresses some instances of the mechanisms involved.

Part Two: Case Studies

Mechanisms of Adaptation

The complex nature of adaptation comes to the fore when discussing the mechanics employed: the variables in play at the level of both constituent elements and their interaction (through combination and sequencing) are potentially infinite.

The complexity is also dependent on the specific qualities of the textual sources involved and of the envisaged performance material. The latter may include the expectations and inclinations of the director and performers as devisers/adaptors, as well as the conditions of the rehearsal and performance venues. These are all elements that, although present, are very difficult to account for in a methodological overview and are best approached through case studies.

As a multi-level and multi-directional composition process, devised adaptation is characterized by aspects that are both visible (such as strategies of work) and invisible (contexts, conditions, motivations, expectations). Since a comprehensive account is beyond the scope of this article, it is limited to the consideration of three case studies in order to highlight some of the 'visible' mechanics involved and any 'invisible' aspects that might be at play. Such exemplification can be viewed as a 'methodology in reverse' or 'retrospective methodology': that is, you know what needs to be done *after* you do it.

Case Study 1: *Lamentations of Cain*

Lamentations of Cain is the culmination of a four-year process (2001–5) by Icarus Project that consisted of six performances in three phases of development, each phase marking different facets of adaptation. The first phase was characterized by two solo structures (*Amargo* and *ICARUS 4*), the second by the bringing together of the solo structures in three combinations (*TWO*, *TWO.2*, and *Amargo TWO*), and the third phase (which resulted in *Lamentations of Cain*) by the re-devising of the accumulated material.[3] *Lamentations* involved three performers, including myself as artistic director.

This case study was selected as an instance of 'retrospective methodology': a completed long-term process of devising and adaptation that can be reviewed in the light of its point of arrival. It also exemplifies instances of an evolving adaptation on a structural and dramaturgical level. Furthermore, the process was pedagogically driven: that is, aimed at training performers in devising, thus marking an invisible aspect that informed the adaptation, as well as making it particularly amenable for methodological analysis.

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Mechanics of Starting Points

The starting point for *Lamentations of Cain* was the three-year process that preceded it. During this process, the five performances that were generated and presented in public had their own dramaturgies or organizing principles. The solos in phase one (2001–3) were theme-driven. For example, my physical piece *Amargo* was based on an adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca's 57-line 'Ballad of One Doomed to Die', which features Amargo as protagonist. The performances in phase two (2003–4) were conditioned by more technical/craft-driven adaptation concerns of how to bring the various solos together in different configurations (duo, trio, ensemble). This consisted mainly of montage mechanics aimed at fusing existing material from disparate sources, as well as devising new sections, especially for scene transitions.

The process that eventually led to *Lamentations of Cain* in the final phase of the project (2004–5) saw the discarding of all movement material and *mise-en-scène* developed until then, with one crucial exception. The 'vocal structure' that had emerged from three years of solo and combined work was kept as a kind of soundtrack, referring not only to texts and their sequence, but also to vocal patterns and textures.[4] The retention of the vocal structure paved the way for a process initially reminiscent of auto-adaptation but that eventually moved closer to retrospective adaptation with the emergence of the Cain theme.

The Cain theme emerged out of two specific needs. First, the project had reached a stage where it needed a distinct unitary dramaturgy (as opposed to a collection of individual dramaturgies). Second, due to the change in performer-personnel (an invisible aspect that conditioned the adaptation) the dramaturgy had to centre on a male-to-male relation because of the sole availability of two male performers and an apprentice female performer.

Three months into the final year of the project the theme of Cain and Abel emerged from Old Testament sources that had been explored in earlier phases and incorporated in the vocal structure. Eventually, even this dramaturgy was re-adapted: the story of Cain was given a New Testament twist via a tragic hero reading that featured a Christ-like figure with a Cain past. The re-reading of the Cain theme thus entailed auxiliary adaptation via the Christ narrative as processed through Lorca's Amargo as 'the one doomed to die'.

Mechanics of Elaboration

The shifting spatial configuration of the stage design in *Lamentations of Cain* exemplifies a mechanism of elaboration in the adaptation of a textual source. It also marks a 'turning point' as described in the Phases of Adaptation above.

Once the Cain narrative was adopted as the performance theme, a number of sources from the Old Testament were selected at various stages of the devising process. As the story of Cain and Abel is only a couple of lines long in Genesis, it was necessary to extend the dramaturgy by means of other sections from the Old Testament.

This included the story of creation, which culminates in Adam and Eve (the parents of Cain and Abel), as well as references to sacrifice (Cain killed Abel because God favoured the latter's sacrificial offerings). Almost all of these were *written* sources, with the exception of a diagram of the tabernacle in the desert as described in Exodus (see Figure 2, on following page).[5]

The link between the Tabernacle as a textual source and the Cain theme was the sacrificial aspect in both. However, the main reason for its selection concerned a potential *mise-en-scène* for the performance. Indeed, it led to one of the prominent features in the performance – the shifting spatial configuration of the stage design:

> The various shapes, objects, and their spatial arrangement in *Lamentations of Cain* were inspired by the shapes and settings in the Exodus Tabernacle design. The frontal elevated positioning [for the audience] not only provided the observer with a better view of the visual patterns and rhythms, but also served to situate the viewer within the dramaturgy of the performance by occupying the God-like position of looking down on the action.[6]

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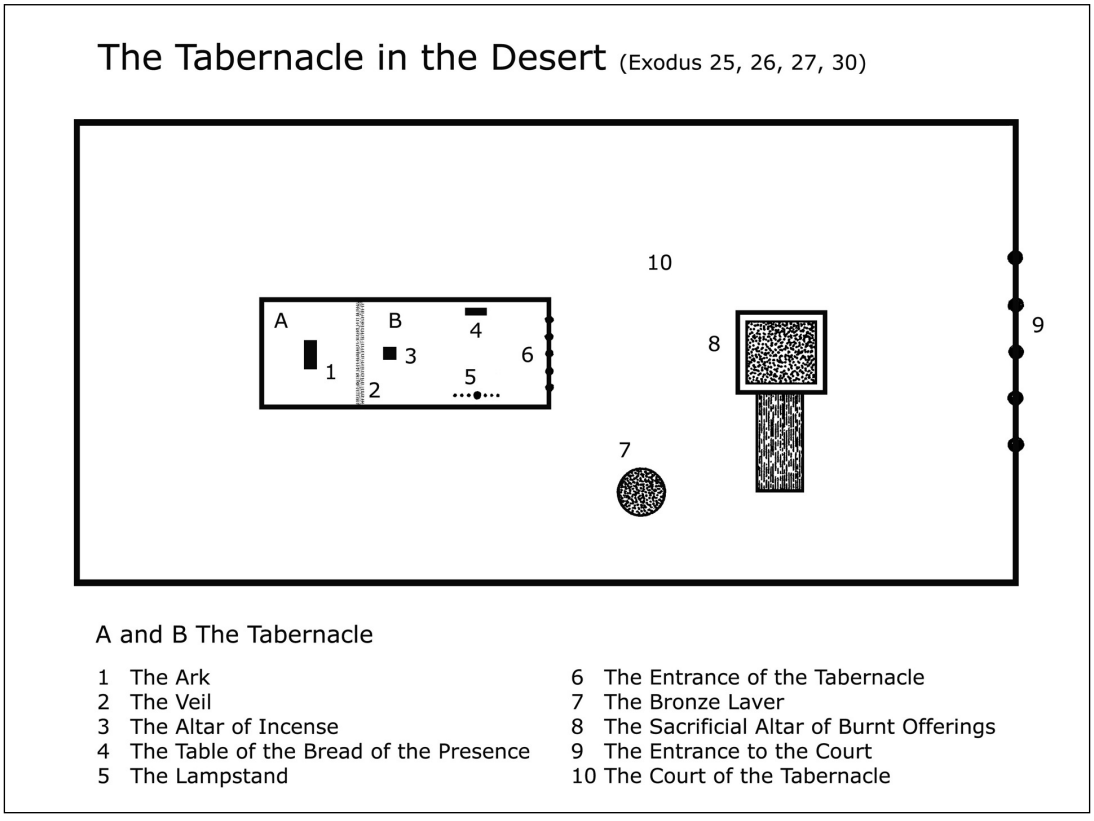


Figure 2. The Tabernacle in the Desert. Reproduced from Frank Camilleri, *Dramaturgy of a Performance Process* (Malta: Icarus Performance Project, 2006), p. 43.

This shifting spatial arrangement was achieved through the moving around of the various objects in the space (see Figure 3, on opposite page).

This proved to be a turning point in the devising process. The decision to retain the vocal structure from the preceding phases of the project, together with a number of 'invisible' factors (mainly the new performers, plus the wariness (and weariness) of over-recycling personal material), made it imperative to generate new movement structures. The shifting spatial arrangement provided a solution: each scene involved a different pattern, and the actions needed to change one design into another became transitional sections, some of which were extended and developed into scenes in their own right with new textual sources adapted retrospectively.

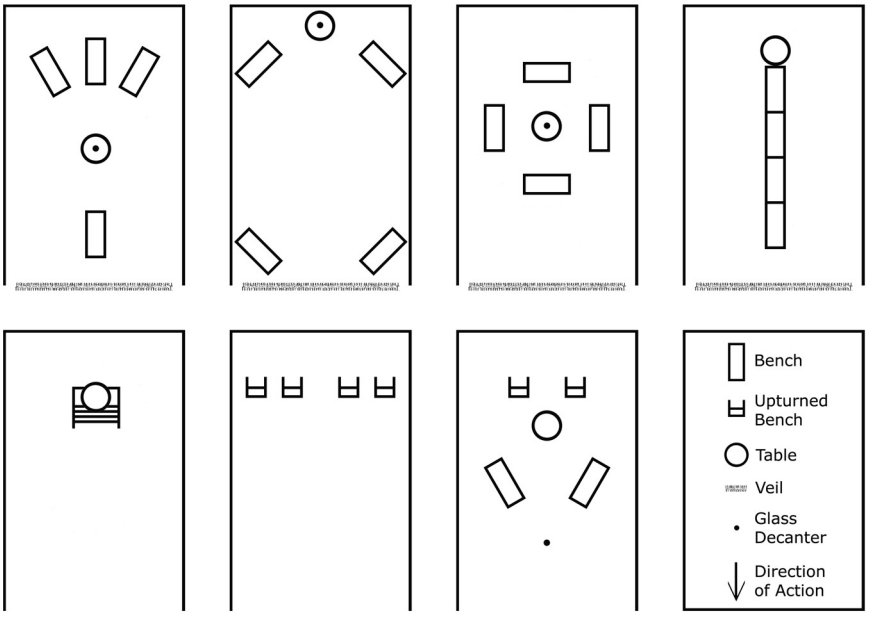
When the setting for a particular scene was achieved, the next task was to devise ways for the three performers to inhabit it. For example, in the top right-hand corner setting in Figure 3, the benches were placed by the other performers in their linear position one after the other as I stepped on them (plank-like) while speaking the Genesis creation text, the implication being that I was walking on the newly created earth (Figure 4).

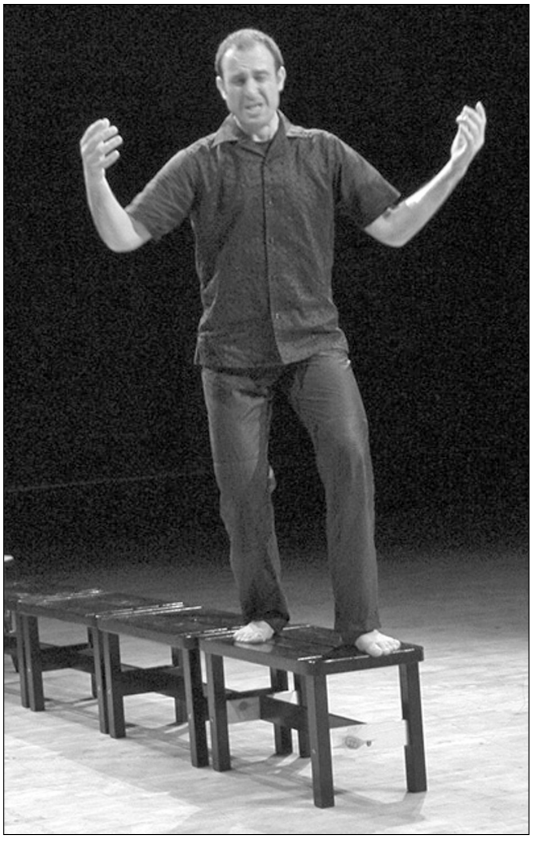
Another example refers to the bottom left-hand corner setting in Figure 3. Here the benches were placed on top of each other to produce a sacrificial altar-like structure on top of which stood the small round table with the decanter ensconced beneath it (see Figure 5), visually cueing the sacramental host in the tabernacle in the Catholic liturgy (which represents Christ's sacrifice).

Opposite page, above (Figure 3): Spatial Configurations in *Lamentations of Cain*.
Bottom left (Figure 4): Frank Camilleri. Bottom right (Figure 5) Nicole Bugeja. Photos: Sandro Spina.

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Spatial Configurations in Lamentations of Cain







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All these shifting arrangements were accompanied by the vocal structure. This kind of interplay between the various textual sources (spatial, literary, vocal, movement) served as an effective adaptation strategy in terms of the dramaturgical link with the Cain narrative, the filtering of the individual textual sources, and the formalistic harmonization of various materials from different periods and sources of the project.

Case Study 2: *Martyr Red*

Martyr Red (2013–14) concluded the first phase of Icarus Project's more recent performance research. *Martyr Red* is constructed as an interconnected series of *études* or scenes, each exploring a different performance format, from text-based to dance-based, to physical theatre, pageantry, performance art, and multimedia. The sequencing of the études follows a dramaturgical development that emerged from the work itself. The *études* themselves can be viewed as case studies in different forms of adaptation. *Martyr Red* involves two performers, including myself as artistic director. This case study was selected as an instance of 'emergent methodology': a current and ongoing process of devised adaptation. Furthermore, the strong research concern that informs *Martyr Red* (a study of 'habitational action' in performance) brings to the fore an invisible aspect that conditions adaptation.[7]

Mechanics of Starting Points

The starting point for *Martyr Red* was the theme of martyrs and martyrdom. There was no specifically articulated reason for this except that the subject resonated with me. 'Resonance' is an important feature in the research of Icarus and something I have transferred to my work with students. Broadly speaking, 'resonance' marks a recurrent tendency of interest in a theme (for example, the plague or martyrdom) and/or a recurring acknowledgement of something particular such as a specific colour or object. It is such 'recurrence' (as a *textual source*) that, through its adoption as a starting point and/or reference point, is transformed into an 'occurrence' (as *performance material*).

In the case of *Martyr Red*, the first concrete textual source to emerge from the resonance of the theme of martyrdom concerned images of martyrs from Christian iconography. These images were eventually adapted in a variety of ways in the performance, including in a tango and in a flaying/flogging sequence, the latter portrayed in Figures 6 and 7. Other textual sources that emerged from the martyr theme, and which were eventually incorporated in the performance, included orchestral and electronic music pieces, as well as texts such as selections from Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and 'The Love Song of St Sebastian'.

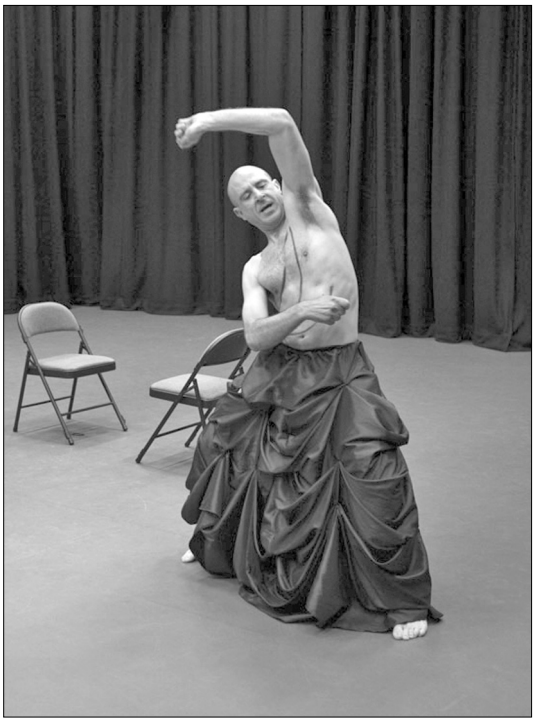
For thirteen months, up until eight weeks before its first public work-in-progress presentation, the performance process was called 'Project X' because it was not clear if 'martyrs' was going to be the main dramaturgical agent as opposed to an influential but essentially *auxiliary* (supporting but silent) aspect. An Icarus performance process is always geared towards 'finding what one wants to say' as distinct from 'starting from what one already knows what to say'. The decision was eventually adopted processually, as an organic consequence of the selected textual sources and of the emergent dramaturgy. In fact, the dramaturgy and the choice of textual sources informed each other, eventually evolving into a narrative-liturgy of temptation, self-doubt, sacrifice, martyrdom, and sublimation – 'a play of passion that treads the fine line between intense suffering and sexual desire'.[8] For example, the text of the four tempters from *Murder in the Cathedral* was selected and adapted specifically to fit 'temptation' as a dramaturgical stage towards martyrdom.

Mechanics of Elaboration

The textual source involving the Christian iconography of martyrs provided much of the inspiration in the first stage of the devising work in *Martyr Red*. Initially, the performers worked on replicating physically the human figures in the images. The next step was to develop these static poses into move-

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Figures 6–7. Judita Vivas and Frank Camilleri in *Martyr Red* (Canterbury, United Kingdom, 2013). Photos: Matthew Wilson.

ment, which entailed reconstructing those *leading* to the position in the image, as well as those *following* from it.

The fact that most of the martyrs were portrayed in a static position (crucified, or tied with their backs splayed on a table, or bound to a pole, among others) meant that there was very little to reconstruct beyond a pose. To develop movement sequences from the images, we switched attention from the recipients to the agents of martyrdom (from the victims to the perpetrators), replicating and reconstructing actions most of which involved instruments like blades and whips. The constant switching between martyr and perpetrator created an interesting recipient–agent motif, proving to be a turning point that evolved into a prominent dramaturgical strand in the performance.

The agency-switching mechanism did not emerge from thin air but from a technical work which we were investigating in the research on 'habitational action', thus marking another invisible element that conditioned this adaptation. The technical work in question is inspired from corporeal mime and involves switching the agency of action from doer to recipient – for instance, countering the task of 'to push' or 'to pull' with 'being pushed' or 'being pulled', utilizing different points in the body. In a sense, the type of devising process engaged here was a looping of the inverse and retrospective adaptation types; that is, the filtering of a textual source through a training exercise to result in material primed for adaptation.

The fundamental problem of working from images, however, remained unresolved: how to adapt still images to movement. Images are perfect for scenic tableaux but need something extra (an additional framework or set of principles) to be developed into movement sequences. The push/pull exercise extended the martyr-image work in quality and quantity, but the material itself still lacked structural coherence. The need for another textual source was felt to supplement this lack.

At first I tried to insert a vocal score as an organizational layering mechanism. Accord-

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Figure 8. Frank Camilleri and Judita Vivas in *Martyr Red* (Canterbury, United Kingdom, 2013). Photo: Matthew Wilson.

ingly, a 'test text' was trialled to see the effectiveness of the strategy: we wanted to see if the iconography material would work with vocalized text before committing to a process of selecting, inserting, and fusing text with movement. We also tried a musical textual source. The qualities of the martyr-images material recalled, through the mechanism of association, tango: confrontational and passionate, at the same time. I selected four potential ('test') tango pieces, with which we experimented, eventually zeroing in on one. The work with the vocalized text was suspended in favour of the tango, which made it to the performance.

After more stages of elaboration, the result was a structure of set and improvised movements for the duration of the four-minute tango piece. The final performance material consisted of a tango involving agent/recipient actions from Christian iconography, including points of contact such as grabbing each other by the throat (Figure 8), or from the belly, as inspired by source images of disembowelling.

This was not the end of this particular strand of elaboration in *Martyr Red*. Textual sources do not come without baggage; sometimes this 'baggage' of associations contributes to the performance material in other ways than originally intended. The tango opened the way to other aspects beyond the need of a particular *étude*. One of these concerned the theme of man–woman relationships. The tango scene (with two persons grabbing at each other's throat) also suggested other possible paths for development from the intersection of martyr images and sadomasochistic (SM) sexual relationships. Indeed, some SM bondage positions directly reference particular martyrdoms – St Andrew's cross is a case in point.

An initial phase of exploring SM material (mainly using rope in the replication of some martyr actions) soon petered out, mainly due to the technical challenges and aesthetic awkwardness of working with the rope. This motif (not yet a theme) remained dormant for a year until it re-emerged in the final stage of the performance process. Elevated to

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the status of a theme, it offered various solutions to the aesthetic of the performance (for example the costumes based on Jacob Kimmie's Martyr Collection and Jennifer Hecker's 'Martyr Dolls' in Figure 9), but also to the dramaturgy. This turning point can be traced explicitly to Eliot's poem 'The Love Song of St Sebastian', which was suggested by a friend rather late in the devising process but which 'changed everything' in the sense described in the first part of this article.

The poem, long unpublished and considered flawed by author and critics alike, combines the martyrdom theme with strong violent and sexual elements that recall SM. In retrospect, the performance seems to have been an adaptation of this poem, rather than the other way round. This is one instance of finding, through the pursuit of 'resonance' and processual adaptation, what one wants to say before knowing it. It is also a localized example of the often serendipitous paths in devising through adaptation.

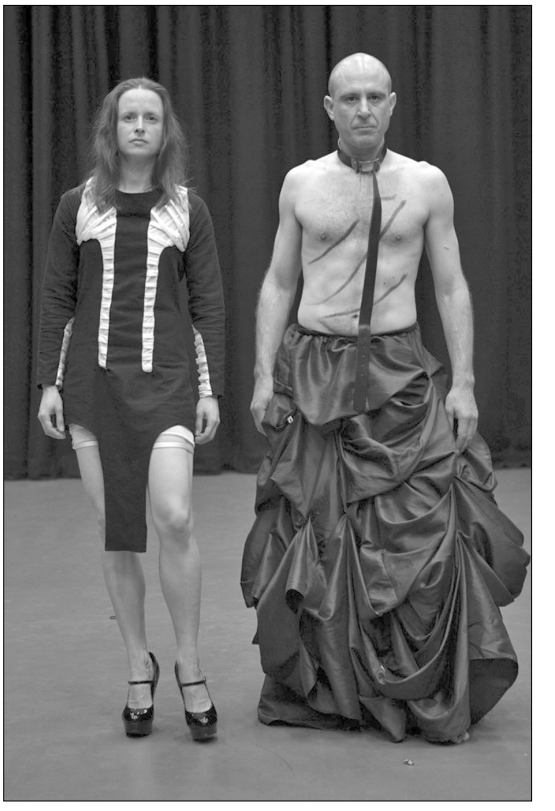


Figure 9. Judita Vivas and Frank Camilleri in *Martyr Red* (Canterbury, United Kingdom, 2013). Photo: Matthew Wilson.

Case Study 3: MA in Physical Actor Training and Performance (PATAP)

Under my co-convenorship between 2011 and 2013, the PATAP MA programme at the University of Kent explored physical training and performance practice. My devising work with Icarus Project informed the guidelines, which shed light on the mechanics and dynamics of devising through the adaptation of various sources (thematic, technical, and written).

This case study was selected to instance 'enabling methodology': a pedagogical process of facilitating devising and stimulating adaptation. The institutional context and modularized nature of this case study marks another category of invisible aspects.

Mechanics of Starting Points

Many devised performances do not start from a predetermined textual source and often resort to something akin to inverse adaptation as a kick-start mechanism. 'How to start?' and 'Where to start?' are questions I regularly face when teaching devising at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In addition to technical/compositional work in the studio, I encourage students to think of something that has 'some kind of resonance' for them in the sense I explain above. They are not required to verbalize and articulate the nature of this resonance at this stage – there is ample time for this later. *Starting* is a delicate stage that should not be rushed because it requires not only finding a voice but also what one has to say. The most common pitfall is to fall back on clichéd themes or, rather, clichéd ways of dealing with universal themes.

The identification of a theme is an integral part of the devising process, and not something that lies outside it, beyond the 'main' work. This does not mean that no practical work can be done until a theme is selected: there *are* strategies of devising that do not depend on themes or a textual source (which will be discussed shortly). The mechanism of resonance, as seen in the *Martyr Red* case

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study, is a useful point of entry. This may be something as general as the word 'blue', which, through association (another mechanism), could be used to generate potential sources for eventual adaptation as a vehicle for one's voice.

Sometimes even the demands of the mechanisms of resonance and association are too much for inexperienced devisers. In such instances I resort to a combination auxiliary–inverse strategy by presenting a number of sources grouped in projects, which students can take or leave: they can adopt them as they are (confirmation mode), adapt/amend them as they wish (translation mode), or even ignore/oppose them (contradiction mode) through other sources or material. The important thing is to locate a foothold in the wall of composition that students (and practitioners) often face. The aim is then to convert these 'sources of inspiration' into 'textual sources' for devised adaptation. The boxed extracts opposite from the MA guidelines provide concrete starting points.

It is important to provide a web of sources (and not limit or predetermine them at the expense of others) early on in the process, to stimulate a working process that facilitates the emergence of a personal theme to appeal to the devisers. The three types of sources in the guidelines are aimed at broadening the range of content and of the mechanics to engage in the shaping of the performance.

Mechanics of Elaboration

The example of the push/pull filtering mechanism mentioned in the *Martyr Red* study highlights another significant aspect of devised adaptation. In addition to 'Sources of Inspiration: Content' , which serve to kickstart the work, the MA guidelines include a second part that addresses the elaboration process of devising, aimed at how to generate material at the level of performers with and (importantly) without a textual source. Indeed, this can be viewed as a multipronged strategy to produce performance material in the absence of a textual source. Once generated, the material can potentially *become* a textual source if it is re-adapted in its own terms (auto-adaptation) or can potentially *lead* to a textual source (aka 'textual *re*source') in retrospection.

The separation between 'Content' and 'Form' to distinguish between the more thematically oriented sources discussed earlier and the more formal and technical ones here, is for terminological purposes only. The sets of inspiration sources overlap and inform each other at various levels. The Principles of Composition and Interaction that characterize 'Form' emerged from the improvisation-based work on the training–performance continuum of Icarus Project, specifically *Duration 56*, which belongs to the technical/experimental branch of the research.[10]

As mentioned in the introduction of this article, this branch explores dynamics and mechanisms of composition within technical and pedagogical contexts, some of which are then applied in performance adaptation. The Principles of Composition and Interaction are complemented by others that address reference points and direction of attention and recall strategies during and after improvisation. They are an effective tool in the generation and elaboration of performance material, including various sections in *Martyr Red* that were eventually layered by vocalized text or music. In the case of students, these principles provide points of entry that both lay the foundations for and condition the eventual adaptation of texts.

Conclusion

The mechanics emergent from the three case studies highlight practical aspects of devising through adaptation. The terminological and structural frameworks discussed in the first part of this article bring out in bold relief the complexities of the processes at play. Although it is an impossible (and undesirable) task to write *a* methodology of 'adaptation through devising', the article's defamiliarization strategy to invert the formula and consider 'devising through adaptation' opens a window on *possible methodologies* – that is, on ways of conceiving in practice and in reflection the modification of texts to fit a performance environment.

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The Projects

Project M	Project S	Project G
(1) minotaur	(1) siren	(1) gorgon
(2) bull-fighting	(2) track and field athletics	(2) tango
(3) Albert Camus: *The Outsider*	(3) Ernest Hemingway: *The Old Man and the Sea*	(3) Federico Garcia Lorca: *Blood Wedding*

Project Sources of Inspiration: Content (these correspond to points 1, 2, 3 in Projects M, S, G)

(1) mythological source, e.g. its representation in different art forms over the centuries

(2) technical source, e.g. the preparation, training, details, performance of the activity

(3) textual/written source, e.g. a narrative, characters, scenes, events

The Guidelines

These sources should be used (1) as starting points and also (2) as reference points throughout your composition process. Research these sources for inspiration on ideas, objects, clothes, texts, actions, dialogue, sequences, and thematic links.

From this research, see what resonates in you as individuals and as a group, even if you cannot rationalize that resonance yet. Part of this research may include the principle of contrasts/opposites (e.g. the female equivalent of the minotaur or of the Old Man; or the male equivalent of a siren; or an 'Insider'). . . .

The conceptual and practical material developed from these sources will provide the basis for a dramaturgy (an organizing structure), which will necessarily inform your devising and individual work. A principal theme, specific to your performance work, may emerge from this process of creation. This theme can be directly or indirectly related to the sources. . . .[9]

Notes and References

1. For more information on Icarus Project's performance branch, see Camilleri, *Dramaturgy of a Performance Process* (Malta: Icarus Performance Project, 2006); and 'Tilting at Windmills: a Case Study Investigating Embodiment, Performativity, and Dramaturgy' (2009), pp. 1-22, available at <www.icarusproject.info/13/36/Tilting-at-Windmills>. For technical structures, see Camilleri, 'Tekhnē Sessions: Investigating Dynamic Aliveness in the Actor's Work', *Theatre, Dance, and Performance Training*, I, No. 2 (Autumn 2010), p. 157–71; and 'Habitational Action: Between Inner and Outer Action', *Theatre, Dance, and Performance Training*, IV, No. 2 (Spring 2013), p. 30–51. See also <www.icarusproject.info>.

2. Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).

3. This project is documented in Camilleri, *Dramaturgy*.

4. Cf. 'Vocal Structure: the pattern of sound and vocal textures, intonations, and dynamics that govern a sequence of texts, songs, and other forms of vocalization in a performance work', ibid., p. 70.

5. Some of the selected texts were in English, but most were in Maltese from an edition which makes extensive use of Semitic-derived vocabulary (Maltese is a Semitic language, written in Latin script, with loan words from Romance and Germanic languages). The use of Maltese reflects an important invisible aspect of the performance: the research on lost Maltese identities via remnants of colonizers' cultures that survive to this day. In *Lamentations of Cain*, this took the form of a grafting mechanism that inserted Arabic-based words in Maltese on to Sicilian melodies. This research was developed in more detail in Icarus's subsequently work on *Don Quixote*, which marks other related instances of adaptation. See Camilleri, 'Tilting at the Windmills', p. 5–8.

6. Camilleri, *Dramaturgy*, p. 42.

7. Icarus Project's research on 'habitational action' was launched in a series of articles in 2013 as a different way of conceiving of and articulating performer process. It was first introduced within a practice-as-research framework, specifically the multi-layered laboratory context from which it emerged, in Camilleri, '"Between Laboratory and Institution" Practice as Research in No Man's Land', *TDR: The Drama Review*, LVII, No. 1 (Spring 2013), p. 152–66. It was subsequently developed as an alternative to the dominance of psychophysical discourse in writings about the actor's work (see Camilleri, 'Habitational Action'), and then juxtaposed with neutral action as the nearest equivalent in the performing arts in Camilleri, 'Yours Neutrally, Habitational Action: Performance between Theatre and Dance', *New Theatre Quarterly*, XXIX, No. 3 (August 2013), p. 247–63.

8. Programme note, *Martyr Red*, Canterbury, 2013.

9. Typically, students are divided into three groups of five or six and asked to select a project. They are free to mix projects by replacing one of the sources from those of another project. It is also possible to remove sources or add new ones.

10. Camilleri, 'Between Laboratory and Institution', p. 154.

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