

## Confined

A contemporary operatic work about human suffering.

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## ArtMusic Awards \* Screen Announcement 2013

Posted on [September 20, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## CONFINED @ APRA|AMCOS : Art Music Awards 2013

Posted on [September 14, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)

CONFINED is a finalist in the 2013 ArtMusic Awards – Award for Excellence in a Regional Area. Writing, performing and producing a work of scale in remote Australia created a range of opportunities, as much as it did challenges, that I believe made it a truly unique project. What a tremendous achievement, honour and recognition for the opera.

Special thanks to everyone who worked and contributed to the Old Gaol iteration in Alice Springs, June 2012. All the amazing local and interstate artists, with a particular mention to Barton Staggs and Sofie Loizou (Co-Composers) who developed the score with me over three years. Ben Ward (Video Artist) for his perseverance; Kieren Sanderson (Associate Producer) who's tireless support began during a cup of tea in 2009 when the spark ignited. And to Younes Bachir (Director), who was bold enough to join me in telling this story; who provoked me to take risks with making visions a reality.

I would also like to acknowledge The *Arrernte* Traditional Owners of Mparntwe, Alice Springs. A place where there are so many sites of importance and cultural significance; a very important aspect to the making of CONFINED. Living in Alice Springs is a truly extraordinary experience.



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## Echo's Ascent

Posted on [March 4, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Echo's Lament

Posted on [February 21, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Viper Island Gaol, Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Posted on [February 5, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Viper Gaol, Viper Island

Posted on [February 5, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)

I recently visited Viper Island in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to see the ruins of a gallows atop a hillock.

The [Viper Island Gaol](#) was abandoned when the Cellular Gaol was constructed in 1906.



Solitary cells, lock-ups, stocks and whipping stands characterised the Viper Jail. Women were among the prisoners there.

The conditions at the jail were such that the place got the notorious name, 'Viper Chain Gang Jail.' Those who had challenged the might of the British authority were chained together and confined at night by a chain running through coupling of irons around their legs. It was at this jail that members of the Chain Gang were put to hardest labour.

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## Bharat Rang Mahotsav Theatre Festival, Delhi, India

Posted on [February 5, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)

**January 7, 2013.**

[Dedicated to Amanat, RIP.](#)

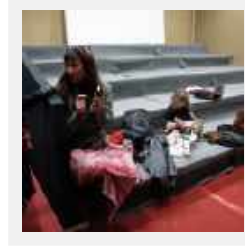
[Confined](#) was invited to be a part of the [Bharat Rang Mahotsav Theatre Festival 2013](#) program. The largest theatre festival in Asia, the Indian Festival hosts both national and international works in Delhi, annually.

Myself and [Younes Bachir](#) traveled to, and presented a unique version of [Confined](#) to Delhi audiences as an [Operatic Song Cycle / Performance Installation](#).

The week leading up to the performance, we met and collaborated with Indian artist, performance catalyst, director, and designer [Abheesh Sasidharan](#). Abheesh worked with us on new video design elements in the work – previously recorded whilst in the [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#), at the [Old Cellular Gaoi](#) in Port Blair. Abheesh also helped in finding five local actors for the show, as well as being a wonderful translator/communicator – when at times it was needed 😊

We got to work closely with the carpenters of the [National School of Drama](#), where they custom built the set design concept for the installation. As well as the incredible technical team of the Festival. The remarkable [Kieren Sanderson](#) also joined the team again in the capacity of production support. Kieren has been in India for the last six months working on the Australian Cultural Festival – [OzFest](#).

Myself and Younes are looking to return to India to develop a new collaborative work that will extend and develop these exciting relationships.



Directed: Younes Bachir

Producer: Tammy Brennan

Soprano: Tammy Brennan

Composers: Barton Staggs, Tammy Brennan, Sofie Loizou

Design Concept: Younes Bachir and Tammy Brennan

Video Design and Catalyst: Abheesh Sasidharan

Video Artists: Ben Ward, Aleksei Vanamois, George Evatt, Tammy Brennan

Production Assistant: Kieren Sanderson

Actors: Supriya Babbar, Vishal Sharma, Kritika Pande, Ashima Sharma, Manish Jalui

A very special thank you to Younes Bachir, the Festival, the National School of Drama and Festival Technical Team.

This performance was supported in part by Arts NT.

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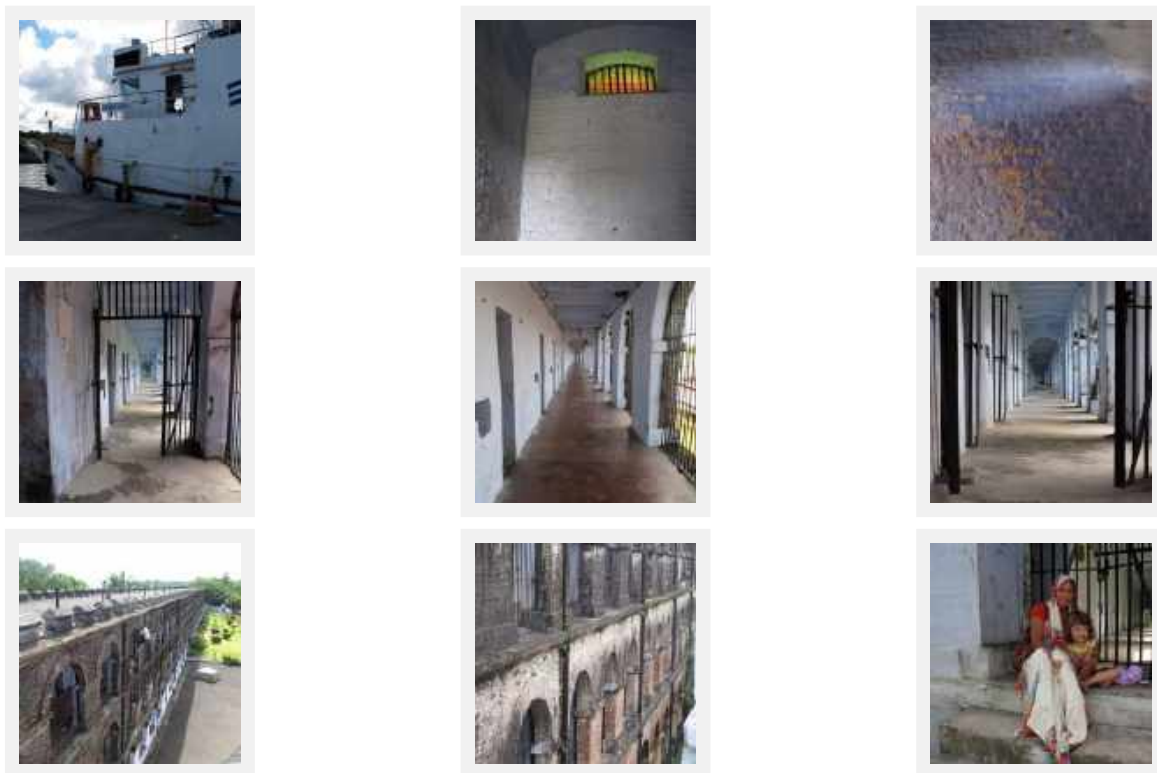
## Old Cellular Gaol, Port Blair – Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Posted on [February 5, 2013](#) by [tammyb](#)

In November 2012 I traveled with my 4 year daughter to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. A seed of an adventure rooted in a discovery made in Darwin, earlier in the year after visiting the Fanny Bay Gaol.

The Cellular Gaol, also known as Kālā Pāani (Black Water), was a colonial prison situated in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. The prison was used by the British especially to exile political prisoners to the remote archipelago.

The construction of the prison started in 1896 and was completed in 1906. Situated in the Bay of Bengal, the bricks used to build the building were brought from Burma.



The building had seven wings, at the centre of which a tower served as the intersection and was used by guards to keep watch on the inmates. The wings radiated from the tower in straight lines, much like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. A large bell was kept in the tower to raise the alarm in any eventuality.

Each of the seven wings had three stories upon completion. There were no dormitories and a total of 693 cells. The name, 'cellular gaol', derived from the solitary cells which prevented any prisoner from communicating with any other. Also, the spokes were so designed such that the face of a cell in a spoke saw the back of cells in

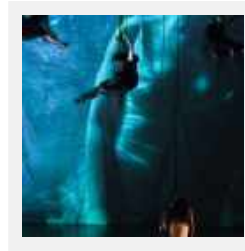
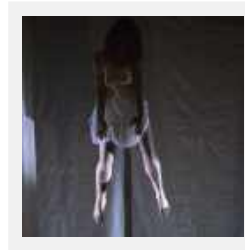
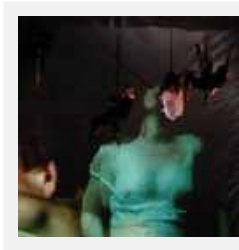
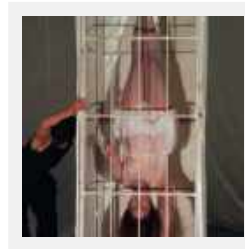
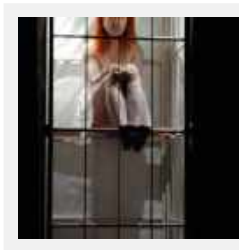
another spoke. This way, communication between prisoners was impossible. They were all in solitary confinement.

I spent two weeks in the Andaman Islands, with multiple visits to the gaol at different times of the day, to experience the architecture in all its beauty. During this time I undertook further video work, to be incorporated into the upcoming Delhi performance of Confined.

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## Red Box – Stage Creative Development, Sydney

Posted on November 12, 2012 by [tammyb](#)



9/24/2020

Confined | A contemporary operatic work about human suffering.

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## Echo

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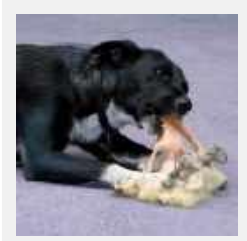
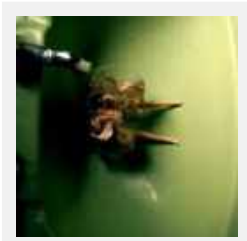


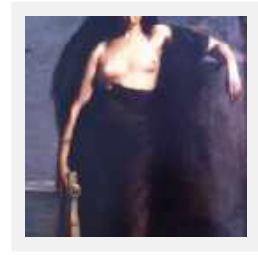
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## Suicide Barbie and Costume Musing

Posted on [August 29, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)







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## ConfinedOpera.com

Posted on [August 21, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

New Website is UP !

[Confinedopera.com](#)

**CONFINED**  
a contemporary opera

Drawing on Ovid's myth, Nietzsche and Kafka, Confined presents an original libretto composed, written and performed by Tammy Brennan and directed by International performance maker Yvonne Rucke.

Confined follows the journey of a young woman's descent into the confinement of the circus to learn with the circus of the past and contemporary of irreversible action. The work presents a bold new contemporary operatic performance language exploring physical and vocal training and adding visual installations around the themes of femininity, sexual abuse, social housing, antisocialism, depression and suicide.

A challenging and beautiful story, Confined invites conversation about difficult subjects that we often do not want to talk about. One in five Americans experience a mental health condition in their lives. It is currently considered one of the biggest health care issues facing the 21st century.

Featuring excerpts from *Journals of a Madman* (1898 - 1892) by Anthony Morris (Quentin's main character October 2012) which looks at the mental and social conditions of the 19th century, Confined explores the state of psychosis and its treatment.

"A national commitment to reproductive schizophrenia, unmet by the state as it is, is a national commitment to the state which can be prepared in the future." - Morris

Click [here](#) to preview a sample of music. Download [here](#) from the opera Confined.

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## Stage Creative Development

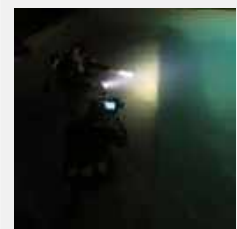
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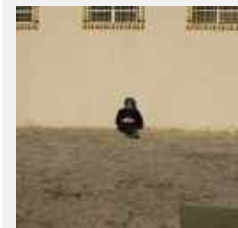
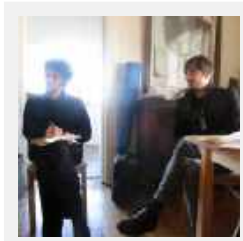


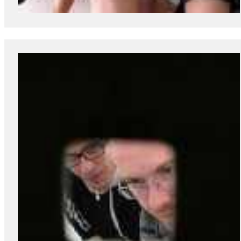
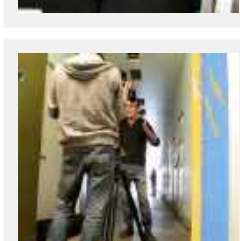
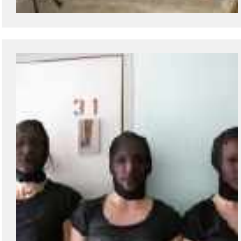
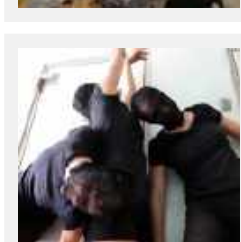
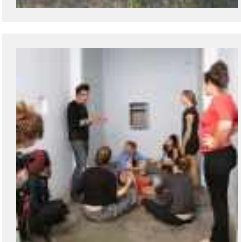
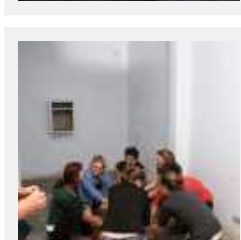
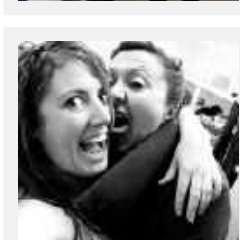
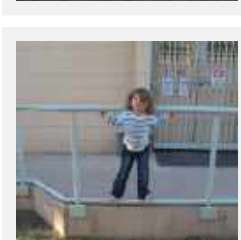
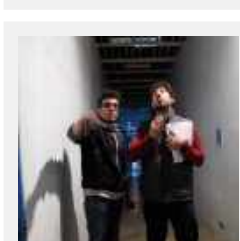
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## Process and Rehearsal

Posted on [July 18, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)









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## Trauma and Childhood Sexual Abuse

Posted on [July 18, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



### By Sexual Assault Psychologist, Stephanie Blake (for *Confined*)

Sexual abuse in childhood is quite possibly the most significant betrayal that a person may ever experience in their lives. In the vast majority of cases the offender is someone very close to the child, a person who has responsibility to love, care for and protect the child. This betrayal of trust is so profound and damaging that dealing with this can be a life long struggle.

About one in five girls and one in ten boys will experience sexual abuse in some form before they are 18 with the peak age of vulnerability being between the ages of 7 to 13. These are horrifying statistics.

Sexual abuse as a child has immediate and long-term consequences that can have a devastating impact. This type of trauma is overwhelming and causes severe ongoing stress that negatively impacts psychological, physical, emotional, neurobiological development. The more severe and prolonged the abuse trauma, the more negative and far reaching the effects.

Humans, like animals, have built in responses to danger: the flight or fight response. Massive neurobiological and physiological changes occur in every organ of the body and every basic function of the body during these reactions to threat. Powerful neurochemicals flood the brain and body, heart rate increases, immune system is activated, attention is focused on the potential threat, and capacity for reasoning, attention and judgment is impaired by the rising fear and anxiety. As fear continues to rise the capacity of speech is lost, as the level of arousal increases dissociation can be triggered as an adaptive response to the hyperarousal. Once dissociation occurs the heart rate lowers and the anxiety and pain recede. Dissociation is mental flight when physical escape is not possible, dissociation splits what is normally associated, this can be thoughts, memories, time.

When people are repeatedly exposed to danger their bodies become highly sensitive, so that even minor reminders of traumatic events, such as a smell, a touch, a look, an emotion, a thought, can trigger the fight/flight response over and over again. This is an unbearably painful physical and emotion state and is basis of post traumatic stress disorder.

What is life like for someone who has suffered childhood sexual abuse?

The world is unpredictable and unsafe, they can be triggered into a hyperaroused state without knowing what has triggered them. They can have intrusive memories and thoughts of the abuse and use alcohol, drugs, self harm to block out the pain. Some people block out the pain by not being present... by dissociating. Depression can be a result of struggling to deal with these problems on an ongoing basis. Sometimes the pain is so overwhelming and they feel so helpless that suicide seems the only answer.

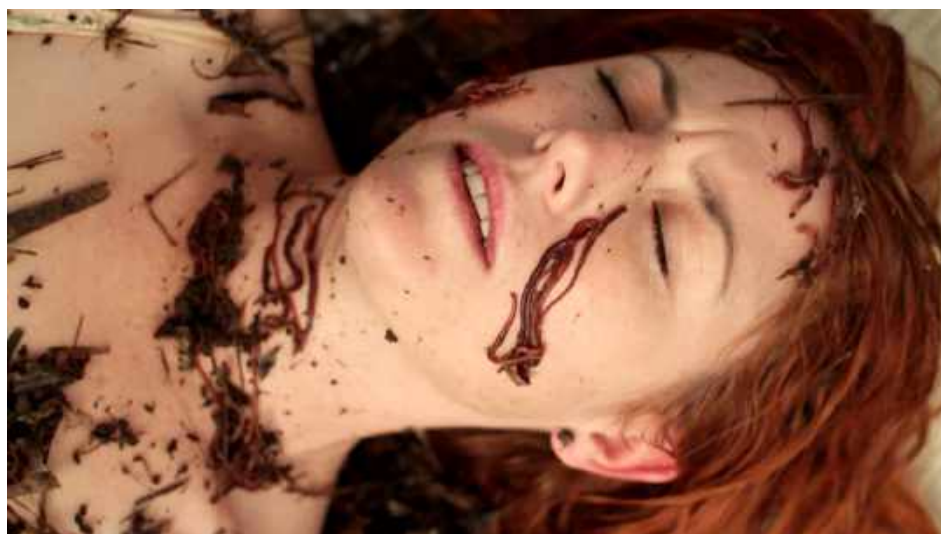
When a child is hurt by someone who should love them, trust feels impossible and life can seem meaningless and without hope. The shame and feelings of worthlessness are so entrenched that the person can feel an unremittingly deep self-hatred.

The survivor of childhood sexual abuse is also exactly that... a survivor. People who have survived such adversity often have great tenacity and ability to deal with difficulty. People who have lived through hard times have understanding and compassion for others in difficulty. People find many ways to cope with traumatic pasts; in some ways it is part of being human.

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## **The Nightmare**

Posted on [July 13, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Echo's Monologue

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## Echo

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## Chamber of Communicable Horror

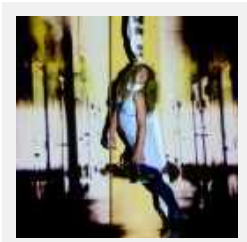
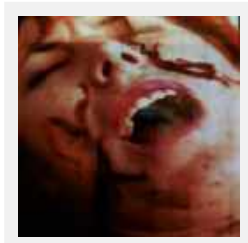
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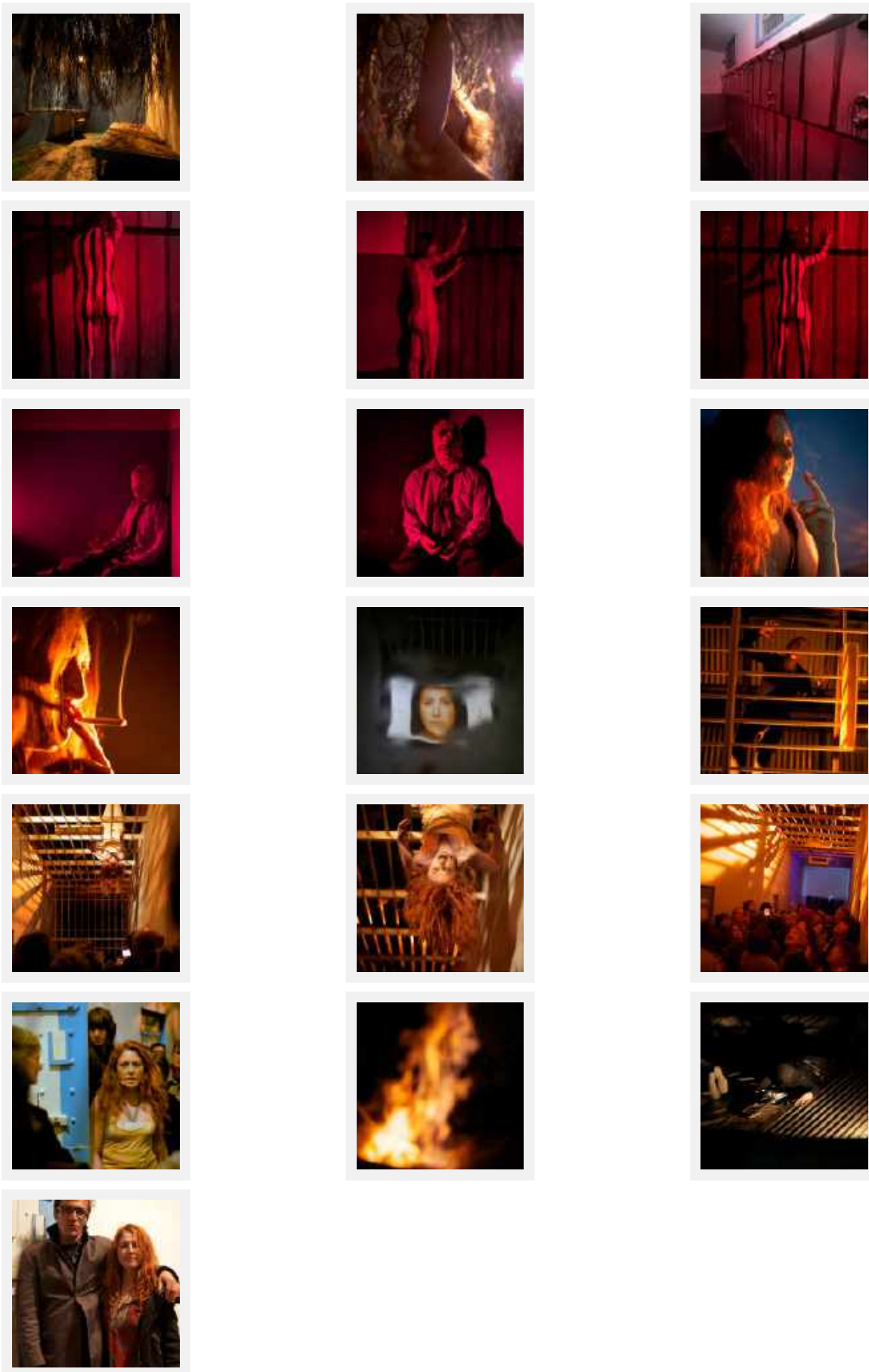


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## Installation and Performance

Posted on July 13, 2012 by [tammyb](#)





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## The June 2012 Cast and Crew

Posted on [July 13, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## June 2012 Cast and Crew

Posted on [July 13, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

DIRECTOR: Younes Bachir  
 PERFORMANCE MAKER/PRODUCER: Tammy Brennan  
 ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: Cieren Sanderson  
 DRAMATURG: Gayelene Carbis  
 COMPOSERS: Barton Staggs, Sofie Laziou  
 VIDEO ARTIST: Ben Ward  
 HEAD RIGGER: Alejandro Rolando  
 LIGHTING DESIGNER: Matthew Strachan  
 PRODUCTION ASSISTANT/STAGE MANAGER: Kim Hopper  
 SOUND TECHNICIAN: Carlos Naranjo  
 VIDEO TECHNICIAN: Scott Large  
 MUSICIANS: Bec Matthews, Janine Stanton, Trevor Brown, Svet Bunic  
 DANCERS: Miriam Nicholls, Hayley Michener, Lauren Young  
 ACTORS: Melissa Kerl, Gabby Diplock, Nikki Bennell, Lucinda Reinhard,  
 Scott Fraser  
 MAKE-UP ARTIST: Jodi Farrell  
 INSTALL ASSISTANT: Janeen Vickery  
 POSTER & WEB DESIGN: Jeff Kessel  
 USHERS: Milyka Scales, Estelle Roberts, Nicky Luna

#### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Accepting Tammy's invitation to direct her libretto has been an exciting opportunity to work in Alice Springs collaboratively with a great team of local and interstate artists. **CONFINED** is the first libretto written by a woman in Central Australia, and it is accompanied by an audacious musical score that has an immense dramatic force.

**CONFINED** is a contemporary vision of the myth of Narcissus and Echo with strong themes that are the stories of our friends, our neighbours, and family. As the director of this work, I invite you the audience tonight to travel the libretto physically with the main characters body, Echo, inside the gaol, to walk and feel the essence of her life, her story and journey.

Thank you Alice Springs for sharing this experience. **Younes Bachir, Director**

Mookler Productions would like to thank Helen Jaroselsky and the Board of the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame and staff at Red Hot Arts Central Australia.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. This project is proudly sponsored by the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport.

Local Sponsors include the Arduen Cultural Centre, Staging Connections, CRiBay Alice Springs, Hardy's Fencing, Home Hardware Alice Springs, Favey Silk Lawyers & Notaries, Page 27 Café, Coleman's Printing, Sains Cafe, Bernard's Hire and Northline Trucking.

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## Confined June 2012 – Old Alice Springs Gaol

Posted on [July 13, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



# CONFINED

Saturday 16 June 2012  
Old Alice Springs Gaol



# CONFINED

Saturday 16 June 2012  
Old Alice Springs Gaol



# CONFINED

Saturday 16 June 2012  
Old Alice Springs Gaol



# CONFINED

Saturday 16 June 2012  
Old Alice Springs Gaol

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## Younes Bachir – ‘Confined’ Director

Posted on [May 21, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

It is extremely exciting to have international Director [Younes Bachir](#) on the work. Younes brings a new vision to ‘Confined’ which involves him working across both the gaol and stage work.

Younes arrived in Australia last week and is now in Alice Springs working on the varying theatrical elements for the opera.

### About Younes

Younes Bachir is a freelance director, actor and the Artistic Director of the [Andante Project](#) (Melbourne, Sydney, Darwin). He has over a decade of international experience in the performing arts.

### [Andante Review](#)



Younes studied at the Superior Theatre Conservatory in Brussels where he specialised in contemporary text and physical expression. In 1994 he obtained the 'Premier Prix in Dramatic Art' and completed his studies with workshops under Carlo Bozzo in Comedia del Arte (Piccolo Teatro de Milano) and ÚltimaVez Dance Company (Belgium).

He began his professional career as an actor in Brussels with roles in classical and contemporary plays directed by Pietro Pizzuti, Frederic Dussenne and Julien Roy.

In 1995 he moved to Barcelona and joined the company [La Fura dels Baus](#) where until 2002 he participated in the company as a performer. Works included: Wip (Barcelona, Firburg, Brussels), Manes (International Tour), Fausto 3.0 (International Tour), DQ Opera (Barcelona).

In 2003 Younes took a new direction within the Company and worked

collaboratively as an assistant director with Fura directors on different projects, events/shows. During these six years he worked closely with internationally acclaimed Catalan opera director [Carlus Padrissa](#) on the [ship-theatre Naumon](#) as an assistant, co-director/author on various creations including the opera Orfeo and [SUB](#).

Work outside La Fura during this time included Bailo en Máscara by Calixto Bieito in 2002, Merma Never Dies from Joan Baixas in 2006, and El cel mes baix by Pera Peyro in 2007.

In the field of cinema Younes has acted in films that have received awards by the Spanish Film Academy: Caja 507, [Fausto 5.0](#) (Winner Best European Movie – Federation of Festivals of Fantastic Cinema 2003) and El Truco del Manco, [No Habrá Paz Para Los Malvados](#) (winner of 6 [Goya Awards](#) 2012). In 2006 he received the Special Jury Award at the Valencia Cinema Festival for his role 'Omar' in the film [Omar Martinez](#).

Younes separated from [La Fura dels Baus](#) in 2009 and is currently developing the Andante Project Australia with [Deborah Leiser-Moore](#) and 'Confined', the first operatic monodrama in Central Australia.



Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | Tagged [Younes Bachir](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

## These Bones – ENO Mini Script Competition

Posted on [May 21, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

### THESE BONES

A 7 min monodrama and musical movement in three parts for concerto accordion, strings and solo voice.

#### Movement One:

A woman sits alone, in a bath, it is full and the water overflows and falls to the tiled covered floor. The bath rocks gently, like a boat adrift at sea. She is slightly hunched, both arms rest and hang out to each of the sides of the bath. Immersed in her grief, she has recently just had a miscarriage. She sings.

*My child*

*My child*

*To burn these bones*

*My unflowered meat*

*Scarlet worms*

*Empty inside*

*Abandoned kingdoms*

*Echo my cry*



*I scourge love*

*And the wreckage of time*

**Movement Two:**

She steps naked from the bath and we hear the sound of the water draining. She stands wet and broken in front of a full length mirror. Instead of a reflection we see a video, she is falling, weightless, under water. She sings in Sprechstimme.

*Mouths that twitch*

*Owls that stare*

*Nuns that mewl*

*Tepid is the water*

*That the angel drinks*

**Movement Three:**

Naked she sits on the toilet. She sings.

*No sharp-tooth will bite*

*This breast of mine*

*Cradled in the dead arm*

*With his dragon tattoo*

*The sweeper of dreams*

*Has my child*

*My child*

*He has swept her up*

*And left me behind*

*With the running deer*

*And the madness of time*

*The sweeper of dreams*

*Has my child*

*My child*

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## No Camera's Please – Contemporary Actor Training

Posted on [May 4, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

I had the opportunity to visit Brisbane and attend a couple of classes with [Steven Mitchell Wright's](#) new Contemporary Actor Training program, delivered by [The Danger Ensemble](#). It was BRUTAL, revealing and AMAZE ! I did sneak in my camera 😊



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## Voice Intensive – Margaret Schindler

Posted on [May 4, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

[Margaret Schindler](#) – Head of Voice at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music – has been assisting me with vocal repertoire, as well as techniques to establish a framework for the breathing and support mechanisms, negotiation and consolidation of vocal registration to build my operatic quality, so I can achieve the wide range of vocal colours and timbres contained in 'Confined'.



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## Dramaturgical Intensive with Gayelene Carbis

Posted on [April 13, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Anthropomorphism

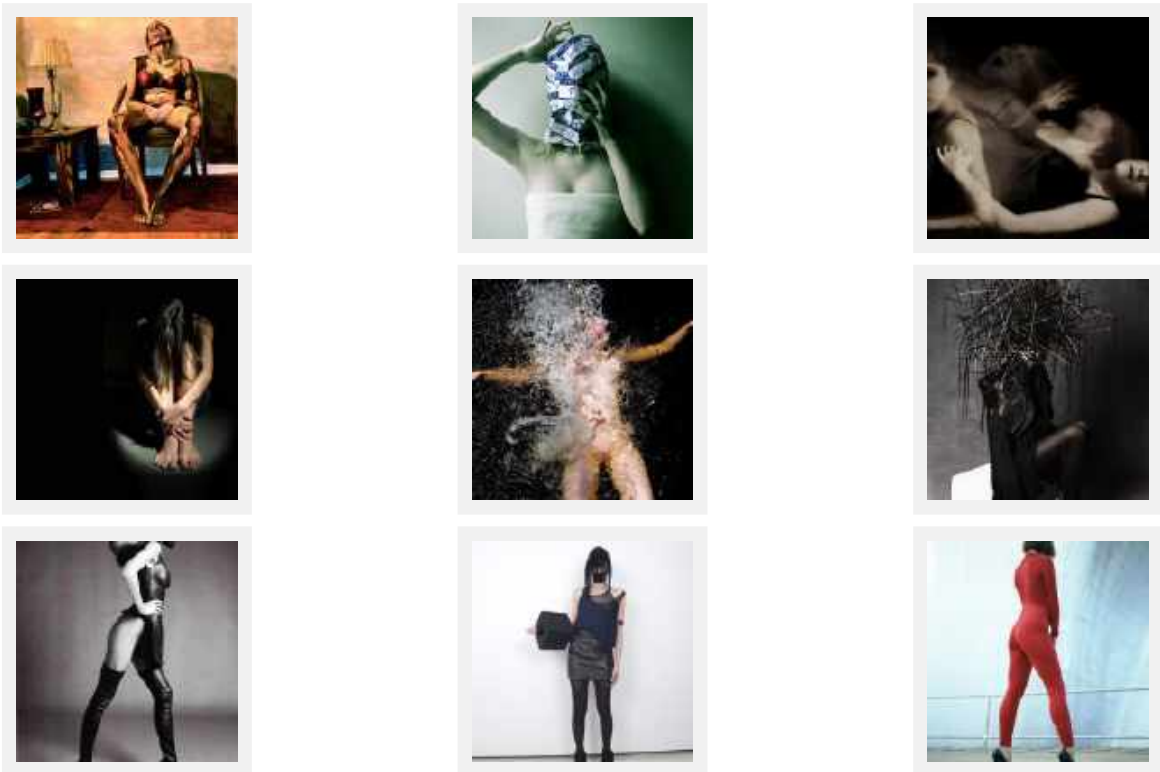
Posted on [April 4, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

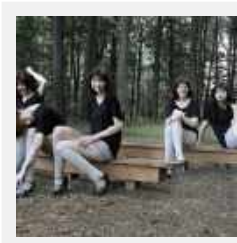


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## Random Inspiration

Posted on [April 1, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)





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## At work Cell 32

Posted on [April 1, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

From talking to the 'lifers' in the current Alice Springs Correctional Centre, I have discovered Cell 32 is where a definite suicide took place in the old gaol – 'hanging'.

I have been spending time in the cell working on the libretto.



Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | Tagged [Confined Opera](#), [Narcissus and Echo](#), [Old Alice Springs Gaol](#), [Tammy Brennan](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

## The Nightmare

Posted on [March 28, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

## Eating Disorder, Depression and Self-harm

Posted on [March 20, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

Over the last few months I became aware of a young girl living in town. My interest being that I was pretty certain she was, or had been a self harmer. I to and fro'd about whether to approach her or not, for an interview. Finally I plucked up the courage and left my number and details for her to call me, if she was interested. She did.

We initially met for coffee where I had to confirm whether my assumptions of self-harm were correct. They were. I then explained that I was interested in hearing her story, that I was writing a libretto, exploring the possibility that one of my characters self-harmed. I had been reading books, but I wanted a more personal account. Luckily for me Jennifer liked the concept of the opera, so about a month later we met at the gaol, where she allowed me to interview her.

It was during the interview that I further discovered that her self-harm was intrinsically linked to an eating disorder. Every time Jennifer ate, as a punishment she would cut herself. She described her experience as 'one long suspended drawn out moment. You have no ambition, you're lethargic, nothing interests you. You're not a person anymore'.



Jennifer's openness about her experience with bulimia and borderline anorexia, depression and self-harm at such a young age revealed how easily and commonly serious health issues are often dismissed by family, friends and care providers as a 'passing phase'. It was only when the situation hit crisis point, after Jennifer seriously contemplated and set up to attempt suicide, that she finally

got help and people accepted it was not a phase.

Jennifer spent three months in a mental health facility, where she was treated with anti-depressants to which she experienced serious side effects. At the time, she thought she would only be in the hospital for a few days, maybe a week. Over time she refused medication and gradually gained enough weight, by eating small amounts, to be released.

Jennifer has not experienced a relapse with her eating disorder and in turn has not has self-harmed. She is doing well.

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## The Surrender

Posted on [March 15, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | Tagged [Confined Opera](#), [Depression](#), [Narcissus and Echo](#), [Old Alice Springs Gaol](#), [Tammy Brennan](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

## Interview with a Killer

Posted on [March 15, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

On Wednesday 14 March I took a drive out to the [Alice Springs Correctional Centre](#), whereby I had gained permission to interview a series of the NTs worst killers.

I did not know this however, before the interview.

I had not been given the identity of any of the prisoners. My sole enquiry was to find men who had served time in the Old Alice Springs Gaol, which closed in 1996.

The Chief Prison Officer identified four men, of which I was only granted permission to interview three.

I had an idea that these men, having been incarcerated for over 20 years, were serving serious time for a serious offence. But it wasn't until after the interview, when I googled the men's names, that the gravity of whom I had spent a couple hours, casually sat at a picnic table with, slammed me in the face.

[Martin Leach](#), a somewhat unassuming character, has been described as one of, if not the Northern Territory's worst killer. Leach is the longest serving prisoner in the Northern Territory, serving three consecutive life sentences without parole for his crimes.

Steven Presley, serving time for murder.

And notorious [Andrew Albury](#) (who had misbehaved before I arrived so was denied taking part in the interview last minute), described as the Hannibal Lecter of the NT. I had on the day rescheduled to interview Andrew, but



after reading about the nature of his crimes, the jury is out.

Martin and Steven talked very openly about their experience of the Old Alice Springs Gaol. Martin served 12 years of his sentence at the facility. I learned about the day to day reality of an overcrowded facility with extreme conditions.

The men talked about being a 'lifer' and the dehumanisation of being confined. How the marked response to an offence creates further isolation, whereby internalising completely and disabling human response – shutting down.

Both men had attempted suicide multiple times.

I also discovered from the Chief Prison Officer, that there is no designated facility for criminals with mental health issues in the NT. Due to the status of their mental health, they are considered unfit to plea and will remain in remand indefinitely. Surely this is a breach of human rights?

I will return to discuss and share further lived experiences, relative to the libretto for Confined.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Superintendent Bill Carroll and Chief Prison Officer Geoff Blundell, for their time and assistance in making this access possible.

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## **The Wild Duck**

Posted on [March 3, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Hearing Voices – March 2012

Posted on [March 3, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

As part of my research and development for the libretto of 'Confined' and the main character *Echo*, I attended a two day conference 'Voices, Conversations and Transformations' in Melbourne at RMIT.

With over 320 attendees, from every state and territory in Australia, plus guests from the UK, USA, New Zealand, Indonesia, and Israel, the conference on issues surrounding mental health was hosted by [Voices Vic](#) and [Prahan Mission](#).

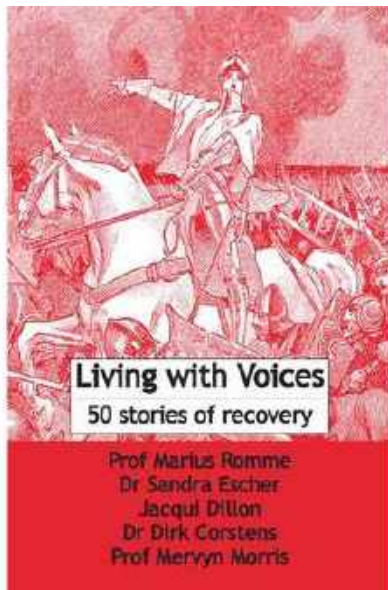
The program included keynote speakers with 'lived experience' talking about recovery, discovery and transformation alongside topics such as the history of hearing voices, the medication debate, narrative medicine, mental or spiritual illness and dissociation and voices.

A particular highlight for me was a special guest workshop with [Ron Coleman](#) and a Hearing Voices Group. I was able to observe a hearing voices group in action. Ron is one of the world's most experienced hearing voice group facilitators. His keynote speech was overwhelmingly candid, insightful and inspirational.

Hearing voices is a normal, common human experience ... but remember ... it's ok to talk to god. But if god talks back ... you're fucked 😊

Following the conference was an intensive with my dramaturg, Gaylene Carbis which is developing into an exciting creative partnership.

Recommended reading: Living with Voices '50 Stories of Recovery' Romme & Escher



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## Suicide Worldwide – Deaths per minute

Posted on [February 7, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

Every year about a million people die by suicide, which means one death every two minutes. The WHO estimates that by the year 2020, this annual toll of suicide deaths will have risen to one and a half million, and suicide will represent 2.4% of the global burden of disease.

The WHO estimates that every year between 10 and 20 million people attempt suicide and about one in ten succeeds; this is more than the number of people murdered and killed in wars combined. In this century alone, more than 8 million people died by suicide. Most of those who ended their own lives decided to commit suicide due to family or personal crises or due to undetected and untreated depression.

The WHO also estimates that by 2020 there will be a million and a half deaths by suicide per year: and more than ten times as many suicide attempts, i.e. three suicides per minute and one suicide attempt every two seconds.



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## Isle of the Dead

Posted on [January 31, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Contemplation

Posted on [January 31, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## The Suicide – Edouard Manet

Posted on [January 20, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Burning Ghats Varanasi, India

Posted on [January 20, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

I recently spent four weeks in India looking for inspiration and researching aspects of Hindu culture for *Confined*.

I was drawn particularly to the burning ghats of Varanasi. Manikarnika Ghat is the primary cremation ghat.

Manikarnika Ghat is one of the oldest and most sacred Ghats in Benaras. According to the Hindu mythology, being burned here provides an instant gateway to liberation from the cycle of births and rebirths. Lying at the center of the five tirthas, Manikarnika Ghat symbolizes both creation and destruction.

At Manikarnika Ghat, the mortal remains are consigned to flames with the prayers that the souls rest in eternal peace. There is a sacred well at the Manikarnika Ghat, called the Manikarnika Kund. Manikarnika Kund is said to be dug by Lord Vishnu at the time of creation while the hot ashes of the burnt bodies makes one remember the inevitable destruction of everything in the world.

(Please note I did not take this photo as photography is prohibited at the burning ghat. The photo is taken from Google images.)



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## Shameless fan photo – Me and Anthony Mannix

Posted on [January 20, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Outsider Art – Art Brut

Posted on [January 20, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

Recently Barton Staggs (Composer) and myself contacted outsider artist [Anthony Mannix](#) to discuss the possibility of using some of the material and prose from his Journals of Madman.

We visited Anthony in his home in the Blue Mountains, where we spent the afternoon looking over the journals and talking with Anthony about his experience with madness, mental health and [outsider art](#).

Anthony's journals are an inspiration and it is exciting to gain his permission and be able to draw from this work in a variety of ways for *Confined* – particularly with regard to the setting of the libretto.

It is likely that some of his drawings will also be included as visual elements in the work.



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## Australia Council Funding

Posted on [January 20, 2012](#) by [tammyb](#)

In mid to late 2012 I intend to present *Confined* as a multidisciplinary installation/theatre work in Alice Springs.

Further to this excellent news, *Confined* has received Creative Development funding from the Australia Council for the Arts, through its New Territory Fund.

This will allow me to develop the outcomes of the site-specific installation work into a fully staged theatrical work.



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## Librettists Workshop, Chamber Made Opera

Posted on [September 26, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

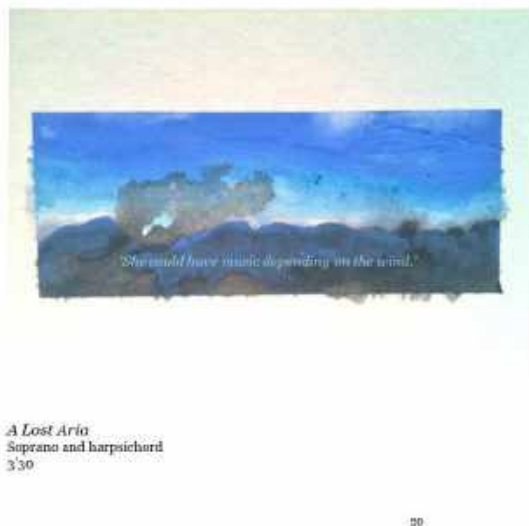
I recently attended a workshop for aspiring librettists and writers working in contemporary and experimental performance making with [Chamber Made Opera](#) and the [Victorian Writers Centre](#), at the [Wheeler Centre Melbourne](#). The workshop introduced participants to the art of writing a [libretti](#), which is the text of an opera set to music by a composer.

The workshop comprised a series of practical exercises, robust discussions, and lecture-style lessons, delivered by prolific Australian librettists, composers, conductors, dramaturges and directors. Confirmed speakers/lecturers included theatre critic, academic and writer, [Alison Croggan](#), Chamber Made Opera resident director, [Margaret Cameron](#), Soprano, [Deborah Cheetham](#), composer, [Moya Henderson](#), poet and academic [Judith Rodriguez](#), Chair of the [Australia Council for the Arts](#) Theatre Board [Stephen Armstrong](#) and Chamber Made Opera Artistic Director, [David Young](#).

It is hard to decide what the highlight of the week was for me. We were introduced to graphic score, which casting my mind back reminded me of the notes of a [Cathy Berberian](#) vocal score. We were presented with one of David Young's watercolour scores, for the Chamber Made work [Minotaur the Island](#) – The Lost Aria. We had been set the task of resetting the libretti of one of two arias which were then performed by Soprano [Deborah Kayser](#).



I chose the Lost Aria and found this task slightly awkward. Primarily due to the existing parameters of the framework for the Lost Aria piece. It was exciting though to have Deborah interpret and perform one's words. This was a definite treat. The other highlight for me was Stephen Armstrong, a driving force and inspiring advocate for Australian theatre making. His robust discourse on opera being a 'blunt instrument', 'a blood sport' and within itself a 'meditation' and importantly to keep the libretti 'short'. Curiously he also reiterated that it takes a 'milieu' to write an opera. Which I assume means a quite particular setting/environment whereby the complimentary conditions coincide to create greatness.



The week's activities concluded with a hilarious 'speed-dating' event with local composers at a Mr Prices Foodstore in North Melbourne. I have to say the highlight of the afternoon for me was the owner of the funky cafe who shared his wonderful story about the acquisition of the grand piano, sat in the corner of the room.

This was a great professional development opportunity and timely with regard to my own libretti work with Confined.

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## Andante Workshop Darwin Festival 2011

Posted on [September 3, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

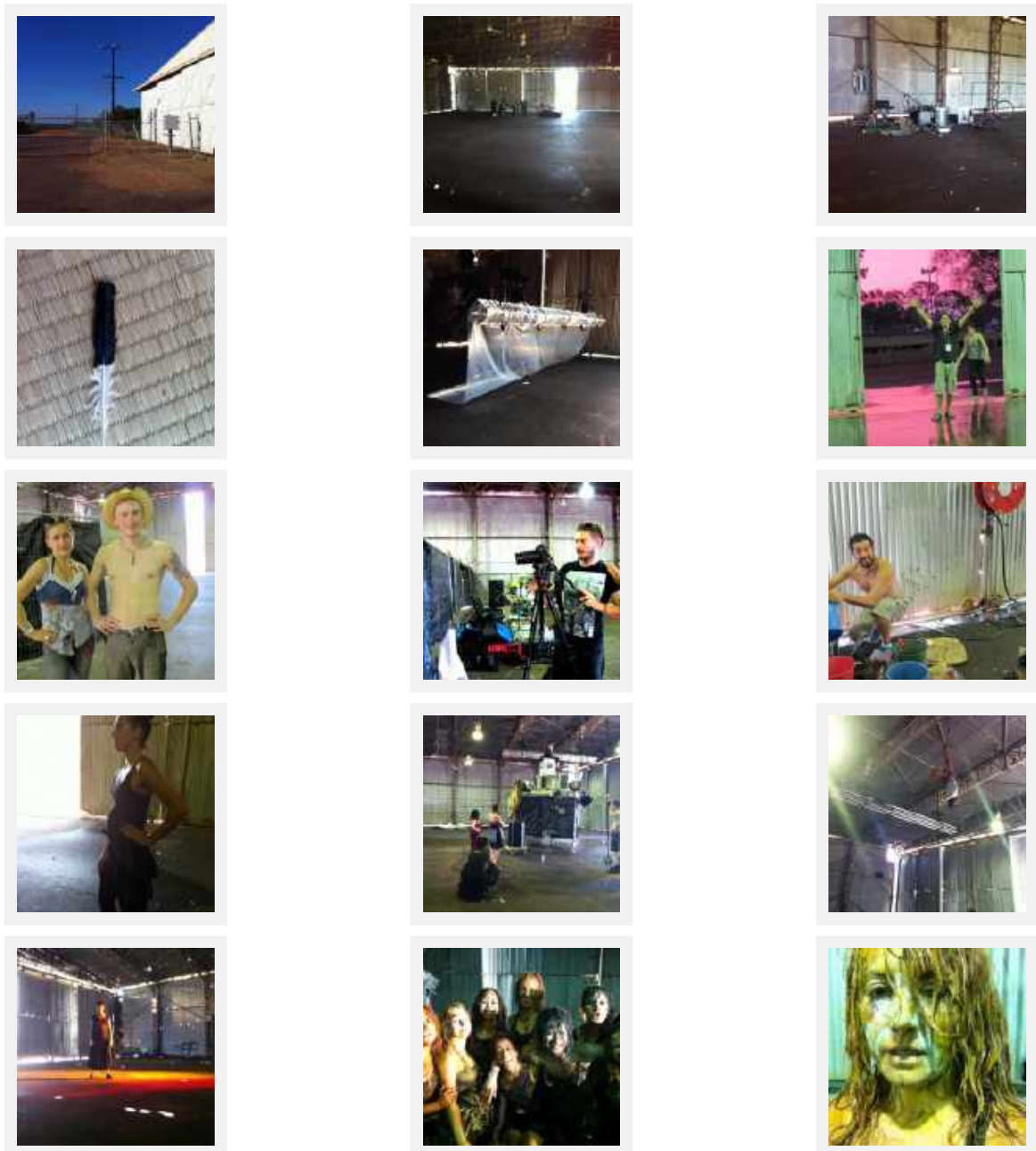
When I arrived in Darwin to participate in the the *Andante* Masterclass of International Performance Maker/Director/Dramaturg [Younes Bachir](#) (ex-Spanish company [La Fura dels Baus](#)), I came armed with lozenges, ginger, antibiotics, my Kobbe's Opera compendium and of course, yoga mat. Weathered by weeks of infections I had scarcely considered the workshop, apart from learning the mysterious '*Ending Poem*'. My voice battered from laryngitis, I held little hope of being able to speak or sing anything of listenable quality, which was a concern considering I had presented my interest in the masterclass as a classical singer.

Eight Northern Territory women participated in the masterclass. During the week Bachir exposed participating artists to a synergy between disciplines and the coexistence of different techniques and perspectives to theatre. Bachir immersed us in a unique theatrical language and process-culminating in two public performances as part

of [Darwin Festival](#) 2011. As the director he combined the *Andante* language with an investigation of contemporary European performance language. He then adapted the work to suit the particular environment (Darwin Showgrounds) and the individual participants. It was the first time Bachir had worked with an all female ensemble.

*Andante* in a musical context refers to a speed, a moderately slow tempo applied to passage or musical movement. When considering the elements and theatrical language of Bachir's work, I reflect on the passages of the masterclass, where he worked the participants into an ensemble of complementary parts, yet toward a tempo of an intensely dynamic and spatial single effect.

The workshop was extremely physical and emotionally demanding. We started each day with an hour of [Aikido](#) followed by running, sprinting, sit ups, push ups and other varied interval training. I have to admit I struggled with Aikido. My instinct is to fight, and with force. Aikido blends with the motion of the attacker and redirects the force of the attack rather than opposing it head-on. This requires very little physical strength. It was interesting to see how Bachir integrated the physical training into the work, as well as concepts of power and leadership within the group dynamic. Other group exercises involved sensory exploration like blindfolding, being bound and viewpoints.



I found Bachir's work, intensely industrial, organic and elemental. I resonated with the use of found objects, water and pigments as well as the post-ecological disaster theme. There was a lot of suspension work and it was refreshing to be in an environment where one could just play and do pretty much anything without restraint. By the end of the week I started to note a significant collection of marks and bruises, an overt indication of connecting to environment.

With perseverance I managed to get my singing voice in relative shape and reworked elements of the 'Ending Poem' to a section of 'Ach, ich fühl's' from [Die Zauberflöte](#). The aria was performed to a passage in the work whereby I was mummified in vegetables and rotten meat with glad wrap then wheeled around by 7 women with head torches on a moving trolley. Imagine the work of [Giuseppe Arcimboldo](#).

It was interesting viewing photos of the performance, having engaged in the work through the masterclass, I had no idea of what the final performance would look like – at night with lights and video. It was beautiful.

As a remote living artist this was an incredible training opportunity. I feel like I have broken through significant performance barriers particularly with regard to audience as a passive receptor and the use of spatial environ.

A big thank you to Arts NT and the Regional Arts Fund for supporting to me attend the masterclass. As well as [Deborah Leiser-Moore](#) of [Tashmadada](#), a contemporary performance company committed to bringing together arts practitioners as well as providing a forum for discussion about the arts. Without Producers like Deborah, access to contemporary performance makers like Younes Bachir would simply not happen, particularly in remote living regions.

## Ending Poem

*I saw god. I kissed him on the lips. He opened his mouth. I entered his body.*

*His saliva stunk. His tongue was rolling.*

*He woke up. He got angry. He wanted to kill me. He tried to kill me with his fingers.*

*I started running. Down into his throat. He vomited, again and again.*

*His lungs were burning. He breathed in this thick dark smoke.*

*I kept running. Until I reached his belly.*

*He started swallowing everything.*

*He swallowed the mountains, trees, oceans, rivers, houses.*

*He started to feel a pain in his belly. But he wouldn't stop.*

*He even swallowed the sun, the moon, the stars and the sky.*

*He swallowed the dragon and the phoenix, who kissed each other and gave birth to a new god.*

*A new god was born inside god's body. God swallowed himself.*

*He stabbed himself. Again and again.*

*He had wings. But he couldn't fly anymore.*

*He opened his hands which turned into two gushes of tornadoes.*

*Echoing each other in voices that hurt my ears. Until I couldn't hear.*

*The sky was torn apart. So was his mind and his imagination.*

*All that was left was his eye. Staring over his own body.*

*He cried and he fell asleep again. Into his dream.*

[Reflection](#) (video)

(thanks to LuLu Madill for use of photographs)

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## **Presentation and Promotion Grant**

Posted on [July 20, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

In July 2011 the project has been awarded further monies to present and promote the work at the Old Alice Springs Gaol.

Thank you Arts NT !

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## **Field Recording Bullet Ricochet with Barton Staggs**

Posted on [July 20, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

As part of Barton's last visit to Alice Springs and our investigation into sound morphology the nature of musical relationships, we decided to field record bullet ricochet. Continuing down the path of exploring the potential relationship of frequencies and dominant harmonic resonances, we are looking at licensing a work from Alan Lamb and his 'singing wires' to be incorporated into Confined.



Local NT resident and gun owner obliged by taking us out to nearby crown load and fired off a few rounds for us [Bullet Ricochet \(video\)](#).

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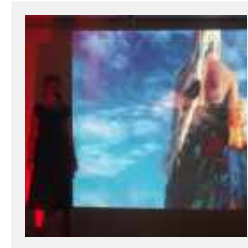
## Music NT Program Launch 2011

Posted on [April 27, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

The [Music NT](#) Alice Springs Annual Program Launch was held on Friday April 8 in Alice Springs at [Watch This Space Gallery](#).

I performed 'Confined' as a concert work at the launch alongside the video work. The performance was well received by the audience.

Read more about Music NT and the other acts on the night at the [Music NT blog](#) and a review of the event at the [Alice Springs News online](#) (scroll down to the 8th article titled 'Mozzie Bites by Ronja Moss').



## Performance Feedback Excerpts for Confined @ Bite Size Theatre 2011

Posted on [April 27, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

### What did you enjoy about the performance?

I was very taken by the sense of being engulfed in the sound. Right from the opening, which was slightly glitchy and dischordant, my mood was affected, I was drawn in and taken. I loved the use of the camera and projection on the cloth, this was again unsettling and engaging. The combination or AV, sound and live voice was very compelling. I loved the wholeness of the piece and the richness of the combined elements.

### What didn't you enjoy about the performance?

I wanted it to be longer! I wanted more, I wanted the mood to last for longer. In a longer version I feel like there could be longer sections of slower/calmer/down time between the bursts of sound, energy and movement between places on the stage. I wanted more of the voice without the sound.

### Give five descriptive words that summarise your experience of 'Confined'

Effecting. Emotional. Commanding. Spine-tingling. Inspiring.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Vocal/acting performance

Tammy had a real presence and although I did not understand what you where doing or why, I could see that you really embodied and were really present in what you were doing from your head to your toes. Again the strongest moment for sure, for me, was your acting in the first live feed, the breathiness and speed and tone of voice really made me believe you were in fear or suffering. I sensed moments when you were angry and in despair. I felt like I was watching a quality performer using breath body and voice to her best ability.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Give your thoughts about the Musical Score

Really dynamic soundscape. Some uncomfortable moments – in a good way – really pushed the boundaries becoming both soundtrack and music. Emotive. Loved the way live performance and singing mixed with pre-recorded soundtrack. Be great live !

### Give your thoughts about the Libretto

Gorgeous, intense. I think at times it needed to lift above the backing vocal more – or perhaps work on speaker positioning to make more directional.

### Give your thoughts about the Video

Awesome ! Kept attention moving almost all the time but not too quickly.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Any other suggestions or comments

Overall the performance felt like you moved through a dense wall of 'theatre', I appreciate this was only a preview but I felt that the segment began and continued through to the end with the same volume and drama, I wanted things to get very small, quiet, personal, whispered, hummed. Also, your discomfort was certainly mental, but I wanted to see that you were itchy, or hot, or blistered, something a bit ugly and uncomfortable. I thought the costume was great, a bit more grotty would be good. I'd say get ugly on stage, make us feel like we've got maggots up our noses, let us share your discomfort, taste your frustration, so we want you to find resolve as much as you do.

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | [1 Comment](#)

## April 2011 Recording Session with Barton Staggs, Jnine Stanton and Bec Matthews

Posted on [April 27, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

Barton revisited Alice Springs in mid April 2011 to undertake refined recording work with Jnine Stanton (musical saw) and [Bec Matthews](#) (kora and other western african instruments).

Recording took place at a small studio at the old Batchelor College, run by [Matthew Hill](#). Barton and I prepared a series of short recordings and field recordings for the instrumentalists to play against.

This session with Bec and Jnine allowed us to further explore and refine the ensemble work for the song-cycle, and to gather material for the sound installation work.



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## Barton revisits Alice Springs 2011

Posted on [April 27, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Confined @ Bite Size Theatre Dress Rehearsal Documentation Video Extract

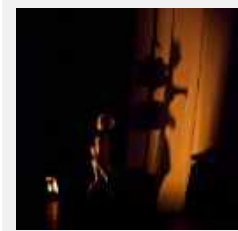
Posted on [April 27, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

[Aria Two Extract Dress Rehearsal Footage](#)

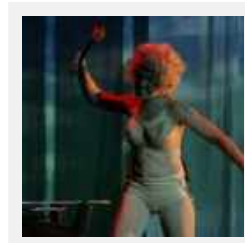
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## Confined @ Bite Size Theatre 2011 Dress Rehearsal Documentation

Posted on [April 27, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)







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## Centralian Advocate, NT Press Picture 2011

Posted on [April 27, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Bite Size Theatre 2011

Posted on [March 17, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

Wow. Amazing. Cannot believe that I have a developmental showing of work to date. The last 6 weeks have been nothing but an enlightening and challenging time. Working embryonic concepts with local Director Kerzlake has allowed me to really engage further with the characters, Echo and Narcissus. Exploring relationships, we have scratched away, peeled back the layers of a somewhat complex relationship. Working remotely on early developments with the musical score with Barton Staggs and [Sofie Loizou](#) in Sydney and the video work with Kieren Sanderson was not without it's stresses; getting the tracks off to [Mazen Murad](#) at the [UK Mastering house \(Metropolis\)](#), on time, sending enormous files via ftp and slowing down everyones internet connections and so forth.

I have been keenly trying to engage Sofie Loizou for sometime, so her willingness to remix Aria 3 for Bite Size is very exciting. She has brought a great dynamic to the piece and work as a whole by adding beats and shaping the celtic harp and clarinet. Aria 3 is the only piece with beats. The visual piece Kieren has worked on to compliment this aria is breathtaking. It is amazing how all these artists have worked in insolation from each other, never met each other, yet managed to capture an essence which is beginning to translate across the work as a whole.

When I started work on the script I had a simple connection to who these characters were, but not a grip on the complexity of them. Characterisation work with Kerzlake to grow up the performance of the show allowed me to take them into my body and know them. It was surprising when Echo came to me in her mid 30s chain smoking with frazzled, blonde curly hair wearing washed out denim. It came more of a surprise when Narcissus, long flowing blonde locks, presented herself as a frightfully joyous, playful and naive 13yr old. To then discover that this was Echo in her youth, pre-rape; the blocks just click-clacked into place.

I really nussed out that Echo has suffered for years from a long lasting complex rape trauma syndrome. Plagued with agoraphobia, manic depression, suicidal thoughts and a split personality syndrome, the tension in the libretto, between the two characters, rests with their covert blame and anger at each other over a rape that took place just after Echo's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. Having never recovered, Echo finally takes her own life to quell the voice of Narcissus and to be released from the pronounced internal terror of daily life. This terror pronounced by Narcissus who constantly eats away at Echo for the recluse she has become.

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## Confined Publicity Shot

Posted on [March 13, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)



Narcissus emerges and mythically floats on the water of the Ilparpa Claypans. Her reflection mirrors into the muddy stillness, amidst the spinifex tufts with the ever watching West Macdonnell Ranges as her backdrop.

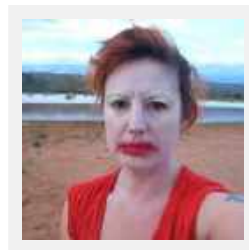
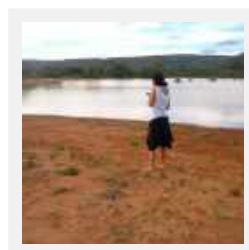
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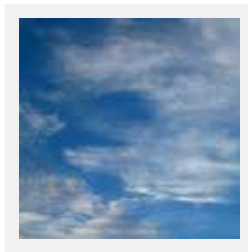
### Video Shoot at Ilparpa Claypans, NT

Posted on [March 13, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

Myself, Darwin based video/visual artist Kieren Sanderson and local Director Kerzlake spent an afternoon at the Ilparpa Claypans gathering images and footage to use in the upcoming developmental showing of Confined for Bite Size Theatre 2011.

The character Narcissus (Echo's split personality voice in head) at this stage is being represented on stage through video. We stylised her with white make up, a \$15 Mad Harry's platinum blonde, straight, long wig and black sheer organza cape.





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## At work with Barton Staggs

Posted on [March 13, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## At work with Barton Staggs

Posted on [March 13, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)

Over the summer I spent time in Sydney working with Barton on developing out the musical score for *Confined*. We visited and listened to the recordings we had done earlier when he visited Alice Springs. We discussed the bigger picture for *Confined*, the site-specific work as well as the ongoing dramatic work. With Bite Size Theatre back on track thanks to [Red Hot Arts Central Australia](#), we worked primarily on the arias for the developmental showing in March 2011.

Watching Barton work his magic across the musical score for *Aria One* in particular was a compositional awakening. Listening to him peel back layers of musical saw and either counterpoint or marry textural nuances or compose new parts against it, has influenced my own way of working, whereby I am now instrumenting a more refined approach. I love the way Barton works with traditional handwritten notation and audio software, drifting between the two. It makes me want to dust off my musical theory books and practice writing counterpoint from dusk til dawn.

Barton works with Pro-tools and I work with Logic. Fortunately working between these platforms on the project has been seamless for us 😊



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## The Making of a Death Mask

Posted on [March 13, 2011](#) by [tammyb](#)



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## Old Melbourne Gaol Visit

Posted on March 13, 2011 by tammyb

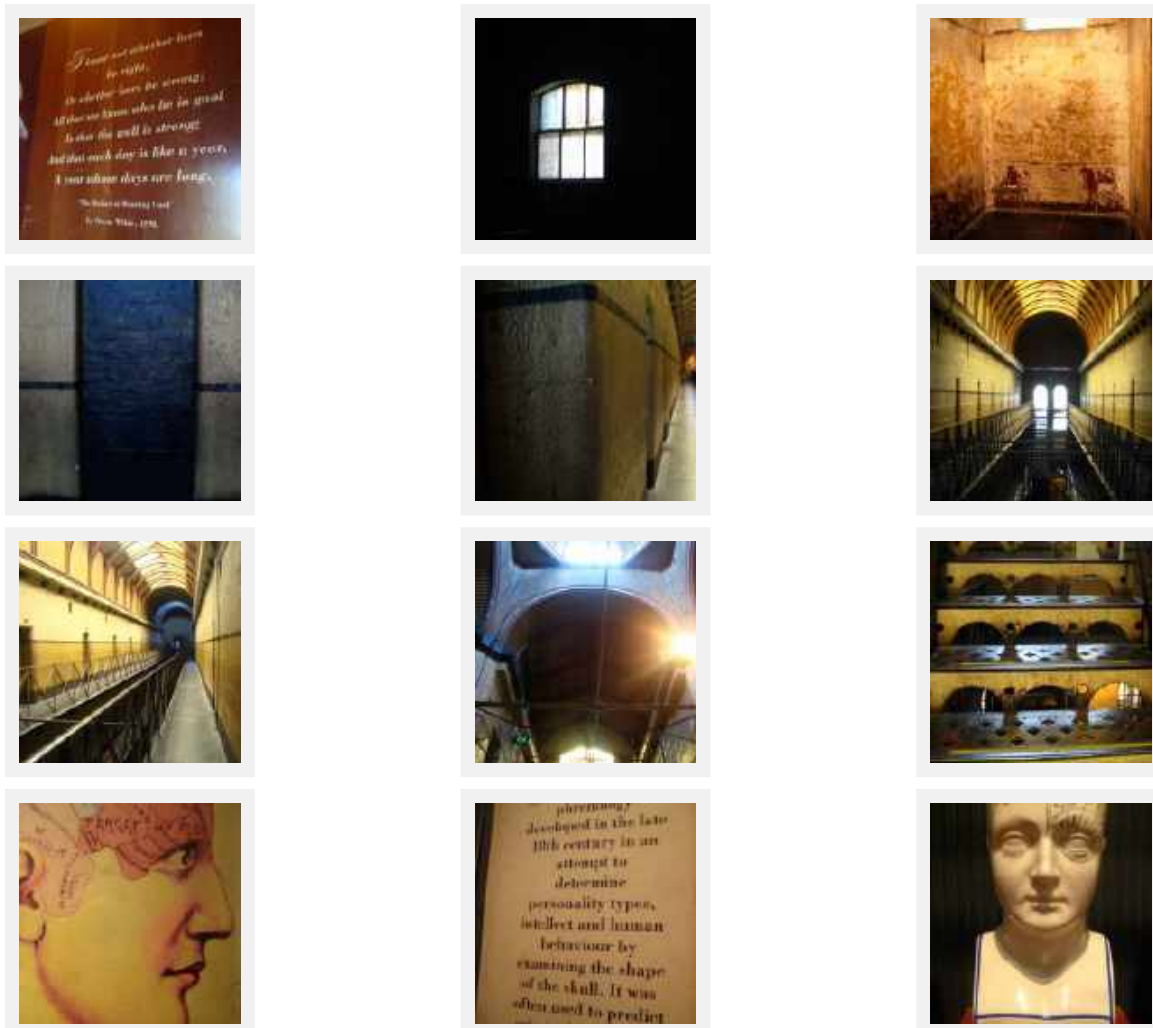
Recently on a trip to Melbourne I took a visit to the Old Melbourne Gaol. I primarily visited due to my increasing interest in old gaols, but also to investigate the space as a future performance venue for when Confined starts to tour.

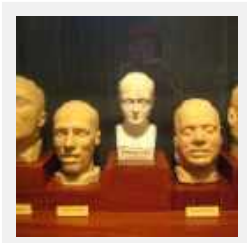
This iconic landmark is the site where 135 people, including infamous bushranger Ned Kelly, were hanged. The bushrangers, murderers, baby farmers and gangsters kept here lived alongside petty offenders, including lunatics, vagrants and bankrupts.

Old Melbourne Gaol dominated the Melbourne skyline as a symbol of authority when it was built in the mid 1800s. [The Old Melbourne Gaol](#) was the first extensive gaol complex in Victoria.

The main cell block is three stories high with the gallows at one end. It's beautiful bluestone walls and central hall high ceilings was based upon the designs of the British prison engineer [Joshua Jebb](#), and more particularly upon the [Pentonville Model Prison](#) in London.

I was stunned by the brutal facts of what happened post hanging. Heads were cut-off and examined under the science of the time, [Phrenology](#). [Death masks](#) were then made to study [physiognomic](#) features in famous persons and notorious criminals. Some of these masks, including Ned Kelly, are on display in the gaol. The closed eyes and expressionless faces give a somewhat false sense of serenity, particularly when juxtaposed against the cells in which they are on display.

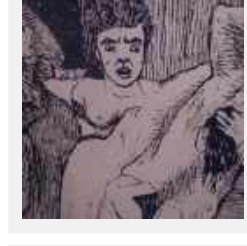




differently from men. In the century dominated by Queen Victoria, loving wife (and grief-stricken widow) of Prince Albert and devoted mother of nine children, women were expected to be nurturing, passive, submissive, self-sacrificing, gentle and delicate. Men, on the other hand, were dominating, powerful, authoritative, strong and protective. It was deplorable but inevitable that some should commit crimes that when women did so they were thought unnatural "monsters"

**PUNISHMENT CELLS**  
The already presented before me the sentence was the lowest kind of the one described Article 113 of the Code and I think prisoners were locked in their punishment cells, with only one window - for days at a time. The purpose of these cells was to punish the prisoner's will by total sensory deprivation - no light, no sound, no human contact with the world.

ry. The making of death into a standard practice and theologians sometimes attended executions. After Ned Kelly was hanged, a pathologist examined his shoulders and proclaimed that it indicated that a man clearly destined to a life...



## Train Spotting and Field Recording with Barton Staggs

Posted on [September 27, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

Let it be known that freight trains run to their own schedule. Barton and I have been recording them in Alice Springs. Barton began on his pat malone with recording the Ghan entering and leaving Alice Springs. I joined him a day later (Friday 24th) and we made a visit to the local rail freight yards to acquire a timetable of comings and goings.

Barton and I leave the yards with the times of two trains north and south bound , along with the yards direct line, to call the yard supervisor ahead of arrival to check that the trains are on schedule. Delighted we drive north about 30 kms to John Orr's Overpass and scope the site for our recording of the northbound train for later that evening (11pm Friday night) and the south bound train (4am Saturday morning), a little closer to town.

We call the station ahead respectively for both inbound trains. Both trains arrive two hours ahead of schedule and are fuelling, preparing to leave at the time of our call. In both instances Barton and I rush out the door and head straight to record the train. Friday night at John Orr's overpass is a moonlight night with cloudless sky. The atmos is alive with frogs, birds, cows, flexing metal roadguards and passing cars along the Stuart Highway. Barton positions himself on the bridge of the overpass and I from underneath. We wait about an hour before we finally hear the very far off approach of the freight train edging its way into the atmos spectrum. The encroach is at least 15mins before the headlight is within view and another 10 before its horn is upon the bridge and stealthily gliding past. It's long and the anticipation declines as the last carriage disappears around the bend into the length of night. We are home and in bed by 11.30pm and so to catch the early Saturday 4am southbound.

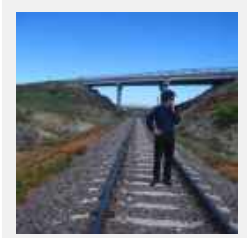
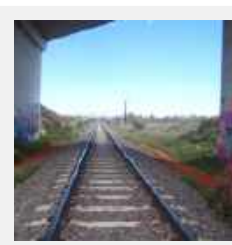
We catch and record the 4am southbound at the Gap and take chase south toward Adelaide. Unfortunately we take a wrong turn and it's a good 10mins before we realise the mistake. We correct our course and find the rail service road, but it's too late. The train has well passed and dawn approaches from the east.

How are trains relevant to the work? Historically the rail line brought labourers from all over to the Alice area. With more men in town, crime spikes. It is intended that after the line is complete this floating population will leave the area. At this time however a world economic crisis hits, wall street crashes and the Great Depression hits. The notion of returning home becomes less appealing as low employment is nation wide. Men stay in Alice and this puts significant pressure on the Old Stuart Gaol. The Old Gaol is built to accommodate the climate of the time.

Barton and I have also been visiting the gaol late in the evening to try to avoid superfluous background noise. Saturday night 1am and three gangs are out on the side street smashing bottles against the perimeter wall, joy riding a motorbike, screaming and yelling. It's interesting to be inside a compound and not feel safe. In contrast Sunday night the air is still and a bird sings brightly. A second bird responds with the same call, in the distance. It is magical.

We return to the gaol and finish with a recording using the megaphone trumpet. The resizing allows it to fit within the male cell block but it won't fit inside a cell. We position it so that the trumpet faces partly into the larger cell and toward the cell door. The sound enters the space but also bounces off the door. I improvise. Barton informs the recording by suggesting that I space the vocal calls in response to the greater atmos – the bird is still singing and the cell block is creaking.





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## Early Development with Barton Staggs cont.

Posted on [September 21, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

### Monday 20th September

We spent the afternoon selecting elements to bounce down for the musical saw player to record to. I have taken elements of the kora and Barton has reworked his musical door piece. We arrive on-site at 7.30pm.

We begin the session by recording a percussion piece whereby I am playing the stainless steel basin and metal vanity unit attached to the wall in the adjacent cell. Barton is recording with the HD recorder. I am using three of the mallets I made with Steve (made from soft rubber dog toys and skateboard wheels). The cell is dark and the only light (tungsten) filters in from the corridor. It is small and oppressive. It feels good to smash the shit out of the fixtures, but within reason as not to damage them (heritage listed building). The sound is reverberant and abrasive.

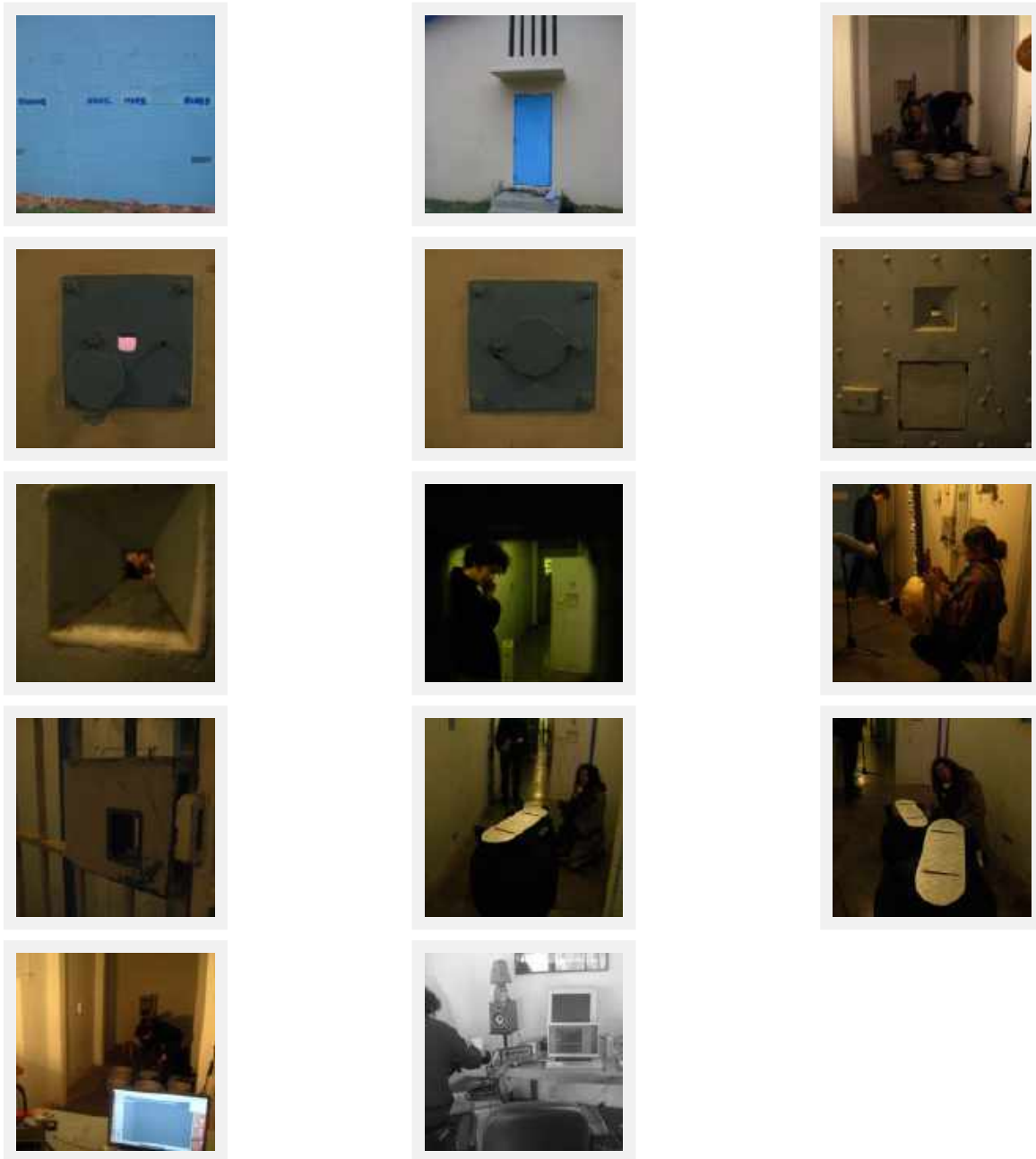
We have asked the musical saw player Jnine Stanton to come at 9pm. We have noticed a fair amount of traffic noise surrounding the site which is impacting on the quality of the recordings. The traffic is random yet unfortunately consistent no matter what time of the evening. The goal is not far from the Stuart Highway. It is fair to say that we will undertake part of the future instrument recordings in a controlled studio environment.

Jnine brings three musical saws to the session. Two high and one low. We have brought a heater into the space for her to be able to warm them; the saws are difficult to play when they are cold. The average current late evening temperature in Alice Springs is 5 degrees celsius.

Jnine plays a mixture of noise and melodic saw to various prepared beds. We also improvise with musical saw and bowing the tonebars on both the subs in the main corridor. The textures and resonances etch into the

surrounding sonic landscape. Similar to the earlier megaphone sizing experience, the big sub does not fit inside the doorways of the gaol cells (early twentieth century gaol architecture impacts on the capacity of the project again!).

We finish the evening with a solo low musical saw recording whereby Barton records from a smaller adjacent cell and Jnine is positioned in the main corridor facing into the cell toward the Rode and HD recorder.



### Sunday 19th September

Today is a very exciting day. Barton and I head into the male cell block to start recording and compositional work. We have arranged for [kora](#) player Bec Matthews to attend the session at 7.30pm. We arrive on-site at 6pm to bump-in and set-up the recording facility. Barton has brought a portable Sound Devices 722 HD recorder and Rode NT4 microphone with him. I am using a Macbook-Pro, LogicPro and RME soundcard with I/O devices and Sterling Audio stereo condenser microphone.

We spend time exploring the various cells from which to record. Cell B14 is the only cell that is larger than the rest, three times the average size. We choose this one due to its size, acoustic ambience and partition for the

toilet (this becomes the site to set the equipment). We can only run power from outside the building and this cell is also closest to this point.

We set up the rims and mini-sub inside the cell. Barton arranges the rims in an ascending scale. They sound incredible in the room. We spend time playing and recording them.

Bec arrives and we have prepared a range of beds and tracks for her to improvise kora. We have bounced them to MP3 and dumped them onto an iPod playlist. Some of these tracks comprise field recordings of trains, two-part vocal harmonies, field recordings from within the gaol site and clarinet. Bec is not particularly inspired to play to the MP3s so we decide to play the rims live, with her. We proceed to record improvised kora and rims, followed by solo kora, and then kora and voice.

Before Bec leaves Barton invites her to improvise with him playing a musical door at the far end of the east side of the male cell block. The tuning of the door blends wonderfully with the kora, as Barton drags it slowly, then frantically backwards and forwards.

### [Musical Door with Kora](#)

Following the kora recordings Barton and I proceed to record the mini-sub and rims. We also name and record the rims individually: [Medea](#), [Ariadne](#), [Persephone](#), [Tamora](#), [Rusalka](#) and [Lavinia](#). We finish the session at 12am.

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## **Early Development Composition with Barton Staggs**

Posted on [September 21, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

Barton Staggs arrives, Alice Springs, Thursday 16 September. The day is wet and wily. We spend the first couple of days installing software, identifying particular items needed for the recording and organising the studio for the work ahead. We visit the gaol on the Friday to collect the keys for after hours access. Barton is inspired with the site and the male cell block. He takes some initial field recordings.



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## Chains of Change – Old Stuart Gaol Rehearsal & Live

Posted on [September 16, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September

After celebrating Tom's 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday, we headed to the gaol at about 10pm for a full run. The space was quiet and still. I was locked in the front cell and Tom performed round back in the main cell. We improvised around a loose structure for about an hour and a half. The frequencies from a loop Tom created from the mini-sub rattled everything inside the small front cell. His use of pitch alteration and distortion on my vocals formed uplifting yet dense harmonic textures. I experimented further with abstracting the historical text and found particular interest in the repetition of 'sugar, tea, tobacco'. Being found with large amounts of these commodities was a regular offence for imprisonment at the gaol, yet ironically it was a freely given main staple of the gaol diet.

[Chains of Change \(Rehearsal\)](#)

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## Chains of Change – Old Stuart Gaol cont.

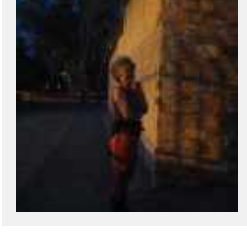
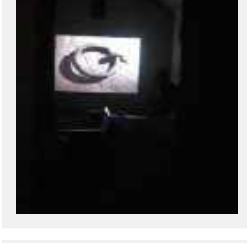
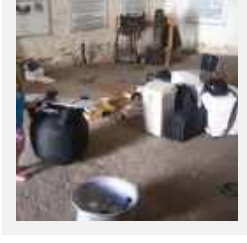
Posted on [September 9, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

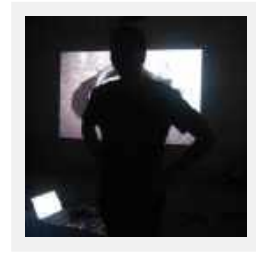
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September

It took a good part of the day trying to find 20 metres of mic cable with XLR tip to run between the two cells. What started with the wrong purchase at Jaycar to make our own, ended with a trip between local music and electrical stores, until finally Staging Connections came to the party with two 20m cables, in lieu of a bottle of cheap wine 😊

I met Tom at the gaol later that evening. When I arrived he had a projection of a manacle on the wall. We were unable to set-up in the front cell area as we are waiting on a ladder to reach the top window between the two rooms, to run the mic cable between. I set-up the mic in the main cell area, to capture the sub, rim and vocals. We proceeded to improv for an hour and at times the bass was rattling various fixtures in the cell. The sound is awesome. I opened a series of documents and letters that I had copied to the laptop from Megg. I randomly edited text and words together, a mixture of spoken word and singing. Tom's looping and manipulation of the overall soundscape was a landscape of white peaks and pulsing volcanic lows. At times I felt myself entranced by the manacle and its dissipating form. I am excited for the performance.







### Wednesday 8th September

Took the mini-sub, a single rim and camera to the gaol. Tom set-up in the main cell area and I set-up in the separated front cell area. Megg gave us full access to her historical records, which will inform at least part of the vocal work. We identified that it will be best to mic the front cell area and instruments so that Tom can feed this mix into the overall soundscape for manipulation. I sang in the front cell today and I like the acoustic. I like the fact that Tom and I are performing independently and that it will unbeknownst to the audience that activity in the front cell is informing part of the live work. The sub sounds tremendous.

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### Chains of Change – Old Stuart Gaol

Posted on [September 8, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

Media Artist [Tom Hall](#) is in town and we are collaborating to present an AV work at the Old Stuart Gaol. This is an exciting opportunity for some early development of ideas for 'Confined'. We are working alongside local historian Megg Kelham, who I will also work with for Confined.

We met in the space on Monday and Megg gave a very detailed historical overview of the gaol with a slideshow and talk. For me the opportunity to engage early on with the Stuart Gaol seems fitting as the Old Alice Springs Gaol replaced the Stuart Gaol in the 1930s. The space only comprises two cells with a small exercise yard.

Tom and I are visiting the space today to test the equipment and devise a performance structure.



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## Nodes of Steel

Posted on [August 29, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

**Task One:** Go to gaol site and see if 'trumpet' will fit inside doorways.

It became quickly apparent that early 20th century architecture failed our grandiose plans of 'bigger is better'. After locating all external entry/exit points, including a hole in the roof, and even scoping the Women's Block, the trumpet could not be fit through any doorway.

Proceeding to measure and find the widest entrance, it was necessary to scale the sides of the trumpet for accessibility. Disheartened at first to have to re-design such a wonder, I soon concluded that this trumpet is an evolving prototype. A functional work in progress, many more will be cloned !

**Task Two:** Sand and fine edge tone bars.

Took the tone bars off again and sanded back all the rough edges and the top of the bar. Smooth as a baby's bottom 😊 This is particularly important for bowing the bars. Also sanded the entire filter to prepare for a matt black finish.

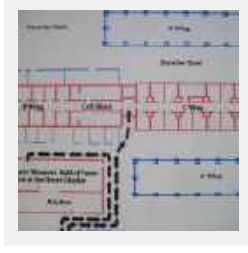
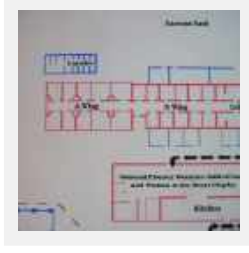
**Task Three:** Tune mag wheels.

The mags have been sand blasted and they look amazing! I have six – 2 x D and A tuned to the octave, F and C. Steve tunes the rims by slicing a series of cuts into the edges of the wheel. The breadth and tone of the [harmonic resonance](#) is voluminous and rich. They are going to sound incredible in the gaol.

**Task Four:** In search of the perfect circle.

Circles are not easy to draw, nor jigsaw the shape into hard moulded plastic chemical drums. It is certainly not best to sight by eye.

[Nodes of Steel](#) is now the inspiration for one of the musical works.



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## Instrument Building Day Two and a Half

Posted on [August 22, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

From discarded junk trumpets and subs adorne/adrone.

After 22 hours of instrument making my approach and understanding of music is forever changed. Metatools. Powertools. Finding. Riveting. Kicking. Bending. Cutting. Tearing. Peeling. Melding. Flowing. Shard. Spiral. Hot.



It's starting to become overwhelming the capacity for sonic bedlam inside the gaol. The three instruments Steve and I finished today are beyond my wildest imagination. Resting on the porch is a 1200mm wide square ended aluminium trumpet. Inside the carport sit two tuned subs made from discarded pool filters, poly pipe, rope and aluminium. Everything scavenged and recycled except the rope, pot rivets and turnbuckles.

We started building the singing-trumpet/megaphone with tinsnips, a marker, a small piece of wood and an axe. The sheeted aluminium we found at the local Alice Springs dump. It once formed part of a solar hot water system. My only concern is will I get it inside ! Hopefully it is not too wide 😊 The trumpet will be used to naturally amplify my voice towards a targeted direction whilst recording in the gaol.

It is difficult to explain the subs. I didn't fully comprehend them until they were finished. When Steve hit the tone bar I felt the wave drive straight into the middle of my chest. Loud and deep, the instrument is compelling. A hole at the base sheathed with plastic attached with u-tac creates the capacity for distortion. Whilst waging the space between the tone bar and the mouth of the drum with your hands creates yet another intimacy when playing the instrument.

After working Saturday afternoon from 2pm – 7pm, then from 9am to 1am on Sunday, I am in awe of the vision of Steve Langton and his ability to bring life and magic to the things we discard.

 [trumpet sheet selection](#)





## Instrument Building Day One

Posted on [August 15, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

Sunday, 9am. I picked up Steve Langton, Instrument Maker Extraordinaire, from Old East Side.

For a Sunday, it has been a most productive day.

We started with tea and chocolate croissants, followed by a brainstorming session, trip to the dump and late afternoon of making. Clocking off at 5pm. Along the way we discovered we both love our tea the same way 😊 milky, sweet and strong. Like that served at Indian railway station platforms.

When Steve and I visited the gaol last week upon his arrival to Alice Springs, his incredible ability to locate playable architecture and fixtures within the space completely illumined and extended my outlook on the project. The man is a sonic wonder.

With our first planning day aside, I can only anticipate that three more days of making and installing will bring new dimensions to *Confined*.



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## Bite Size Theatre

Posted on [August 15, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

As part of an initial development phase for the compositional work and operatic monodrama of *Confined*, I submitted a script to the Red Dust Theatre Company (Alice Springs) production 'Bite Size Theatre' 2010.

After receiving script development from Peter Matheson a freelance dramaturg and Artistic Director/Playwright Michael Watts, *Confined* was chosen along with 8 other plays from Alice Springs for production.

An opera in four parts, the libretto/plot is based around the myth of *Echo and Narcissus* and expressly engages with issues surrounding mental health. Local Actor/Director Kerzlake, known most recently for her lead in *Morgan and Molly*, came on board to direct the work.

During the months of June/July 2010 I worked with various local musicians to develop the musical work for the opera. Instruments such as the musical saw, piano, cello, celtic harp, clarinet and mandoline, alongside synthesised sounds, informed the work of four arias. Players came 'cold' to the work and were only given a

simple brief to perform from. They were talked through the script and played a small selection of works from turn of the century composers, from which they were encouraged to lend a motif from which to improvise.

Late July I was also fortunate enough to receive further script development from Brown's Mart Theatre (Darwin) Creative Producer and Dramaturg, Alex Ben Mayor. Heading toward production, the work was feeling strong, focused and deliverable.

Unfortunately at this time Red Dust Theatre dissolved as a Company leaving Bite Size Theatre without legs. The approved production funding is sitting with Arts NT and is post-poned until another producer/body will take it on.

Outcome:

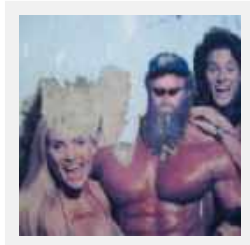
I have finished an initial script (for 2011 presentation) and four musical works. The arias will inform the test recordings to take place at the Gaol for *Confined* when Barton Staggs, lead Composer/Arranger from Sydney, visits Alice Springs for 10 days in September.

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## About the work

Posted on [August 15, 2010](#) by [tammyb](#)

CONFINED is a site-specific research and development project at the old Alice Springs Gaol. The work has been in progress since 2009.



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**Confined**

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