



‘Asi

An exegetical consideration

Ua avatu ele Atua le gutu ma le fatu ia te oe. E pau a mea, e mana'omia¹.

(God gave you a heart and a mouth. That is all you need).

¹ I have memories of the role that my father was given as a matai (family chief), while I was growing up. At the time, many people did not agree with him receiving the title because he was the youngest of his siblings. Some members of his family would challenge his often unconventional thinking and ineloquent ways of speaking. However, he believed in this advice and often shared it with me when he could see that I had something to say, but found difficulty sharing it. I take courage from his guidance.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all Oceanic youth
who seek pathways lit by creativity.

Let your inner being shine through everything you do.
Be the best you can be.

Be you.

Abstract

In 1993, Wolfgramm referred to the climax in faiva as 'asi (the presence of the unseen). This spirit of artistic expression is an agent sometimes identified when Oceanic people work together to bring artistic works to their apotheosis.

Building on the idea of the unseen spirit that energises and gives agency to artistic work, this thesis asks, "What occurs when young Oceanic people work together creatively in a group, drawing on values from their cultural heritage to create meaningful faiva?" In posing this question, the study seeks to understand how, within this process, 'asi might bring forward a powerful spirit of belonging that resources artistic practice. As such, it proposes that the 'asi identifiable at the peak of a performance, may be also discernible before and after such an event, and resource the energy of artistic practice as a whole.

As an artistic inquiry the research considers two bodies of work. The first is a co-created project called *Lila*. This was developed by a team of research participants² who combined talents and experiences to produce a contemporary faiva for presentation in 2019. This case study is used in conjunction with interviews from contemporary Oceanic youth leaders who reflect on the nature and agency of 'asi as a phenomenon that resources artistic practice.

The second body of work is the development and performance of the researcher's experience and synthesis of thinking in a contemporary faiva called *FAIVA | FAI VĀ*. This is presented as part of the examination of this thesis. Emanating from the perspective of a teacher who has worked with students for over 20 years, the piece employs spoken word poetry, sound, drawing, video design and performance. These elements interweave autobiographical reflection and poetic portraits to reflect on the nature and agency of 'asi.

The significance of the research lies in its contribution to a distinctive understanding of 'asi, such that we might identify and consider its potential agency for resourcing creativity and belonging inside the development and performance of contemporary faiva among Oceanic youth.

² In this exegesis these students are referred to as the Faiva Creatives.

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To God be the glory. He has been my strong pillar, my inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He has been the source of my strength throughout this journey.

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DR JANI WILSON

I feel fortunate to have been in the presence of this wonderful woman. I would like to thank her for supervision and guidance in relation to urban Oceanic aspects of this project and for her staunch support throughout this journey.

MY MOTHER VAIOLA FAUMUI AND MY LATE FATHER MALAE SILIA MOSE FAUMUI

I would also like to pay homage to my mother and father for their tireless efforts in providing my siblings and me with a better life in this new land, Aotearoa - New Zealand. I love, cherish and honour them both with this work.

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THE FAIVA CREATIVES

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I am grateful to the School and Faculty of Design of Creative Technologies for granting me the Mature Student Scholarship and research stipend associated with the realisation of the thesis. They have been of great assistance to the continuity of my study. In appreciation, I hope that this project might be useful as we extend learning opportunities for new generations of Oceanic people.

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HISTORICAL OCEANIC SCHOLARS

Finally, *‘O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota, e mama se avega, pe a amo fa’atasi*³ (My strength does not come from me alone but from many). I would like to acknowledge those who have before me, navigated a space for indigenous epistemologies in the academy. Your work has expanded our collective wisdom internationally, giving substance to indigenous epistemologies, enabling Oceanic thinking to be heard, valued and woven into greater understandings of human ecology.

3 N. Urale-Baker explained in an email that the literal meaning of this proverb is “many torches bring more light to catch more seafood (figota), making the burden lighter when it is carried together” (personal communication, November 28, 2021).

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly indicated), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

CECELIA FAUMUINA

December, 10th 2021

Declaration of Intellectual Property

I retain copyright of all images and creative work produced and presented as part of this thesis.

CECELIA FAUMUINA

December, 10th 2021

Ethical approval

This research received approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 20 October 2017, for a period of three years, until 20 October 2020.

ETHICS APPROVAL NUMBER: 17/292

The ethics approval was extended on 29 October 2018, so I could include interviews with Oceanic youth leaders.

On 9 February 2021, due to COVID restrictions, the study was afforded an additional extension until 31 December 2021.

All research was conducted in keeping with the regulations and guidelines of the approval.⁴

CECELIA FAUMUINA

December, 10th 2021

⁴ Correspondence relating to ethics approval is available in Appendix 6.

INTRODUCTION

- ⁵ Apogee (from the Greek apogaion, ‘far from the earth’), refers to a culmination, or the farthest or highest point in the development of something (Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apogee>
- ⁶ Apotheosis (from the Greek apotheoun, ‘to deify’), normally refers to a culmination or the highest point in the development of something. In art, apotheosis can refer to a genre where a person or object is raised to the level of the divine (Terry, 2020).
- ⁷ A zenith (from the Arabic samt (ar-ra’s), ‘path over the head’), is an imaginary point vertically above an observer on the imaginary celestial sphere. Zenith can also describe a point at which something is most powerful or successful where one is positioned at the pinnacle, summit or highest point (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n. d.). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/zenith>

The spirit

Throughout Oceania there is an understanding that ‘spirit’ exists within and around us and it may reside within tasks that we undertake. Ferris-Leary (2013), in discussing the Tongan phenomenon of laumālie (spirit) in relation to faiva (performed artistic expression) notes:

Laumālie is accessed directly in many instances through various forms of faiva ... Faiva has been a traditional way of accessing, enhancing the experience of, and building a social ideology and cultural aesthetic based on and in, the ways of laumālie (p. 71).

Like laumālie, ‘asi refers to an unseen dynamic. Although ‘asi is not a word in common parlance, when Wolfgramm referred to it in 1993, he described a non-physical climax in faiva, that was both spiritual and emotional. In this regard ‘asi transcends Western concepts referred to in arts practices, like apogee,⁵ apotheosis,⁶ and zenith.⁷ While these Greek and Arabic words refer to a pinnacle of elevation, only apotheosis contains a sense of divinity and this is limited to an attainment or elevation to godly status, rather than describing a spiritual, unseen, inherent and elevating energy.

Thus, this thesis considers the nature of ‘asi as an active, unseen agent inside Oceanic students’ and the researcher’s artistic practice.

The inquiry locates this analysis within a contemporary conceptualisation of faiva that embraces traditional as well as present-day creative practices. Given a perceived relationship between the spirit and artistic expression, the study emanates from Oceanic ways of knowing, where the spiritual is understood as present and potentially active in reinforcing a sense of identity and belonging.



FIGURE 1.1
Information graphic illustrating the relationship
between strands of the thesis.
© Cecelia Faumuina (2021).

- 8 This is a group of young men and women from West Auckland aged between 10 and 18 who attended ACG Sunderland school between 2016 and 2019, who constituted the core of a group called Faiva Creatives. The students included Amiyah Armstrong, Erin Geraghty, Veronica Semau, Faith Waraki, Victoria Kaho, Kuldeep Khakh, Jasvinder Khakh, Fania Kapao, Shannon Macdonald, Chase Leathard and Samantha Tanner. Interviews conducted with a number of these students, two years after leaving school are available in Appendix 1.
- 9 These leaders include Dr Igelese Ete, Rokalani Lavea, David Riley, John Kennedy, Troy Tu'ua, Marina Alefosio and Rongo Atkins. Transcripts of their interviews are available in Appendix 2.
- 10 This work is presented as part of the examination of this thesis.

Research question

The thesis asks,

What occurs when young Oceanic people work together creatively in a group, drawing on values from their cultural heritage to create meaningful faiva?

In considering this, the study seeks to understand how 'asi becomes manifest and operates as an agent for collective expression in contemporary faiva.

Structure of the study

In examining this question, the project interweaves three strands (Figure 1:1).

The first strand is a case study involving a group of young Oceanic students who, in 2019 created a contemporary faiva called *Lila*.⁸ The second strand draws on interviews with Oceanic youth leaders who work with groups of young people in the development of artistic practices. Their talanoa records their experience of both contemporary faiva and 'asi.⁹ The third strand is a personal, artistic synthesis of knowledge emanating from these inquiries. It is a composed work called *FAIVA I FAI VĀ* which combines spoken word poetry, sound, drawing, video design and performance.¹⁰ Emanating from my experience as a teacher who has worked with Oceanic students for over 20 years, the work is an artistic synthesis that 'gives voice' to a consideration of 'asi as something that exists within co-creative practice; extending through gestation, development, performance and post-performance experience. I argue in the thesis that its agency lies in its potential to increase a sense of connectivity and belonging.

The use of Oceanic languages in the thesis

Given the nature of the thesis, I draw upon a number of languages. Beyond English, the two most common of these are Tongan and Samoan (partly because these are the languages of my parents and dominant among the Oceanic youth with whom I work). In an effort to reinforce the equal status of these languages, in this exegesis they are all written in regular type and precede an English translation in brackets.

My normal approach is to translate the word at first use and then allow it to operate as an integrated part of the exegesis' discourse. Exceptions to this approach occur when I am quoting directly from another source or the word may be unfamiliar and warrants ongoing translation until it becomes familiar to the reader.

The use of footnotes in the exegesis

The exegesis uses parallel footnotes that have become a convention in Art and Design exegetical writing (Nepia, 2012; Ventling, 2018). These footnotes run alongside the text and add additional information corresponding to the main discussion. Sometimes such notes are relatively robust (e.g. footnotes 62 and 87), because they provide information conversant with, but not integral to, the flow of the main body of writing.

¹¹ Helu Thaman (personal communication, January 29, 2018).

¹² Manu'atu (personal communication, January 28, 2018).

¹³ This may be a speech, story recitation, dance or song.

Definitions of keywords

In the exegesis I use certain words in specific ways. Because definitions can be subject to diverse interpretation, and meanings may change in different contexts, I provide the following clarifications:

'Asi

The Tongan word 'asi may be defined as, "to reveal" and can be linked to what is 'revealed' in an art form; be it a story, speech or performance. In this sense, the revelation may be physical (actually seen) or mental (seen by the mind) or spiritual, or emotional.¹¹ Manu'atu suggests that, 'asi describes the ability to "catch sight of something from a distance." ¹²

Wolfgramm (1993), in his discussion of 'asi, notes, "In Tongan storytelling, it is often the storyteller's goal to achieve an emotional and spiritual climax in which the spirit of the presentation permits the audience to experience the unseen world" (p. 171). He calls this phenomenon 'asi and suggests that it is a mark of a good performance.¹³ He claims:

Tongan art performances seek to reflect the spiritual angst of the composition, an ideal acknowledged by such responses from the audience as Mālie faiva, Ko e langi kuo tau! (Bravo, well done. The heavens are being attained!) (ibid.).

In this thesis I extend the use of the word 'asi to describe an unseen energy that may permeate, resource and be revealed in the gestation, development, performance, and aftermath of faiva.

Faiva

The word faiva appears in a number of Pacific languages. In Samoan it relates to a pursuit of something or an endeavour.¹⁴ Allardice (1985) draws our attention to the word's composite parts: fai (to make), (p. 18) and vā (space), (p. 100).¹⁵

In Tongan the word normally refers to artistic expression concerned with the performing arts (Ka'ili, 2017). Traditionally Tongan art is divided into three categories: Tufunga (material), faiva (performance) and nimamea'a (fine art) (Māhina-Tuai & Māhina, 2012, p. 23). Manu'atu (2000, p. 75) explains:

Faiva as a verb means to perform. As a noun faiva refers to a performance, a task, work, feat and games requiring skill or ability. Faiva is also thought to have been derived from a compound word, faihiva– fai and hiva. The word fai as a verb means 'to do' and as a noun, it refers to the deed ... Hiva as a verb means to sing, and as a noun, it refers to the song itself, the singing and the numeral nine.

Māhina (2005), in defining Tongan performance arts, says "Performance Arts are, in Tonga, commonly referred to as faiva. Included in this division are, amidst many others, such art forms as hiva 'music', haka 'dance' and ta'anga 'poetry'¹⁶ (p. 140).

¹⁴ N. Urale-Baker (personal communication, November 28, 2021).

¹⁵ Allardice notes that faiva may also be translated as fishing, employment or skill (1985, p. 20).

¹⁶ (Wood, 1998, p. 13); (Māhina-Tuai & Māhina, 2012, p. 24).

In this thesis, I use the word faiva to embrace movement, poetry, performance, illustration, video design, lighting, and sonic design. This expansion is not unprecedented. For example the word faiva in contemporary speech can describe a television documentary or a cinematic story. Thus Churchward, in 1959, records the question, "Ko e ngaahi pō fe 'oku fai ai ho'o faiva? (On which nights are your pictures shown?)" (p. 23).

Faiva Creatives

The term 'Faiva Creatives' is used in this study to describe the group of Oceanic student participants with whom I worked at ACG Sunderland school between 2017 and 2019. Members of this group were actively involved in a range of performative and sporting activities in, and outside of school. However, in this exegesis they are primarily discussed in relation to their 2019 performance work *Lila*, and their influence on my creative 2022 work *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*. Interviews with a number of these students, two years after the performance when they had left school, appear in Appendix 1 and contribute to the exegesis' critical commentary.

FAIVA / FAI VĀ

This is the title of a live performance of the researcher's reflection on 'asi. The artwork integrates a series of spoken word portrait poems, narrativised recollections, illustrations, sound and film video works. *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* references both my Samoan and Tongan backgrounds and draws on Wendt's (1999) and Ka'ili's (2005) considerations of vā as a resonant 'between space' of relationships that holds separate elements together in a unified whole. Although *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* is the work of the researcher, it exists because of support and input from the Faiva Creatives group. As such it is an artistic synthesis that holds within it, traces of the participants whose experiences of 'asi helped to shape the inquiry.

¹⁷ These words may be associated with the laumālie. Tu'inukuafe (1992) defines laumālie as “soul or spirit” (p. 180).” Mafileo and Vakalahi (2016) suggest, “Well-being is achieved when dimensions of atamai (mind), laumālie (spiritual) and sino (physical) are napangapanga mālie (in balance)” (p. 545).

Mālie faiva and māfana

These are Tongan terms. Manu’atu (2000) explains that “the notion of mālie espouses a philosophy of process, energy and transformation” (p. 74). She suggests that this “produces meaningful connections between ta’anga (the context in Tongan language and culture), hiva (singing), haka (the bodily movements), the psyche and spirit of both the performers and audience, all of which energise and uplift people” (p. 76).

Wood (1998) suggests that “artistic creation is intended to evoke māfana or joy that derives from appreciation and understanding of the skill of the performer” (p. 17). Manu’atu (2000) asserts that the notion of māfana is associated with the notion of mālie. She defines māfana as “a movement of warm currents that energise the process of malie and mālie and māfana are inseparable” (ibid.).¹⁷ In a similar manner, Shumway (1977) defines māfana as “warmth that informs the highest artistic moment in Tongan faiva, when all elements of a performance come together into a gestalt of feeling known as ‘kuo tauēlangi’ (the signing has hit the mark)” (p. 29).

In this thesis I use the terms in the manner of Manu’atu (2000), where māfana describes a movement of warm currents that energise the process, energy and transformation that constitutes mālie.

Oceania

In 1994 Ha’uofa spoke about Oceania calling it “a sea of islands” (p. 152). He proposed that the Pacific is not made up of discrete islands separated from the rest of the world by a vast ocean. Instead, he perceived the ocean as an agent that connects us.

Although ‘Pacific’ as an adjective used to describe indigenous peoples derives from the Portuguese word *Mar Pacífico* (calm seas), more recently writers like Douglas, Lopesi, Wikiteria, Tuagalu, Tapuni

and Waerea (2017) have begun to refer to these peoples as 'Moanan'. Other researchers who use Moanan include Leadership New Zealand - Pumanuwa Kaiarahi o Aotearoa (2019), Ferris-Leary (2013), Mallon, Mahina – Tuai, Salesa and Orange (2012) and Lafitani (2011). In addition the associated term *Moana Cosmopolitan* is currently used to describe Tagata Moana (people of Pacific descent who live and work in diasporic cities while maintaining cultural links to ancestral Pacific islands and cultures) (Mallon, Mahina-Tuai, Salesa and Orange 2012).

However, in this study I prefer to employ the term Oceanian because of its potential for greater inclusivity. The students with whom I work have grown up in New Zealand and have been educated here. Some of them come from diverse backgrounds including Māori, Niuean, Samoan, Tongan, Melanesian, Micronesian, Indian, and Chinese. These countries exist inside or surround the Pacific Ocean, but they are not all geographically considered Pacific nations. Although in Māori, Hawaiian and a number of other Polynesian languages, the word Moana means “ocean, wide expanse of water, deep sea” (Tu’inukuafe, 1992, p.196), being primarily Polynesian in application, the word does not adequately embrace the genealogical spectrum of participants in the study. Many of the young men and women with whom I work are not easily positioned as Pasifika and their first language is not always Polynesian. Their mixed heritage places them in a space where many see themselves as fitting everywhere and nowhere. The single thing that connects them is an expanse of ocean. In using the term Oceanic I am reminded of the etymology of the

word¹⁸ meaning a “great stream encircling the earth’s disc” (Fowler and Fowler, 1969. P. 554). Using this definition the ocean may be conceived of as a connecting agent within which diverse peoples might find relationality (Figure 1.2).

Practice-led inquiry

This is a practice-led inquiry. Candy uses the term to describe an “original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” (Candy, 2006, para. 2). Within a paradigm of Artistic Inquiry (Klein, 2010), such research is primarily initiated through practice and is carried out through practice (Gray, 1996). Candy (2006), Gray (1996) and Steagall and Ings (2018) all suggest that in artistic doctoral study, “if research is undertaken



FIGURE 1.2

Oceanic space. © Cecelia Faumuina (2020).

¹⁸ From the Greek *ōkeanos*, via Latin to the Old French ocean.

to advance practice and practice is used as a vehicle for reforming, critiquing and advancing the research question, then we might define such an undertaking as a practice-led inquiry” (Steagall and Ings, 2018, p. 67). This thesis study may be understood as practice-led because I use artistic practice to understand and advance understandings of ‘asi and faiva through processes of synthesising, forming, critiquing and advancing iterations of the research question.

Post-disciplinarity

Post-disciplinarity is a concept I use when discussing relationships between ‘asi and existing school disciplines. Wolmark and Gates-Stuart define post-disciplinary practices as “cultural hybrids, [that] refuse to accept hierarchies of knowledge that are offered as repositories of universal values”

(2004, p. 4).¹⁹ Post-disciplinarity, Drachenberg argues, refers specifically to the dissolution of institutional structures (or disciplines). Thus, post-disciplinary approaches exist because many problems that we seek to address are not disciplinary in nature. For example, Oceanic students’ loss of faith in their ability to express themselves, may not just be an educational or artistic problem. Their economic situation, cultural orientation, mental health and identities may all play a role in how they experience disablement or alienation. Drachenberg notes that “those in favour of a post-disciplinary arrangement argue that organising institutions around themes or specific problems and abandoning disciplinary boundaries, can be a more effective method of tackling difficult issues” (2016, para. 7). Her discussion is significant for this study because this thesis suggests that traditional school disciplines and practices offered in the wider community might be usefully seen as permeable.

Vā

Albert Wendt (1999, p. 402) defines the Samoan use of vā as:

... the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving things

¹⁹ Usefully, Drachenberg (2016) separates post-disciplinarity from multidisciplinary interaction. Multidisciplinarity, she suggests, describes activities that involve individuals contributing specialist knowledge or methods to a problem. However, they take nothing back from the group interaction. Interdisciplinary collaboration, she suggests, differs from this because individuals feed insights from other disciplines into their individual disciplinary research. Alternatively, with interdisciplinary collaboration one encounters an integrated synthesis of knowledge and methods from different disciplines.

meaning to things... A well-known Samoan expression is 'la teu le vā' – cherish, nurse, care for the vā, the relationships. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group unity more than individualism, that perceive the individual person, or creature, or things in terms of groups, in terms of vā or relationships.

In Tonga this idea is called Tauhi vā, and here vā relates to what Ka'ili (2005, p. 89) calls the 'Moanan notion of space'. He states:

The word vā is not unique to Tonga, for cognates are found in many Moanan languages. Vā can be glossed as "space between people or things." This notion of space is known in Tonga, Samoa, Rotuma, and Tahiti as vā, while in Aotearoa and Hawai'i it is known as wā. Vā (or wā) points to a specific notion of space, namely, space between two or more points.

In this study I consider vā to be the space between that requires nurturing in order to create harmony. I position myself as an Oceanic woman with two genealogical backgrounds Samoan and Tongan, who has grown up in a bicultural country shaped by Māori and Western European values. The vā I understand as a potentially productive space, resonant with potential yet also vulnerable to experiences of isolation and disconnection.

Components of the thesis

This thesis contains two interrelated elements: a faiva as a performance and a contextualising exegesis.

The faiva

The artistic outcome of the study is a contemporary faiva created by the researcher.

This is a personal, artistic synthesis of knowledge called FAIVA | FAI VĀ. It interweaves spoken word poetry, sound, illustration, video design and performance. The work begins with an autobiographical reflection on the nature of the unseen, then moves through a series of spoken word, poetic portraits of students with whom I have worked. Permeating, then emanating from these reflections, is a consideration of 'asi as something that resides in creative, human interaction and lifts performance through connectivity and a sense of belonging. The structure of this performance is available as Appendix 5.

The exegesis

FAIVA | FAI VĀ, is supported by this written exegesis, that creates a critical context for the work.

In 2011 Jillian Hamilton argued that an artistic inquiry exegesis must negotiate "the disinterested perspective and academic objectivity of an observer/ethnographer/analyst/theorist [and] the invested perspective of the practitioner/producer" (para. 2). Thus, an exegesis must be flexible enough to navigate a relationship between deeply subjective thinking and objective analysis. In addition, it should also function as a demonstration of rigorous reflection, not only on what is imported into the study but

also on what is creatively generated inside it.

Barbara Bolt (2006) suggests the importance of the act of making and the critical reflection behind it form a “double articulation between theory and practice, whereby theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time that practice is informed by theory” (para. 7). Accordingly, the exegesis is structured into six chapters.

The first forms an introduction to the thesis and the second offers a ‘positioning’ of the researcher that considers my personal, cultural and professional experience. The chapter shows how these elements generated the research question. The discussion is useful because I function as a culturally shaped ‘insider’ in the inquiry and from this position, I operate as a subjective, artistically synthesising, agent.

The third chapter presents a Review of Contextual Knowledge. I use this term in preference to the conventional ‘Literature Review’ because a significant amount of knowledge relating to the study exists beyond written repositories (literature).

Such knowledge includes that which was gained through interviews with youth leaders and cultural experts. However, in addition to these resources, a significant body of written material is also covered, including knowledge relating to faiva, the unseen and ‘asi.

The fourth chapter discusses the research design underpinning the project. Paradigmatically the study may be understood as an artistic inquiry that employs a Ngatu methodology applied through a range of methods that are divided into five phases. At the end of the chapter I offer a

consideration of the advantages and challenges inherent in the methodology.

Chapter five presents a critical commentary on the practical work. Drawing on literature and interviews with youth leaders, the chapter begins with a case study of a group of Oceanic students (the Faiva Creatives) and their co-created project *Lila*. From there the chapter moves to a critical discussion of my performance work *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*. I conclude this body of work with a reflection on the implications of ‘asi and a consideration of how it might usefully be nurtured in relationships between schools and communities. This section discusses disjunctions between national aspirations and research relating to the education of Oceanic youth. It also suggests that a consideration of ‘asi within contemporary faiva, might help to create more effective connections between schools, communities and demarcated disciplines within the arts.

I conclude the exegesis with a reflection on the thesis as a whole, including a consideration of the project’s contributions to knowledge and a discussion of future research.

The rationale and significance of the research

Rationale

A significant body of research currently highlights mental health issues for young New Zealand born Oceanic youth (Anae et al., 2012; Ataera-Minster & Trowland 2018;

Culbertson et al., 2007; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009; and Roy et al., 2021). Much of this research proposes a connection between identity, self-expression, belonging and a sense of wellbeing. Usefully, Fletcher et al., (2009) notes that high achieving Pasifika students believe that the most significant factors contributing to their success include the maintenance of their cultural identity, home-school relationships, and parental support and love.

This inquiry, cognisant that mental health needs remain disproportionately elevated for Pacific and Māori students in New Zealand schools (Roy et al., 2021), steps beyond qualitative analysis and employs an artistic inquiry, resourced by the reflections of Oceanic Youth leaders and students, to consider how the phenomenon of 'asi associated with practices of co-creating faiva, might generate a sense of productive belonging, expression and relational space with others.

Significance

The thesis proposes four significant contributions to knowledge.

First, it contributes to a consideration of 'asi, such that we might identify, understand and enable its potential agency inside the development and performance of contemporary faiva.

Second, the study reconceptualises the traditional concept of faiva as a multimodal form of contemporary expression. It does this by critically considering faiva as it is processed among a group of urban Oceanic youth called the Faiva Creatives, the current practices of community leaders, and in the researcher's artistic practice.

Third, the study demonstrates the application of a methodological framework based on co-creative processes involved in making Ngatu. Here, the researcher is a reflective, co-collaborative, observer-maker, whose relationship with her participants is both subjective and artistic. The Ngatu framework demonstrates how eight phases associated with question gestation, data gathering, reflective practice, co-creation and presentation, can be employed in the explication of a culturally appreciative inquiry that draws on Oceanic ways of knowing.

Finally, the study suggests a possible reframing of artistic inquiry in education. Using a contemporary conceptualisation of faiva as a post-disciplinary concept, I argue that demarcations between poetry, dance, design and visual arts, might move beyond existing divisions in English, the arts, health and physical education and technology (that constitute four of the eight learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum). It might also permeate conventional boundaries between schools and communities, to enable approaches to creative performance that focus on integration, co-creation, wellbeing and belonging.

POSITIONING THE RESEARCHER

THE PRESENCE OF THE UNSEEN

I remember as a 10-year-old girl visiting Samoa for the first time and waking up in the middle of the night, needing to go to the bathroom (Figure 2:1). My whole family was sleeping together in one room on a thin mattress on top of woven mats. I felt an unusual presence that then alerted my grandmother's dogs who started barking ferociously and running around the house as if they were chasing something.

I began to cry because I was scared and I desperately needed to go to the bathroom. However, in Samoa during that time, the lavatory was usually a tiny corrugated shack that enclosed a hole in the ground and it was outside the main house.

My whimpering combined with the incessant barking of the dogs must have woken my father, and I was relieved when his reassuring voice in the darkness asked me if I was okay. To be honest, I was surprised that nobody else in the family had been woken by the commotion of the animals. My father assured me that everything was all right, explaining that the dogs were probably chasing spirits away as they would be visiting, curious to see us all, because it was our first time coming back to Samoa as a family. That was my earliest memorable experience of feeling the presence of the unseen.

Since that time, I have had other experiences - feeling the presence of what is not physical. As an artist and educator I encounter such things distinctively within creative activities.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CREATIVITY

As a child I loved making mud pies with my school friends. Into the slush would go daisies and grass, rocks and leaves to make the most majestic, albeit inedible creations. At home, I would spend hours trying to perfect



FIGURE 2.1

Memory of a Samoan fale (circa. 1986). ©
Cecelia Faumuina (2021).

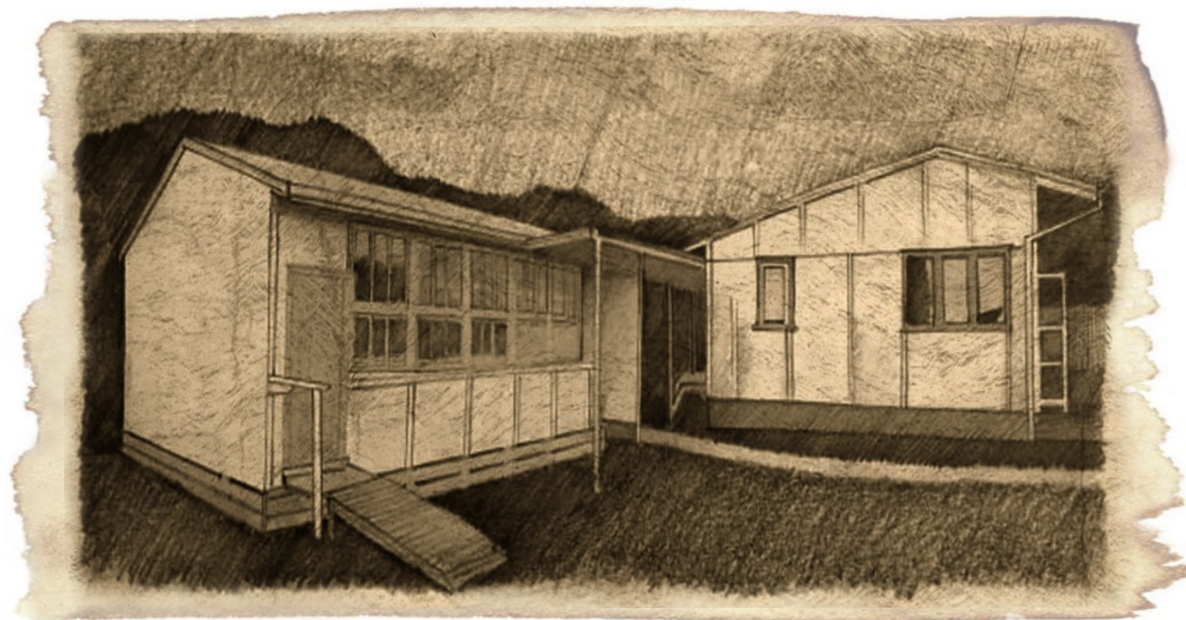


FIGURE 2.2
Memory of a prefabricated school classroom.
Kelston Girls' High School (circa. 1993).
© Cecelia Faumuina (2020).

stitches taught to me by my mother while she crocheted blankets. I would practice embroidery and hand sewing techniques, immersed in a world full of the wonder of making. I also remember sitting in front of sun drenched windows creating intricate drawings in my old exercise books. When my father was free from his work outdoors, I would show these to him. He was a beautiful artist and I aspired to create work as fine as the illustrations that festooned his journals.

At high school, I would stay late with my friends to work on our art and design projects. In the decrepit prefab that constituted the Senior Art room, time would escape us as we spent hours drawing, painting, designing and crafting (Figure 2.2). In this community I came to understand how making and belonging were connected. We were close. We talked about our worlds in words and in dimensions beyond words. Making was something transformative and cumulative. We built a sense of belonging. Often, we would leave the room and walk out into the darkness; the day had passed into night.

In 1994, seeking to continue this experience, I decided to pursue tertiary level education in Graphic Design. In my first and second years of study I was still able to lose myself in creative space, but the sense of a close community working alongside and into something cumulative, was lessened. Then my father left to work overseas and I descended into a downward spiral of depression and suicidal tendencies. There was no infrastructure around me. I felt as if I was cast adrift.

Some days I would go to the central bus station and use my student monthly bus pass to catch a random bus to anywhere but university classes. The trip led me all around Auckland to places I had never visited. I would alight at an unknown terminus, then catch another bus from there to somewhere else ... with no real consideration of where I

might be going. Inside the bus I felt safe ... looking out at drifts of people and places from whom I was disconnected.

During this dark period, I completed my Bachelor's Degree in Graphic Design and began my first job as an Audio Visual Producer.²⁰ Creativity remained a constant in my life in the form of music, movement, photography, sketching, poetry and boxing, but these increasingly became outlets for frustration and angst. Such undertakings constituted a tenuous grasp on an increasingly singular world. Eventually, after a few years of working in the industry, I began to question whether I was really destined to be living in this manner. I didn't enjoy sitting in a dark office in front of a screen, constantly designing and editing presentations for corporate companies. Although I valued talking to clients, my growing dissatisfaction with my career and other life events began to take its toll and I descended further into a spiral of self-destruction.

TURNING POINT

In an effort to rectify the situation I decided to take a break from this life and move to Australia to be with my family. I felt that I needed to be reconnected. While there, I saw how my parents maintained their picturesque garden, crocheted blankets for new grandchildren, designed and built extensions for their

house and I rethought the nature of creativity and belonging. Around me I saw creativity allied to something wider than the 'self'. It operated between and beyond activities, it occurred in the 'ordinary', that became extraordinary ... and at the base of it resided a human connection.

In this context I slowly began refinding my voice; writing, painting, touching tentatively again the essence of something that had become dislocated. After a year, I returned to New Zealand to become an educator because it seemed to me that this might be a way to connect people through creativity. Accordingly, in 2001, I completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching specialising in Art, Design and Technology.

CREATIVITY AND TEACHING

For the next 10 years I taught Technology in various schools in Auckland and worked with many Oceanic students who reminded me of my younger self. I could see that a number of them were going through issues similar to what I experienced when I was their age. Many had talent and potential but they were destructively acting out anger and frustration. I saw young men attending school tired, because they had just arrived from work. I saw kids scrambling for identity by grasping at flickers of American culture; I watched good boys and girls forming gangs as a way of belonging and turning a sense of disconnection into delinquency. However, the incident that prompted an urgent rethinking of my values occurred on 9 September, 2012.

On that morning, the suicide of a 14-year-old student flooded the New Zealand online news feeds. Many of her closest friends posted moving tributes on social media. I grappled with the thought that here was a young person who appeared to be talented and destined for a bright future but she had taken her life. I felt connected to this story because this could have been me when I was younger.

²⁰ I was employed in Auckland, New Zealand at Multimedia Systems Limited between 1997 and 2001.

21 Pacifickology Symposium Interview with Dr Siale Foliake. Retrieved from <http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/nz-born-pacific-youth-vulnerable-mental-health-risk-expert-4802991>

22 My thinking here was that an outreach that was easily accessed might offer some comfort to students who couldn't yet reach out for assistance. It was something they could watch in their bedroom and it told them that it was okay to ask for help. The closing lines of the work stated "E lelei le talanoa – It's okay to talk".

MANULUA

So, in 2013 I returned to university to study for an honours degree in Art and Design. I was motivated by a growing need to find a way of utilising creativity as a way of preventing such destruction. It was in this year that the high suicide rate in New Zealand among Oceanic youth prompted an important suicide symposium in Auckland.²¹ For this sharing of ideas, I created an illustrated health promotion video that sought to express a lived experience of depression. The short film, entitled *Manulua* (Figure 2:3), was uploaded on to YouTube so it could be viewed by a wider Oceanic audience.²²

Manulua contained no speech but it employed illustration, animation, sound and film to create a linear narrative and a message of support. The 2 minute 40 second work examined the sense of loneliness and confusion that a young Oceanic girl might face when she finds herself stranded, connecting neither fully to her cultural roots or feeling at home in Western culture.

However, although the film was able to be distributed widely online, I began to wonder if less mediated narratives might have more impact because they might have the immediacy of being performed live. I wondered if something might 'live' inside such work.

MALANGA

For my Master of Philosophy thesis (2015), I created a 20 minute faiva (performance) called *Malanga*.²³ This was a composite oratorical work where diverse artistic forms of expression were brought together into a poetic performance presented as a public address. The work integrated spoken word poetry, illustration, dance, sound, and set and lighting



FIGURE 2.3

Illustrations from the short film *Manulua* (2013). The grading for these images was inspired by the colours of Ngatu. The film illustrated my experience of disconnected travelling through Auckland as a young person. It fused the 'realistic' with a sense of irresolution, such that the background city remained like an incomplete sketch of the world.

The full work can be accessed at: <https://www.thecoconet.tv/creative-natives/pacific-short-films/manulua-by-cecelia-faumuina-khakh/>

©. Cecelia Faumuina (2013).

design that unfurled as generational women's narratives, enclosed between an introduction and conclusion. In designing this work, I drew on conventions of traditional Samoan oratory. In considering these forms of communication, I was striving for a concurrently ritualistic and emotional way of connecting with people. What I discovered was a spirit within a performance (Figure 2.4).

In *Malanga* I voiced the stories of five generations of women in my family, beginning with the fleeing of my grandmother from the erupting island of Niuafu'ou in 1946. This was followed by a poetic reflection on the plight of my mother in the abusive care of the Catholic church and her and my father's decision to come to New Zealand to give their children and families back in Tonga and Samoa a better life.²⁴ The work then offered a reflection on my own childhood and struggle with depression and a sense of not belonging. It then progressed to a consideration of the life of my daughter, and culminated with thoughts on a child from a coming generation who has not yet been born.

Before performing the work, I felt a deep sense of responsibility. I was conveying the stories of people I loved. I thanked them for what they had done for me and I asked for their support and spirit to be with me while I performed.

During the performance, an extraordinary thing happened. All of the words I had been trying to memorise for weeks leading up to the event seemed to just roll off my tongue as normal speech. The work itself possessed me and I became a kind of conduit. The content and spirit of the performance flowed through me. The painful events in the oration where I had broken down and cried during rehearsals were swept up into a forward motion. My body moved in rhythm, my voice rose and fell and something profound swelled and drew itself into the light. At the time, I did not know the word for this. It permeated everything.

After the performance, my family told me that they felt the presence of our ancestors in the room, especially the presence of my late father Malae Silia Mose Faumui.

In the months following the thesis' examination,²⁵ I began to think about the nature of this phenomenon. I wondered if this spirit that connects people through art making and triumphs through performance might be of use as we develop richer, more supportive environments for our young Oceanic men and women growing up in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was during this period that I encountered the work of Emil Wolfgramm (1993) and the discussion of the relatively obscure Tongan word 'asi, which he described as 'the presence of the unseen' (p. 71).

²³ The word means oratorical work or speech in Tongan; in Samoan it is spelt Malaga and relates to travel or a journey.

²⁴ By being able to send money home that was earned in a more lucrative economy. This is a common undertaking for immigrant Pacific families (Taumoevalau, 2005).

²⁵ The exegesis contextualising the research is available online as: Faumuina, C. (2015). *Malanga – The voice of positive dissonance*. <http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/handle/10292/9163>

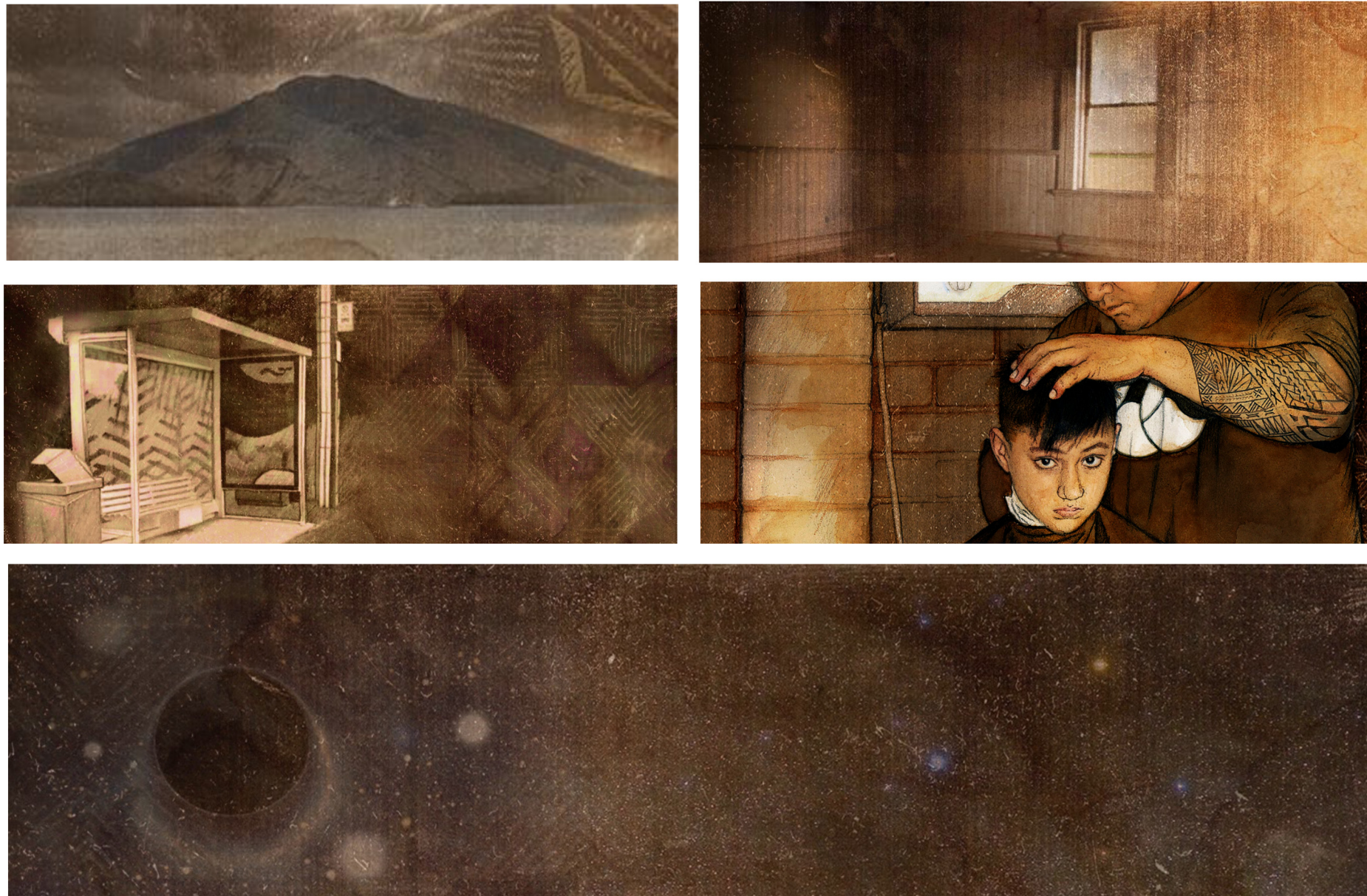


FIGURE 2.4

Background illustrations I created as projections accompanying each of the generational spoken poems in the faiva Malanga. ©. Cecelia Faumuina (2014).



REVIEW OF CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

INTRODUCTION

Having considered the research project from a subjective position, it is now useful to discuss the relevant knowledge that either influenced the study or serves to contextualise it. This chapter has been titled a ‘Review of Knowledge’ because it reaches beyond the conventional parameters of a ‘traditional’ Literature Review to also consider contemporary events, cultural practices and indigenous knowledge that has been sourced in interviews or through personal communications. This material has been divided into four areas:

- Knowledge relating to faiva
- Knowledge relating to Oceanic spirituality and the ‘unseen’
- Knowledge relating to ‘asi
- Contemporary realms of performance for Oceanic Youth.

I liken a Review of Knowledge to a ngatu. Here all contributions honour culture and comprise complete layers. Thus, in this chapter, Oceanic researchers are introduced as such, so the epistemological frameworks from which they work are acknowledged. In addition, given the strong tradition of oral knowledge in Oceanic cultures, all interviews are included in their entirety (see Appendix 1 and 2), so anything quoted in the exegesis can be considered inside the full context of an interview.

KNOWLEDGE RELATING TO FAIVA

The word faiva appears in a number of Oceanic languages.

FAIVA AS A TONGAN CONCEPT

Shumway (1977) believes that the Tongan term faiva encompasses more than entertainment within the performing arts. He suggests that it may be understood as a collection of many elements such as “musical harmony and rhythmical movement” (p. 25). He also argues that Tongan faiva offers “a ritual reinforcement of the fundamental values that bind the Tongan society together” (ibid.).²⁶

Kaeppler (2007) suggests that certain elements included in a faiva are useful in determining the way aesthetic judgement operates in Tongan culture. These components include: heliaki, indirectness (to say one thing but mean another); faka’apa’apa (respect or humility) and a Tongan concept, for which she had no word for at the time, but she described as “the integral association of verbal and visual modes of expression” (p. 61). Kaeppler observes that dance and poetry are closely intertwined in customary Tongan culture and she suggests that faiva must be understood in a new context where many Tongans now live abroad and navigate spaces shaped by both Tongan and Western perspectives.

The Tongan academic and poet Helu, (1998) notes that the word faiva is derived from a compound word, faihiva (fai and hiva). The word fai as a verb means ‘to do’ and as a noun, it refers to the deed.

Hiva as a verb means to sing, and as a noun it refers to the song itself, the singing and the numeral nine. As a verb, faihiva means to conduct a group of singers (like a choir) and as a noun, faihiva refers to the conductor. The derivation faiva, somehow indicates a movement (doing) of hiva (singing) and haka (bodily movements) (p.75).²⁷

Like Helu, the Tongan educator Manu’atu also associates the word faiva with performance. She says, “As a noun faiva refers to

²⁶ Shumway also notes that the role of a Punake (poet) in faiva is to “preserve and restate the most urgent social and political imperatives of both past and present” (1977, p. 26).

²⁷ Helu, I. (1998). Personal interview with L. Manu’atu. (Cited in Manu’atu, 2000, p. 75).

a performance, a task, work, feat and games requiring skill or ability” (2000, p. 75). She sees faiva as a performance of the arts of hiva and haka and maintains that these represent an interconnectedness that is grounded in Tongan language and culture. Likewise she notes that the creation of hiva and haka enable the telling of stories, histories and relationships of the people, land and cosmos” (ibid.).

FAIVA AS A TONGAN CONCEPT

Māhina-Tuai, a Tongan curator and writer, together with Māhina, a Tongan theorist and philosopher (2012, p.23) state that traditionally, “Tongan art is divided into three categories: tufunga (material), faiva (performance) and nimamea’a (fine arts).” Further, Māhina (2005) notes that “Performance Arts in Tonga are commonly referred to as faiva and are represented by diverse art forms including hiva music, haka dance and ta’anga poetry” (p. 140). In discussing Tongan tufunga and faiva, (material and performance arts), she notes that these categorisations may include highly specialised subdivisions. She says:

“These are underpinned mainly by a strong sense of tā and vā, “time” and “space”. As a matter of fact, both

terms tufunga and faiva generally mean tā and vā, “time” and “space”, specifically signaling their form and content. The spatio-temporal underpinnings of Tongan art are evident in the case of ta’anga (Tongan for poetry). In dealing with both tā and vā “time” and “space”, the Tongan case reveals that art is four dimensional rather than three dimensional.” (Māhina, 2005, p. 40)

Like Kaeppler (2007) and Manu’atu (2000), Ferris-Leary (2013, p. 5), also suggests that Tongan faiva should be understood in a wide cultural context. She says:

Faiva is revealed to be an extraordinary and complex conceptual phenomenon woven into so many aspects of Tongan culture that a fuller understanding may only be seen by examining a large number of other Tongan ideas, concepts and practices, both ontologically and epistemologically.

FAIVA AS TAU’OLUNGA

Within Tongan faiva there exists a dance genre called tau’olunga.²⁸ This symbolically describes the concept of tauhi²⁹ vā,³⁰ and its importance in Tongan culture is significant because it expands how we might think about faiva beyond a physical form of artistic expression as it is a shared experience of both the physical and the non-physical. As an illustration of this, Smith (as cited in Kress & Lake, 2013) describes a scene where a young woman performed a tau’olunga with a group of men singing behind her and an audience of family, friends and guests in the foreground. Here, the audience clapped and called out mālie (entertaining, interesting, well done), when they felt mafana (overcome with emotion) from her performance.

I was deeply touched by this experience. Not only because the dance was aesthetically beautiful, but because the collaboration between dancer and audience was equally beautiful. The dance was not simply a representation of a cultural artifact; instead,

28 When defined literally, tau in Tongan means to hit (Churchward, 1959, p. 461) and ‘olunga means above. Thus, tau’olunga means “to hit above.” (Tu’inukuafe, 1992, p. 204).

29 To tend, look after, take care of, or to minister to; to keep, keep safe, preserve (Churchward, 1959, p. 463).

30 The distance between, a distance apart; an attitude, feeling, relationship towards each other (Churchward, 1959, p. 528).

much like school, it operated more significantly as a method of reaffirming, redefining, and communicating social relations... It was a process of producing and reproducing culture. For me... The emphasis on participation and collaboration, on feelings of community and mutuality, made this a particularly poignant metaphor for a certain type of teaching (p. 61).

The Tongan academic and writer Ka'ili (2005, p. 105) suggests that:

Because vā can be organized and reorganized, it is dynamic and fluid, changing all the time in response to other formations of space. In addition, tauhi vā is a spatial practice of reaffirming harmonious socio-spatial relations with kin in order to create culturally meaningful life for diasporic Tongans.

This observation is significant because tau'olunga as a genre is an amalgam of many elements. Kaeppler notes that, "Its music is adapted from Western musical traditions. Its name and manner of performance are borrowed from Samoa. Its movements and role are Tongan" (1967, p. 302).

³¹ Over 100 of Queen Sālote's poems are collected in *Songs and poems of Queen Sālote*. These works were translated by Melenaita Taumoevalau and the collection was edited by Elizabeth Wood-Ellem.

³² Hermes (in her analysis of themes of hybrid diasporic identity in the work of Oceanic women poets), describes the concerns of such poetry as "finding oneself and the struggles of reconciling traditional and modern-day female roles" (2018, p. 655).

FAIVA AND TONGAN POETRY

In FAIVA I FAI VĀ, the artistic output that constitutes the culmination of the thesis inquiry, both hiva (singing) and haka (dance) have a distinctive presence, but it is ta'anga (poetry) that carries the weight of the performance. Helu (2012) notes that, "Tongan poetry was, and is, inextricably connected with music and dance" (p. 50). Indeed, Tonga's Queen Sālote (1900–65) produced a significant body of poetry³¹ and songs that contributed to the preservation and artistic use of the Tongan language. The corpus of work she produced in her lifetime contains over 100 songs, lullabies, laments and dances (Mallon, Mahina-Tuai, Salesa and Orange, 2012). Henry (2015) notes that her poetry that was set to music:

... consisted of love songs (both happy and sad), laments for deaths of chiefs and those close to her, lullabies for her grandchildren, and songs written especially for the accompaniment of dance, such as lakalaka and mā'ulu'ulu. Love songs (hiva kakala) were often used as accompaniment to the solo dance for a woman, the tau'olunga (para. 4).

However, some Tongan poets have published anthologies of poetry that stand as discrete expressions in print and can be read without physical performance. Wood (1998), in analysing the works of Tongan poet Konai Helu Thaman, recognises that the themes of her poems and the tone in which they are told can be read "as an attempt to symbolize the gains as well as the losses of cultural and historical change" (p. 9) within Tonga and for diasporic Tongans living in pluralistic cultural environments. Although traditional Tongan society is presumed to be patriarchal and punake (Tongan poets) are mostly men, Helu Thaman's work may be seen as a significant contribution to an increasing body of published Pacific women's poetry that may be traced back to Queen Sālote and continues today in the work of Karlo Mila, Grace Teuila Taylor, Selina Tusitala-Marsh and the late Teresia K. Teaiwa.³²

I suggest these women poets work within the realm of faiva because, whilst Mila, Taylor, Tusitala - Marsh and Teaiwa all wrote poetry that has appeared in print, each of these women also performed their poetry in public, as spoken word texts.

FAIVA AS A SAMOAN CONCEPT

Samoan academic, Urale-Baker (2020) defines faiva as “an activity where one or more people go to find and get fish-seafood. This word ‘faiva’ is often used as a metaphor in regards to an endeavour, a project, an expedition, or studies. Hence the Samoan expression, ‘la manuia le faiva’ (May the fishing go well).”³³ Fai vā, when literally translated from Samoan, means to fai – “make,” vā – “space.”

FAIVA AS CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

Considerations of faiva as a contemporary artform was discussed in many of the interviews I conducted with Oceanic youth leaders as part of this research.³⁴ In considering its nature, Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) suggests that contemporary faiva may be conceived as a form of public, performed ‘talking’, where the past is brought through to the present. He advocates that within the process, there exists discernible energy. Kennedy (2019, Appendix 2) associates such faiva with collective creativity and energy that he argues emanates from collaboration. Riley (2019, Appendix 2) believes that such collaborative processes can embrace diverse artistic forms including poetry, storytelling and performance. These, he suggests, can give voice to youth concerns and

lived experiences and faiva connects an audience with the performers in a unique dynamic. As contemporary practitioners, Lavea (2019), Kennedy (2019) and Riley (2019) all associate faiva with an artistic process that is reliant on close, supportive relationships between contributors, and that by drawing on young people’s lived experience in a dynamic of collaborative creation, contemporary faiva enables something more than a staged performance.

OCEANIC SPIRITUALITY AND KNOWLEDGE RELATING TO THE ‘UNSEEN’

While it is not the focus of this review to document the complete spectrum of discourses surrounding Oceanic understandings of spirituality, it is useful to note here certain ideas that have impacted on the study.

Because there is a lack of consensus as to a definition of spirituality, the word can be used in diverse ways (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009; Gall, Malette & Guirguis-Younger, 2011). In discussing Western concepts of spirituality, Valentine, Tassell-Matamua and Flett (2017), Midlarsky, Mullin and Barkin (2012), and Sperry and Shafranske (2005) define it as “an intrinsic, autonomous, and subjective sense of transcendence or connection with a sacred dimension of reality, which provides meaning, purpose, connection and balance” (Valentine, Tassell-Matamua & Flett, 2017, p. 64).

However, indigenous concepts of spirituality may often relate more specifically to ideas of integration and connectedness. For example the United Nations in their consideration of indigeneity has described spirituality as “an internal connection to the universe” (2009, p. 60).

³³ (N. Urale - Baker, personal communication, May 11, 2020)

³⁴ See Appendix 1: Interviews.

In the discussion of Māori thinking Valentine, Tassell-Matamua and Flett suggest that “spirituality from an indigenous perspective acknowledges the interconnectedness between the human situation and an esoteric realm [as well as an] interconnectedness between the human situation and the natural environment” (2017, p. 65). They also note that spirituality inside indigenous traditions may be differentiated “from religion and is based on a sense of connectedness” (ibid.).

The idea of indigenous, Oceanic concepts of spirituality relating to interconnectedness is also discussed by Christakis and Harris (2004), who maintain that interconnection bonds together “earth, ancestors and peaceful existence” (p. 251). From a Māori perspective, Ruwhiu (2001) argues that the “spiritual realm is always present, integrated into everything, the source of both pain and suffering and healing and wellbeing” (p. 63), meanwhile Pere (1982) notes that “every act, natural phenomena and other influences are considered to have both physical and spiritual implications” (p. 12).

Sue and Sue (2008) stress that ontologically indigenous spirituality is integral to the construction of social relationships, because it is manifest in cultural beliefs, practices, and values. Furthermore, Furbish and Reid (2003) argue that such spirituality results in a unique way of viewing and understanding reality, giving existence both meaning and purpose.

In this study I conceive of spirituality in the manner of Valentine, Tassell-Matamua and Flett who state that from an

indigenous perspective, it “acknowledges a wider connection to the universe as a living entity” (2017, p. 65). In other words, I do not see spirituality as an abstract idea, rather as something alive and connective, a force that permeates both what is physical and what has potential to become physical (ideas).

Related concepts

MĀLIE, MĀFANA AND TAUĒLANGI

Three Tongan concepts, mālie, māfana and tauēlangi may be understood as emotional and spiritual threads that strengthen and are revealed in the performance of faiva. These things are ‘felt’ and are associated with laumālie (the spirit).

Throughout Oceania there is an understanding that spirit exists within and around us and permeates artistic initiatives in which we participate. Ferris-Leary (2013, p. 71) states:

In Tonga ‘laumālie’ is accessed directly in many instances through various forms of faiva [...] Faiva has been a traditional way of accessing, enhancing the experience of, and building a social ideology and cultural aesthetic based on and in, the ways of laumālie.

In her discussion of the concept of mālie, Manu’atu (2000) describes “a process that produces meaningful connections between ta’anga (the context in Tongan language and culture), hiva (singing), haka (the bodily movements), the psyche and spirit of both the performers and audience, all of which energise and uplift people” (p. 76). She sees an association between māfana and mālie, defining māfana as “a movement of warm currents that energises the process of māfana” (ibid.).

Shumway (1977) defines *māfana* in a similar manner, describing it as “warmth that informs the highest artistic moment in Tongan faiva, when all elements of a performance come together into a gestalt of feeling known as ‘kuo tauēlangi’ (the signing has hit the mark)” (p. 29).³⁵

In discussing the concept of tauēlangi, the Tongan academic Lafitani (2011) notes that, when literally translated, the Tongan word tau means to “reach and arrive at the sky, langi” (p. 11). He says that tauēlangi is broadly concerned with “the psychological and emotional stage in performance art whereby people in general experience the heavenly fiefia of climactic euphoria” (p. 13). He notes that “the literal meaning of reaching the langi, is a reflection of the extreme nature of the aesthetic quality of tauēlangi, which is a situation that is considered the highest happiness ... and the highest virtue” (ibid.).

In this study I use tauēlangi in the manner of his description. The concepts of mālie, māfana and tau ē langi illustrate the strong association between the spiritual dimension and the

context in which faiva is understood and presented. They form part of a rich spectrum of ways in which we might understand performance not just as dramatic, but also as energising and uplifting.

MĀORI CONCEPTS

In te ao Māori (the Māori world view), people are linked intrinsically to the natural world through the mind, body and spirit (Barlow, 1991; Durie, 2001; Henare, 2001; Sheehan, 2020; Walker, 1990). Thus, Ruwhiu maintains that “... the spiritual realm is always present, integrated into everything, the source of both pain and suffering and healing and wellbeing” (2001, p. 63). Within this connection, five ideas are significant to this study. The complex and nuanced concepts of wairua, mauri, te ihi, te wehi and te wana, are not easily defined. Although not directly comparable to ‘asi, in te ao Māori they all relate to connections between identity, performance and spirituality.

WAIRUA

Both Best (2005) and Mead (2003), note that, within Māori understanding, wairua describes the “spirit of man” that continues to exist beyond death (Best 2006, p. 214). Ruwhiu (2001) suggests that wairua “is concerned with mana, whenua, tapu and noa³⁶, tikanga and kawa³⁷ and experienced as a lived phenomenon” (p. 65). Jenkins (1998, p. 493) maintains that wairua, “... penetrates and permeates through the whole of life, supporting, nurturing and guiding the natural order.” In addition, Marsden (2003) links wairua to hau (the source of existent being and life), and Pohatu (2011, p. 3) argues that wairua “extends beyond the individual to the connection to Io.”

³⁵ Wood (1998) suggests that, “artistic creation is intended to evoke māfana or joy that derives from appreciation and understanding of the skill of the performer” (p. 17).

³⁶ Marsden and Royal, (2003, p. 7) describe noa or whakanoa as being made common or neutralised. Thus, “noa is designed to neutralise or ward off the malevolent and debilitating transgression or challenges to mana and tapu.”

³⁷ Marsden & Royal, (2003, p. 173), note that “kawa is applied to the way in which the progressive steps of tikanga Māori is ordered” and that individual iwi may have different yet precise kawa pertaining to marae protocols.

Pere (1998), Marsden (2003), Mead (2004), Pohatu (2011) and Sheehan (2020), all suggest that wairua describes the spirit or soul that is created when one is conceived, then dwells within and exists after death.

However, the principle of mauri differs from wairua because it is associated with an entity's living essence that does not continue to exist after death. In 1954, Best likened mauri to the Greek concept of thymos (an inward spiritedness).³⁸ However, Pere (1991) defines mauri as a distinctively Māori "life-force" that resides in all living things. Noting mauri as a complex, abstract concept that has no direct English equivalent, she suggests it "can pertain to an individual's psyche alongside other people, or it can also pertain to talisman, the physical symbol of the hidden principle that protects vitality, fruitfulness" (1991, p. 12). Durie (2001) describes mauri as "a dynamic force, [that] recognises a network of interacting relationships" (p. x). Significantly, he associates mauri with energy and vitality. Henare describes mauri as "a concentration of life itself, like the centre of an energy source" (2001, p. 208).

Marsden (2003) argues that "mauri acts as the bonding element, creating unity in diversity" (p. 60), and Mead describes it as "the spark of life, the active element that indicates one is alive. Mauri [he suggests] is an essential and inseparable aspect of a human-being. It is an active sign of life, an attribute of self" (Mead, 2003, p. 53). Mead argues that it is important to nurture and protect the mauri of children because it is related to their health and well-being. He says, a "Māori child is born with mauri, which remains with that child all of his/her life. When the child is physically and socially healthy,

³⁸ However, he observed that mauri is richer than this definition because, under the concept of mauri ora, mauri is understood as having a "protective quality, the sacred life principle" (1954, p. 47).

the mauri is in a state of balance, known as Mauri tau (the mauri is at peace)" (ibid.).

TE IHI, TE WEHI, TE WANA

While mauri and wairua are often associated with the spiritual wellness of an individual, when discussing the presence of the unseen in performance, three other concepts warrant consideration; they are te ihi, te wehi and te wana.

Te Aka Māori Dictionary (n.d.) defines ihi as an "essential force, excitement, thrill, power, charm, personal magnetism - psychic force as opposed to spiritual power (mana)" (para. 1). It is an intangible emotion that constitutes a "connection between te taha tinana (physical being) and te taha wairua (the spiritual realm), the tangible and the intangible, the potential and the realisation of potential ... Ihi begets Wehi, that begets Wana" (Sport New Zealand 2021, para. 2). Te Ihi may be understood as "positive energy within that is ignited by what is seen, heard, felt, te Wehi, describes the emotional reaction that acknowledges Ihi, and te Wana - the collection energy that unites people, connects people to environment and people to kaupapa" (Sport New Zealand, 2021, para. 3). The Māori Language Commission chief executive, Ngahiwi Apanui describes ihi as "a combination of something spiritual and something physical ... the ability of someone ... it's hitting you in the heart and the hair is standing up on the back of your neck and you're thinking, 'wow, this is amazing" (Apanui quoted in Manch, 2018, para. 29-30).

These three, related Māori concepts can occur in discussions of sport (Rongo, 2021; Sport New Zealand/Ihi Aotearoa, 2021) and the performing arts (Kruger, 1984; Manch, 2018; Matthews, 2004). Kruger (1984) suggests that the portrayal and attainment

of ihi relates to the achievement of excellence in performance. Thus, he describes ihi as “a psychic power that elicits a positive psychic and emotional response from the audience” (Kruger, 1984, p. 230). The reaction to this power may be described as wehi (Kruger, 1984; Matthews, 2004), and wana constitutes “the condition created by the combination of the elicitation of ihi and the reaction of wehi during performance” (Kruger, 1984, p. 232). Thus, Matthews notes that in performance, wana may be experienced as an “aura that occurs during the performance and which encompasses both the performers and the audience” (Matthews, 2004, p. 9). Matthews (2004), suggests that these three concepts relate to action and each must be present for a performance to be deemed excellent.

³⁹ Wood (1998) suggests that, “artistic creation is Helu Thaman (personal communication, January 29, 2018).

⁴⁰ Manu’atu (personal communication, January 28, 2018).

⁴¹ Appear: show: visible (Tu’inukuafe, 1992, p. 136).

⁴² Speech, story recitation, dance, song.

⁴³ O. Māhina (personal communication, February 25, 2019).

⁴⁴ In his TāVā theory, Okusitino Māhina explains, “art is defined as a form of intensification of tā – time, and reconstitution of vā – space, and involves transformation from a condition of chaos to a state of order through sustained rhythmic production of symmetry, harmony and, more importantly, beauty” (Lopesi, 2016).

⁴⁵ Kaeppler suggests that heliaki “means to say one thing but mean another” (2007, p. 65).

KNOWLEDGE RELATING TO ‘ASI

TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Helu-Thaman (2018) asserts that the Tongan word ‘asi may be understood as a revelation that may be linked to what is revealed in an art form; be it a story or speech, or another artistic medium. In this sense the revelation may be physical (actually seen) or mental (seen by the mind) or spiritual or emotional (such as that which is identifiable in māfana and mālie).³⁹ Manu’atu maintains that, ‘asi describes the ability to “catch sight of something from a distance.”⁴⁰

Wolfgramm (1993), in his discussion of ‘asi, notes that “in Tongan storytelling, it is often the storyteller’s goal to achieve an emotional and spiritual climax in which the spirit of the presentation permits the audience to experience the unseen world” (p. 171). He calls this climax ‘asi,⁴¹ and asserts that it is a mark of a good performance.⁴² He claims that Tongan art performances seek to reflect the spiritual angst of the composition, an ideal acknowledged by such responses from the audience as Mālie faiva, Ko e langi kuo tau! (Bravo, well done. The heavens are being attained!).

Although little has been written about ‘asi as a phenomenon, we might understand it as a discernible emotional or spiritual climax that is revealed during faiva. In this regard, the word can be closely associated with mālie, the transformative energy that lifts a performance and māfana the connecting internal but discernible warmth that permeates it.

Mahina (2019)⁴³ suggests that, in the context of Ta-Va,⁴⁴ ‘asi may be understood as a ‘revelation’ or ‘appearance’. However, he also believes that it is important to consider the opposite meaning, which is to conceal or disappear. He suggests that when considering ‘asi, we might remind ourselves of the comparative idea of heliaki.⁴⁵ That is considered

a mark of good poetry when an audience's comprehension and appreciation of a performance leads to mafana (warmth) and tauēlangi (elation at the climax).

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

However, in interviews conducted as part of this study, the nature of 'asi was considered by a variety of Oceanic leaders as something that may extend beyond a moment of revelation in a performance.⁴⁶ Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) describes 'asi as an energy that exists between people when they are working together in the creation of performances, and Kennedy (2019, Appendix 2) describes it as 'joy and transcendence' that surfaces through development and becomes manifest in performance. In a similar manner, Riley (2019, Appendix 2) suggests that 'asi describes a form of awakening that opens up possibilities. As an extension of this, Ete (2019, Appendix 2) suggests that 'asi reaches beyond the physical and may be understood as a form of spiritual uplifting that results in both inspiration and empowerment. Its presence, he believes, is discernible by a distinct change in atmosphere and as a spiritual phenomenon, 'asi has associations with genealogy. Ete, also associates 'asi with harmonious alignment and like Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) and Tu'ua (2109, Appendix 2), he believes that it has agency in both creative processing and performance. He also suggests that this agency has the potential to heal through collective energy, connection and emotional encounter.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 1: Interviews.

CONTEMPORARY REALMS OF PERFORMANCE FOR OCEANIC YOUTH

Given the thesis' concerns with how performing artistic practice impacts on a sense of identity and belonging for Oceanic youth, it is useful to consider existing community initiatives, beyond church-based activities, that provide environments for such expression.

Often these activities interface with regional or national competitions including Word – The Front Line, Stage Challenge, the Smokefree Rockquest and Polyfest. Given the role of events such as these in supporting and connecting communities and groups of students, it is useful to consider their specific nature. The four events discussed in this section of the review share a number of common features:

Each enables school-aged students to work collectively and artistically in expressing a sense of identity.

Each encourages artistic communication and cultural reflection.

All may be seen as engaging with contemporary manifestations of faiva.

Although they may draw on work developed in schools, each event is organisationally discrete and aims independently to facilitate artistic development and expression.



FIGURE 3.1

Illustration of Showquest performer.
©. Cecelia Faumuina (2020).

SHOWQUEST

Showquest is a performance arts competition run by Rockquest Promotions Ltd. It is supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and NZME Radio Ltd. Its purpose is to encourage schools and students between 5 and 19 to showcase Music, Dance, Drama, Art, Technology and Culture. Although the competition was originally known as Stage Challenge, it was revived in 2019 after losing traction due to rising production costs. Showquest still maintains its original purpose as a "... a student-led production that aims to motivate and inspire students to lead positive proactive lives, by giving them a 'natural high' (Live, 2021, para. 4).

Significantly, in 2020 the event (due to the Covid 19 pandemic) was run online and students were challenged to create a 5 minute self-filmed screen video exploring a story or theme. The challenge was for students to engage in diverse roles in the production. The promotion stated, "Teams can film at multiple locations and use costuming, makeup, soundtrack and props as well as filters, special effects, live music and editing to intensify their story" (ZM 2020, para. 2). In addition to these provisions, students were encouraged to engage with set design and construction, choreography and 'wearable art' (the latter of which could be entered online in a separate Wearable Art competition).

What was significant here was the melding of multiple dimensions of artistic engagement into a single performance. As such, the event is conversant with the notion of contemporary faiva where narration and interpretation are brought into productive relationships with current media and spaces.

WORD - THE FRONT LINE

Word - The Front Line is a spoken word poetry competition run by Action Education. Its purpose is to “engage and grow the potential of our future leaders ... equipping young people with poetry prowess and leadership principles for an opportunity to battle for themselves and the challenges that their generation face” (Action Education, 2017, para. 8). The aim of the competition is to engage the community with the voices of their youth, giving young people an opportunity to voice their experiences of the world in powerful, creative ways. The festival provides “a stage where young people courageously confront their truth and share their journey in the creative expression of spoken word poetry” (ibid.).

The competition holds auditions in April each year. These lead to a series of workshops that help participants craft their poems before competitions in August. The workshops are followed by a “Grand Slam” in September. To enter, teams of four to six students need to complete an Audition Registration Form signed off by a teacher from their school. This document is emailed to the event organiser who responds with an audition date. Although the organisation emphasises the power and expressive importance of the spoken poetry, music and choreography are rarely included. This said, poetry is presented live and as such, the event may be seen as aligning poetry more closely with Oceanic traditions of oral performance.



FIGURE 3.2

Illustration of Showquest performer.
©. Cecelia Faumuina (2020).



FIGURE 3.3
Illustration of Showquest performer.
©. Cecelia Faumuina (2020).

THE SMOKEFREE ROCKQUEST

The Smokefree Rockquest is a nationwide event that operates as a vehicle for competitors to develop and perform live, original music. The aim of the initiative is to enable young people “to prove their ability and realise the heights they can reach in their music careers, and to encourage their peers to support original New Zealand music” (Smokefree Rockquest, 2018, para. 3).

The competition has been running for 33 years and was founded in 1989 by music teachers Glenn Common and Pete Rainey. The competition accepts contestants of secondary school age. Bands must register to compete by early May to perform at regional heats where they perform in the hope of being included in the top 12 bands selected in their region. Successful bands from the regional finals are then invited to make a band video from which the top nine bands are chosen to compete in a final event. From this performance, the overall competition winners are selected. The national competition is held in Auckland normally around September, however in 2020 due to Covid 19, it was an online competition.

This performance event includes poetry (in the lyrics that the artists have written), music (in the songs they have created) and movement (in the manner in which they perform).

POLYFEST

Polyfest is an annual event held in Auckland which, despite its humble beginnings, is now the largest Polynesian Festival in the world. It features traditional Oceanic music, dance, costume and speech, and it is described as “an important showcase of New Zealand’s diverse cultures and a celebration of youth performance” (ASB Polyfest, 2018, para. 1).

The Polyfest Trust considers that the highlight of the event is witnessing “the enthusiasm, pride, passion of the range of student performers together with their families, schools and large number of committed community volunteers” (ASB Polyfest, 2018, para. 3). The organisers aspire to a festival that “recognizes and celebrates the cultural diversity of our community [and] maintains links, traditions and relationships within and among these cultural groups” (ibid).

The festival accepts full time secondary school students under the age of 19 from across the Auckland region. The event is held at the Manukau Sports Bowl, Te Irirangi Drive, South Auckland in March each year. In the competition, secondary school cultural groups perform on one of the six stages (Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island, Niuean or Diversity). The stages feature performances simultaneously throughout the festival competition. Groups present traditional and sometimes contemporary performances that include poetry (in the composition of songs), sound (in musical arrangements and singing) and movement (in dance). The competition is organised in a similar manner to how a faiva competition was conducted in Queen Salote’s palace gardens. Shumway notes that in these events, Queen Salote would invite punake from around Tonga to compete at the royal palace. Groups would perform in different areas of the royal gardens simultaneously (1977, p.30).

Events such as these engage school-age students in opportunities to create contemporary manifestations of faiva. As performance-based initiatives, they all have the propensity to nurture and reveal ‘asi, and they are all predicated on finding productive value in connecting artistic expression with ideas of wellbeing, cultural identity, heightened performance and belonging.



FIGURE 3.4

Polyfest performers.
©. Cecelia Faumuina (2020).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have considered knowledge that either contextualises or has impacted on the development of the thesis. Given that certain areas are not widely represented in secondary research resources, where necessary I have sought contemporary understandings of ideas by interviewing experts in the field.

I appreciate that a review like this is shaped by the nature of practice and as such I have not proposed a chapter that is exhaustive of all realms that might be brought to bear by other scholars when considering the nature of 'asi or faiva. I acknowledge here robust bodies of knowledge generated by scholars relating to the 'va, concepts of spirituality and

performativity. My aim with this review has been to focus on a pertinent connection between my creative practice and theory impacting it. As such the chapter has considered knowledge relating to faiva, Oceanic spirituality and 'asi. It has then described contemporary initiatives that exist outside of schools and churches as realms for youth engagement with contemporary manifestations of faiva.

Having now considered these realms of knowledge, in the next chapter I unpack the research design behind the project and in so doing, make explicit the inquiry's unique methodological framing and development.

46 See Appendix 1: Interviews.

RESEARCH DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

As a practice-led inquiry, the project may be paradigmatically positioned as an artistic research project (Klein, 2010). Emanating from this orientation, the project utilised a Ngatu inspired methodology,⁴⁷ and five phases associated with question gestation, data gathering, reflective practice, co-creation and presentation (Figure 4.1).

THE NATURE OF RESEARCH

The idea of doctoral research as artistic inquiry has a history that may be traced back to the 1980s (Jones, 2005; Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli & Nicholson, 2011; Tavares & Ings, 2018). At this time a variety of artistic postgraduate research projects surfaced in the academy that were described as ‘practice-based’ or ‘practice-led’. Undertaken by artists, designers, creative writers, choreographers, musicians, filmmakers and performers, these researchers navigated unique ways of framing and conducting creative inquiry (Tavares & Ings, 2018). Heard suggests that in this context, designers undertaking advanced research degrees who adopted an artistic, practice-oriented paradigm, often faced an environment of “extreme disjuncture between what non-artist academics defined as research (work that is measurable, factual, and results-based), and the creative work that artist academics and their students undertook (work which is experiential, intuitive, and open-ended)” (2010, p. 81).

⁴⁷ This methodological framework for an Oceanic, artistic inquiry was developed for my Master of Philosophy thesis ‘Malanga: The voice of positive dissonance’ (2015). <http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/handle/10292/9163> The structure has been further developed in this study.



FIGURE 4.1
Information graphic showing the thesis’ research design. ©. Cecelia Faumuina (2020).

Practice-led, artistic inquiry emanates from a specific paradigm, based on the principle that research might be progressed through practice and critical reflection upon artistic thinking (Ings, 2015; Scrivener, 2002; Toluta'u, 2015; Ventling, 2018). In Aotearoa, such inquiry at doctoral level may be positioned within the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission's framework that defines research as an "original, independent investigation undertaken to contribute to knowledge and understanding and, in the case of some disciplines, cultural innovation or aesthetic refinement" (2018, p. 14). The New Zealand guidelines note that the term 'independent' may include collaborative work, and "in some disciplines, research may be embodied in the form of artistic works, performances or designs that lead to new or substantially improved insights" (ibid.).

RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm refers to the values that orient a research project. Ling and Ling (2016, p. 19) describe it as:

... a set of assumptions and understandings about key aspects of the research: the nature of reality or truth (ontology); the intent, ethics and values of the researcher (axiology); the understanding of the nature of knowledge and how it may be known (epistemology); the way information is obtained (methodology); and the nature of the research outcomes.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Paradigmatically this thesis project may be framed as a practice-led artistic inquiry. Klein's (2010) seminal work

What is Artistic Research? usefully works outwards from the 2008 UNESCO definition of research as:

Any creative systematic activity undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this knowledge to devise new applications. (OECD Glossary of Statistics Directorate)

Toro - Pérez (2009) argues that such research involves perceiving the world through one's senses and he suggests that "sensuous comprehensibility is the precondition specific to art, the prerequisite for artistic practice and artistic experience" (p. 34).

Bolt, in her discussion of practice-led artistic research (2006, p. 1) observes that such research:

... offers a very specific way of understanding the world, one that is grounded in ... "material thinking" rather than merely conceptual thinking. Material thinking offers us a way of considering the relations that take place within the very process or tissue of making. In this conception the materials are not just passive objects to be used instrumentally by the artist, but rather the materials and processes of production have their own intelligence that come into play in interaction with the artist's creative intelligence.

As such, this study adopts a process where the researcher is led by practices of making and reflection into states of discovery and resolution (Gray, 1996).

GUIDING TONGAN VALUES

While paradigmatically the study may be understood as an artistic inquiry, the values that underpin and then shape it have their origins in the Tongan roots of my ancestry. They are uouongataha, mālie/māfana and anga fakatōkilalo (Figure 4.2).

UOULONGATAHA

Uouongataha relates to harmony that is achieved, and in this study it may be associated with artistic work. In Oceanic cultures there is a strong sense of togetherness and harmony between everything that arises when people work together. Across diverse cultural practices, the experience of the collective is emphasised over discrete individual performance. Te Pou suggests that this “collective approach ... is governed by a complex set of inter-relationships between individuals, their families and their communities” (2010, p. 14). This study therefore seeks to understand how ‘asi emanates from within the harmony of collectivity. While aspects of the case study project Lila and my creative reflection

FAIVA / FAI VĀ, may at times appear individual, everything pursues uouongataha as it passes through and is reinforced by belonging to, and working within a group.

MĀFANA AND MĀLIE

Wood (1998) argues that “artistic creation is intended to evoke māfana or joy that derives from appreciation and understanding of the skill of the performer” (p. 17). This may be compared to Shumway’s (1977) definition of the māfana as “warmth that



FIGURE 4.2
Information graphic showing the thesis’ research paradigm and orienting values.
©. Cecelia Faumuina (2020).

informs the highest artistic moment in Tongan faiva, when all elements of a performance come together into a gestalt of feeling known as ‘kuo tauēlangi’ (the signing has hit the mark)” (p. 29).

In this study, I do not see artistic practice as a purely aesthetic undertaking. Shaped by māfana, I understand it as something

emotional and spiritual that relates to joy and beauty and warmth. As elements draw together, those with resonance suggest connections that eventuate in work that is both deep and capable of reaching levels of exaltation. In this regard I understand my research as shaped by a transformative energy that draws together through warmth, making meaningful connections between ta’anga, hiva, haka and the psyche and spirit (Manu’atu, 2000). In this dynamic, māfana is the movement of warm currents that energises and mālie is the sense of something being ‘well done!’⁴⁸

ANGA FAKATŌKILALO / LOTO TŌ AND LOTOMAU LALO

The third Tongan principle is anga fakatōkilalo / loto tō (humility, and being open to learning).⁴⁹ This bears some similarity to the Samoan concept of lotomaulalo⁵⁰. I embraced this way of being when I worked with the young people who were the research partners and co-creators of artistic texts within the inquiry. I was aware of the need to be sensitive to a culture of trust wherein people could share thoughts, feelings and emotions that might place them in a vulnerable position. As an Oceanic woman, I

treat the people with whom I participate with care and respect. This same care and respect is practised when approaching elders or youth leaders who are steeped in Oceanic knowledge or when presenting the research back to the community.

In Tongan culture we are often advised,

‘Tokoni ki ha taha ‘oku fiema’u ho’o tokoni ’ (Use your gifts to serve others).⁵¹

Similarly in Samoan culture there is a well-known proverb,

‘O le ala i le pule o le tautua’ (the pathway to leadership begins with service).⁵²

Thus, the thesis is seen as an act of service, a respectful offering to a body of knowledge that currently exists. My research utilises ways of artistic knowing that elevate harmonious co-creation and togetherness (uoungataha), is sensitive to the feel of warmth and connection (māfana and mālie), respects vulnerability and remains humbly open to the insights of others that resource my thinking (anga fakatōkilalo / loto tō).

⁴⁸ (Tu’inukuafe, 1992, p. 188).

⁴⁹ Tuinukuafe, Fifita, Hamani, Samani, Tesimale, Kupu, Afeaki – Mafile’o, (2012, p. 11).

⁵⁰ Allardice, (1985, p. 35).

⁵¹ (Manu’atu et al., 2016, p. 20).

⁵² Samoan society has a set of related values including fa’aaloalo (respect), which involves individuals operating daily in a way that is fa’amaulalo (with humility).

METHODOLOGY

THE CONTEXT OF NGATU

This research project employs a methodological framework inspired by the making of Ngatu.

Growing up, both siapo (Samoan barkcloth) and Ngatu (Tongan barkcloth) were kept in my home and I would often see them at family gatherings such as weddings, birthdays and funerals. On family visits back to ‘Eua in Tonga, I would marvel while watching a koka’anga working on Ngatu while my mum visited and shared talanoa with the women.

53 A harmonious form of communication historically and socially related to the female gender (Toluta’u, 2015, p. viii).

54 Tongan women.

55 This framework had already been applied to educational research before Toluta’u adapted it to artistic inquiry. In 2003, Helu-Thaman designed Kakala as a holistic philosophy and framework for research, teaching, art and spirituality. Her metaphor draws on the kakala process that is utilised for making kahoa (a necklace) for loved ones for special events such as weddings and graduations. Helu-Thaman’s original Kakala framework contains three processes: toli (picking or gathering of flowers – data collection), tui (weaving or making the flower garland – data analysis) and luva (to give away the flower garland to someone – dissemination of findings).

In my 2015 Master of Philosophy thesis, I began exploring, developing and refining a methodology for artistic inquiry based on the processes I observed. Having proven useful in that study, I have extended it in this project.

Ngatu is a significant metaphor to me because I am inspired by the fact that Ngatu is an artform of women that is made collaboratively. It is layered and joined through processes of selection and connection. It also exists in an environment where the work and the wellbeing of the women working on it is enhanced by belonging, working and talanoa.

In 2019 a gathering of Oceanic scholars called, ‘A Proliferation of Models: New Paradigms in Indigenous Research Working Session’ was convened in Auckland, New Zealand to discuss the burgeoning of new research methodologies in indigenous Pacific research. The Tāvāist critique/discussion focussed on three existing research models, talanoa, kakala and mālie-māfana which the speakers argued might all be framed as heliaki (metaphors). The scholars discussed how these models might operate within Moana / Oceanic research and pedagogy.

The use of heliaki to describe methodological approaches to inquiry has a distinct history in the development of Oceanic artistic doctoral theses. Significant among these is Toluta’u’s (2015) doctoral study *Veitalatala*.⁵³ In her research of Tongan diasporic women, Toluta’u utilised the Tongan concept of Veitalatala to explore the memories of hou’eiki fafine⁵⁴ who left Tonga to live overseas. Drawing on Konai Helu Thaman’s methodological framework, Kakala⁵⁵ (Helu-Thaman, 1993), Toluta’u interviewed three women, using the expressive and elegant nature of Tongan women’s talanoa (where women

engage openly in retelling personal experiences without suppressing their feelings). Their narratives of experience were constituted as visually poetic texts (moving image sequences) that Toluta'u described as "new forms of artistic narrative, designed to capture the cultural and emotional resonance of [the women's] identities" (p. viii). Toluta'u deliberately drew upon Tongan ways of knowing in her research so the study "did not propose Tongan culture as the subject of study inside a western academic paradigm, but rather positioned Tongan ways of knowing and researching at the core" (2015, p. 3). In doing so, she sought to employ artistic syntheses that were "actively involved in building the capacity and capability of Pacific

⁵⁶ Talanoa has been likened to a form of narrative interview. Vaoleti, (2006) sees it as an open, informal conversation between people where stories, thoughts and feelings are shared. Kingi-Uluave and Olo-Whaanga (2010) note that the word talanoa "is widely used to cover anything from general through to more meaningful conversations at many different levels" (2010, p. 3). However, they note that Fa'atalatalanoa "is a more purposive, deliberate and action-orientated dialogue, that often has an end-goal in mind. [They suggest] ... when frontline workers meet Pacific clients for the first time, they must not only engage positively with them, they must also take the opportunity to switch from a talanoa to a fa'atalatalanoa process" (ibid.).

⁵⁷ Nepia (2012) defines Te Kore as, "experiences and feelings of absence, void, nothingness, loss and annihilation, and also notions of potentiality, a source or origin" (p. 28).

peoples in research and contributing to the Pacific knowledge base" (Health Research Council of New Zealand, issuing body, 2014, p. iii).

In 2015, John Vea used the Oceanic methodology talanoa as a culturally sensitive approach to his artistic practice thesis, *The Emic Avenue; Art through Talanoa*.⁵⁶ In his study, talanoa was employed to develop a "respectful journalistic mode and sensibility for collecting everyday stories" (2015, p. 4). Using this approach, Vea immersed himself in the world of those he researched, reflecting on their stories and reacting by enacting situations that they had shared with him, in an effort to "bring these overlooked realities of the everyday people into visibility through art" (Vea, 2015, p. 4).

In 2018, Tupou also utilised talanoa in her doctoral thesis (*De constructing Tongan Creativity: a talanoa about walking in two worlds*). In this study she sought to understand what creativity means to bicultural New Zealand Tongan art practitioners. Within *talanoa* one reaches beyond simply recording data; instead, the researcher is communing with the 'spirit' of what is shared. Thus, in the documentation of her research Tupou refers to the energy that was felt between her and her participants. In one such encounter she notes, "I instantly felt laumālie (spirit) and māfana (warm, heartfelt emotion) in her presence" (2018, p. 66).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, two indigenous doctoral theses in Art and Design draw on distinctively Māori ways of knowing and practising. The first is Nepia's (2012) study that explored the concept of Te Kore⁵⁷ as a principle for creative practice. His proposition was that Te Kore "holds potential for social

interaction, human activity and layering histories together” (2012, p. 25). For this study he developed a methodology he defined as Aratika. Aratika (which may be broadly translated as navigating the right pathway forward) aligns the concepts of:

- Mātaranga Māori (Māori Knowledge)
- Mōhiotanga (internal experiential knowledge)
- Whakapapa (the process of tracing and establishing relationships)
- Kōrero (discussion, conversation, narrative, speaking)
- Akoako (consultation, learning and teaching together)
- Kitenga (observation)
- Pātai (questioning)
- Whakamāramatia (explaining, shedding light on something)
- Huihuinga or huihuitanga (gathering information)

58 Pouwhare (2000) argues that Kaupapa Māori is based upon and informed by, mātauranga Māori. Pihama suggests that Kaupapa Māori “provides a cultural template, and philosophy that asserts that the theoretical framework being employed is culturally defined and determined” (Pihama, 1997, p. 6).

59 Pouwhare (2020), notes that the word pūrākau derives from the words rākau (tree) and pū (roots). Given that pūrākau is also the word for narrative and the art of storytelling, he drew on the relationship to describe a process where the tacit and explicit operate relationally.

Whakarongo (listening, apprehending with the senses apart from sight) and Hurihuringa (turning over ideas, turn over in one’s mind) (Nepia, 2012, vol. 3, p. 215).

He integrated these states and practices he integrated into a composite approach to navigating indigenous Māori knowledge within a movement-oriented artistic research inquiry.

In Pouwhare and McNeill (2018), and Pouwhare (2016 and 2020), Robert Marunui Iki Pouwhare developed and applied the methodological approach called Pūrākau, which was earlier theorised by Lee (2005). Drawing (as Nepia had) on a Kaupapa Māori paradigm.⁵⁸ He articulated an approach to indigenous, artistic inquiry into storytelling that is “rooted in Māori knowledge, language beliefs and values” (Pouwhare, 2019, p. 4).⁵⁹ The significance of this methodology was its assertion that knowledge may be explicit in te kura tūrama (the world that can be seen), or drawn from te kura huna (the realm of esoteric knowledge that we don’t see, but sustains us). He suggested that,

... in the process of artistic creation, knowledge moves between the realm of the unseeable and the seeable; in a process of mahi (work/practice) and reflection, [where one’s] artistic research is accompanied by wairua (spirituality) and mauri (the life force). (Pouwhare, 2020, p. 36)

NGATU AS A METHODOLOGICAL METAPHOR AND FRAMEWORK

Ngatu shares some similarities with Helu-Thaman (2003) and Toluta’u’s (2015) Kakala, in that it employs a heliaki (metaphor) to describe a methodological approach of gathering, shaping and gifting back. Ngatu also integrates inclusive, participatory, shared

dialogue (talanoa) but, as an artistic inquiry, its primary concern is with co-creative and individual making and reflecting on what is experienced. Like Pouwhare's Pūrākau (2018; 2020), the Ngatu inspired methodology accepts the significance of knowledge that is unseen but dynamic and it understands that the process of making is integral to knowing. However, it may also be differentiated from these other frameworks.

In the Ngatu methodological framework, the position of the researcher is both internal and external. In other words the researcher is both a creator of artistic work and also a reflector on the experience of other research partners' experience of working. She journeys inside herself and into the experience of others, to answer the question 'What is 'asi?'

She also shapes knowing through individual and co-creative practice. In this regard the researcher may be likened to a woman who brings her artistic skills to work with others in the creation of a piece of Ngatu.⁶⁰ She makes with others, creating a fabric that passes through a series of phases including gathering, preparation, expansion, joining, refinement and presenting.

⁶⁰ Ngatu is cloth made from the bark of the hiapo (the paper mulberry tree). In Samoa it is called siapo and in Fiji it is known as masi. Ngatu is used for floor mats, bedding and room dividers, but traditionally, it was a common form of clothing. It is also often given as a gift at weddings, funerals and formal presentations. Ngatu making is both time consuming and collective. It is considered one of Oceania's distinct art forms and processes.

NGATU MAKING AS AN INDIGENOUS PRACTICE

The process of making Ngatu aligns with the manner in which this thesis inquiry has been explicated. Initially, after a mulberry tree has been cut down (usually from a plantation near a family's home), the bark is separated from the trunk, then the white inner surface is separated from the brown outer-bark. The inner-bark is then soaked and softened in water until it becomes slightly pulpy, before it is laid out on to a traditional wooden anvil, and shells are used to scrape out the water from the material. Then a community of women begin the long, slow process of thinning and widening the fabric. The participants pound the bark with a traditional mallet, working from the centre out to the edges, spreading the material a few millimetres at a time. Slowly, each small strip becomes a papery cloth. Collectively, working on different areas of the fabric (which can become many metres long), the women continue to hammer until the pulp becomes large enough for its intended purpose.

After leaving the material to dry for a number of hours, the women then press it on to a carved woodblock that has been smeared with a glue (made from arrowroot). Etched into the woodblock are impressions of the natural world that may include birds, sea shells, flowers, leaves, bats or fish. When the cloth is stretched over the woodblock, the women scrape a lump of red clay over its surface, before rubbing areas with a wet pad. As the sprinkled clay dissolves, the cloth turns red, and takes on the pattern of the woodblock beneath its surface.

When special events call for the creation of a very large Ngatu, a group of as many as 30 participants work together on sheets. During the making process the spirit of the undertaking is resourced by rich talanoa and singing (Figure 4.3).

Ngatu making emphasises the collective; the humility and

openness to discovery of anga fakatōkilalo (humility), the energy and transformative potentials of mālie, the collective warmth of māfana and the harmony that is pursued through uouongataha.

RESEARCH METHODS

Within the Ngatu methodology, the research project utilised a range of methods that may be grouped into 5 main phases; each of these relates to a process involved in creating the fabric of the performances *Lila* and *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* (Figure 4.4).

To understand how each of these phases relates to the process of Ngatu making and the manner in which methods within them advance the inquiry, it is useful to consider each in



FIGURE 4.3

Koka'anga, the stage in the tapa making process when a group of women sit together to join the pieces of feta'aki each has brought with them, into the larger Ngatu. (Illustration ©. Cecelia Faumuina (2020).



FIGURE 4.4

Detail of the five stages in the Ngatu research process. ©. Cecelia Faumuina, 2020).

turn.

PHASE 1: TŌ (Ongo'iloto)

The planting phase is where a seed is placed in the earth. It is a time of gestation in an interior state. Here, life comes to the inquiry and it begins to sense the nature of its being. This phase utilises a state of ongo'iloto (indwelling) and ilo'i-loto (to know it in the mind) to feel out the dimensions of the research question. Here, I draw possibilities inside myself and feel for

the 'life' in ideas. I blend myself with questions and I ponder and draw out my inner spirit's response to what I experience.

Moustakas (1990, p. 24), in his discussion of heuristic inquiry, describes such an initial approach to research as a:

... process of turning inwardly to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of the experience ... [here one employs] an attentive gaze at some facet of a phenomenon in order to

understand its constituent qualities and its wholeness, and to expound the essences and details of the experiences.

Toluta'u likens such a gestative state to the Tongan concept of faka'o'onoa (indwelling), which she defines as "a phase of the research and artistic process where the artist/researcher reflects and immerses in the depth of his/her creativity and inner spirit" (2015, p. 47). Moustakas (1990, p. 47) describes such a state as carrying "a sense of total involvement in a research theme or question in such a way that the whole world is centred in it for a while." Here personal knowledge fuses with ancestral knowing and creative potential.⁶¹

In a state of ongo'iloto I understand that knowing flows forward and backwards across time. I begin to search within myself to find potential. I go back into memory and I reflect on how birds navigate between land and sky. I think about how Ngatu is collectively layered into a co-created fabric and I hear in my heart the beating of collective energies as the fabric takes form. These thoughts are often resonant heliaki (metaphors) and they mix with my memories of years of teaching students and watching the effusive joy that sometimes surfaces when they work co-creatively. These thoughts combine with thinking about my experiences of unseen strength that emanates from

⁶¹ Polanyi (1962, p. 63) says, "The tracing of personal knowledge to its roots in the subsidiary awareness of our body as merged in our focal awareness of external objects, reveals not only the logical structure of personal knowledge, but also its dynamic source."

belonging or making things together. Tō does not pursue rational thought; rather, it is a merging of the sensed and the poetic. I retrace my thinking back through my years of drawing and writing poetry. In a state of ongo'iloto these strands of experience move and flow into and across each other.

In this gestational environment a seed eventually takes root and it begins to grow. From this state questions emerge. In this project, I asked myself:

What is asi?

When can it be sensed?

What does it feel like?

How might artistic practices in education engage with such a feeling?

PHASE 2: TĀ (Gathering)

The second phase is concerned with gathering (or harvesting knowledge). It may be likened to a journey through 'uta (the plantation), the harvesting of hiapo (paper mulberry trees) ... looking for the fibres of ideas that might be beaten and blended into a fabric.

Guided by questions that surfaced from the Tō phase, I moved outwards into the realm of explicitness. Here, I began working with people and things. I gathered around me knowledge and artistic processing that was not my own. In addition to reviewing existing literature, this gathering took two forms; talanoa with students and interviews with cultural experts and youth leaders.⁶²

- 62 Vaioleti (2006) defines talanoa as “a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations” (p. 21). He argues that it may enable more meaningful material to become apparent for research. Manu’atu (2002) suggests that when engaged in a rich talanoa, the intersection of tala (participants’ stories and experiences) with noa (interrelation space) can lead to “an energising and uplifting of the spirits, and to a positive state of connectedness and enlightenment” (p. 254). O. Māhina (personal communication, April 9, 2013) suggested that talanoa relates to tā and vā. In reality tā and vā exist in everything we do (in nature, mind and society). Tā in the word talanoa refers to the beating (of a drum). “When discussing and sharing our ideas together,” Māhina says “we are beating our topic to get to knowledge ... to get real knowledge ... to get to a state of noa (zero).” In the tā phase sometimes talanoa may seem unrelated to the focus of the research question but the information is often still relevant. Normally the talanoa was audio, rather than audio-visually recorded, because video can sometimes make participants feel self-conscious.
- 63 Five of these interviews are transcribed and available in Appendix 1.
- 64 All recorded work was conducted within the provisions of the ethical approval afforded the project. See Appendix 6. However, because sometimes very personal things were discussed, I chose not to quote from or directly reference this material because I had undertaken to keep students safe.
- 65 During this period I also recorded (with permission) iterations of poetry and sound designs.

INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS

Talanoa with students in the Faiva Creatives group occurred throughout the development of the case study project *Lila*, and was followed up to two years later with interviews after participants had left school and had an opportunity to consider their experience from a broader perspective.⁶³ In these interviews, I asked them to reflect on their individual and collective experience of the spirit of the unseen that surfaced while developing work for a performance.

At school, while creating the faiva *Lila*, students used a white board to talanoa, record and reflect upon what was being said (Figure 4.5). I was able to photograph this material and also take audio recordings of the discussion.⁶⁴ While there was some talanoa about ‘asi and the construction of contemporary faiva, much of this discussion was informal or concerned with the immediate process and logistics of creating work.⁶⁵



FIGURE 4.5 Whiteboard in 2018, showing an early part of the tā (gathering) process, where the students discussed a variety of topics that might relate to the idea of ‘asi. Getting the students to describe the context in which they came together to work became a way of holding the question front of mind in their journey through the project. An advantage of the white board as a visual data-recording method was that only ideas were written down, so thinking became a visualised, collective whole rather than individualised inputs.

These interviews, conducted two years later, once students had left school, were focused on participants reflecting on the nature of their experience and what they considered, retrospectively, to have been of value.⁶⁶ This material was useful because discussion was focused on recollections of embodied experience, contextualised by accrued, reflective thinking about the nature of what constitutes valuable learning.

INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH LEADERS AND CULTURAL EXPERTS

The second realm of gathering involved interviewing Oceanic youth leaders who work in contemporary ways with emerging manifestations of faiva and have an embodied insight into the nature of 'asi.⁶⁷ I attempted to harvest their experiences and understandings in two ways. First, I observed them in their creative practice with young people. While watching them, I searched for similarities in their practice and asked myself, what was driving commitment, energy and belonging. I tried to discern if there were similarities in the way that these leaders engaged with the young people. My second approach was to interview them. The leaders included a choir master, a performing arts teacher, youth performance directors, a music tutor / mentor, a teacher and a spoken word artist / youth

⁶⁶ See Appendix 1. These students were Erin Geraghty, Fania Kapao, Shannon Macdonald, Victoria Kaho and Charlotte Kaho.

⁶⁷ These leaders were: Igelese Ete, Rokalani Lavea, David Riley, John Kennedy, Troy Tu'ua and Marina Alofesia. (Transcripts of their interviews are available in Appendix 2)

development leader. Our talanoa was concerned with the way that they work with young people, and their thinking about how young people belong to a group, and the spirit of the unseen that might have been experienced while they were engaged in creative practices. Within these interviews, although not framed as direct questions, I was attentive to thinking about uouongataha, māfana and mālie, and the way that anga fakatōkilalo / loto tō might be balanced with the nature of expressive performance.

I also discussed issues arising in the inquiry with cultural experts including Dr Albert Refiti, Dr Okustino Māhina, Kolokesa Māhina – Tuai or Dr Linita Manu'atu. Because I was cognisant of the heavy demands placed on these scholars, I tended to respectfully focus my inquiries on specific issues about which they had expert knowledge and the approach took the form of discrete talanoa. Their thinking is normally noted as a personal communication in the exegesis.

PHASE 3: NGAOHI / TUTU (Preparation and expansion of ideas)

The third phase of the Ngatu framework was Ngaohi (to physically work on something). This phase was concerned with preparation and tutu (the expansion of ideas). This phase may be associated with initial creative synthesis and reflection where the researcher works both with, and separately from, other participants in the project, to artistically process thinking through reflective composition. In reference to Ngatu making, this phase may be paralleled with the initial processing of the hiapo (paper mulberry material), where fibres are prepared and potentials begin to take form.

In the Ngaohi phase, one lays out thinking, observing and acting creatively while being guided by the principles of anga

fakatōkilalo / loto tō. In this process one comes to understand ideas through experimentation. There are three distinct but related methods in this phase; they are journaling, poetic writing, and fakatātā (illustration).

JOURNALING

In preparing and synthesising insights, I employed a reflective journal (normally in the form of a notebook). Inside this, I created annotated diagrams that helped me to make meaning of what I was encountering. In these journals I processed my analyses and reflections from both contextual reading and field work. Diagrams were used to clarify ideas in a visual manner that made information easier to compare or understand (figure 4.6). In these journals, sketches, annotations, recorded observations, impressions, models⁶⁸ and questions stimulated reflective thinking about the research and became “a self-reflexive and media literate chronicle of the researcher’s

68 While essentially two-dimensional, I also recorded models that I built as I sought to understand abstract constructions (like the relationships between values and research paradigms). Thus the journals were concerned with both research content and conceptualisations of process.

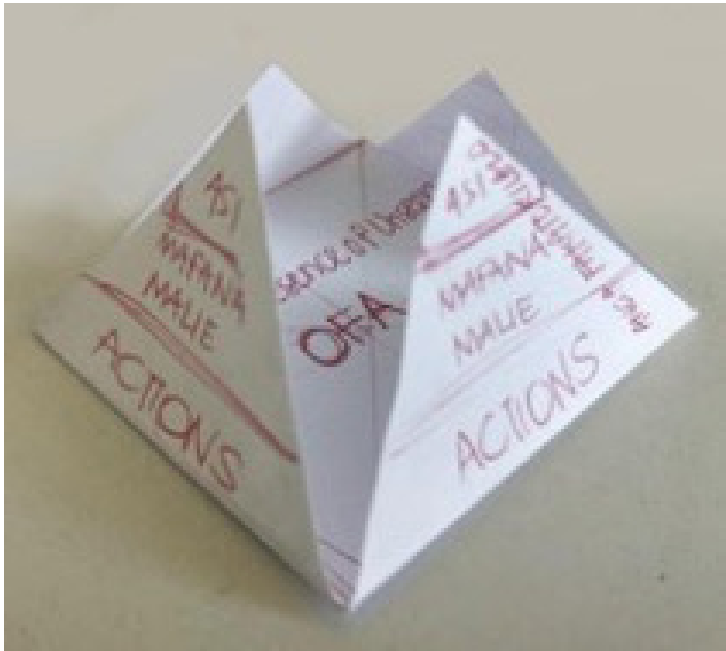
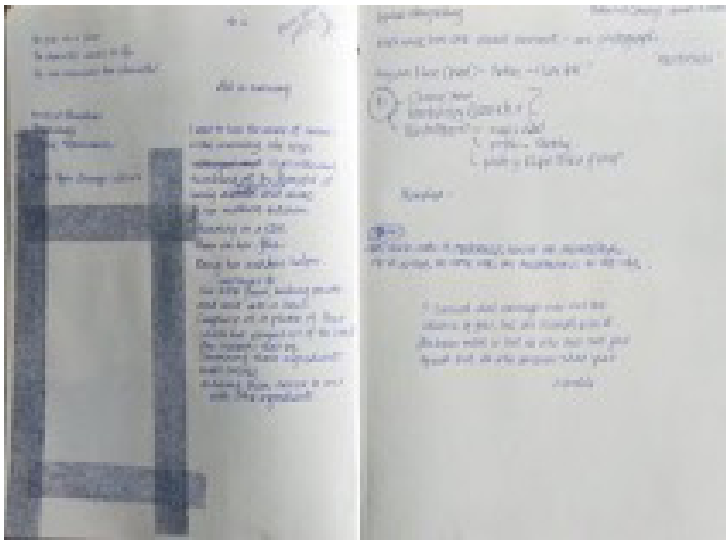
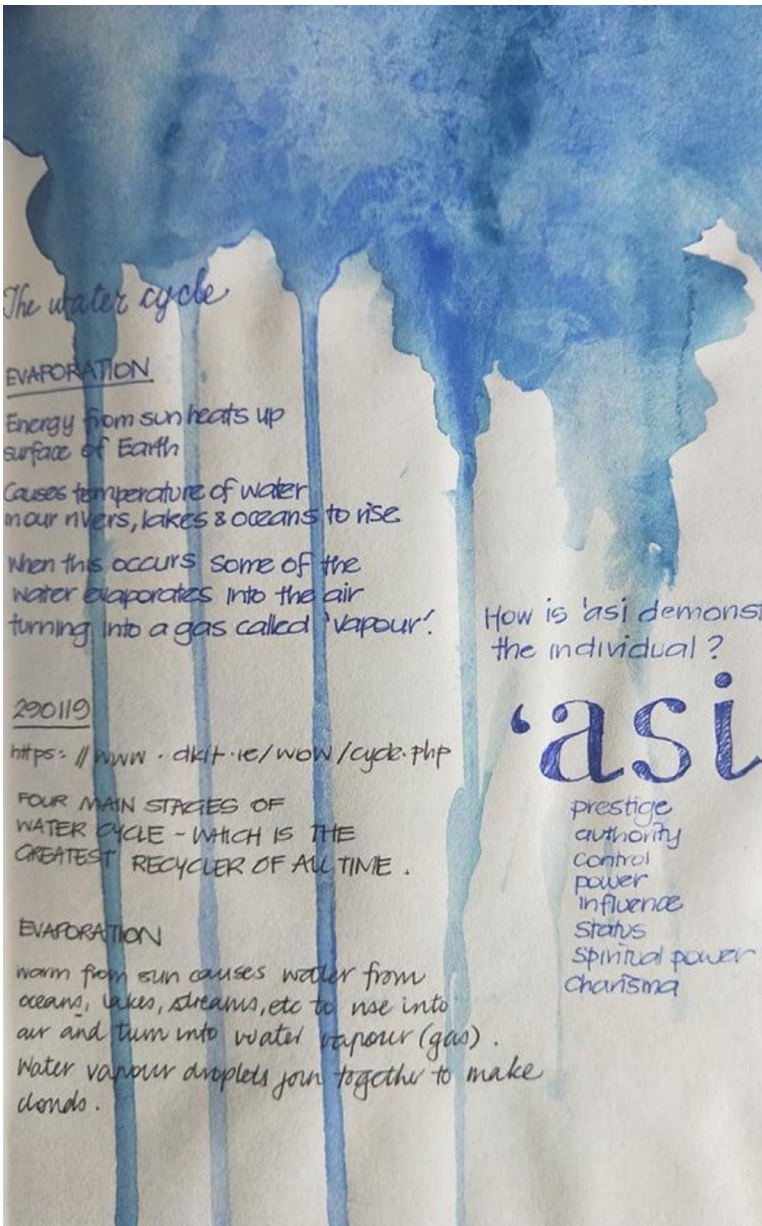


FIGURE 4.6
Pages in my journal showing reflecting on the concept of ‘asi and models used as I clarified my thinking about the project’s research design. ©. Cecelia Faumuina (2018).

entry into, engagement with and departure from the field” (Newbury, 2001, p. 7).

When journaling, I do not “attempt to present the process of research in the linear fashion that is typical of research paper writing” (Newbury, 2001, p.1). Instead the method allows me to integrate elements of the real “inner drama of research, with its intuitive base, its halting time-line, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 15). Such journaling is subjective and relational.

POETIC WRITING

In addition to journaling I also wrote poetically as a reflective method that enabled me to make tangible, my reactions to what I heard or experienced. To a certain extent this may be likened to the method of poetic inquiry (Finley, 2003; Prendergast, Leggo and Sameshina, 2009; Prendergast and Galvin, 2015; Vincent, 2018).

Poetic inquiry has been utilised as a qualitative research method in hundreds of published studies (Vincent, 2018), and its employment can be traced back for almost 70 years (Carruth, 1948; James, 2017; Vincent, 2018; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis and Grauer, (2006) and Neilsen (2008) note that such inquiry exists both between disciplines and within disciplinary practices.

Leggo suggests that writing poetry enables a way of knowing or viewing the world differently (2008). He proposes that the use of poetry in research has helped to expand both the nature of

academic writing and what it means to be a researcher. Brady (1991, 2004) has argued that the use of poetry in research may enable an enquirer to express and account for life’s exigencies, and Vincent (2018) proposes that the use of poetic construction may assist in the expansion of perspectives on human experience. He suggests that poetic inquiry enables a researcher to “interact through language in ways that are not commonly accepted in more traditional qualitative research methods [and therefore enable a researcher to] seek different ways of knowing” (2018, p. 51). He also proposes that through poetry, an alternative approach can be employed that adds “the voices of participants to the research and provides different ways to try and understand others’ perspectives and experiences” (ibid., p. 52). Significantly, Oceanic poet scholars like Helu-Thaman (2008) has used poetry and prose in essay writing to reflect on and trace the impact of the Tongan concept of *vā* on learning and language.

Hanauer (2010, p. 75) notes that as a research method, poetic inquiry has been used:

- to represent and reinterpret existing data

- to collect data; and

- to collect field notes.

Of his three categories, it is the first that I have utilised in this project, but I also use poetic writing to create new data. By this I mean the writing of poetry generates new thinking and produces new artistic artefacts.

Using poetic inquiry one may synthesise what has been made present. In this study, both the student participants and the researcher used this method of ‘thinking through’ and creatively arranging thought into narratives of experience or reflections upon character.

STUDENTS’ POETIC WRITING

After the initial talanoa in the tā phase, the Faiva Creative students developed discrete bodies of work, as a way of ‘feeling inside’ ideas (ongo’i-loto). Such writing enabled the surfacing of vibrancy in voice (Vincent, 2018). The students’ poetry tended to be both emotional and intimate.⁶⁹ One participant produced a piece about the loss of her twin sister at birth, another wrote about living in a home where, on certain nights, she felt like a referee between her parents. Another wrote about her student journey, likening it to being at sea and drowning under

pressure.⁷⁰ These poems became part of a growth of ideas that moved from words on a whiteboard, through ngaohi (practice) and tutu (expansion), to works that were in many instances drawn into the *Lila* faiva.

THE RESEARCHER’S POETIC INQUIRY

As the students in the Faiva Creatives group wrote, so did I. However, I wrote about them, their contexts and how I watched them learn.⁷¹ In certain instances I also reflected on an individual’s writing and reinterpreted it. Using this process, I tried to understand not only the depth of what the students were synthesising but also their personalities. In other words, I took what had been written and framed it through another lens. This enabled me to consider relationships between the student writer and what they had created. An example of this creative relationship is Angelique, a poem written by Fania Kapao, one of the Faiva Creatives, and my response to it with the poem Le Teine Tulafale (The Girl Orator).

ANGELIQUE

Sometimes I feel
as if I am talking to the wind
because of the way that my words cling to the air
in desperation
It’s the same as when sirens blare at midnight.
They say that you should pray
every time you hear a siren
and I do
but the thing is

69 I am aware here that such intimacy occurs because of accrued trust and it is relevant to note that I had been working with these students for a number of years, as a teacher, mentor and facilitator of cultural events.

70 These works are available in Appendix 3 as Angelique, 6125 miles and Consuming Thoughts.

71 Examples of this kind of poetry include Sasa le Pefu (Beating dust), Āwhā (Storm), Liusuavai (Melting), Pā i le lagi (Hit the heavens).

I only ever pray for you.
I dreamt of you and you were dressed in ivory
Your skin was glistening and your hair was braided
as strong as the woman
who bore us
who bore us
who bore us
before I was left alone,
I was left alone at about five weeks old.
I see you and you are dancing with the angels
You laugh and you play
You play with the hands of those who ushered you away
Whose wings are soundless
But his motions could easily knock the life out of us
If they really wanted to.

Little sister keep playing
Because God is looking at you
He's looking at you
He's looking into your eyes
To see the souls that were left behind.

Every time that I cry,
I raise my head to the sky and ask
Does he see me?
Does he see me because
I'm sure as hell not dressed in ivory
I'm always wearing ebony because every day

I'm healing and I'm grieving
And I'm mourning
the loss of you.

Gemini
We're meant to be Gemini
In my dreams we are always Gemini
But we always have to
Wake up!
Wake up!
Wake up!
because it's only a dream
Nana said it was only a dream...
It's not a dream.
Today's our birthday Angelique
We're 17 and birthdays....
Are the worst days
Dad would always come a day late

He'd always leave a cake at our front door
But forget to leave himself there too!
At least I like to think that he forgot...
Made the card easier to read in the end.

"Happy Birthday"
I love you
I love you

I love you
If my cards were on the table Angelique
I'd tell you that I miss you
I'd tell you that I always think of the places we'd go
Of the people we'd see
But it's all in vain.

I had a dream of you last night
You held me in your arms so tight
And you told me that it was time to let go

I said no,
no..
No you can't go
You left me once before
Not again.

You were gone...
You were gone
And it was at that moment
I realised
That my entire life
I've only ever been talking to the wind.

©. Fania Kapao (24 August 2018)

LE TEINE TULAFALE (THE GIRL ORATOR)

She travels
Through insignificant parts of town
Sleepy suburbias
with dust filled curtains ...
To step into the world of school.

Camouflaged
She is tidy.
Her uniform, a mask.
With lyrical weaponry
She takes the stage.
Rage gathering in her throat
Swallowing doubt and nerves
She launches an assault on egg-shell egos
Demanding attention.

Brown child
Raised by a single mum
Misunderstood
Alone
She speaks of a twin

Lost at her birth
Residing in her heart
A reflection
A soul that once was.

She demands
“Do you see me!”
She claps her hands urgently
“Wake up. Wake up!”
Frantic
“Wake up!”
Emotion chokes
For a moment ...
Broken.

The crowd stirs
Stung by sharp words
Unexpected
Pierced
Tears

... a connection.

©. Cecelia Faumuina (September 2018)

The second form of poetic inquiry involves a reflection on my own experiences as a teacher. Here the writing of poetry connects multiple ideas and generates thinking that results in new artistic works. For example, the poem Amataga (the beginning) which is the opening poem in *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*, reflects on tensions I encountered when I taught in a school where both the Oceanic students and I navigated spaces between worlds and conflicting values. The poem helped me to orient not only the research inquiry but also myself as a reflective practitioner within it. A reflective poem also closes the set. ‘Asi is a reflection on energy and mystery. It is a short poem that was written as a crystallisation of my thinking and an optimistic call to a better and more courageous educational future.

Such writing operates as a synthesis of experiences. It constitutes a form of encapsulation where elements are arranged into a composite whole; this process is guided by the pursuit of uouongataha (achieving harmony). In such an approach, the poetic is used to reach beyond the confines of the objectively analytical; it is employed to make meaning of experience. It is this empathetic connection that I suggest, reaches beyond statistics and recommendations in reports. This is because of poetry ... its rhythm and pause ... Its reduction of the verbose to the essential, can take us to the heart of human experiences that lie behind education and the worlds we design to support it.

TOGETHER

Writing and sharing poems in this research project created a way of touching the essence of an experience. As we shared work in the Faiva Creatives group, we thought of poetry as multi-sensual.⁷² However, the process also built trust because we were entering intimate experiences and taking risks with each other. Here, we were creating a *feveitokai’aki* (respect, generosity and care for relationships between yourself and others) around shared experiences. Sharing and vulnerability generated a deep level of reflection, trust and belonging.

Over time the demarcations between poetic inquiries began to fuse so, increasingly, people began creatively interpreting each other’s work in new pieces. For example one participant wrote the song *Live up to something*⁷³ after reading a poem written by another member of Faiva Creatives entitled *A Night Out*.⁷⁴

⁷² We asked ourselves how we feel? What does this look like? What does it sound like? What would the feeling sound like? We tried to describe the experience through the senses.

⁷³ See Appendix 4a for “Live up to something” song lyrics. The song can be accessed here at 3minutes and 10 seconds into the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8mQDY_nX_o

⁷⁴ See Appendix 4a.

⁷⁵ See Appendix 4b.

⁷⁶ I sometimes layer sketching over the top of photographs I have taken, using coffee staining, watercolour and paint as washes (an example can be seen in Figure 4.2).

⁷⁷ The knowledge the research partners are striving for is a felt knowledge also. In their work they aim to reflect on ‘asi - the presence of the unseen.

Similarly, after I wrote the poem *Sasa le pefu*⁷⁵ I read it to one of the dancers in the Faiva Creatives (about whom it had been written). When he heard it, he responded to it by creating a piece of choreography which we then filmed. This work appears in the final performance of *Sasa le pefu* as a music video.

FAKATĀTĀ (ILLUSTRATION)

I use artistic rendering as a subjective approach to synthesising observations and feelings. *Fakatātā* is a method that enables me to move beyond words, to capture the weight of an emotion, the tone of movement or stillness, or the unspeakable subtlety of the spirit. As a form of reflection through drawing, painting, and sometimes photographic reconstitution,⁷⁶ illustration is used to acquire and make meaning of knowledge. Such knowledge Klein argues, is “acquired through sensory and emotional perception, precisely through artistic experience, from which it cannot be separated” (Klein, 2012, p. 6). Artistic knowledge [he argues] is sensual and physical, “embodied knowledge”, that is “felt”⁷⁷ (ibid.).

When creating the images that eventually became part of the introduction to the performance piece *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*, I reminisced about dusk in my father’s family’s village in Samoa. I remembered that a drum would sound and everyone would gather in the house for *lotu* (prayers). I looked at this world from the perspective of a nine-year-old girl (figure 4.7).

Here darkness dissolved details into each other; there was the texture and smell of the Samoan tobacco my grandmother would be smoking as she waited for everyone to arrive. The smoke from her rolled cigarette, held in leathery fingers, would drift through the air above us ... passing through the light of the kerosene lamp that hung from a hook on the ceiling.

As I immerse myself in drawings such as these, I can hear the sound of bats flying outside in the dusk, dogs sniffing around for dinner scraps and the sound of distant hymns rising from the other fale in the village. Outside darkness settles quickly and I feel safe in the company of my family, safe from the itu (spirits) whose deeds are accounted for late at night when everyone is lying down to sleep.

Fakatātā then, is a method for sensory immersion and embellishment. Through it I can connect with environments (aural, visual and those of the heart) that surround what I am drawing.

In this research project, the ngaohi phase is richly complex. In it ideas are shared, expanded through tutu, developed and reconnected into a composite fabric that many people have worked on. Once ideas had begun to take shape through selection and expansion, the research process turned towards composition where layers of artistic expression were brought together into a whole and we sought to create faiva that were greater and more resonant than the sum of their parts.

PHASE 4: HOKO (joining) and KOKA'ANGA (harmonious refinement)

This is the point where people work collectively on a performance. We might think of it as a compositional phase. Like the Ngatu making process, in this part of the project, elements overlap and are joined by beating out (hoko). Here we pursue what Māhina et al. (2010, p. 14) describe as “making a ‘fuo-uho (form-content) and `aonga (function)”. In the koka'anga phase, thinking is transformed and refined from the discrete or separated “through sustained symmetry and harmony to produce beauty” (ibid.). This phase contains two methods, co-creative making and rehearsal.

CO-CREATION

Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010, para. 7) describe co-creation as a process that focuses on the “experiences of all contributors who may be involved in or affected by a new offering.” Thus, rather than being a consultative process, driven by an individual, co-creation utilises the collaborative development of new ideas that are shared and improved collectively. Lopera-Molano and Lopera-Molano (2020), in moving the concept of co-creation away from the business paradigm with which it is commonly associated, assert that this approach involves the creation of value by ordinary people.



FIGURE 4.7

Illustrated memory of our family's Samoan fale (circa. 1986), from the perspective of an anxious nine-year-old child ©. Cecelia Faumuina (2018).

⁷⁸ Being co-creative, the performance may be understood as a form of Oceanic faiva rather than a traditional Tongan performance, where the creative process is normally developed by a single punake (poet).

⁷⁹ This process and its relationship to the thesis' question is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

They argue that because such a process appreciates ideas, designs and content from a broad spectrum of experience, it is less likely to run out of innovative approaches to challenges that it might encounter.

Co-creation as a method occurred in two ways in the research project. The first was as a form of hoko (joining) I observed among the Faiva Creatives across 2018 and 2019 as they created the production *Lila*.⁷⁸ In the process of *Lila*'s development, students drew together artistic work they created, and then integrated and modified their contributions until they were able to shape a composite faiva.⁷⁹

The second method we might understand as ngaohi is associated with koka'anga (the pursuit of harmonious refinement). In achieving this state, the students undertook forms of rehearsal where ideas were tested and performances refined until the faiva reached a level of agreed harmony, both narratively and performatively. Although in conventional theatre, rehearsal can be broken down into specific types: read throughs, blocking, polishing, technical and dress rehearsals (Vax, 2017), these demarcations were largely blurred by the students. They tended to operate more holistically, sensing mafana and resonance in connections that appeared harmonious. This state surfaced through a process of building on each other's suggestions as the faiva was worked and reworked.

This is a similar process to the one I followed with *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*, where I wrote and rewrote poetry, and reshaped sound and graphic treatments as a consequence of performing and experimenting with suggestions (including technical issues that caused me to change approaches). Significantly, the faiva, although containing my spoken word poetry and artwork, was a co-created work that sought artistic koka'anga (harmonious refinement) through its engagement with other people's thinking and artistic contributions. Rehearsing was a method that I used to 'feel' the resonance between connections.

PHASE 5: FOAKI (presenting back)

The final phase, foaki, occurs after arriving at a state of uouongataha (being bound together as one). After planning, rehearsals and refining, the artistic artefact is ready to be presented to the community. Perhaps ‘presented’ is not an appropriate translation. The principle of foaki is very deep. In Tongan culture it is associated with ‘gifting back’ and it relates to the concepts of:

Luva (the act of giving a gift)⁸⁰

Tatala (opening up the world of wisdom)⁸¹

Fetokoni’aki (helping each other)

and perhaps, the Samoan principle of *tautua* (to be of service to others).

Lila was presented on two consecutive nights. Our gift back to our community was the physical and emotional culmination of two years of co-creative, artistic practice.⁸² Like *FAIVA I FAI VĀ*, the student’s work was an expression of gratitude as much as an expression of identity. This is the nature of foaki.

80 Dr. Talita Toluta’u (2015, p. 54).

81 Dr. Linita Manu’atu (personal communication, June 7, 2015).

82 The presentation of the work is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

83 For example, over the duration of this thesis, I have gifted and been recipient of much shared knowledge. I presented part of the study at the 2019 MAI Annual Conference at Karitane Marae in Dunedin (November 15 - 17). I also presented work at the AUT Postgraduate Symposium in 2021 and the International Link Symposium in 2021 in the same year.

When Ngatu are made, the artefact becomes a living manifestation of commitment and harmony; it is a physical expression of what is explicit and what is not physical. Thus, Ngatu is seen as an essence of value and foaki describes its presentation that can occur in diverse rituals including burials, birthdays and weddings. In this regard I understand my research as *koloa* (wealth, what one values) finely wrought and co-creative. Accordingly, in a Ngatu inspired framework, both *FAIVA I FAI VĀ* and this exegesis are rendered as objects of beauty, because they are respectful gifts to greater knowledge and an expression of gratitude to the students with whom I worked, the parents who supported them, the youth leaders who shaped my understanding, my family, my communities, and the wider academy who sustained and will assess the value of my work.

This said, foaki when understood as a phase of research, may also relate to presenting thinking that may not be the final artefact. For instance bodies of thought emanating from a study may be offered at conferences or in workshops. When I attended Oceanic conferences my position was one of humility. In such instances I came carefully prepared but also accompanied by *fefaka’apa’apa’aki* (respect for other researchers), *feveitokai’aki* (an expectation that I will cooperate as a fulfilment of obligations) and *lototō* (deporting intellectual humility that shows I am open to learning). When presenting at a conference, as I foaki, I am reminded that Ngatu is offered in a reciprocal manner, as a symbol of cultural respect that may be gifted and forwarded across many occasions.⁸³ In its finest form, I suggest that this is also the purpose of research.

CRITIQUE OF THE METHODOLOGY

Having now discussed the paradigm, methodology and methods employed in the research, it is useful to turn to a consideration of the research design's advantages and challenges.

ADVANTAGES

VALIDATION

First, the Ngatu methodological framework validates the practice of artistically processing Oceanic knowledge through Oceanic epistemological frameworks.

Taufe'ulungaki (cited in Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009, p.14), notes:

Obviously we cannot recreate our traditional Pacific communities in New Zealand but we can reclaim a sense of community through the identification of 'core values' that are consistent with the rebuilding and reconstruction of relationships that promote health and wellbeing for all our people.

Accordingly, how one works with others is guided by specifically Tongan values where anga fakatōkilalo orients practice towards humility and openness to discovery. Progress and critical decision-making are resourced by the energy and transformative potentials of mālie, the collective warmth of māfana and the pursuit of attaining conceptual harmony through uouongataha.

The five phases, although seemingly linear, are permeable and at various times one is able to move back and forwards between them. However, when considered as a trajectory for an Oceanic artistic researcher, they constitute a process that moves from a

gestative state of indwelling (tō), to a state of gathering (tā), to a process of initial practice and expansion (ngaohi / tutu), into a phase of composition (hoko/koka'anga), into the realm of presentation (foaki).

RICH REFLECTION

Second, the Ngatu methodological framework affords diverse means for personal and collective reflection on practice. In Ngatu making, the process of creating an artefact is not individualistic. Objects of beauty are brought into being because of the support of a community of practitioners, (in the case of this research, by the Faiva Creatives participating in the project and the support of technicians and cultural experts). In such an approach, an artist/researcher and the community with whom she works, are able to achieve something beyond individual thinking. This is important because the approach is capable of addressing the limitations of individual frames of reference because it brings to bear on the development of creative work, multiple creative resources and diverse forms of critical reflection.

CHALLENGES

CULTURAL SPECIFICITY

However, the framework also poses a number of challenges. As an approach, it is still in development and while this is the second artistic research project in which it has been employed, I am cognisant that it has not been exercised (and critiqued) through diverse applications. The principles of anga fakatōkilalo, mālie, māfana and uouongataha, may function effectively in an Oceanic approach to co-creative artmaking, but they may not serve analytical, objective research or artistic inquiries predicated on Western epistemological frameworks that value autonomous pursuit, the absence of a spiritual dimension and demarcations between literary, visual and performing arts.

EXPANSIVENESS

Firstly, a significant challenge when using this methodology is its propensity to expand. As with many forms of heuristic inquiry, one is sensing one's way forward in a rapidly branching inquiry. This can give rise to doubts about relevance, progress and effectiveness. To deal with this, I often stood back and overviewed what was being accumulated. I mapped what had been discovered and what I was reflecting on. In this process, I used my research question as a compass, constantly asking myself: 'Does this help me to understand the nature of 'asi?'

ISOLATION

Second, because the methodological framework is new, it does not afford a wide range of pre-existing models with established processes for data collection and thematic analysis. As an indigenous, artistically-oriented methodology, Ngatu is designed to resource and reflect upon collective, Oceanic, artistic expression. To address the sense of isolation one can face at the vanguard of formulating a relatively new methodological framework, I joined reading groups and attended workshops in the wider university, where discussion about research progress was encouraged. However, often these did not work well, because they emanated from assumptions about the nature of research (as something primarily concerned with data gathering and analysis). Given its distinctively

artistic Oceanic paradigm, I was seeking informed feedback that might provoke judicious rethinking and experimentation inside a very specific kind of research. Eventually, I located a Māori and Indigenous, talanoa-oriented research support group called *Mai Ki Aronui* (figure 4.8). This cluster of researchers became my 'family'. Here, I was able to share my thinking and progress each month, and feel supported and accepted in the process. Many of the people in this group were also undertaking artistically-oriented research projects, so issues like balancing poetic and objective concerns were familiar to them. In addition, because all members of the group were Māori or Indigenous, I was able to discuss the concepts I was exploring with researchers whose studies emanated from similar world views.



FIGURE 4.8

The MAI Ki Aronui group with whom I met each month to share progress and discuss issues relating to Māori and Oceanic-based research (2019). ©. Cecelia Faumuina).

VULNERABILITY

The third challenge is that the methodology elevates the subjective to very high levels of exposure, so the study must be constantly reinforced by principles of *fekaka'apa'apa'aki* (mutual respect), *feveitokai'aki* (sharing, cooperating and fulfilment of obligations), *lototō* (humility) and *tauhi vā* (loyalty, commitment and attentive care for all participants, including the researcher). I had to constantly remind myself that each participant was a co-creator on potentially vulnerable ground and care had to be taken of their ideas and the manner in which they became reconstituted in collective creative works. Although the University's ethical approval was gained for the project,⁸⁴ the integrative nature of the inquiry meant that its surrounding Oceanic values had to be attentively embedded in practice.

TIME AND COMMITMENT

The fourth challenge with the Ngatu inspired methodology was that it was very time consuming. Work generated in the thesis passed through many hands and underwent multiple iterations.

⁸⁴ See Appendix 5.

⁸⁵ The information sheet was accompanied by a parent and participant briefing that emphasised that involvement in the project would be predicated on participants achieving at an adequate level in their school subjects. All parties knew that involvement would be monitored by ACG Sunderland's Senior Management Team.

⁸⁶ The only significant disturbance to the relationship were the disruptions emanating from COVID lockdowns that ran through 2020 and 2021. This meant that in some instances, what would have been reflective, *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face) *talanoa* was replaced with zoom interviews or email correspondence.

As a researcher using this approach, I knew that I was asking participants for very high levels of commitment. Senior school students involved in the study had to balance pressure to perform well in examinations with commitment to the project. As a result I had to be able to appreciate the pressure of conflicting demands and work strategically with time and scheduling. This meant judiciously timing certain parts of the inquiry and maintaining an open, accepting attitude to instances when participants were not available. To signal a commitment to the prioritising of school work for student participants, in the ethics approval documentation an assurance was offered to all parties that the study would be voluntary and research engagement was expected to assume a second position to school commitments (see Information Sheet, Appendix 5).⁸⁵

As a corollary to this, because the research spanned four years, as it moved into an artistic synthesis of my experience of witnessing 'asi, all of the student participants in the Faiva Creatives group left school. Some went on to study in tertiary institutions and some entered the workforce. However, because of the depth of relationships built up in our time working together, we maintained ongoing connections on both artistic and educational levels.⁸⁶

SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the research design of a practice-led, artistic inquiry. Significantly, the Ngatu inspired methodology that underpins the research values both Indigenous ways of knowing and researching. The methodology uses the concepts of planting, gathering, collective synthesising and presenting as phases in the development of artistically resonant faiva. In this chapter I have tried to present an authentic articulation of a process of thinking and refinement that has shaped the thesis. As such I have demonstrated how cultural ways of knowing and being can become integral to a particular kind of artistic inquiry, where the researcher is not a discrete objective analyser, but rather an integrated, part of a process of co-creative making.

Having discussed the approach taken to the inquiry it is now useful to consider how 'asi was made manifest in practice.

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

This chapter offers a critical commentary on the two creative works that constitute the practice underpinning this thesis. The first is a consideration of 'asi in relation to a faiva titled *Lila*, that was created by a loosely knit group called the Favia Creatives who presented their performance to the public in April 2019. The second is a critical discussion of the performance *FAIVA FAI VĀ* that is performed as part of the thesis submission. Underpinning both faiva is a consideration of 'asi, its nature and agency in co-creative, artistic practice. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the implications of the research, specifically a consideration of how 'asi and faiva may inform educational practices to the benefit of young people and school communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

'ASI AND THE PRODUCTION LILA

In this thesis we may consider the discussion of the Faiva Creatives' production of *Lila* as a case study. A case study is useful in this project because it serves to illuminate and explicate a subject and its related contextual conditions (Thomas, 2011). By using such a device I am able to explore a complex phenomenon anchored in real life (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Feagin (1991) notes that a case study does not seek to discover generalisable, transferable truths, nor does it claim to elucidate cause-effect relationships; but it may be useful as a device for considering and describing something that is encountered.

Because the *Lila* case study is concerned with a group of Oceanic secondary school students who created a faiva, it draws on experience from lived contexts where the specific approaches were initiated, developed, and refined.

The *Lila* initiative occurred when I was working with students at ACG Sunderland School in Auckland early in 2019. During this period, and for three years prior to this date, I was employed at the school as a Technology teacher. I was also the sole Pacific Island staff member and I worked extra-curricularly with a group of Oceanic students as they created work for an array of festivals and performances, including Polyfest, Rockquest, WordUp, Stand Up-Stand Out, Kapa Haka performances for Māori language week and annual school productions. This group was called the Faiva Creatives, and in most of their initiatives students moved fluidly between roles as actors, dancers, musicians and members of production crews.

It was through this culture of co-creation that the project *Lila* surfaced (figure 5.1). The production was presented on the 10th and 11th of April, 2019 in the ACG Sunderland School auditorium.⁸⁷ During the development of the project, I worked alongside these students whose approach was largely co-creative. As their script developed and they began the formal process of constructing a production, the group expanded incrementally to a collective of over 40 participants. New participants included a cast, choir, band and production team.

87 In this faiva, the students drew together artistic works they had initially developed discreetly but then integrated into a narrative about Lila, a respected community leader, who teaches music to students at her local school. In their narrative, Lila is preparing the local school choir for an upcoming performance when she unexpectedly becomes ill and is unable to continue helping the group for the event. Lila's granddaughter Melody, who enjoys singing and playing the guitar, is thrown into her grandmother's role. The girl feels uncertain about whether she is able to fulfil the expectation and she befriends one of the other choir members, a shy girl named Faith. Faith also loves to sing but is often discouraged from pursuing it in an environment of expectation that believes academic pursuits are of greater value. The two young women experience bullying from the other students who see Faith as an outsider. However, the girls find strength in their commitment to music. While Faith battles with her parents' values about what is useful in education, Melody is supported by her grandmother and from this support she leads the choir in a triumphant performance. The group discovers not only Faith's talent, but how working together without prejudice can help people belong to something greater than themselves.

88 See Appendix 2, Interview 2, 00:11:54

89 See Appendix 2, Interview 5, 00:22:11

90 See Appendix 1, Interview 1, 00:06:58

'ASI AND THE PROCESS OF CO-CREATION

Ete (2019, Appendix 2) and Riley (2019, Appendix 2) note that among Oceanic youth who work collaboratively on contemporary faiva, 'asi is often evident in both a final performed production and during the process of co-creative making. Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) observes that the phenomenon tends to surface in a 'family orientated' environment where:

... we give everyone the opportunity to just showcase what they can do, how they can do it and just work together. We are not limited to certain ways or certain processes of doing things.⁸⁸

Riley (2019, Appendix 2) suggests that when young, Oceanic people are involved in collective artistic work, they "latch onto the group and get support for what they are doing."⁸⁹ In this project, this support was initially discernible in talanoa and group planning where participants shared ideas that they then connected and reconsidered in dynamic ways. Physically, they gathered around a whiteboard and armed with markers, they wrote up proposals and encouraged each other's contributions. In recalling one of these evenings, Geraghty (2021, Appendix 1) said, "I remember we sat in the design room, there was one night we were there for five hours and it was like, goosebumps and everything. We were talking about all these stories ... cultural stories ... we realised how similar they were at the same time."⁹⁰

COLLECTIVE BELONGING

My connection with, and access to observing the students' creative processes occurred because of an existing culture where I had worked with them on past projects in an environment of collective belonging. Such belonging grows out of trust. As a Pacific Island teacher at the school, I was familiar with a distinctive kind of intimacy. I often ate my lunch with these students and they would talk with me, confiding personal anxieties,

hopes and aspirations. The relationship between teaching and enabling creative work developed beyond the borders of established disciplines and their associated curricula. Collectively we belonged to something based on years of co-creating faiva. This belonging grew in a learning context where there was a history of sharing ideas and experiences in a non-judgemental and celebratory manner. Alofesio (2021, Appendix 2) notes this phenomenon when she works with young Oceanic people who are creating spoken word poetry. She observes that before working with young people in a creative space, facilitators must establish “a connection first, and through this connection, they’re able to access the learning around the creative, even if [young people] don’t identify as someone who is creative or likes creativity.”⁹¹ This bond of belonging appears to be something that is sensed as ideas begin to surface and commonalities are recognised. Kapao (2021, Appendix 1) in her recollection of working on the Lila project, recalls:

I think that the first thing we really did was get to know each other better. Erin and I already knew each other because we were in the same classes and shared the same friend groups. But getting to know Shannon in a more intimate way was new. We knew her as the ‘A star’⁹² student who was perfect in every way, until we found out that we all shared the same roots in having a past that was different to that of our peers. That built a trust that was unique to us, which then led to the creation of the production.

⁹¹ See Appendix 2, Interview 6, 00:01:17 (Part 1).

⁹² A star is the highest grade awarded at IGCSE and AS level for Cambridge Assessment International Education



FIGURE 5.1

The promotional poster for the production *Lila*, illustrating the main characters Amiyah Armstrong as Lila (top), Reve Wooley as Melody (right) and Francesca Gray as Faith (bottom left). The play was written, designed and directed by the Faiva Creative participants.

Macdonald (2021, Appendix 1) also commented on finding connections first. She recalled:

We just started off doing workshops, expressing ourselves, writing down how we felt and how we related. Then, because we were able to sense something between us, something that was similar in all of our stories and everything we created ... that's what inspired us to create Lila.⁹³

This sense of belonging may also be connected with a participant's perception that their gestational ideas were heard without criticism. Geraghty (2021) experienced this as "a reassurance that this was a safe environment and that everything we said wouldn't be held against us ... there was some sort of connection between all of us that it was okay, and I think when one person sort of steps up and becomes vulnerable, it's easier for other people."⁹⁴

⁹³ See Appendix 1, Interview 3, 00:11:14

⁹⁴ See Appendix 1, Interview 1, 00:06:58

⁹⁵ See Appendix 1, Interview 3, 00:15:57

⁹⁶ See Appendix 1, Interview 2, Question 2.

Macdonald (2021, Appendix 1) recalls a similar experience:

We all knew that whatever was said, it would never get out. Even though most places say, 'It's a safe place' ... we 'knew'. We trusted each other. There was just a mutual understanding that we were all going through something and we were all vulnerable in that space, so we just wouldn't break it at all – not for nothing.⁹⁵

Kapao (2021, Appendix 1) experienced something similar:

I think the main environment that needs to be there in a creative group situation is trust. Yes, trust in each other but also trust in yourself. We were all so young back then and the things we talked and wrote about were really heavy, but that was normal for us. We were the kinds of people who spoke about our issues so casually because they were a part of who we were. It was funny sometimes though because we'd get asked by people if we were okay and stuff and we'd laugh it off. Something that we were always very big on was "What is said in this room between these people stays in this room between these people." Not because these things were secrets but because these were the pains and experiences of someone we loved and like family, we protect each other.⁹⁶

In the Lila project this distinctive kind of bonding in a non-judgemental environment intersected the sharing of ideas and the sharing of food. These were not luxurious spreads ... in reality this was my, or a student's lunch that hadn't been eaten during the day, that was offered to everyone. Normally, this meagre fare was combined with food from whoever had some money to go across the road to the local shops and bring something back to contribute.

Riley (2019, Appendix 2) talks about the importance of food when working with the Oceanic students on creative performance projects. He says:

... it's collaborative and you have to work together. So one thing I wanted to do early, was take them to town, eat together at the food court around the table [...] put all the tables together - we all had our BK ... in the bus home, we're talking and we're laughing ...⁹⁷

The students working on the Lila project would stay for hours after school. We shared dumplings, leftover muesli bars or slightly bruised fruit saved from the bottom of school bags. There were bites off each other's sandwiches, pies, cookies or burgers. We were content with making the most of what little we had to sustain each other.⁹⁸

Associations between food, sharing and connectivity permeate many Oceanic cultures. McRae (2015) notes that "in Māori and Pacific cultures, the sharing of food in social gatherings is a symbol of caring and love" (para. 6). Deo (2014) and Cook and Carter (2013, p. 55) note that the act of sharing food is important because it "demonstrates respect, love and appreciation; it expresses hospitality and brings people together." Kapao (2021, Appendix 1) when recalling this phenomenon said, "we shared to nourish, we shared to show

⁹⁷ See Appendix 2, Interview 3, 00:24:14

⁹⁸ It reminded me a little of a fusion between the Māori concept of manākitanga (hospitality, kindness, generosity, support – care for others) and the story of Jesus feeding a crowd with the simple fare of five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14).

⁹⁹ See Appendix 1, Interview 2, Question 3

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix 1, Interview 1, 00:06:58.

¹⁰¹ See Appendix 1, Interview 3, 00:21:21.

love and to pass on traditions."⁹⁹ Geraghty (2021, Appendix 1) suggested that food, in building Oceanic relationships, is an expression of cultural identity. She said:

I think it's because we were quite culturally based - it was mainly Asian and Polynesian cultures - I know that in both, it's very food oriented. Like at someone's house, you always bring food or, you know, at dinner, there's more than enough to share. I think it's because we were just so comfortable with each other, that it kind of felt like a family meal that you kind of shared food within. It's cool to share it, because we were sharing our own experiences. I think it's because you're trying to share psychological stuff, because it's harder to do that. You can do that through food. I was brought up like always, bringing food to things. I share food with the people I love, so I don't know – that was my vibe.¹⁰⁰

Macdonald (2021, Appendix 1) discussed the phenomenon like this:

... it's a very Pacific people thing ... Having food, it just made it feel more natural, instead of being in a classroom, just writing. It allowed us to talk as well, instead of just heads down. I feel like it just makes everything more comfortable. Everyone feels better with food.¹⁰¹

IDENTITY

Significant in the *Lila* project were students' concerns with issues of identity. Ideas for a faiva connected to this were invariably well received because it appeared that people could relate to them.¹⁰² What was significant was that, in this gestational environment, it was often the marginalised students who offered the most resonant ideas.

Geraghty (2021, Appendix 1) explained:

... it was quite different to the environments that we were in before we came to this school. It was definitely a big culture shock and I think some of us lost our roots a little bit. I know it was like that for me and Shannon, because we went to the same school, our friends were like, 'Oh, you go to a private school ...' and I think a lot of that had to do with why we wanted to share the underdog stories in *Lila*. It's because it's not something that people at [the] school would see. I think we were looking at the previous plays as well

and we were like, 'What is this crap? It's not deep or anything.' We wanted to do something that actually told the collective story [of the Faiva Creatives] that gave insight.¹⁰³

Kapao (2021, Appendix 1) also discussed the significance of belonging and struggling to be yourself in a world that made you feel different. She recalled:

... it wasn't normal for someone like me with my background to go to a school so prestigious and Eurocentric. I hate to say that, but I'd be lying if I didn't bring that up. It's tough to be one out of a handful of Pasifika students. It's even worse when you feel like you have to change yourself so that you are not labelled by the stereotypes that you had no hand in producing. I remember the first day that our school allowed us to go to Polyfest, that was a highlight because it was the first time we were allowed to be fully immersed in our cultures during school hours. We had peers at other schools who fully embraced their cultures, and we didn't. We felt ashamed to embrace ours because of our stereotypes and because academia was the prominent culture.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² These suggestions took the form of proposed songs, dances, storylines and musical compositions.

¹⁰³ See Appendix 1, Interview 1, 00:18:17.

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix 1, Interview 2, Question 6.

As the students working on the *Lila* project began to process their ideas (hoko), something invisible but discernible became evident. It was identifiable in the increasing richness of thinking and it surfaced out of an environment of affirmation where the energy seemed to create a collaborative ‘oneness’. Here ideas bounced off each other and built into an escalating level of collective potential. If we might call this ‘asi, then Ete (2019, Appendix 2) notes something similar. He observes, “it comes about in certain ways and you can sort of feel it.”¹⁰⁵ Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) describes the phenomena as participants “feeding off each other’s energy ... that’s when everyone’s working as one.”¹⁰⁶ Manu’atu (2000, p. 87) relates it to the māfana and mālie people experience when involved in faiva, observing that it “energizes people” and enables the continuation of “their creation of ideas and knowledge.”

Culturally this bond of belonging may draw on feveitokai’aki (sharing, cooperating and the collective fulfilling of mutual obligations)¹⁰⁷ and tauhi vaha’a (loyalty and commitment). Lavea (2019, Appendix 2), in his account of working with young Oceanic people, notes:

... it’s the environment we set for them. It’s very family orientated as in, we always keep up with each other [...] we are so in unity with one another that if one, for whatever reason, happens to fall out (due to illness or for any other reason), someone can just step up and take the role and it’s that strength that we all have together.¹⁰⁸

Kennedy (2019, Appendix 2) noted the same phenomenon and suggests, “it’s important that people have a shared vision of what they’re creating [...] that’s what actually helps them work together.”¹⁰⁹

THE EMERGING FAIVA AND ‘ASI

The process of hoko (joining ideas) initially surfaced through talanoa that was made visible on a whiteboard. The students positioned their ideas in a way that meant everything could be grouped or connected while all suggestions remained visible (Figure 5.2).

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix 2, Interview 1, 00:01:13.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix 2, Interview 2, 00:04:09.

¹⁰⁷ Feve’itokai’aki discusses a Samoan equivalent as vā feiloa’i.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix 2, Interview 2, 00:10:59.

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix 2, Interview 4, 00:08:12.

As the structure of the performance developed, people wrote and rewrote parts of the faiva together. Sometimes this would be collective and at other times small groups would go away and work on specific tasks (like set design, musical compositions and choreography). However, these small groups were constantly bringing each aspect back to the wider Faiva Creatives group, to check that what they were working on was harmonising with an increasingly solidifying whole.

‘ASI IN RELATION TO REHEARSAL

Once a structure (and script) had taken form through co-creative shaping, a call was made to the wider school

community for others who might be interested in being involved. Many students came, including dancers, choir members, actors and musicians from school bands. This expanded team met after school twice a week to rehearse, and as the project progressed, practices became more frequent (especially in the fortnight leading up to the public performances).

During this phase the warmth of connection and increasing strength surfaced. This sense of rightness as a faiva takes form is discussed by Alofesio (2021, Appendix 2), Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) and Ete (2019, Appendix 2). Alofesio (2021, Appendix 2) describes it as “a point of connection. Like heart to heart.”¹¹⁰ Ete (2019, Appendix 2) says:

... when I’m working with young people, the key has always been to inspire and empower and uplift. It comes about in certain ways and you can sort of feel it. It’s probably different factors but I can sense that, when it feels like there is an uplift and there’s a sense of transcendence.¹¹¹

Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) likens this to “a visitation of some sort” explaining, “it’s a visiting of a different type of energy, a different power [...] it’s when you are in the space and everyone is just vibing off each other, feeling the same energy [...] you have to feed off each other’s energy to work.”¹¹²

This energy was often recognised by students (Geraghty, 2021, Appendix 1; Macdonald, 2021, Appendix 1), and it was likened by youth leaders, to being in a ‘family’ (Tu’ua, 2019, Appendix 2; Lavea, 2019, Appendix 2). If we call this energy ‘asi, then in the production Lila, it became manifest in an uplifting of spirits, joy, tenacity and commitment. It surfaced through long

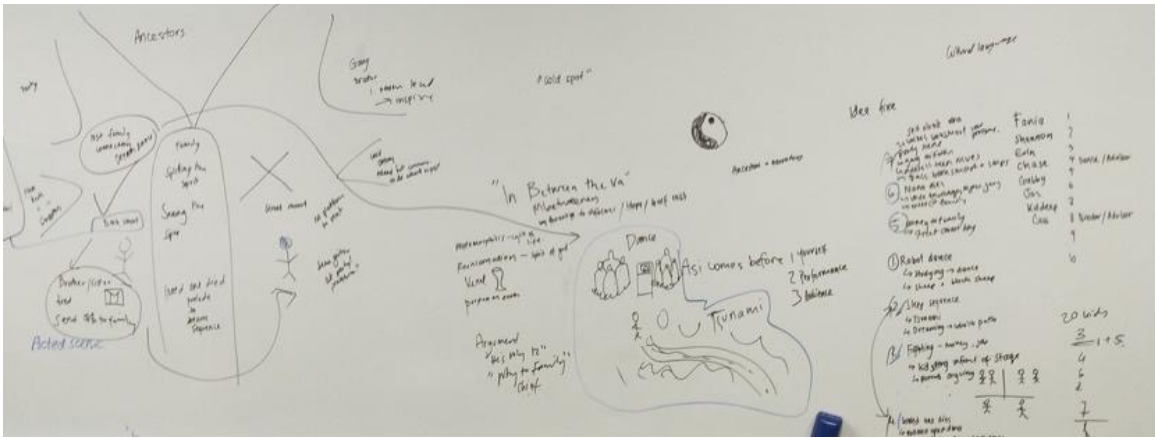


FIGURE 5.2
Putting ideas together on a whiteboard and engaging in talanoa to join contributions into potential unity.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix 2, Interview 4, 00:27:14.
¹¹¹ See Appendix 2, Interview 1, 00:01:13
¹¹² See Appendix 2, Interview 2, 00:02:28

hours and enthusiasm, and underneath all of this, there grew a sense of unity, *fekaka'apa'apa'aki* (mutual respect), *tauhi vaha'a* (maintaining relationships), *anga fakatōkilalo* (humility and openness to learning) and *mamahi'l me'a* (loyalty). 'Asi was discernible as something that built, rather than simply appeared at a climax of performance. It appeared to be intimately connected to a collective wholeness, that emanated from a state of *uouongataha* (being bound together as one) (Figure 5.3).



FIGURE 5.3

As the production came together it was common for the students to physically unite in group affirmations. This was not something I initiated, although because I was part of the energy that was growing in the project, I joined in. In such 'team huddles' the spirit of *'ofa* (love) and *fatongia* (obligation) to each other became palpable. (2019). ©. Cecelia Faumuina.

'ASI IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE

In a public performance, 'asi may become an integrated part of *foaki* (presenting). Here it becomes intertwined with principles like *luva* (the act of giving a gift),¹¹³ *tatala* (opening up the world of wisdom),¹¹⁴ *fetokoni'aki* (helping each other) and the Samoan principle of *tautua* (being of service to others).

When presenting *Lila*, the students combined vulnerability with the beauty of their artistic thinking. In so doing, they were "acknowledging the relevance and applicability of indigenous cultural values in a contemporary setting" (Huffer & Qalo; cited in Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009, p. 11). Their co-created work was delivered with *lototō* (humility in talking about issues that were meaningful to them but potentially challenging to their audience). They sought *tauhi vaha'a* (commitment to cherish the space between themselves as students with the wider school community), and they demonstrated how individual talent may become part of a collective whole, that is composed of trustful sharing, reinterpretation, respect and artistic contribution.

While *Lila* was being presented, participants recalled that performance quality peaked continuously. Students described the experience in different ways. Geraghty (2021, Appendix 1) remembered, "It was so emotional, I don't cry often about creative things, but there was so much of that presence there ... I just remember sitting on the floor backstage and it was just like wow!"¹¹⁵

Macdonald (2021, Appendix 1) experienced the emotional sense of performing beyond herself, as "goosebumps". She recalled, "I felt it three times during the actual production ... I know it wasn't just me that felt it."

¹¹³ Dr. Talita Toluta'u (2015, p. 54).

¹¹⁴ Dr. Linita Manu'atu, personal communication, after witnessing the performance, June 7, 2015.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix 1, Interview 3, 00:24:42 - 00:27:49.

A number of community leaders working with Oceanic youth in creative performance environments also discuss this presence of 'asi as something that rises during the climaxes of a performance (Ete, 2019, Appendix 2; Kennedy, 2019, Appendix 2; Alofesio, 2021, Appendix 2; Lavea, 2019, Appendix 2). Indeed Wolfgramm (1993) described 'asi as a spiritual and emotional climax in faiva. By extension, Helu-Thaman suggests that 'asi may be discernible as a revelation in diverse forms of faiva and, although she acknowledges that it can be physically seen, she suggests that it may also be perceived by the mind, spirit or emotions.¹¹⁶

Ete (2019, Appendix 2) claims that 'asi in a performance is felt. He says:

Well I ... actually you sort of feel it. It's a feeling aspect, but when it comes it's hard to describe, because it's intangible but you can feel it, when you get goosebumps. There's something special happening.¹¹⁷

Riley (2019, Appendix 2) experiences 'asi in a performance, as a form of recognition. He says:

Potential awakening, like, 'Wow I thought but now I can see.' Just being part of it opens up their minds to

what can be ... even for the younger ones to watch here ... it just opens up possibilities to them that they didn't think were possible before.¹¹⁸

Alofesio (2021, Appendix 2) identifies this awakening as internal. She says, "I'm so hooked and engaged in it, and it's doing something inside that I can't even ... sometimes people, they can't even understand the words, but it's hitting them inside."¹¹⁹

In discussing her experience of 'asi as a performer in spiritual terms. She says:

I've been on stage and I'm just, I'm not performing anymore. I felt an out of body experience, where I was watching myself perform [...] sometimes we are too scared to go into that realm, because of our fears, we're blinding ourselves from a potential that we could get to [...] the word talks about a veil that's in front of our eyes, and we can't see the spiritual because there's no connection to the vā between us and the Creator.¹²⁰

Both Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) and Ete (2019, Appendix 2) also consider 'asi as a spiritual experience or visitation and in a work like Lila this presence may be described as a spiritual energy (Ete, 2019, Appendix 2; Lavea, 2019, Appendix 2). Alofesio, 2021, Appendix 2) describes 'asi as the 'livingness' of the faiva itself.

On the two nights when Lila was performed, there was a close connection between performers and a responsive audience. Lavea (2019, Appendix 2) considers the audience "just as important as the performance itself" because he believes "the audience is a reflection of what we (the performers) are giving

¹¹⁶ Helu-Thaman (personal communication, January 29, 2018).

¹¹⁷ See Appendix 2, Interview 1, 00:01:46.

¹¹⁸ See Appendix 2, Interview 3, 00:27:18.

¹¹⁹ See Appendix 2, Interview 6, 00:26:22 (Part 2).

¹²⁰ See Appendix 2, Interview 6, 00:27:14 (Part 2).

them.”¹²¹ Significantly, Tu’ua (2019, Appendix 2) and Kennedy (2019, Appendix 2) argue that ‘asi exists inside this connection. So, these youth leaders suggest that although ‘asi may build through initial co-creative processes and rehearsal, it is not just the attaining of peak performance on the stage, but a responsiveness to and recognition of the energy that sweeps into the audience wherein ‘asi becomes manifest. Kennedy (2019, Appendix 2) says, “That feeling of connecting with the audience and with each other will usually be the joyful thing and ‘asi comes from it.”¹²²

‘ASI BEYOND PERFORMANCE

Having considered the presence of ‘asi in co-creative and rehearsal processes, and its manifestation in performances with an audience, it is useful to discuss the nature of its durability. If ‘asi is something only associated with a climax in faiva, it should discernibly disappear at the end of a performance. However, what was distinctive about *Lila* and many other co-created performances I have worked alongside students on, is a palpable energy that accompanies them into the wings and off the stage at the end of the production (Figure 5.4).

In reflecting two years after *Lila* was performed, Macdonald (2021, Appendix 1) described the energised euphoria at the end of her performance as “a pretty magical atmosphere ... all the performers were jumping around ... just being able to feel free together.”¹²³ Geraghty (2021, Appendix 1) recalled, “I was just too excited... it couldn’t have been a happier night for me.”¹²⁴

At the end of the event nobody wanted to leave. The students were consumed by an atmosphere, resourced by the

knowledge that they had been able to achieve a student-led project with the minimum of adult supervision. They knew that they had created something extraordinary. Even after the audience had left, the core group of Faiva Creatives who had been integral to the creation of the work, stayed on to wash dishes and vacuum floors. In the mundane nature of these tasks there was a permeating sense of elation; a belongingness both to each other and to an energy that had swept through them and the performance space. The truth is, they didn’t want to go home. Something significant had happened that was recognisable.



FIGURE 5.4

Curtain Call on show night. This image shows nothing of the electric energy that permeated the performance; you cannot hear the waves of applause, the calling and the adulation. You cannot see the tears, the elation, the pride of families or the palpable sense of value. But this was all present.

¹²¹ See Appendix 2, Interview 2, 00:04:09.

¹²² See Appendix 2, Interview 4, 00:51:02.

¹²³ See Appendix 1, Interview 4, 00:31:17.

¹²⁴ See Appendix 1, Interview 4, 00:50:15.

Summary

This case study considers the complex phenomenon of ‘asi as an occurrence that can be experienced emotionally, socially or spiritually. As something unseen but discernible, I suggest that ‘asi is a living energy that can grow and shape artistic thinking. It may surface in an environment of non-judgemental sharing, even when there is considerable diversity in people’s life experience. Rather than being confined to final performance, it may pervade developmental processes. It appears to become palpable where practices are collective, co-creative and carry a strong sense of belonging that heightens a sense of relevance and value.

The *Lila* project offers a case study consideration of an experience of this phenomenon. The second phase of this chapter now turns to my artistic synthesis of this phenomenon, as an inquiry through artistic practice.

FAIVA / FAI VĀ

FAIVA / FAI VĀ will be staged as part of this thesis submission. As an artistic inquiry, it considers the nature and agency of ‘asi in the form of the researcher’s composed spoken word poetry, dance videos, fakatātā, sound design and performance. As a contemporary faiva, the work layers together co-creative and individual practices.

¹²⁵ Building on assertions by Hamilton (2011), Scrivener (2000), and Ventling (2018), I suggest that artistic research is more concerned with meaning generation than locating truth because, as Eisner observes “truth implies singularity and monopoly [whereas] meaning implies relativism and diversity” (1981, p. 9).

FAIVA / FAI VĀ represents an artistic synthesis of my autobiographical reflection on ‘asi. As such, it emanates from my embodied experience as an Oceanic woman and teacher. As a contemporary faiva, it aligns with Klein’s (2010) assertion that artistic inquiries are not concerned with “secure and universally valid knowledge” (p. 5).¹²⁵ Instead, as Vaage (2019) proposes, the study engages with embodied wisdom that it has developed through intuitive and rational methods, to produce outcomes that often transcends words.

The title *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* uses a co-positioning of words representing my dual Tongan and Samoan heritage. The word FAIVA in Tongan refers to the skill of creativity and the arts (Manu’atu, 2000; Mahina, 2005). FAI VĀ in Samoan also speaks of skill, but in addition, it refers to “space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity that-is-All” (Wendt 1999, p. 402). Thus conceptually, *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* creatively employs artistic skills to consider the space between.

Physically the work is positionable in a space ‘between’ because it is not the singular, discrete creation of the researcher as an individual artist. Drawing on the Ngatu making processes of tutu (beating), talanoa (talking, uncovering and critiquing) and hoko (joining and refining harmoniously), the performance is the researcher’s reflection on students’ learning. In other words, *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* grew out of the journey of a research project and the work was refined through collective critique and contribution.

FAIVA / FAI VĀ began gestating in its TŌ phase in 2017 when I embarked on the project. While studying how a small number of Oceanic students worked together on co-created, artistic

projects, I wanted to identify ways in which experiences of belonging, trust and creative expansion occurred and were articulated. Within this I was trying to understand the agency that underpinned both their commitment and co-creativity. Accordingly, although *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* represents the final thesis expression, it has been shaped and developed by my experiences working with students on the *Lila* project.

The performance piece gives voice to a belief that the holistic wellbeing of Oceanic youth is central to understanding educational and artistic growth. Like the youth leaders interviewed in the project, I feel that it is my responsibility to understand, and to find ways of utilising the unseen spirit of connectedness and artistic flourishing that I witness in Oceanic youth as they navigate the complex world in which we live. Although their social landscape looks somewhat different to

126 I acknowledge here that young people today exist in a rapidly changing, technological and social world. Social media, learning technologies, and escalating mental health statistics do not equate with the world of my youth, but as Menzies et al., (2020) note, what appears to remain consistent is the need for acceptance, belonging, understanding and support.

127 However, I acknowledge that many of these concepts have parallels in other Oceanic cultures, and I am especially appreciative of the support and advice that I have received from Samoan family and scholars. Often in my spoken word poetry I will reference the cultural complexity of the student or situation by using language that they employ in day to day discourses. In this regard, throughout *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* there are references to Māori, Samoan and Tongan languages.

what I experienced when I was young,¹²⁶ observation suggests that certain principles and needs might still apply and might be utilised to help shape teaching practice and creative processes.

In both my practice and exegetical writing, I tend to defer to Tongan descriptions and principles because Tongan was a fundamental part of my language and cultural formation.¹²⁷

FAIVA / FAI VĀ may be described as an autobiographical performance that takes diverse elements and combines them into a fabric that includes stories of the self, my family, and the lives of young people with whom I have worked (prominent among these are students in the Faiva Creatives group). My discussion of these works is divided into five categories:

- Lotu (prayer), faiva hiva (singing)
- Talanoa (autobiographical narratives)
- Faiva ta’anga: (spoken word portraits of students and autobiographical poems)
- Ta’anga hele ‘uhila (video design)
- Fakatātā (Illustration).

Prayer and faiva hiva

LOTU KAMATA (THE OPENING PRAYER)

FAIVA / FAI VĀ opens with a lotu (prayer). Christianity is the dominant religion among many contemporary Oceanic people, therefore spirituality is often understood within this theological framework. Accordingly, in reference to traditional, formal address, the performance commences with an opening prayer offered to the heavens. It gives

thanks for the opportunity to have researched the thesis topic, to have completed the journey and to have been able to present my findings back to the community. This traditional approach that blesses both the study and the people who have been integral to its creation and dissemination. The prayer also asks for forgiveness for anything that might be lacking within the work. The lotu kamata will be delivered by my uncle, Reverend Siosifa La’akulu, an ordained minister of the Tongan Methodist church, an orator and respected elder in my family. This opening ties together the values of lotu (prayer), (kainga) family and my belief that ‘asi is a spiritual phenomenon.¹²⁸

TE’E, THE SONG OF THE SPIRIT

The lotu kamata will be followed with the Samoan Song of the Spirit, *Te’e*.¹²⁹ This work alludes to something that is sensed but not necessarily completely clear. As such, it will take us from the prayer to a realm where things are not explicit.¹³⁰ *Te’e* will

¹²⁸ Havea (2011) notes, “Lotu in essence encompasses both religion and spirituality where not only does it refer to the institutionalized church but also a personal relationship with God” (p. 24).

¹²⁹ *Te’e* was an aitu (spirit) from the village Fogatuli in Savai’i, who was said to feed on shellfish that he collected by the village reef at night. When he was fishing, his presence was made known by a sudden gust of wind and his torch was seen moving over the reef. The choir performing this opening work are manifest throughout the faiva, layering their presence between the unfolding of spoken word poetry and narrative.

¹³⁰ The mysterious nature of the song is compounded because many esoteric, pre-Christian references within it are no longer understood.

be sung in a style that is now rare in Samoa; the vocalisation is in a traditional nasal style that I remember my father sometimes using. This early form of Samoan vocalisation was recorded by both Turner (1861, 1884) and Williams (1842). Turner described such singing as discordant and “an unearthly concert of voices in which there were nasal squeaks of old men and women” (1861, p.429). Interestingly in 2021, Ete returned to this same, pre-missionary vocalisation in his contemporary koniseti, *Naatapuitea: The Sacred Star*. When I hear such vocalisation, it resonates within me as something mysterious and beautiful; it calls to me from the rich distinctiveness of Oceanic storytelling that predates missionaries’ poor appreciation of what they encountered.

LO TA NU’U’

The second faiva hiva in *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*, follows an account of a childhood experience in the fale of my Samoan grandparents. The narrative of the unseen will be lifted with the joyous pride of a choir singing *Lo ta nu’u* (my dear country). *Lo ta nu’u* is traditionally sung in large church and family gatherings and it calls upon Samoan people to wake up, be grateful, and to serve God and our country with pride. It is a deeply moving song that has almost become a Samoan anthem. When swept up in the midst of unified voices, especially during the chorus, one experiences pride, patriotism and a sense of unification.

‘Samoana, Samoana (People of Samoa)

Ala mai, Ala mai (Arise - wake up)

Fai ai nei, Fai ai nei (Give now)

Le fa'afetai, Le fa'afetai (Your thanksgiving)
I le pule, ua mau ai (To the Most High, who gave you)
O lou nu'u, i le vasa (Your island / country, here in the ocean).

This song is like a migration. It symbolises the deep pride in Pacific cultures that many Oceanic students in schools carry in their hearts from across the oceans to Aotearoa (either as a direct embodiment or in the talanoa of their parents or grandparents). The hiva *Lo ta nu'u* is accompanied by animated drawings of the sea, that in the closing bars of the anthem bring us to the shores of a new, distant island where we are welcomed with a karanga.

KARANGA

A karanga normally indicates the start of a formal Māori ceremony of welcome. It is performed and initiated by the host of a meeting. Traditionally kaikaranga, (senior women) carry out the address and greet each other and the people they represent. In this process, they also address and pay tribute to ancestors whose spirits accompany them.

However, in *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* my response to this call is not voiced; it appears as sound because I am representing the spirit of the unseen that has migrated as memory to these new shores. In this regard the karanga is a memory of welcome

to Aotearoa that is performed by a kuia.¹³¹ In this section of the performance I honour the journey of my Samoan father. I acknowledge that I am a New Zealand born Oceanic researcher and that the research conducted in the thesis is intended to benefit young Oceanic people born and raised in this beautiful fonua (land).

The visual reference to the land that supports the karanga references three types of fonua that permeate much Oceanic understanding. The first is the fonua that is in the womb of the mother, the second is the land that many of the Oceanic youth with whom I work are born into, and the third fonua references the place where they will travel to when they die. Māori as Tangata Whenua (people of the land) share similar understandings in their word Whenua. This word may refer to land, country, nation, ground, territory, placenta and afterbirth. By integrating a karanga into the work I acknowledge that my afterbirth is buried in Aotearoa and I have ancestry that hails from Samoa and Tonga.

FA'AFETAI I LE ATUA (THANK YOU TO GOD)

In the final minutes of *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*, the performance was closed with a hymn that thanks God for his sustaining love. *Fa'afetai i le Atua* is a traditional Samoan song of gratitude that will be sung by the Faiva Creatives whose creativity and reflection on it has been the substrate upon which the thesis has been developed. However, often in Oceanic contexts an audience will join the singers when this song is sung, so the room will become a connected whole; both worlds reaching across to each other in a gesture of unity and appreciation.

¹³¹ A kuia is a term to describe a mature Māori woman of rank.

The positioning of the hymn at the end of the performance brings us from the isolation of a talanoa about a childhood memory, through spoken word poems about students and my experiences as a teacher, to an uplifting and explication of 'asi. Here the spirit of the unseen has been designed to become manifest; to connect and embrace everybody in the room, before the close of the performance where, as one, we settle again into a lotu (prayer).

LOTU FAKA'OSI (CLOSING PRAYER)

In homage to traditional practices that form part of many Oceanic peoples, *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* ends with a lotu (prayer). Like the lotu kamata (opening prayer) this will be delivered by my uncle, Reverend Siosifa La'akulu. Again it expresses gratitude, asking for blessings upon the work and the people present and requesting forgiveness for anything that may have been missing. The prayers in *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* are delivered in Tongan and the hymns in Samoan, in reference to the esteem with which I hold my two Pacific cultures.

¹³² As such, the narrative connects my exegetical discussion and my creative expression. This is because I do not see theory and practice in artistic inquiry as binaries. I understand them as interrelated and mutually resourcing. Although Dena (2005) has argued that in artistic practice theses, relationships between creative components and practice can be dysfunctional, I have not experienced this. Both practice and writing in this thesis call to and are dependent on each other.

TALANOA

Following the opening prayer and the orienting of the faiva in relation to the spiritual in the song Te'e, the performance moves to an introductory, first-person narrative. This recollective account also appears in Chapter 2 of this exegesis.¹³² The narrative situates the audience in Samoa, amidst the night sounds surrounding my grandparent's fale. Here, my early memories of an unseeable presence are cradled in a subtle audio mix I composed, that uses the sounds of crickets chirping, wind, bats calling, barking dogs and the distant ocean lapping the shoreline on Lefaga beach.

In this opening to the body of the performance, I pay homage to the power of small, familial accounts that, I suggest, are the fabric of belonging, ancestry and identity. My father opened worlds by telling stories. They were not the great cultural myths of Nafanua and Tangaloa; they told us about him working as a young man in plantations, the origin of the scar on his right shin from a machete, and an account of the time he and his brothers ambushed some young men in a neighbouring village, seeking revenge for one of their female cousins. Unfortunately, the cost of their impulse was a prison sentence. His ability to weave words evocatively took us to the toilet block in the prison where he was forced to clean the corrugated iron sheets and he told us how he would sluice the excrement-covered walls only to end up having the faeces thrown back at him by the water pressure. We would writhe with discomfort, laugh ... but feel deeply for his situation. His storytelling was intimate and relational; a domestic artform that is rarely elevated and yet, is the substance of how families come to understand generations. When he spoke, he held in the presence of

historical moments. The sequence in *FAIVA I FAI VĀ* about my grandparents' fale seeks to do the same.

FAIVA TA'ANGA: THE SPOKEN WORD POEMS

FAIVA I FAI VĀ is approximately 30 minutes in duration; it interweaves five spoken word portraits and two autobiographical poems with fakatātā (illustration) and ta'anga hele 'uhila (video work).

THE PORTRAITS

The five spoken word portraits are a homage to 'ofa,¹³³ which Tameifuna et al., (2012, p. 7) note, "is the philosophical ground upon which Faa'i Kaveikoula 'a e Tonga (Tonga's Pillars) stand. These five portraits are of individual students whom I deeply admire."¹³⁴

SASA LE PEFU

This poem is based on a young Oceanic man I taught, who appeared to be a model student. He was the school's head

¹³³ Love and care, kindness (Tameifuna et al., 2012, p. 11).

¹³⁴ The exception is the poem Liusuavai, which is a portrait of an amalgam of individuals.

¹³⁵ The Youth 19 survey (Fleming, Tiatia-Seath, Peiris-John, Sutcliffe, Archer, Bavin, Crengle & Clark, 2020), forms part of a long-running study facilitated by the universities of Auckland, Wellington and Otago. It found that 23 per cent of the 7890 New Zealand secondary school students surveyed felt that depression and anxiety affected their daily lives. This statistic was a significant increase from 2001, when the study recorded only 12 percent of respondents identifying this problem.

boy, the senior athletics champion, the senior swimming champion, a sports coordinator, a widely respected academic performer and an extraordinary dancer. One day he talked with me about the crippling pressure he experienced, trying to balance his school activities, leadership roles and high grades. He spoke about the obstacles that he faced, particularly when others made him feel small about his successes. After we talked, I felt moved to write about the difficulties such boys can encounter as they struggle to maintain an idealised performance of perfection. Such struggles are not always apparent to others.

Recently Kenny (2021) recognised that the anxiety that this boy experienced, is one of the most significant issues affecting young people in schools today, and it appears to be a growing phenomenon. In 2020, Fleming et al., found that poor mental health conditions amongst Aotearoa/New Zealand youth had doubled in the past decade. The researchers identified a range of possible causes for the escalation, including an increased exposure to social media, the ongoing impact of racism, a lack of free time, and increasingly high expectations at school.¹³⁵

The poem Sasa le pefu opens with an explosion of pain and pride, and it unfurls with a rhythmic beat that mimics the thumping I heard when the student danced. This dynamic is driven forward by action (verbs): *exploding – pushing –skimming – beating – pounding – crumpling – heaving*.

Inside the poem's momentum we encounter images of conquest set against paradoxical limitations:

... Solid yet fragile

A conqueror of worlds.

... The tyranny of success
Becomes as chalk
Dust beaten to nothing
By the rhythm of his feet.

In *Sasa le pefu*, I tried to capture the pressure and frustration of a boy who dances emotions that he cannot reach with anything but his body. The poem is a homage to his conflicted pressure, but it ends with triumph. This is because I watch the power that dance has for him as an Oceanic youth who continues to commit to artistic expression, drawing on pressure and pain to create choreographed works of startling beauty.

The development of *Sasa le pefu* drew on the principle of *ngaohi* where, in making a *Ngatu*, one works collectively with others to join ideas in pursuit of a co-created whole. The boy about whom the poem was written, joined the Faiva Creatives group just for this particular poem production, because demands from different dimensions of his life meant that he wasn't able to be consistently present at our gatherings. After I wrote an initial draft of the poem, I approached him and his mother (a dance teacher) and asked their opinion of the work and whether they would support my further development of

136 The film emanating from this discussion is discussed later, in the *Ta'anga hele 'uhila* (video) section of this chapter.

137 It was during this discussion that one of the students suggested that she design a soundscape that might connect the poem and the dance. However, after trialling it several times, it was working as a discrete composition so I used an existing piece that better suited the dance sequence the boy created.

the piece. I was prepared at this point (as I am with any spoken word portrait), to leave the work unfinished if the person about whom the poem is being created is uncomfortable with further development. What was wonderful was that they asked if they could be involved in further developments of the idea and the boy decided to choreograph with his mother, a dance interpretation of what I had written. The idea was that this dance might be a live or a filmed sequence that expressed the turbulent physical, mental and spiritual journey from his perspective.¹³⁶

Having gained permission to develop the spoken word portrait with the Faiva Creatives, the boy joined us as we discussed how the poem might be refined.¹³⁷ As a result of our *talanoa*, I edited the work substantially, removing superfluous words and punctuating the rhythm in more dynamic ways. I also drew forward images of chalk and dust that correlated with the way the boy thumped the floor with his feet and body when he danced. The poem was further refined as I watched the dance that the initial draft had inspired. In this regard we may understand both the portrait and the dance as a discourse. Connected by processes of *tutu* (beating), *talanoa* (talking, uncovering and critiquing) and *hoko* (joining and refining harmoniously), the works fed off and were nourished by each other.

ĀWHĀ

The student who inspired this poem had a difficult experience of school and she was often in trouble with senior

management, teachers and parents. She was also in conflict with other students. She came from a large blended family¹³⁸ who were known for their association with drugs.

However, because she wanted to avoid this kind of life, her adopted parents sent her to the school in which I taught, in an effort to provide an alternative learning environment. But this young woman was torn; she wanted to belong to and be part of her biological family because the association gave her a sense of identity (even if it caused her trouble).

Sometimes, she would enter my class during break times or after school and talk with me about things that were going on in her life. On one particular day she arrived, having stormed out of a class after an altercation with another teacher. *Āwhā* was a poem based on my recollection of that incident. The pain beneath her rage was palpable.

I am reminded when I think about this girl, of the recently retired Aotearoa/New Zealand Children's Commissioner, Judge Andrew Becroft, who said:

Culture is an important part of who we all are. It gives us a sense of belonging, that others share our values and beliefs, to know who we are and where we come from.

Culture includes all the customs, practices, languages, values and world views that define our social groups – whether these are based on nationality, ethnicity, region or common interests. We know cultural identity

is important for people's sense of self, belonging and how they relate to others. A strong cultural identity can contribute to people's overall wellbeing. For children and young people, developing a positive cultural identity is linked to protective factors against risks to their wellbeing, and resilience from adverse situations (Becroft, 2017, p. 1).

Judge Becroft's observation of "nationality, ethnicity, and region" suggests something discrete and contained. However, most of the Oceanic youth with whom I work (including the students in the Faiva Creatives) navigate identities that are shaped inside cultural intersections. Few of the students can say 'I am Tongan' or 'I am Māori' or 'I am Samoan'. Instead, they often (and sometimes apologetically) describe themselves as 'part' or 'half' ('part Tongan - part Māori - part Chinese' or 'half Samoan and half palagi'). Sometimes this identity space can be expressed as a sense of not truly belonging (Agee et al., 2013; Avia, 2004; Mila, 2005; Marsh, 2006; Geraghty, 2021, Appendix 1; Kaho 2021, Appendix 1), being an imposter (Agee & Culbertson, 2007; Kapao, 2021, Appendix 1), or being inauthentic (Taylor, 2013). But sometimes, as in the case of the young woman in the portrait *Āwhā*, this state of being in between cultures and families can also give rise to expressions of anger.

This student describes herself as part Māori, part Fijian Indian and part Niuean. In te reo Māori, *āwhā* means storm and the poem opens with an explosion of conflict and anger. Rage approaches us from a distance, like a storm coming down a hallway. The language in the work is immediate, angry and posturing: "kicking shit" – "talking sass" – "Fuck off Bitch!"

¹³⁸ A family that is made up of step parents and step siblings, including their extended family.

The poem interprets the anger of a young woman who copes with pain by attacking then pretending that she doesn't care. But beneath this, we sense a deep hurt and a feeling of being lost or caught in an irresolvable tug of war between expectations. In reference to this, the poem is constructed as an angry veneer, a display of aggressive nonchalance into which leaks a fragment of poignant insight.

... Slumping on a chair

She starts ...

Ua Mimita vale

Went to a party last night

Got drunk ... wasted - It was all good times"...

Ae sau le fa'anoanoa

"Sometimes I hate my life..."

Silver linings

Narcotic storm clouds

She buries herself in headphones.

¹³⁹ By extra-diegetic I am borrowing a term from Prince (2003) that describes a commentary that is delivered from outside of the world of the main narration.

Here, we see interior and exterior voices speaking, oscillating ... trying to make sense of anger. We also encounter directness, counterpointed by insight that references the vulnerable, poetic intelligence that often lies beneath the surface appearance that students like her hold up to the world. In reference to the young woman's rich heritages, the poem is constructed in three languages; its title is Māori, the main narration is in English, and its extra-diegetic¹³⁹ observations are Samoan. In Samoan '*mimita vale*' describes the girl's state of being overly proud, 'staunch' and projecting confidence. But when she ponders her world, the shift in her attitude is described as '*Ae sau le fanoanoa*', which may be broadly translated as, 'soon enough, misery arrives'. At this point she attempts to escape her condition by hiding behind the music in her headphones.

This young woman reminded me of my sister who was part of a gang in her teenage years. She was expelled from school at the age of 14 and was sent to an alternative church school on the other side of the city. We all thought that she was leaving early in the morning to arrive on time but in actual fact, her early departure was so she could hang out in the bus depot with her friends. She soon started spending a lot of time with the group, smoking and drinking during the day and she would return home late in the evening. She was often in trouble for not having work done, being late, disobedience and defiance, but I feel that she was often misunderstood. I believe that this was her way of dealing with things we were going through at home. We each had a different way of coping; mine was to hold it all in and try and deal with it in my head, hers was to deal with it in more expressive and explosive ways.

The young woman in this poem was a temporary member in the Faiva Creatives. The group was grateful for her help in shaping one of the main characters in their play *Lila*, because they knew how embodied and rich her experience of being an outsider was. But in the tutu (beating), and hoko (joining) of each of the contributed stories, their talanoa with her revealed that she was afraid that her identity might be revealed and people might judge her and her life, even though much of this was beyond her control. Accordingly, they eventually removed her narrative from the work.

LIUSUAVAI

This poem was inspired by a number of male students who I have come across in my teaching career. These are boys who act like boys but look like men. They are still learning to fit into their bodies, but they have many responsibilities thrust upon them at a young age. They are expected to take care of their siblings, contribute financially to their family, be successful at sports, contribute at church and also succeed academically. They often come to class hungry and tired ... and I quietly ignore them while they catch up on sleep.

Their lives remind me of my older brother. He is the only male of my siblings and the eldest in our family. He started working at the age of 15 (while still at school) to help my parents make ends meet. We grew up in a three bedroom house, crammed with 21 people. This was because my parents sponsored and brought over many relatives from the islands (both Samoa and Tonga) who were searching for a better life in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Every weekday, my brother would rise early to walk some distance to his job in a fruit and vegetable shop, stocking the shelves before walking further on to school. He would often

arrive late and was accordingly often in detention. Depending on the teacher 'on duty', he was sometimes able to avoid trouble by giving one of his other friends' names.

Like many Oceanic families, we saw education as our ticket to an easier, happier life. My brother wanted to be a medical doctor and he studied hard to attain the grades he needed to get into medical school. However, he struggled to grasp the abstract complexities of maths and physics.

Growing up, he was known as a good-looking boy and I was often his 'screener' of calls that came to our house. We did not know anything of the sexual abuse he was receiving in our home until everyone had left, and he featured in a documentary on television where he appeared partly hidden, talking about his experiences to a reporter. We were shocked and felt for him, realising that he had suffered in silence.

This poem is a homage to all the young men who don't feel that they can speak up ... and to my big brother, my hero. I will always remember the day that I woke up in a hospital bed after a suicide attempt to him screaming angrily at me that he loved me and telling me that he would have missed me if I had gone. His words saved my life.

Research in Aotearoa/New Zealand suggests that young people of different Pacific ethnicities experience different rates of unwanted sexual touching (Helu et al., 2009; Paterson et al., 2007). Referencing the National Youth '07 survey (Robati-Mani et al., 2020, p. 6) note that in Aotearoa/New Zealand, "6 percent of Pacific male students had experienced one or more episodes of unwanted sexual behaviour from another person in the last 12 months". Of these, 27% described the abuse as severe and more than half had not told anyone. The 2016 report summary, *Pacific Peoples in New Zealand:*

Understanding Family Violence, noted that “Pacific students were also twice as likely to report having experienced sexual abuse or coercion than their New Zealand European counterparts” (p. 3).¹⁴⁰ The report also noted that 9% of Pacific children who required the services of Child Youth and Family, reported sexual abuse.

The world depicted in the poem *Liusuavai* is not a fictional construction, but it is rarely talked about in public. *Liusuavai* is a Samoan word that means ‘melting.’ Like *Āwhā*, this poem deals with the veneers students use to hide difficulties that can often be complex and hard to talk about. In the opening verse of the work we encounter a counterpoint between what is seen and what is experienced:

He is a young man rising
Cooler than cool
Hair slicked back
Woollen jumper on a hot day
Hiding bruises,
From the night before.

¹⁴⁰ There is not a great deal of current research relating to the sexual abuse of young Pacific men but this report was distinctive because it drew comprehensively on a wide range of statistical data including evidence from CYF Statistics; NZCASS 2014; the New Zealand Health Survey 2014/15; the 2013 New Zealand Population Census; Pacific Youth 2012; Police Offenders and Apprehensions data; Police Statistics; The Treasury; and Young mothers in the workforce 1994–2014.

This sets up a sense that the portrait might contain a contradiction.

I wrote the work so it would initially feel rhythmic and repetitive. Thus, its verses maintain a regular six line structure that underscores the idea that we are witnessing something almost documentary in nature. We see a boy who is struggling at school. We encounter signs that we are prepared to acknowledge; the pressures of being a role model, struggling to learn, fatigue, a shortage of money.

He walks quickly
Late for school.
Detention again.
When asked his name
He will give another boy’s
To keep a low profile.

Stomach rumbling
He unwraps jam sandwiches
He’s put together
at the crack of dawn,
already stale on the edges
Curling in his fingers.

However, this documenting of the obvious is broken in the poem's sixth verse. The revelation of the poem's true subject is not presented as an outrage of exposure. Instead it is cool, and matter-of-fact; the way that silent abuse can be experienced as a chilled, integrated whisper that accompanies day to day survival. In this sixth verse, the metaphorical thread of coolness, set up earlier in the poem, resurfaces as something more chilled:

He is a pretty boy
But cold
Unresponsive
To the extended family member
Who lives at home
Who tries to touch him.

This metaphor of coldness is then progressed, one final step, in the poem's closing moments. As the six line structure of *Liusuavai* falls apart, we are left with:

Silence
Suppressing
Shame.
He is melting away.

Because this was a poem that had its roots in my family, my method of working with it differed from the other portraits. My older brother was not a member of Faiva Creatives. Accordingly, I approached him and the rest of my immediate

family and shared what I had written. I explained to my brother that I loved him and I would understand if he did not want me to give voice to the issue. While what had happened to him had shaken me deeply, I knew that it was his life that I was writing about. But he read the work and understood what I was trying to do. He said, "The challenge has been very real and I continue to battle the scars." I assured him, I would take the poem out of my thesis if at any point, he wanted to change his mind. But he replied, "Nah, all good."

I am deeply grateful for this quiet, humble man in my life. With his permission, I shared a developed draft of the poem with the Faiva Creatives. Rather than suggesting changes to its structure or content, two of them responded by collaborating on a soundscape that they felt might speak to the spirit of the poem.¹⁴¹ However, when we tried combining the sound and the portrait, the text was so fragile and vulnerable that we decided it would be better to strip as much as possible away from the work. Thus, I concurrently edited extraneous words out of the draft and decided to present the poem in a silent room with only a subtle image transitioning behind it.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ The soundscape experiment (positioned behind an early iteration of the poem) was developed by Erin Geraghty and Kuldeep Khakh. It is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qB7EBFLAw4>

¹⁴² This visual accompaniment is discussed later in this chapter under the subheading 'Liusuavai'.

PEPE TAIMANE

This poem depicts a student who has appeared at numerous times in my life. She tells me that in her mother's Chinese culture, this is known as Yuanfen (fate/coincidence). On days that I taught her, she would bound into my room, full of energy, with a million things to say, before she settled down and got on with her work.

She involved herself in a diverse array of activities both in and outside of school, including football, the Senior Leaders' team, WordUp, the Smokefree RockQuest, the Model UN, the West Auckland Choir, and the Dance Academy. Like the young woman in the poem *Āwhā*, she also came from a blended family and was influenced by multiple cultures.¹⁴³ Because of this, she often felt challenged about her identity and misunderstood by her peers.

I often heard students saying hurtful things about her, but despite this she maintained outward displays of enthusiasm. However, her life outside of school formed a stark contrast to the light that she radiated. She saw herself as a constant mediator between her parents. Her escape was to write and sing songs about these experiences, in an attempt to bring healing to herself and others.

Although research indicates that children's emotional reactions to parental conflicts change as they grow older (Easterbrooks et al., 1994; Davies et al., 1999; Cummings et al. 1989), Davies et al. (1999) have noted that the motivation to intervene in parental disputes increases with age and normally peaks during adolescence. Research seems to suggest that if children perceive parental conflict as frequent, this experience can

increase their risk for developing internalising problems (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Grych et al., 2000). Other research suggests that self-blaming behaviour is reliably linked to internalising problems (Dadds et al., 1999; Kerig, 1998) that are more frequently found in girls (Grych et al., 2003).

There are few roadmaps for teachers who encounter adolescents whose sense of self-blame leads to mediating behaviour or feeling responsibility for resolving or minimising parental conflict. It is a troubling phenomenon and *Pepe Taimane* gives voice to a single instance of something I have witnessed many times, over many years.

In Samoan, *Pepe Taimane* means a diamond butterfly/baby. It is the title of this poem because an allusion to a metamorphosis appears in the last lines of the work. The paradox of a butterfly made of the hardest known stone on earth also references the contradiction in the student; someone beautiful and fragile who attempts to be impossibly strong in a world for which she feels responsible.

The poem is structured as an argument between a teacher who observes, and students who criticise. In other words it is a portrait painted using conflicting views.¹⁴⁴ The argument of opinion places what is seen socially and what is understood privately in opposition to each other.

¹⁴³ The student's mother is Chinese and her father is an Irish man who migrated from England. She has an older step-sister who is half Māori, to whom she is very close.

¹⁴⁴ The students' reactions were direct 'lifts' from things I heard said about the girl at school.

Grooming worlds into something stable, Helping
students,

Helping teachers,

She is polite.

But they say,

What a wanna be!

Trying to be a teacher's pet

Have you heard her swear man?

She's such a potty mouth,

Pretending she's innocent.

I use this conflict stylistically to set up the closing verse of the poem where the child's performance reveals what is hidden from her peer's judgements. This was a deeply gifted student, her perceptions and creativity were bright, spiritual and transformative ... and her identity resembled something made of light, surfacing from a misinterpreted cocoon.

¹⁴⁵ Recently for one of her university projects, this student created a short film faiva, 'Hapa Homegirl', with three other collaborators. The work articulates the challenges she and many others faced with identity and belonging when they were growing up. The work can be accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5822Yfq3_g

... and yet

when she sings ...

Songs of the heart,

Composed in nights of uncertain shadow.

Her voice transforms,

Lightness into being.

Palagi to the world,

The calling of a spirit

.... unbroken and enduring

This poem went through many iterations. I showed earlier versions to the student who was the subject of the work to gauge her response to what I had written. But the earliest versions of the portrait constantly fell short of the spiritual transformation I observed in her performances. When I listened to her blending of self-composed lyrics and delicate melodies, I knew that I was witnessing the discernible presence of 'asi.

In the end, the poem metamorphosed over four years as I observed this young woman's extraordinary honesty and ability to exhume beauty from conflict. Across this time, and still today, she maintains an abiding interest in my, and other people's poetry and she continuously offers encouragement and advice.¹⁴⁵

PĀ I LE LAGI

The young woman in this poem is often described as shy and she wrestles with self-doubt. But when she performs a waiata (song), power rises through her and becomes palpable. She was raised with Māori and Pacific values, so she encountered what might be described as ‘educational culture shock’ when she entered the school in which I was teaching. Although considered a prestigious educational environment, it would be a fair observation that as an institution, it did not invest heavily in celebrations of cultural diversity. The girl struggled with the school’s traditional teaching methods and its emphasis on academic success. Sometimes she would leave her classes, sit with me during my non-contact periods and talk about things that were happening in her world.

I felt for her and encouraged her to talk to the Faiva Creatives about possibly starting a Kapa Haka group.¹⁴⁶ Because the students were enthusiastic about the idea, I asked an ex-colleague from another school to come and help them. Usefully, this student had worked with my colleague before so there was an existing level of trust in the relationship.

For Māori language week that year, the Faiva Creatives felt confident enough to perform a waiata and short haka for the school assembly, attired in full costume.¹⁴⁷ However, after the event, the student talked with me about encountering a ‘different vibe’. She said that as soon as she stepped on to the stage she felt very self-conscious. All she could see were uniformed rows of people with blank stares who were whispering to each other and chuckling. She felt like the beauty of her culture was an oddity on uncomfortable display; something not valued.¹⁴⁸ She decided not to pursue any further

expression of her uniqueness and to simply blend in with the dominant culture in the school. My heart ached for the sense of loss I felt inside her. The poem Pā i le lagi was a call to her to kia kaha (stay strong).

Menzies et al. (2020) suggest that for young New Zealanders there is a correlation between cultural identity and mental wellbeing. Williams et al., in discussing indigenous Māori culture, make a similar assertion, stating “we must support the continued reclaiming of traditional Māori knowledge and practices by contemporary Māori youth to heal, connect and give meaning to their lives” (2018, para. 25).

¹⁴⁶ Kapa haka is the term used to describe Māori performing arts often presented by groups on marae, at schools, in national and regional competitions, and during special events. Literally the term means to form a line (kapa) and dance (haka), although the artform is also associated with waiata (singing), chanting, and historical and cultural accounting.

¹⁴⁷ Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori (Māori Language Week) was initiated in 1975 as part of the revitalisation of the Māori language. In 1987, Māori became an official language of New Zealand and in the same year, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori was established to promote te reo Māori. The use of Māori language is currently undergoing a distinctive resurgence in Aotearoa/New Zealand and greater numbers of people speak the language. Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori features annually across diverse media and is widely promoted and supported by Māori radio stations and the Māori television channel.

¹⁴⁸ Her sense of being culturally marginalised, vulnerable and misunderstood, was discussed with the other students in the Faiva Creatives group and some of her experience was woven into their production of the faiva *Lila*.

Judge Andrew Becroft argues that it is imperative that New Zealand students feel that they belong and are accepted in school environments. He says:

Young people want to be accepted as individuals, with different learning styles, family circumstances and experiences. They want time, space, opportunities and meaningful learning experiences – that they can see the relevance of. (The Office of the Children’s Commission, 2018, p.17)

These assertions of a positive connection between cultural acceptance and effective educational experience, may be understood in the context of Lorraine Spiller’s (2012) analysis

149 It is this failure to understand cultural identity that Spiller links to an inability to develop strong, positive relationships and pedagogies when working with Pasifika students.

150 I am aware in making this comment that Tent and Geraghty (2001) suggest that the exact meaning of this and related terms, the Western Polynesian Papālagi~Pālagi and the Fijian Vāvālagi~Pāpālagi, remain open to speculation and the exact meaning is uncertain. In his journals, Cook noted the expression “ko e vaka no papalangi” (the boats of Papalangi) in Tonga, translating the phrase as “cloth ships” (Beaglehole, 1961 p. 178). Tent and Geraghty (2001) and Tcherkezoff (1999) suggest that the use of the term probably spread in the 18th Century when Tongans and Samoans came into contact with European sailors, missionaries and whalers, who emphasised ethnoracial demarcations between themselves (papalagi/ papalangi) and the indigenous Oceanic peoples they encountered.

of teacher beliefs about Pasifika values and ways of learning. Her study noted that poor achievement of Pasifika students can be connected to teachers either having deficit views of their students and their potential for learning or a failure to understand the significance and nature of their identities.¹⁴⁹

In Samoan, Pā i le langi means ‘gate to heaven’ or ‘hit the heavens’ and in varying forms, this is a term used by many Oceanic nations to describe ‘foreigners.’¹⁵⁰ I chose it as the title of this poem because, when I thought about this student, I understood that she considered herself to be in a foreign environment where she did not belong. But I had also witnessed her ability to hit the heavens when she performed in our small Kapa Haka group. Thus, I extended the metaphor of the heavens to connect ideas of foreignness and empowered performance.

She holds the heavens in her hands

And the voice of her ancestors flow through her when she speaks

When she sings

She can pierce your heart.

The poem begins with loss and anger. It is composed as a narration of statements that the student made to the group about how she felt when performing something as intimate as her ancestry to an assembly that responded with incomprehension and amusement. In the poem, the poetic metaphor likens the young woman to a ship that is lost at sea, (or in this case the school environment), but her sails are filled with potential. The portrait builds through frustration and disillusionment to an acknowledgement of latent power and agency. The poem is a challenge to look closer at the horizon, to see what lies beyond initial experiences of rejection and incomprehension.

After writing a first draft of the work, I discreetly shared the poem with the student one evening when we were working late together after school. She reacted with tears. I was not prepared for this but I realised that I had written it on the same day as the performance because what I witnessed had distressed me so deeply.

I asked her if she was okay and I assured her that the poem needed to go no further. But she said, “Thanks Miss, for understanding.” The student realised that what she experienced, although personal, probably had equivalents in her Oceanic peers’ experiences. The group responded with deep empathy to the student’s pain and they incorporated elements of her experience into *Lila*.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEMS

FAIVA / FAI VĀ also contains two poems that are autobiographical. *Amataga* and ‘*Asi*’ are compositions created from the perspective of a teacher and they enclose the five student portraits.

AMATAGA

Amataga in Samoan means the beginning. I chose this title because it opens the performance with an explanation of why I began my journey with the research and what initially inspired me to become a teacher.

The poem recounts an experience in a school in which I taught where there was little consideration given to the celebration

of cultural diversity. Given the number of Oceanic students in the institution, I asked for permission to take a small group to Polyfest. Initially my plan was to support them as they developed a performance for the festival but although they worked during lunchtimes and after school on the project, as the date arrived, they felt that they had not made sufficient progress. However, I sought permission to take them to the festival anyway so they could experience the joy and pride of seeing diverse cultures celebrated in beautiful ways. The bus ride to the event was filled with excitement, laughter, singing and jest. At the event, we soaked in the atmosphere but I noticed that a colleague who had to accompany us on the excursion to make up student-adult ratios, was not sharing in the enthusiasm.

When we returned to school, I went to the staff room with this teacher to complete the administrative documents associated with the trip. While we were working, another colleague asked how the day went, and the teacher who had accompanied us described the event as ‘a waste of the day’ and a ‘glorified picnic’. I bit my tongue and said nothing. Unfortunately, the kids had picked up on the negativity and asked if this would have been the same response had we visited the museum and wandered around with a worksheet looking at Oceanic artefacts on display.

I wrote *Amataga* after this conversation and the students concurrently composed spoken word pieces based on the day’s events for WordUp 2018. Two of their poems were finalists in that year’s festival.

I was reminded when writing *Amataga*, of a disjunction between what often appears in Ministry documents and what sometimes occurs in schools. For example, the introductory paragraph to the 2003 Ministry of Social Development's Report states:

New Zealanders share a strong national identity, have a sense of belonging, and value cultural diversity. Māori, European/Pākehā, Pacific people, and other groups and communities are able to pass different cultural traditions on to future generations. (2003, para. 1)

This is an embracing and celebratory aim, however in practice, I sometimes experience such claims as aspirational rather than real. On the positive side, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, links have been found between environments where cultural identity is celebrated and the growth in positive outcomes in health and education (Durie, 2000; Ministry of Social Development, 2003). In addition in 2018, while I was creating *Amataga*, the national census found that in both secondary and tertiary education, "younger Māori and Pacific peoples are achieving outcomes closer to the national average than their counterparts in older age groups" (Statistics New Zealand, 2020, para 1).¹⁵¹ Data like this proposes something encouraging. However, in the same year that these figures were released, when appearing before the committee for its annual review of the Education Ministry, the Secretary for Education, Iona Holsted, referred to a growing body of research indicating that "increasingly there are parts of the teaching workforce that do not respond well to the identity, culture and language of those [culturally diverse] students" (Holsted quoted in Gerritsen, 2018, para. 5). Her statement followed a report released two weeks earlier by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the New Zealand School

Trustees Association (NZSTA) that noted "Many children and young people told us that they experience racism at school and are treated unequally because of their culture" (NZSTA, 2018, p. 23). The NZSTA report drew on data gathered from 1,678 New Zealand children from across the education sectors and it found that for tamariki and rangitahi especially, "not being understood in the context of their own culture can present significant barriers to their sense of belonging, engagement and achievement" (NZSTA, 2018, p. 8). The report also noted that in mainstream schools, these children often did not

... see themselves or their culture reflected back to them. They also said that they found the use of karakia or waiata in their classroom or kapa haka displays for visitors tokenistic, especially when kawa and tikanga were not understood or embedded at a deeper level" (NZSTA, 2018, p. 21).

Parallel concerns about cultural misunderstandings and marginalisation were also noted that year in Hargraves (2018) who made a call for educators to understand that "Pasifika students want teachers who know their culture and know

¹⁵¹ The 2018 Census noted that, "80.6 percent of Māori and 83.0 percent of Pacific 15- to 24-year-olds had at least a level 1 qualification or equivalent (such as School Certificate), compared with 85.8 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds nationally. Older age groups showed a larger difference, with 73.0 percent of Māori and 72.1 percent of Pacific 45- to 54-year-olds having at least a level 1 qualification or equivalent, compared with 84.6 percent of 45- to 54-year-olds nationally" (Statistics New Zealand, 2020, para. 3).

about them as people. They want to read, learn, and write about their own culture. They want their teachers to care about them” (para. 23). Predating this call, Davidson-Toumu’a and Dunbar (2009) had proposed that if we intend to create effective educational environments for Pasifika students, then teachers should understand education and culture as intimately connected and appreciate how the two concepts work. The researchers also emphasised that Pacific students need to be understood holistically, given that their worlds comprise diverse cultural roles and familial obligations.

It was in an environment where this disjunction between reporting and certain, lived experiences inside schools that *Amataga* was created.

‘ASI

Tonally, ‘*Asi*, the poem that closes the set of portraits is very different. It follows the uplifting of aspiration and recognition in the closing lines of the student portrait *Pā i le Langi*. However, the poem’s nature is more mysterious. As a short work composed to draw ideas in the production together, it speaks of the unseen, timeless, permeating energy of ‘asi.

In this work, I address ‘asi as the living energy that I have witnessed while working with the Faiva Creatives, and observed in groups of Oceanic young people nurtured by youth leaders interviewed for this thesis. ‘Asi surfaced while people talked about ideas, practised and performed ... and it remained after a performative event. The students I interviewed for the project described this unseen presence as “... all energy... all positive... pretty magical... something that you are inspired by, something that you actually take something from.” (Macdonald, 2021, Appendix 1).¹⁵²

Victoria Kaho (2021, Appendix 1)¹⁵³ said:

I knew I belonged here at this moment. I never felt like that before. I could feel change ... Looking around and feeling everyone’s energy when practising and working on a Kapa Haka song together, or even just having a vent session. ‘Asi was present and you could feel it as soon as you walked into the room we were in. You could hear it probably while walking down the corridor, belting out laughter or breaking out in song.¹⁵⁴

The joy and power that Kaho (2021, Appendix 1) describes, I sought to capture in the uplifting nature of the poem’s closing lines:

We have awoken
To discovery
Conscious
Of your flow ...
Of your reaching out
Your embrace.

Here, ‘asi is expressed as energy that binds people together. I have likened it to water or air that is dynamic and embracing. Sometimes we can see it and at other times we cannot - but we know that it is there. It is a universal solvent¹⁵⁵ that surrounds and exists within us.

¹⁵² See Appendix 1, Interview 3, 00:10:46 – 01:20:10.

¹⁵³ Two sisters were interviewed in the same year. To differentiate between their contributions, their Christian names are used in citations.

¹⁵⁴ See Appendix 1, Interview 4.

¹⁵⁵ It is capable of universally dissolving substances.

TA'ANGA HELE 'UHILA (VIDEO DESIGN)

FAIVA / FAI VĀ features three faiva hele 'uhila (videos) that I designed to speak to three sequential portraits (*Sasa le pefu*, *Āwhā* and *Liusuava*). The videos may be differentiated from my animated illustrations because the sequences are largely photographs and filmed footage.

SASA LE PEFU

Sasa le pefu was filmed and edited in 2019. In *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* is the first video and it forms a response to the poem of the same name. The dancer in the work is Chase Leathard (the boy spoken about in the poem).¹⁵⁶

The video was filmed in a converted storage shed in West Auckland. Working with Mairi Gunn (the director of photography), I directed the two minute sequence where we approach a dramatically lit empty school desk in a vacant concrete classroom. Shot using an angular lighting rig, the video concentrates on brutal textures that surround a physical performance where a young man struggles between the tentative and the explosive (Figure 5.5). Here, tension is explored as frustration and delicacy,

¹⁵⁶ Chase has given permission to be named in this exegesis. He not only performed the work he, in association with his mother Victoria Leathard of the VCM Academy of Dance, choreographed the piece in response to my poem.



FIGURE 5.5

Sequential screen grabs from the video *Sasa le pefu*. (August, 2019).
©. Cecelia Faumuina.

where the struggle to perform (alluded to in the poem) finds embodied expression that ends with a sweeping, frustrated gesture through a chalk on a dusty floor.¹⁵⁷ In designing the video, I used a palette based on the darkest pigments we see in Ngatu, so our attention is focused on movement and light without the distraction of colour.

I cut the video against contemporary rhythms and instrumentation, remixing a soundscape by Secession Studios and Greg Dombrowski called *Dukkha* (Suffering), which included the distant haunting call of a *pu* (Samoan shell trumpet).



ĀWHĀ

The video created for the portrait Āwhā treated the title literally. The piece initially features a billowing of storm clouds that bristle with electricity. These are edited so the sequence speaks to the performed poem, exploding with sound at instances where the student’s outbursts of rage occur in the poem (Figure 5.6). When the poem transitions from ‘*Ua mimita vale*’ (the girl’s state of aggressive posturing) to ‘*Ae sau le fanoanoa*’ (her despondency), the thunder and lightning dissolve into smoke that drifts across the screen. This alludes to the narcotic culture that shrouds the student and her family. The reference here is to second degree smoke;¹⁵⁸ the effects of the family’s circumstances that impact on the student’s life and damage her well-being.

FIGURE 5.6

Sequential screen grabs from the video sequence Āwhā (March, 2021). ©. Cecelia Faumuina.

¹⁵⁷ This is in reference to the poem’s closing metaphor of where the tyranny of success is likened to an accumulation of chalk on the ritual floor of generations of classrooms.

¹⁵⁸ Second degree smoke relates to the smoke from a burning cigarette and the smoke breathed out by smokers. It contains thousands of chemicals, some of which are toxic.

LIUSUAVAI

Liusuavai is a dark, subtly dissolving video sequence that speaks to the poem of the same name. Because *Liusuavai* is such a sensitive portrait, I did not want to design a video with the same power and tension evidenced in *Sasa le pefu* and *Āwhā*. I developed several iterations of this work, including a sequence that featured a slowly melting ice cube (Figure 5.7). However, being figurative, such experiments proved overpowering and also revealed the crisis of the poem too far in advance of the spoken text.

In the end, my approach was to return to the iconography of school, and to layers of drawings and photographs that dissolved into each other in subtle progression (Figure 5.8).



FIGURE 5.7 (RIGHT)

Initial concept for *Liusuavai*.
(March, 2021).

FIGURE 5.8 (BELOW)

Original drawings from the video
Liusuavai. (October, 2021).
©. Cecelia Faumuina.



My aim was to illustrate a dark drift forward through the exterior and interior of a building, as if we were witnessing the journey of a student who is late to school (Figure 5.9).¹⁵⁹ Here what is drawn, what is photographed and what is animated is fused indiscernibly. This gives the video a sense of reluctance as we progress, gradually approaching doors of glass at the end of a corridor that turn to ice at the time that the spoken word exposes a similar metaphor.

Technically the work, that was co-created with VFX artist Victor Cham,¹⁶⁰ is a relatively complex fusion of parallax drawing,¹⁶¹ photographs and animated camera movement.



FIGURE 5.9 Screen grabs from the video *Liusuvai*. (November, 2021). ©. Cecelia Faumuina.

¹⁵⁹ My idea of layering was inspired by the layering of Ngatu, where separate pieces of the same material are fused, seamlessly into a single whole.

¹⁶⁰ VFX is an acronym for Visual Special Effects. Victor used Adobe AfterEffects software to achieve the seamless transitions I wanted in the work. He also worked with me on the video *Pepe Taimane*.

¹⁶¹ A parallax involves a disjunctive fusion between two images of the same object that are seen from different angles (Tonkovich, 2014). In this process, different layers of two-dimensional images are animated so they move at different speeds within a virtual environment. This enables one to suggest independent life and a sense of three-dimensionality in a photograph.

FAKATĀTĀ (ILLUSTRATION)

EXEGETICAL DRAWING

In this thesis, drawing permeates both the practical work and my critical writing. In the exegesis I draw the people I interview. This is not a decorative pursuit. It is both an honouring of their contribution (I gave them copies of their thumbnail portraits), and a method I use to help me dwell within, and think through their interviews (Figure 5.10). In other words, when transcribing

their reflections on 'asi, drawing enabled me to hold the presence of each participant close while listening, thinking and drawing.

FAKATĀTĀ IN *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*

FAIVA / FAI VĀ features two sequences of edited drawings I created between 2018 and 2021. Rendered in ink, graphite pencil, coffee and white colouring pencil, these works were reflections on either remembered environments or studies from reference material.



FIGURE 5.10

Illustration of Marina Alofesio (August, 2021).
©. Cecelia Faumuina.

Graphically, the drawings allude to Ngatu's colour range and texture. However, they also have a sense of age, like images that we might find in the old sketchbooks of my father or in boxes of ancestral photographs. Thus, the surfaces of these drawings sometimes feel water stained or faded and their edges are uneven.

These drawings open and close *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*. In the introduction, they contextualise the opening narrative, then accompany us across the ocean and into a New Zealand school system, leaving us at the close of the poem *Amataga*.

The drawings were my attempt to 'feel' recollections of my schooling and teaching, so often they have the sense of fatigue or damage. They reference the prefabs down the back of the school where the lowly-status subjects like Technology and Art are often taught (Figure 5.11).

When sketching, I was reminded of Terry Rosenberg who describes immersion in such processes as a state "where one thinks with, and through drawing to make discoveries, to find new possibilities that give course to ideas and to help fashion their eventual form" (2008, p. 109).

Rendered on photocopy paper, I created these images as immersions, where I could sense the presence of the unseen as I began working on them. In this regard I am reminded of Taylor's account of the Italian painter Titian who reportedly,



FIGURE 5.11

Illustration of a classroom interior from the poem *Amataga*. (July, 2020).

“touched the surface of his paper in order to investigate an elusive world just beyond his reach” (Taylor, 2008, p.11). Thus, I drew these images as a way of feeling and thinking in such a way that I was “drawn into making drawing and the drawing drew me into further thinking” (Rosenberg, 2008, p.110).

The second set of drawings are composites used to close *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*. They accompany the last poem *Pā i le langi*, then take us through the Ma’ulu’ulu,¹⁶² the poem ‘*Asi*, a closing hymn, and the lotu faka’osi (formal closing prayer).

These works are more spiritual in tone, fusing the past and future in amalgams that blend subtly into each other. They are multilayered, containing references to both traditional Oceanic representations and contemporary imaginings of the heavens of the future (Figure 5.12). They are digital renderings where “the known and the unknown are drawn to and through each other” (Rosenberg, 2008, p. 112).

These fakatātā are intended to lift us to a wider vā or optimistic relational space that celebrates ‘asi as something spiritual that draws from the past, reaches into the future, but celebrates young people in the ‘here and now’.

¹⁶² The Mā’ulu’ulu is a traditional Tongan dance that is performed by a group of seated men and women. The dance is a combination of the ancient Tongan ‘otuhaka (a seated dance involving mainly hand movements) and the Samoan Mā’ulu’ulu. The word mā’ulu’ulu literally means ‘to sprinkle’ or ‘light rain’, relating to the lighthearted style of performance which came to Tonga in the 19th Century.

In these fakatātā I conceive ‘asi as existing in the vā. Here, ‘asi is something that can be seen but is also hidden from plain sight. It has existed for generations and our ability to awaken and discover enables us to see beauty that exists across and

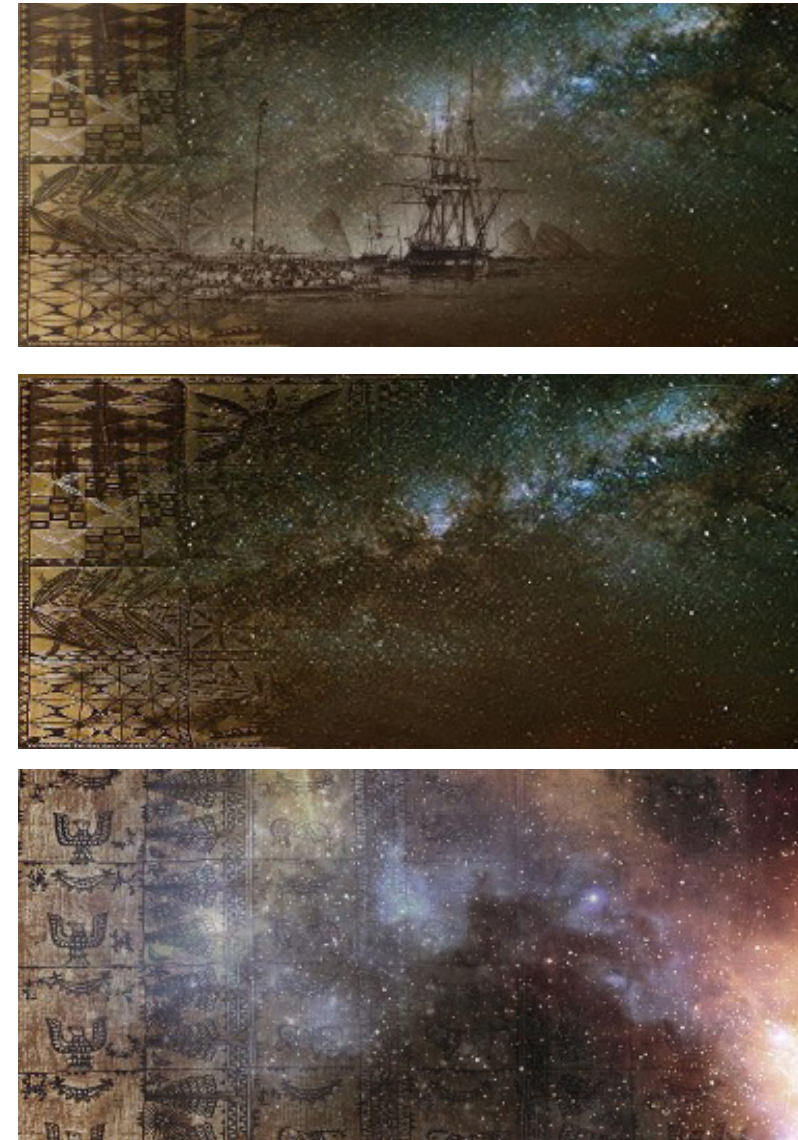


FIGURE 5.12
Digital fakatātā for ‘Asi
(April, 2021).
©. Cecelia Faumuina.

through time. Mahina (2019) in a personal communication discussed this relationship in tavaist philosophical thinking. He suggested that 'asi might be understood in the intersection between connection and separation (puli to conceal, disappear and 'asi to reveal, appear) . In this relationship 'asi, he suggests, may be made much more meaningful.¹⁶³

SUMMARY

Lila and *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* are contemporary engagements with Oceanic, artistic practice that contribute two parts to a spectrum of experience. They are connected through co-creative practices. In the Faiva Creatives' production of *Lila*, I supported and witnessed what was occurring, inquiring into the students' experience and reflection of what was being discovered.

In turn, *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* is my artistic response to what I witnessed. Rather than separating personalities and experiences from the people involved in the project, the work elevates the essence of students as portraits and narratives of my own experience.

Having considered the nature and thinking behind these artworks, it is useful to briefly reflect on how what has been discovered and artistically expressed, might offer something useful to how we develop and improve educational experiences for Oceanic students in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

¹⁶³ O. Māhina (personal communication, March 1, 2019).

¹⁶⁴ I am aware when quoting such statistics that they are not inclusive of the greater diversity of ethnicities I frame as 'Oceanic' in this thesis. However, all of the students in the study identify with one or more Pacific cultures.

REFLECTION

ASPIRATION AND REPORTS

Menzies et al. note that globally, there is a rise in mental health problems reported by young people and they suggest that "the underlying causes and the need for prevention and intervention remains largely ignored" (2020, p. 2). As a teacher in Aotearoa/New Zealand, who has worked for 20 years with Oceanic students, the fall-out from mental illness has become increasingly apparent in my classroom.

Alongside these increases in anxiety and depression I note research that suggests that traditional approaches to teaching and learning are not working for diverse students in New Zealand schools and this can impact on their sense of wellness, belonging and agency (Bernade et al., 2014; Roy et al., 2021). If we set these things against an aspiration that Oceanic students should live in a society where people and environments are valued and communities flourish, then it is helpful if we consider ways where their learning might become more integrated with the world around them.

Last year, the Ministry of Education's Best Practice for Teaching Pacific Learners: Pacific Evidence Brief, observed that the country has a large and diverse Pacific population, of whom:

... almost two thirds are born in New Zealand. The population of Pacific children and young people who can attend early childhood education and schooling is significant and increasing, and is predicted to reach 20 percent of the school population by 2050. (Ministry of Education, 2020a, para. 2).¹⁶⁴

This report also noted that although achievement data for all Pacific learners has improved over the last decade, with some of these students achieving well in both primary and secondary education, progress has recently flattened out with many still experiencing “significant disparities in achievement [from a] system that does not support their success as well as it does for other groups of learners” (ibid., para. 3).¹⁶⁵

In the light of this observation, we might consider the government’s current Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030. This guide was developed through a fono series in 2018 and 2019 with Pacific learners, families, teachers, leaders and communities and it aspires to “an education system that is free from racism; that values Pacific children, young people and families as leaders of learning; and supports them to feel safe, valued and equipped to achieve their education aspirations” (Ministry of Education, 2020b, p. 6).¹⁶⁶

The plan’s five recommended shifts in education include greater governmental reciprocity when working with diverse Pacific communities,¹⁶⁷ confronting and addressing systemic racism and discrimination, enabling advancements in teachers’ cultural competence when working with diverse Pacific learners, and growing the proportion of educational professionals with Pacific whakapapa.¹⁶⁸ However, equally valued among these recommendations was a specific call for greater partnerships “with families to design education opportunities together with teachers, leaders and educational professionals so aspirations for learning and employment can be met (ibid., p. 7). In the light of this recommendation, the plan noted “Pacific learners and families describe learning and succeeding as a collective activity. Decisions regarding

¹⁶⁵ These inequities are significant at both NCEA Level 3 and University Entrance (UE). “In 2018, 28 percent of Pacific 18-year old’s, had not yet achieved NCEA Level 2 (the minimum level considered suitable for readiness for life outside school). Less than a third of Pacific learners attained UE while over half of European/Pākehā did” (Ministry of Education, 2020a, para. 3).

¹⁶⁶ This Action Plan outlined the Government’s commitment to transforming outcomes for Pacific learners and their families in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. It identified five key shifts and a set of actions that would improve how early learning services, schools and tertiary providers approach educational environments for Pacific people.

¹⁶⁷ The recommendation proposes an initial focus on needs that will arise from the current COVID pandemic.

¹⁶⁸ The Ministry of Education uses this Māori word to describe ancestral connection or genealogy.

learning, pathways and employment are often based on the needs and aspirations of the wider family and/or community” (ibid.). The vā that connects school and community

THE VĀ THAT CONNECTS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

If we think physically about schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand, they are normally entered through a gate that allows access to an environment that is fenced and spatially demarcated from the community that surrounds it. In many schools this gate is shut and locked after hours and daytime contact across this demarcation is formally negotiated. Unlike libraries, sportsgrounds, museums and other community centres, the space of schooling is discrete and spatially proscribed. However, the Faiva Creative students who participated in this project constantly sought opportunities to dissolve this border. They wanted to bring cultures, identities and networks that had been developed outside of school, across this divide; they naturally sought out opportunities to create learning “as a collective activity” (Ministry of Education, 2020b, p. 7).

When discussing her involvement in the Lila project, Kapao (2021, Appendix 1) recalled that non-curricula projects:

... gave me a huge sense of self that I was lacking. They allowed me to connect to my culture too. In my family, my grandparents have always been very big on living in such a way that reflects success through education and sacrifice. Sacrifice has resulted in us kids not learning our mother tongue or our customs. So other projects allowed me to meet other second-

generation Pacific islanders who felt just as lost as I did. It also taught me how to speak up for whatever it is that I find to be inhumane in our world.¹⁶⁹

Geraghty (2021, Appendix 1) saw this connection to outside connections as integral to her sense of wellbeing. She said:

It gave me an opportunity to meet people who were like-minded and who were a lot more carefree about life and weren’t so serious... Everyone at school was very serious and very narrow ... in terms of focus and life’s purpose; it was like – ‘I’m on this path, I’m never stepping off of this path.’ But it was cool meeting new people – Rockquest especially ... I found that I spent a lot of my time in high school looking for competitions like that.¹⁷⁰

These students saw their learning as something both inside school and reaching out into their communities, and they saw faiva as a means of connecting their lived experience with the social practices of schooling. If we consider the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund – UNICEF’s second Strategy to “ensure that all adolescents live, study, work and socialize in supportive, healthy and safe environments that promote and protect their mental health and reduce their engagement in risk behaviours” (World Health Organization, 2021, p. 33), perhaps these students’ behaviours are understandable. When space was made for them, they unknowingly responded to Hargraves’ (2020) recommendations for effectively supporting Pasifika students, who proposed a richer education system where teachers understand “students as individuals, knowing the cultures they identify with and what this means for them” (para. 4).

¹⁶⁹ Appendix 1, Interview 2, Question 7.

¹⁷⁰ Appendix 1, Interview 1, 00: 51:47.

Such a recommendation is predicated on developing richer connections between schools, families and communities. Conceptually, such an approach might be thought of as a form of postdisciplinarity. Postdisciplinarity proposes learning as something that reaches between school subjects and the disciplines with which they are associated, into wider communities of knowledge in which Oceanic students exist.

Wright et al. suggest that postdisciplinary learning emerges when educators “identify with learning rather than with disciplines” (2015, p. 271). Darbellay sees postdisciplinarity as an essential rethinking of the concept of a discipline. He suggests that when learners are able to work beyond the idea of demarcated subjects (disciplines) they can “construct a new cognitive space ... through degrees of interaction/integration” (2016, p. 367). Thus, postdisciplinarity suggests a significant

rethinking of not only knowledge but also the subject structures that surround and support it in schools. I would argue that if we wish to understand the ‘arts’ from a non-Western perspective, the practices of contemporary faiva mean that we need to broaden the manner in which we consider organisational knowledge structures, especially in secondary schools.

A postdisciplinary concept of education would see both school and a student's community as complementary realms where learning can occur in integrated ways. Thus, learning in a church choir would integrate with learning in a music room, poetry in a spoken word workshop would become an integrated and valued part of English, kapa haka would be perceived not as an adjunct to learning but as an integrated and equally valued part of curriculum. This would involve two significant rethinkings. The first is that while much is said about valuing extra-curricular cultural activities, most community educators in these realms are not paid.¹⁷¹ If such knowledge is genuinely valued we need to think as a nation about how we show respect for the hours of voluntary time cultural experts are expected to give to education.

Second, especially at Levels 1, 2 and 3 in secondary education (the areas where the Faiva Creatives were studying during this project), we have very limited methods of valuing postdisciplinary contributions to knowledge. Although technically, NCEA Achievement Standards¹⁷² have some flexibility, learning outside of school cannot become part of an assessment unless it is measured by a registered teacher. The truth is that educators with specialist knowledge in Pacific Church choirs, culturally informed choreographers and community initiators are generally more deeply informed about Indigenous knowledge than most registered teachers. Accordingly, useful consideration might be given to how we enable their depth of cultural knowledge to become part of how Oceanic students (who seek cultural knowledge beyond the borders of

¹⁷¹ See interview number 7 with Rongo Atkins. Appendix 2. 01:15:51. Provided here is an example of the level of voluntary commitment an unpaid cultural expert makes to the growth of learning of students in a number of Auckland schools.

¹⁷² NCEA is the national qualification system that senior secondary school students study towards in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Information on its structure and application can be accessed at: <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/>

schools) are assessed. This would result in significant cultural learning that students currently access through initiatives like Polyfest¹⁷³ and WordUp¹⁷⁴ being valued within educational assessment.¹⁷⁵ At the moment the complexity and depth of such learning often receives lip service, but it is rarely formally integrated into assessment systems that are used by schools to measure student worth.

When community-based cultural knowledge is rewarded in assessment and integrated in learning as more than cultural display, Oceanic parents will begin to see the beauty and complexity of their indigeneity. Such knowledge would become tangibly valued and cultural experts, who make such significant contributions to their children's education, would be acknowledged and rewarded.

¹⁷³ expertise required for a school's contribution are generally donated by cultural experts in the wider community.

¹⁷⁴ Word Up is a spoken word competition where young people perform their original word-based performances. Contestants include singer-songwriters, poets and rappers. This initiative was established by Grace Taylor in 2007. Since its inception, she has worked with other Oceanic poets, producing, mentoring and facilitating workshops and spoken word poetry programmes. In 2011 the group founded 'Rising Voices'; a poetry movement that provides additional workshops and a platform for young writers to perform their work.

¹⁷⁵ Other examples of unacknowledged, indigenous community 'use' are less formal. For instance, in many schools in which I have worked, what become lauded music department gospel choirs, actually have the depth of their training developed by unacknowledged, cultural specialists in local churches.

THE VĀ THAT CONNECTS DISCIPLINES

Learning is culturally shaped and formal state education in New Zealand has been largely developed from a late 19th Century British model that was seen at the time as democratic, progressive and designed "to reduce inequalities and enable social mobility" (Olssen, 1992, p. 276). Currently statistics and government reports show that this aspiration has not played out for many New Zealand children. In the 20 years since I began teaching, numerous reports on the plight of Māori and Pacific students have proposed solutions (e.g. Anae et al., 2001; New Zealand. Ministry of Education, 2008; Tongati'o, 2010; Wendt Samu, 2010; Chu et al., 2013; Hargraves, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2020a; Ministry of Education, 2020b; Matapo & Teisina, 2021) and while these proposals are similar in their calls for increasing cultural understanding and connection, from where I stand as a teacher, often little beyond the rhetoric has changed.

When I consider a student-initiated and maintained group like the Faiva Creatives and their engagement with Oceanic ways of working with the arts, I am confronted by a disjunction between conceptions. In New Zealand secondary school education, the Arts are divided by disciplines, so that music, writing, drama, dance, painting, design and creative technologies are all separate subjects that students study as discrete, independent and contained bodies of knowledge. Unlike faiva that integrates music, dance, drama, design and poetry with realms of oratory, history, theology and cultural identity, the world inside the school gates remains divided into disciplinary states. Although Wright et al. (2015) note that discipline structures can make institutional management easier, they also observe that these structures can engender the pursuit of narrow specialisms, and this can result in schools reinforcing limited societal understandings and ideologies of disconnection.

Primary education in New Zealand is arguably less traditionally demarcated by subjects, although there are discernible separations of literacy, numeracy, the arts and sciences. However, in secondary and tertiary education, knowledge and expression divisions are content divided and historically defined. Normally, they are also separately resourced and at worst, hierarchically valued in schools. Ings (2017, p. 130) notes that this can lead to forms of “professional jealousy that lie at the base of many of the interpersonal conflicts we encounter

176 The instance referred to here is established practice at St Kentigern College where James Wakelin, a Visual Art: Design teacher, currently borrows a three credit, internally assessed standard (91102: Construct and deliver a crafted and controlled oral text) from English. He does this so he can broaden the presentation skills of young designers in his classes. This standard is derived from the Level 7 ‘Creating Meaning’ strand [speaking] and related achievement objectives in the English Learning Area of The New Zealand Curriculum (2007). It is related to the material in the Teaching and Learning Guide for English, Ministry of Education, 2011, available at <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz>

177 Currently an achievement standard can only be used once by a student. If it has been ‘given away’ to another department, it is no longer accessible as a fall back option in the department that ‘loaned it out’.

and it can take many forms.” It is inside this troubled vā that opportunities for interdisciplinary approaches to the arts can founder.

As a case in point, currently NCEA Achievement Standards at Levels 1, 2 and 3 can technically be shared between disciplines. So, a teacher of Visual Art Design can employ an English standard about the presentation of information. This can be used as a credit earning undertaking, presenting a design process, product or service to a client or stakeholder using ordered visual aids on a PowerPoint presentation.¹⁷⁶ However, although such a standard can be borrowed from another discipline, in practice this rarely happens. When subjects have developed statuses and discrete cultures, sharing standards may be seen as disciplinarily detrimental and destabilising. There may be questions about another discipline’s ability to effectively teach content, worries about impacts on limited departmental resourcing, or the resulting unavailability of the standard within the parent department, if something goes wrong.¹⁷⁷ Borrowing standards can also be experienced as time consuming because the practice generally disrupts established traditions of practice.

Because departmentally the connective nature of faiva is not easily achievable in secondary schools, students often struggle to construct knowledge gaining environments that correlate with how they create learning environments outside of school.

Geraghty (2021, Appendix 1), explains it like this:

For my last two years of school, I chose English Language because it was about creative writing and there was more flexibility on how you could do the

curriculum. Like you wrote your own stories and there were no boundaries. That similar mindset was in Design as well, which was really cool and obviously Music's like a main thing in my life. They all related to music because I was able to, in Design, physically put down on paper what I wanted to have out. Then I could in English, emotionally write out in words what I'm feeling and then in Music – kinda put together all three of those aspects.¹⁷⁸

However, these negotiations of a system that in practice offers limited flexibility meant that for this student, the deepest and most connective levels of artistic inquiry were sought out inside the Faiva Creatives initiative.¹⁷⁹

Hargraves (2020), in her recommendations for supporting Pacific students in education, suggests that in New Zealand schools we should be pursuing “effective pedagogies which are discursive and collaborative” (para. 4), and Ings notes that such approaches are useful because they can “enhance more flexible ways of thinking and growth” (2019, p. 63).

THE LIMITATIONS OF ASSESSMENT CULTURE

However, thinking and growth are not only enhanced by

discursive and collaborative approaches to learning. In the interviews supporting this project, a significant number of youth leaders and students independently stressed the need for fertile learning environments that are not predicated on assessment and binary notions of success and failure (Atkins, 2021, Appendix 2; Geraghty, 2021, Appendix 1; Kaho. C, 2021, Appendix 1; Kaho. V, 2021, Appendix 1; Kapao, 2021, Appendix 1; Kennedy, 2019, Appendix 2; Lavea, 2019, Appendix 2; Macdonald, 2021, Appendix 1; Riley, 2019, Appendix 2). They saw growth connected to an environment where mistakes were normalised, rather than framed as failure or disablement. This emphasis on learning as something enhanced by low stress, creative, thought-provoking environments reminds me of the etymology of the word ‘school’, that actually derives from the Greek σχολή (scholē), meaning “spare time, leisure, rest, ease; that in which leisure is employed; learned discussion” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2000, para. 1).

Perhaps if the literature, interviews and experiences of ‘asi that have resourced this inquiry emphasise anything, it is the necessity for learning environments for Oceanic students to be oriented towards wellbeing and an embodied sense of identity, co-creation and achievement (Alofesio, 2021, Appendix 2; Atkins, 2021, Appendix 2; Ete, 2019, Appendix 2; Geraghty, 2021, Appendix 1; Kaho. C, 2021, Appendix 1; Kaho. V, 2021, Appendix 1; Kapao, 2021, Appendix 2; Kennedy, 2019, Appendix 2; Lavea, 2019, Appendix 2; Macdonald, 2021, Appendix 1; Riley, 2019, Appendix 2; Tu’ua, 2019, Appendix 2). It is within such environments that I have observed ‘asi rise and connect ... creating a sense of belonging and connectivity ... and lifting students’ abilities and potentials into the light.

¹⁷⁸ Appendix 1, Interview 1, 01:16:35.

¹⁷⁹ Currently, this student is a successful New Zealand composer and performer who is enrolled in a double degree in Communication Studies and Business, (both of which fields are relatively interdisciplinary in nature).

CONCLUSION



FIGURE 6.1
Overview of the research.
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INTRODUCTION

In writing this exegesis I have been cognisant that etymologically the word comes from the Greek *exegeisthai*, meaning to “interpret, guide or lead” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2008, p. 498). As such, the document has sought to articulate the journey of a subjective question that asked:

“What occurs when young Oceanic people work together creatively in a group, drawing on values from their cultural heritage to create meaningful faiva?”

On its journey across six chapters, the exegesis has considered personal and theoretical contexts, the project’s research design, and thinking behind creative works that have surfaced during the inquiry.

The performance of *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* has been resourced by six bodies of knowledge (Figure 6.1) and much of this has come from primary resources. This is because the concept of ‘asi has not been widely discussed in the literature. However, the word and its presence are evident in current discourses and practice with Oceanic youth leaders. Although its meaning has expanded from its use by Wolfgramm (1993), in this study I have proposed it as a contribution to how we might think about the ways that young Oceanic people work together productively in a group when creating meaningful, contemporary faiva. Conceptually the thesis constitutes an artistic inquiry that Mäkelä, Nimkulrat, Dash and Nsenga define as “academically-attuned, practice-led research” (2011, p. 8), where inquiry and art practices work and develop in unison. Because the study was explored through practice, it has been concurrently generative and reflective (Gray, 1996).

As an Oceanic woman and a teacher, I am aware that my culture reaches across genealogies; I am part of Aotearoa/New Zealand's diverse Pacific population who are born in this country and are of mixed ancestry.

This blending of richness lies behind the way I negotiate and speak with the world as an artist. In my Master of Philosophy thesis I discussed this state as 'positive cultural dissonance'. In other words I do not see my mixed Oceanic ancestry as a negative state; it is instead beneficial because I can draw on and participate in multiple cultural frameworks where synergies arise that can be generative and optimistic, rather than conflicting and obstructive. In *FAIVA IFAI VĀ* we see this position as something fluid that moves between spaces; I am not half of anything. I proudly draw on Tongan, Samoan, Māori and Western ideas and language because, like my students, the journeys we make seek out constructive relationships of being.

Like the ocean, we are constantly in motion, moving fluidly, across and within, finding beautiful connections between things but remaining respectful of knowledge so, when it surfaces, we acknowledge its origin.¹⁸⁰

Although *FAIVA IFAI VĀ*, is a synthesis of my thinking and expression, behind it lies a blend of pain and optimism. Like many of the students in the Faiva Creatives group and those who seek out the array of artistic community initiatives in Aotearoa/New Zealand, our lives are shaped by complexity and beauty ... and a desire to rise into the light. During the interviews with pupils who had been involved in the *Lila* project, Fania Kapao (2012, Appendix 1), one of the students, looking back on her time in the Faiva Creatives said this:

In terms of knowing something has hit its peak ... I'd say for me it's when you feel old pain coming up to the surface and healing. I know that sounds really bad, but that's how it feels. It's like you've somehow unknowingly identified this old pain and through your creative process, you've worked on healing it. The peak comes when you feel like the next breath you take is the first you've ever taken. It's uncomfortable, it's new, but it's sustaining ... When I was performing spoken word poetry, I felt 'asi in a way in which all the trauma and pain that has taken place in my past suddenly becomes healing to talk about. Like *Lila*, yes tears are shed, but after it all, it comes from a place of pride and finally making peace with the past.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Specifically, I am indebted to the cultural expertise of Associate Professor Dr Albert Refiti, Dr Okusitinto Māhina, Kolokesa Māhina – Tuai, Aisea Māhina, Dr Linita Manu'atu, Dr Jani Wilson, Dr Natasha Urale-Baker and Rongo Atkins, all of whom have helped me when I have referred to or sought to understand obscure or complex concepts.

¹⁸¹ Appendix 1, Interview 2, Question 1 and Appendix 1, Interview 2, Question 5.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

The thesis proposes four contributions to knowledge.

First, it offers a consideration of 'asi as a phenomenon. This unseen spirit I suggest, is discernible during the development of work, its performance and its aftermath. It reaches beyond singularised Western ideas like apogee and apotheosis, and may be understood as inhabiting conceptual spaces similar to malie, māfana, ihi, wehi and wana.¹⁸² However, it extends these

¹⁸² Rongo (2021) uses the Maori word ihi to describe an internal positive energy that connects te taha tinana (physical being) and te taha wairua (the spiritual realm). This energy can be both tangible and the intangible, potential and the realisation of potential. It is ignited by what is seen, heard, felt. In te ao Maori, this energy is connected to te wehi (an emotional reaction that acknowledges the energy of ihi) and through this to te wana (connective energy that unites people and connects us to ideas and our environment).

¹⁸³ Thus, we might relate the idea of 'asi to the Samoan concept of asiasiga that refers to a visitation of spirits or a "pastoral visitation conducted by members of a community to those in need to offer spiritual, physical, and emotional support and to hear stories of survival" (Tamasese et al., 2014, p. x).

¹⁸⁴ This discussion was initiated in 2019 with the gathering of Oceanic scholars in an event at Auckland University in Aotearoa, New Zealand called A Proliferation of Models: New Paradigms in Indigenous Research Working Session.

concepts in its distinctive association with the visitation of a constructive, spiritual energy.¹⁸³ 'Asi is a living phenomenon that resources connections between creativity, people, identity and belonging.

The study also contributes to evolving ideas of faiva as a contemporary artistic phenomenon, by considering its nature in the work of a group of Oceanic youth (the Faiva Creatives) and in the current practices of a number of community leaders. Such faiva can combine contemporary approaches to sound design, ta'anga hele 'uhila (video design), fakatātā (illustration), faiva talanoa (performative storytelling), faiva ta'anga (performed poetry), faiva hiva (music creation) and faiva haka (choreography/movement).

The study also contributes to an increasing emphasis on, and recognition of, Oceanic research methodologies based on a heliaki (metaphor).¹⁸⁴ The Ngatu methodological framework was designed for a specific kind of artistic inquiry where the researcher is a reflective, collaborative observer-maker, whose interactions with her participants is personal, intuitive and creative. The thesis demonstrates and explains how a Ngatu framework utilises phases of question gestation, information gathering, experimentation, composition, and presenting, in the development of co-creative work that draws its processes from Oceanic ways of knowing and working.

The final contribution the study makes is as a proposal. It suggests that by considering the concept of contemporary faiva as a post-disciplinary construct, we might enable greater levels of fluidity and connection in Arts education. The concept of contemporary faiva and ways in which it is developed by students and Oceanic youth leaders, I suggest, might

indicate ways that currently demarcated arts practices can be productively joined and demarcations between schools and the communities rethought. Thus, disciplinary divisions between English, Physical Education, Technology and the Arts¹⁸⁵ might flow through and with each other in richer ways, allowing students to not only generate performances but also integrate co-creation, belonging and wellbeing as part of their educational process.

FURTHER RESEARCH

In this research I have considered 'asi in the context of contemporary faiva and, accordingly, the emphasis of the inquiry has been on the Arts. However, I am aware that the concept may warrant recognition and application in other collaborative contexts like sports (Macdonald, 2021, Appendix 1;¹⁸⁶ Māhina – Tuai, 2021).¹⁸⁷ There is also potential for research into how 'asi might function in non-physical,

online environments where people are involved in co-creative processes in the arts and education (given that these realms have burgeoned as a result of the COVID pandemic). However, these research potentials are beyond the parameters of this current project.

PRACTICE

In keeping with the spirit of Ngatu as a co-creative process, I am considering publishing a book of poetry (including work that my students and I have created). The work may contain illustrated portraits or images that support insights into some of the issues that Oceanic students encounter in New Zealand education today.

I may also present the *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* poems as spoken word contributions that I contextualise, at education conferences. This artistic discussion of issues that currently reside in statistics or organisational recommendations may add a layer of human experience and intensity to what is currently in the public domain. While conducting this research I became aware of the power of human voices embedded in publications like those from the office of the Children's Commissioner (2018) and [Conversation.education.govt.nz](https://conversation.education.govt.nz) (2019). These were statements made by young people. However, quotes like these are generally fragments that are only one or two sentences in length. I am wondering if perhaps longer, poetic works might provide deeper, more complex and resonant expressions of experience.

¹⁸⁵ These are four of the eight learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum.

¹⁸⁶ Appendix 1, Interview 3, 00:51:43

¹⁸⁷ Personal communication with Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai where she likened the sport of Rugby to faiva tau 'akapulu or the performance art of going to war with a ball (21 October 2021). A related phenomenon is evidenced in Sport New Zealand's discussion of ihi in relation to te wehi and te wana. <https://sportnz.org.nz/kaupapa-maori/a-matou-taonga/te-ihii/>

I am also considering taking a few of the poetic portraits from the thesis and redesigning them as animated film poems¹⁸⁸ that contain fakatātā and soundscapes. By posting these on YouTube or Vimeo, the insights would be accessible to a wider range of people.

PUBLICATION

In addition to performances emanating from *FAIVA / FAI VĀ*, there is also potential to reconstitute and publish work from the exegesis as an article that posits faiva as a framework for post-disciplinary approaches to teaching the arts in education. A useful location for such an article might be the *MAI Journal*. *MAI* is an open access, online, peer reviewed publication that presents multidisciplinary articles dealing with Indigenous and Pacific issues related to Aotearoa New Zealand.¹⁸⁹

I may also submit a paper (and a subsequent article) about the Ngatu methodology to the 2022 Link Symposium,¹⁹⁰ and I will investigate opportunities to contribute to the 2022 NZEI Pasifika Fono,¹⁹¹ and the PPTA Education Conference.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ William Wees (1984) described ‘poetry film’ as a genre that fuses word poetry, visual imagery, and sound to create a more intense presentation and interpretation of meaning.

¹⁸⁹ See: <http://www.journal.mai.ac.nz/>

¹⁹⁰ This is an annual, peer reviewed conference at which I presented a paper this year: See <https://www.linksymposium.com/about>

¹⁹¹ <https://events.nzei.org.nz>

¹⁹² <https://confer.eventsair.com/ppta-2021/>

... IN CLOSING

This project took four years and a lifetime to create; in that time it has required huge levels of strength and faith in a research question that kept evolving. My years of commitment to students as a teacher and cultural mentor have shown me that the central idea behind the thesis has a beating heart. The life in this idea has also been identified by students with whom I have worked; it is evident in the talanoa of youth leaders who commit so generously to enabling cultural expression and belonging, and it is in the wisdom of Indigenous scholars with whom I have consulted.

In the last days of writing this exegesis, I was talking with Aisea Māhina, who had generously taken time to review the document. He reminded me of the concept of ‘toutou ‘asi’; something that can occur multiple times. When he visits his elderly aunt he recalls that she often says, “‘Sai ho’o toutou ‘asi mai (It is good that you keep appearing here repeatedly), Ha’u ma’u pe” (Keep returning).¹⁹³ In this everyday statement, ‘asi is not a description of a climax in faiva; it is an integrated part of ordinary life. ‘Asi is concerned with connections between people, where there is love, warmth, belonging and repetition. ‘Asi is the unseen spirit that binds and strengthens. Its energy bound the members of the Faiva Creatives group and me together as it binds Oceanic community initiatives and the young men and women within them. Macdonald (2021, Appendix 1) described it like this, “It was a place where we belonged, we ‘knew’, we trusted each other. There was just a mutual understanding that we were all going through something and we were all vulnerable in that space, so we just wouldn’t break it at all – not for anything”.¹⁹⁴

It is this “ha’u ma’u pe” (returning) that has walked alongside the thesis. Two years after *Lila*, in interviews, the students spoke about their experiences as if they had occurred yesterday. They recalled the energy, the vulnerability and the heightened senses. These students returned throughout the thesis, remaining in contact, updating me on events in their lives ... and they will be present in the *FAIVA / FAI VĀ* performance.

So, in closing ... this thesis is a respectful offering from the field of artistic practice. I don’t propose that it can cure the world’s problems but I hope that it might contribute something useful to how we value and understand our young people as taonga who bring unique gifts to the world. I foaki (offer) this research as koloa back to all who were involved in the study; my family, the university, the complex realm of the arts, and wider Oceanic worlds. I hope that both the faiva and fai vā might contribute to a greater whole, to a living idea that offers both protection and expression ... that connects young people, their families and communities in the warmth and beauty of ‘ofa / alofa ... that sustains us all and is felt as the spirit of ‘asi.

¹⁹³ Personal communication with A. Māhina (November, 2021).

¹⁹⁴ Appendix 1, Interview 3, 00:15:57

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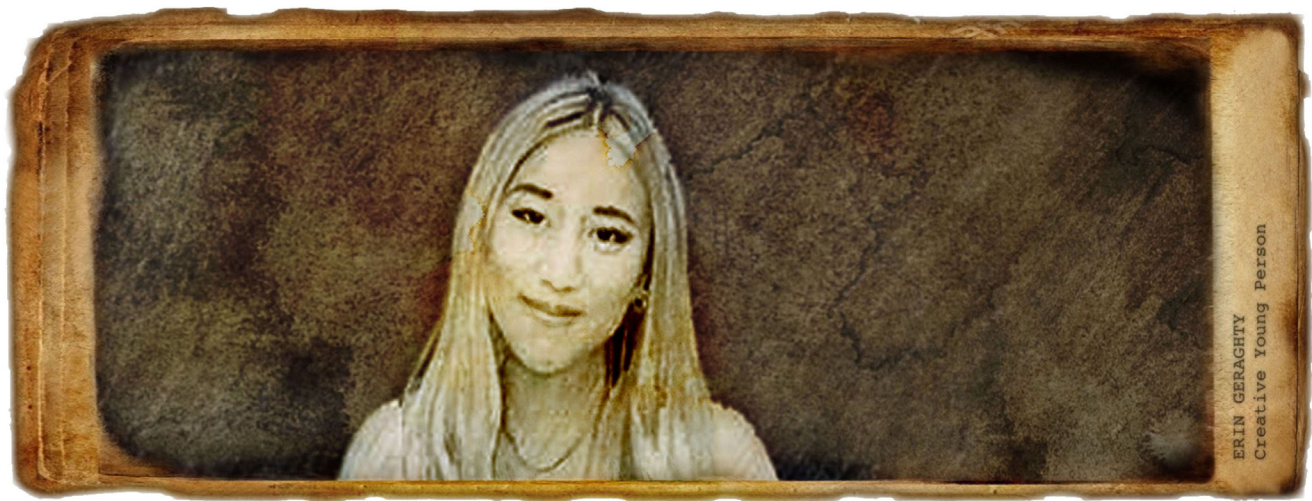
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 : TRANSCRIPTS OF
INTERVIEWS WITH OCEANIC YOUTH



INTERVIEW 1: ERIN GERAGHTY

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA
INTERVIEWEE: ERIN GERAGHTY

Context:

Erin Geraghty was a student at ACG Sunderland where I was teaching from 2016 to 2019. She was heavily involved in the school’s extracurricular creative pursuits, including Word Up (A spoken Word competition for high school students), RockQuest, SUSO, Faiva Creatives, Kapa Haka and Polyfest. She was integral in creating the faiva Lila in 2019.

Topic: Reflections on the faiva Lila and the nature of ‘asi

Location: Zoom meeting online

Date: 10 September 2021, 2.00pm

Time: Part 01: 00:00:00–01:52:41

Recording device: MacBook Pro macOS Mojave Version 10.14.6

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed here are excerpts from a broader talanoa).

CECELIA 00:06:24

Describe the process that the Faiva Creatives went through when creating Lila. How did the ideas come together?

ERIN 00:06:58

I remember you asked us about the idea of 'asi and what that is and I remember we sat in the design room there one night that - we were there for like five hours, and it was just like, goosebumps, and everything. We were talking about all these stories. I think it was cultural stories about little things that we do in our cultures [...] We realized how similar they were at the same time [...] the connection through music and dance and getting a message through those mediums – we looked through those mediums. I think we saw through poetry – poetry was the main one [...] we definitely had a huge talk beforehand, and then we wrote the main ideas down and narrowed them down a bit and detailed them.

CECELIA 00:11:01

What environment needs to be there for a wide variety of students to offer creative suggestions?

ERIN 00:06:58

I think it is a reassurance that this is a safe environment, and that everything that you say won't be held against you, or you won't be judged by what you say, because I feel like we're very vulnerable with each other - things that we don't usually talk about. We were all on the same sort of mental note that this is the sort of space that we're talking in. And this is the topic and stuff - it just felt nice. Like, although I've never really been that close with XXXX obviously, there was some sort of connection

between all of us that it was okay and I think when one person sort of steps up and becomes vulnerable, it's easier for other people. Also because it was a smaller group of people, it's easier to hear everyone, and less ears to worry about.

00:13:15

... and I think like 'pure purpose' from each other as well. Like within the bigger group, it was just like a cool after school thing to sort of hang out whereas I think, with us - we were actually wanting to create something out of that. It wasn't just mindless chats or anything like it, it was getting to a point. But we needed to break the uncomfortableness of that before we could actually go into that space.

00:14:38

I totally believe that, like we bounce off other people's energies and ideas, so that definitely helps everyone.

CECELIA 00:15:04

Reflecting back to our meetings, which were often after school, why do you think when we met, we often shared food?

ERIN 00:06:58

I think it's because we were quite culturally based - it was mainly Asian and Polynesian cultures - I know that in both, it's very food oriented. Like at someone's house, you always bring food or, you know, at dinner, there's more than enough to share. I think it's because we were just so comfortable with each other, that it kind of felt like a family meal that you kind of shared food within. It's cool to share it, because we were sharing our own experiences. I think it's because you're trying to share psychological stuff, (is this right? In the interview you

said Physical stuff but did you mean psychological)? because it's harder to do that. You can do that through food. I was brought up like always, bringing food to things. I share food with the people I love, so I don't know – that was my vibe.

CECELIA 00:17:58

When coming up with ideas for Lila, what were the main ideas that seemed to be unanimous for all of you, and why do you think they seem to be common themes?

ERIN 00:18:17

I think it's because the school that we were in was quite different to the environments that we were in before we came to the school. It was definitely a big culture shock and

I think some of us lost our roots a little bit and I know that for me and XXXX, because we went to the same schools, our friends were like, "Oh, you go to a private school..." and I think a lot of that had to do with why we wanted to share the underdog stories in Lila. It's because it's not something that people at [the private] school would see. I think we were looking at the previous plays as well and we were like, what is this crap? It's not deep or anything. We wanted to do something that actually told the collective story and gave insight into ... Not what the kids in school have grown in.

CECELIA 00:23:07

What do you think the common themes were?

ERIN 00:23:15

It circled around goals and aspirations, and then families and then expectations and then limitations - but yeah, it's all about goals in the creative arts. We were working on this project but we were growing and finding ourselves as well.

CECELIA 00:26:46

How do you know 'asi is present? How does it feel? Can you give examples of when you were working together, performing or after the performance that you could sense 'asi?

ERIN 00:27:06

Personally, it's like, a physical reaction, like, body chills and like a tightness in my chest. Sort of like a mental realization, inspiration but then within the group, I felt like it was present when we were just all on the same page. We were working as one person - although there were four brains. We have very different life stories, experiences that I just felt like, when we were working on some things, I was like, 'Damn! I feel like we're like one person right now [...] When one person said something, and then the other one was like, 'Yeah', and then the other one was like 'Yeah'. It was pretty buzzy.

CECELIA 00:28:09

How about the actual performance? Were there any moments when you felt 'asi?

ERIN 00:28:22

I think it was Frankie, and that was the first night and she said the poem... when she said it, it was so emotional, like – 'Ohhhh - I don't cry, often about creative things, but there was so much

of that presence there that I was like ... I just remember sitting on the floor backstage and it was just like, 'Wow!'

00:30:18

I think 'asi can be seen in an after-performance thing, because we have like the adrenaline, running off of that, and it's infectious.

CECELIA 00:30:33

Do you think it occurs before as well or even in the making of a faiva? Like were there any moments in rehearsals?

ERIN 00:30:18

Yeah, I think the way that I've been viewing 'asi is through quite a positive lens, but I think viewing it through a not so positive lens - like, you know, the nervousness before the performance or something. [...] Do you remember XXXX's scene where like, the parents are fighting and that was an important part for us to do and I think we were trying to explain to everyone in the cast, what the play meant to us or what that scene was, and then I remember us seeing XXXX perform it a couple of times, and we're like, 'Nah nah nah. Give it more! Go! Go! Go! ... and then he got it, and I think that collective - everyone sort of understood the whole idea. It was in a rehearsal and then he came out and he was that ANGRY DAD! And we were just like, 'Okay, that's what we mean. Yeah, that's the one!'

00:32:41

I think they didn't go through the same process as us when we wrote it - they kind of needed to see it for themselves to get it. Like, it doesn't matter how many times that we'd explain it - it was up to them.

CECELIA 00:33:11

How did everybody prepare themselves emotionally for the performance that evening?

ERIN 00:33:36

I was quite nervous actually because of how important to us it was. I think [...] from the beginning of our group having this safe space to connect and be vulnerable with each other. I was a bit nervous as well, because it's not like a fun school play for people to watch. It had a lot of like mature themes that I don't think a lot of people were expecting, and it was definitely more of an artistic approach rather than a 'Let me make you happy' approach. So, I was definitely worried about that.

00:37:20

I felt like this was a collective thing and we're going out on the stage as a unit. Not just, 'We wrote the play, and you guys are going there to perform. We feel your nerves and all your hard work as well.' I just thought that was a nice little thing to do before the performance, just to show that like, 'Hey, it's okay - If you mess up - well, the experience was cool and we really enjoyed building up to this point. So just have fun. Go kill it, feel the emotions, feel the nerves' [...] I also think that although we were nervous, we were also quite emotionally drained as well, because of all of what had led to that point. We also did the sharing food thing, even with the whole cast and audience.

CECELIA 00:40:09

How did you each, and collectively, build a sense of belonging?

ERIN 00:40:27

I think it was just finding that common ground in our stories – like we had all these different things but we found the middle ground.

00:42:28

I think we also tried to bring belonging in through our poems as well, because that was the main thing that we were collaborating with. Putting our poetry into the play, that was like the main thing.

CECELIA 00:42:38

Yeah, that's right, from those workshops and then from our own workshops, you came up with like a series of poems and it was like trying to find the themes in each of those poems. Good reminder!

ERIN 00:43:14

Wasn't it Tori's poem? That was the one that kicked it off.

CECELIA 00:43:24

And that was a poem from the year before, so actually we were working on this thing for a couple of years before we even got to the point where we were making our own? [...] We had all these random ideas but, in that year, we kinda brought all the ideas into one thing, and it was like – they don't quite fit but we're just gonna try to make them fit somehow.

ERIN 00:44:00

Long process!

ERIN 00:44:50

... and we were at school (in the last year) till 11.00 pm most nights.

CECELIA 00:44:55

It was crazy aye?!

ERIN 00:45:00

We put a lot of work into this [...] with some of the others gone – there was none of those vibes any more

CECELIA 00:48:37

Can you describe how you and the group felt while the performance was happening?

ERIN 00:48:53

Quite proud. I felt like a mother that night – it stressed me out – I felt proud as. We all had a role that night.

CECELIA 00:50:06

Ok so that was during it – you felt proud, then immediately afterward?

ERIN 00:50:15

I was just too excited. Like, we got through it, even when mistakes were made. I know other people would be upset, but I wasn't. I didn't feel any negative energy. I was pretty chill. It couldn't have been a happier night for me.

CECELIA 00:51:26

What did working on projects like Lila and other things that you were involved in outside of school (like RockQuest or Polyfest) give you that the school curriculum didn't give you?

ERIN 00: 51:47

It gave me an opportunity to meet people who were like-minded and who were a lot more carefree about life and weren't so serious. That was the main thing. Everyone at school was very serious and very narrow – not narrow minded – but like in terms of focus and life's purpose – it was like – 'I'm on this path, I'm never stepping off of this path.' But it was cool meeting new people – Rockquest especially, because I've done it five years in a row – just meeting cool people who are doing cool things. I'm so glad that I was still friends with my friends from Intermediate who kinda pushed the outside environment back onto me – like I didn't lose any of that. Carefree is the word – I think that's the word for it.

00:53:37

I found that I spent a lot of my time in high school looking for competitions like that – I'm so glad that I found SUSO – that's a big one – I kinda came into the school. Mr XXXX did not like me in my first year – actually none of the teacher's really liked me in my first year because I was kinda a mess. I was still in my same mindset from my last school, so I was quite like - running around barefoot and I wasn't too serious about a lot of things but then obviously I got into the whole mindset of the school, but am glad that I kept one foot outside of the door.

00:55:55

Me and XXXX had a chat about this... now two years out of school – we're just thriving – we're living the life.

00:59:51

I think overall, keeping to your outside environment, not being sucked in at the school.

CECELIA 01:02:24

Can you think of ways in which secondary school education could bring the experience of 'asi into the formal part of school?

ERIN 01: 02:45

Actually yeah, in school, the only time where you could potentially see 'asi is in a cultural event or a performance or a game – I definitely think we can.

01:03:25

You know how we stay in our one class with a couple teachers? Although you become quite close by the end of the year, you have to start again – sort of like establishing that safe space from the beginning. Perhaps even like putting in non-conventional classes like mindfulness (all of that), to balance out the academic needs –sort of incorporate a whole lifestyle instead of you're to study and that's it.

01:08:19

We had this class (in uni) called mahitahi and it was all about working together as one. A lot of people didn't like it because it was like using indigenous values to do essays and people were like, 'I came here to study for this degree not to do some class on working together.' But the teacher was like – 'When you go out into the work environment, this is the thing that you're going to have to do, no matter what. You have to work

with someone or a group of people’ – I love that paper. It uses Māori stories – and the values from them – I loved it and my group was amazing, and we grew this one mind thinking when we were approaching our project and it was like a research diary and it wasn’t just like some boring essay. It was cool and we had a lot of fun with it and we did these fun activities – like the drawings and stuff. I feel like we should do more of that.

CECELIA 01:09:30

Do you think you enjoy it more because you are creative and perhaps the students that didn’t enjoy it so much were not as creative, or were they just not liking it because they wanted to stick with a more direct route of learning?

ERIN 01:09:51

I think they wanted to stick to a more direct route which is fair enough but I think it is also because they just couldn’t see the point of learning Māori values. It’s what happens to a lot of kids – even in Law and Medicine. I remember XXXX and XXXX complaining about why they have to learn about tikanga and stuff. Me and XXXX gave them a full on lecture but I think it’s helpful even for the people who aren’t creative, because it’s another good problem solving challenge. That’s what you could argue to people who are like ‘How is this more beneficial than writing an essay?’ It makes you think in a different way like, I know my business classes are going the same route as my communication studies classes where they’re not just giving us homework based on – ‘write an essay.’ We have to make an advertisement and market that and I’m so excited – I feel like AUT is doing ‘asi – just slowly incorporating it into like the formal academic Incorporating it into Secondary schools will be cool because that’s where you need to start.

ERIN 01:12:33

And also to make it like a natural idea – not something that’s like – ‘So now we have to do something creative because we have to’. You know, it’s like wow, I can do this idea in a completely different way, and it has the same effect.

01:13:27

The world is ever changing you can’t stay in one spot forever

01:14:47

I hope that when I end up having kids, that they have the opportunity to feel the presence of ‘asi. I think ‘asi’ is also like the opportunity to explore every boundary that you have, that you can, and that’s your journey of finding who you actually are because you’ve tried everything and you know what you like. I think that’s a very emotional and mentally stimulating experience.

CECELIA 01:15:54

In your creative life what areas that are separated by disciplines in school do you naturally integrate? You know how you had music class, you had English class and you had Tech class – were there some classes that you could naturally combine together and undertake one project that covered all subjects?

ERIN 01:16:35

Yeah, that’s why I chose all those classes for my last two years of school. I chose English Language because it was about creative writing and there was more flexibility on how you could do the curriculum. Like you wrote your own stories and there were no boundaries. That similar mindset was in Design

as well, which was really cool and obviously Music's like a main thing in my life. They all related to music because I was able to, in Design – physically put down on paper what I wanted to have out. Then I could in English, emotionally write out in words what I'm feeling and then in Music – kinda put together all three of those aspects.

01:18:04

That's why I chose to study communication studies and business so I can learn how to market myself, how to communicate and network with people but also how to present myself in a creative way.

01:19:17

That's why I wasn't too gutted or regretful about not taking the sciences in year 10 or 11, I focussed into the things I actually wanted to do.

CECELIA 01:22:40

Looking back at Lila, what do you think students took away from the project?

ERIN 01:22:58

I think what we took away was a different medium of creative writing and performance we'd never experienced before. We've always been pretty good at the wording and writing the thing, but actually making it into a physical performance with other people- that's what we're taking away – trying to explain these things – feeling we get when we write these pieces and what they mean to us but in a performance way, with other people.

01:24:06

It's a little, new spark that's been lit but also like a new art form. That was a serious kinda play. You know, there are your typical school plays, but I think [Lila] was different.

CECELIA :25:03

Why do you think a lot of you would stay at school till 10 o'clock or 11? Why do you think you voluntarily stayed at school that long?

ERIN 01:25:33

On a positive note, we just enjoyed each other's company and we could talk for hours on end, and it wouldn't feel like that. But on a sadder note, I don't think a lot of us y'know wanted to go home after school. I think for a lot of us, it was kinda like a little escape where we didn't have to deal with things as much as if we went home right after school. I think the lure of the safe space and community was the main thing because it was after a day at school and we could finally relax and be ourselves. Like you know how we all unbuttoned and took our shirts out of skirts ... and we'd all take our ties off, and take our hair ties out, and be like – 'Let's put some music on – let's just chill out!' [...] It was school v.2.0

CECELIA 01:28:20

What is it in your culture that you find difficult or helpful in daily life?

ERIN 01:28:54

The way that we do things – you know, like Manaakitanga – like the welcoming of people. There's a certain way that we

approach people, act around people – like I know we’re quite friendly in our culture and it’s all about – ‘Take it, take all that I have for you’ – and like a lot of people find it weird or they find it like – too much. A lot of people don’t understand the welcoming vibe. My uni mates, whenever I go out to eat with them, I’m already sharing food and I’m like, ‘Here try this!’ I think because they don’t get it, it doesn’t get reciprocated. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, but there’s just one side – I’m giving to you.

01:31:50

Pacifica and Asian cultures – we’re very similar [...] there’s some sort of difficulty because I know that the way I was brought up was different to others.

CECELIA 01:32:25

How about your culture being helpful to your everyday life?

ERIN 01:32:32

You know how like the basis of our talks and like my contribution was about stories and ideologies from Chinese culture, that’s been awesome because I feel like my mental health is pretty decent because I have these – maybe it’s philosophies. I have these philosophies that I can think back on, with my mum being really into feng shui and the way things have to be done. I find that really helpful if my mates are going through things, I feel pretty wise and not so worried about it because these stories get passed on. I understand that and I know the whole story, and I know where it’s coming from and how to resolve it if it needs to be resolved. I’ve found that they’ve helped me so much ... all of these little sayings and ideas like Yuanfen (fate / coincidence).

CECELIA 01:35:45

What do you find the most useful when you’re being taught something?

ERIN 01:36:14

Thorough explanation but in simple terms that can be visually shown and I can show it back to you in my own words. If it’s in the form of a story, I can sort of flip it into my narrative and that makes it easier for me to remember.

CECELIA 01:36:58

How do you know something you’ve created has hit its peak – it’s there?

ERIN 01:37:10

It’s an internal thing, I can’t explain it – it just happens. Lately I’ve been singing on these drum and bass songs. I know I’ve hit the vocal as well – it’s just – a melody – I just know because 99% of it is my confirmation and 1% of it is everyone else. I don’t care what anyone else thinks. It’s like an internal thing where you are just like, ‘Woah! Okay, keep going on that – if it works it works – if it doesn’t it doesn’t.’ There was this one melody line – and everyone was like, ‘This is it’ and I was like, ‘I know’. I think it’s when you can’t change it anymore, that’s when it’s hit its point. I can go back on a song and maybe rewrite some bits but, I’m like ‘Guys I can’t. This is the best it can be’ [...] It’s also the minimal effort. If you’re overworking something and you just keep going at it, and at it, and at it, then it’s not authentic anymore. A lot of things with my songs - they were just made up on the spot and I knew instantly they were going to be something good.

CECELIA 01:39:20

What does it feel like?

ERIN 01:39:24

Euphoric! It's like the build-up of euphoria. It's the starting point of euphoria when you get that idea that you can't ignore and then every part of it comes together.

01:39:20

There's no word to describe it! There's no struggle – it kinda just happens – it's spiritual. I don't know why – for me – that's how it's been – like when I was trying to figure out my short film pitch – I spent three weeks. I had seven films and I was like, 'Nah. Nah, none of these are good. I don't see any vision.' I started working on it that night and it was like 'Wait a second – What? – Boom! – Best idea ever – It was sick – I love it!' – It just comes, y'know, I think you just don't put any pressure on it.



INTERVIEW 2: FANIA KAPAO

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: FANIA KAPAO

Context:

Fania Kapao was a student at ACG Sunderland where I was teaching from 2016 to 2019. She was involved in diverse extra-curricular activities including Faiva Creatives, Word Up and Polygroups. She was also a Youth Member of Parliament, representing the Hon. Phil Twyford and the Te Atatu electorate in 2019. She was one of the three writers of the faiva Lila in 2019.

Topic: Reflections on the faiva Lila and the nature of 'asi

Location: A questionnaire discussed online, then emailed to me, due to COVID lockdown restrictions that disabled a kanohi ki te kanohi interview.

Date: 28 September 2021

1. Describe the process that the group went through when creating Lila. How did the ideas come together?

I think that the first thing we really did was get to know each other better. Erin and I already knew each other because we were in the same classes and shared the same friends. But getting to know Shannon in a more intimate way was new. We knew her as the A star195 student who was perfect in every single way until we found that we all shared the same roots in having a past that was different from that of our peers. That built a trust that was unique to us, which then led to the creation of the production.

We just kinda sat in a room together and talked; talking about the things we had been through. Things that we were ashamed of, even though we were the ones affected, not the ones who took action. I guess my point of view concerning the main take away from the play was that it was about someone trying to be okay with being passionate about the things they were passionate about.

In terms of knowing something has hit its peak... I'd say for me it's when you feel old pain coming up to the surface and healing. I know that sounds really bad, but that's how it feels. It's like you've somehow unknowingly identified this old pain and through your creative process, you've worked on healing it. The peak comes when you feel like the next breath you take is the first you've ever taken. It's uncomfortable, it's new, but it's sustaining.

2. What environment needs to be there for a wide variety of students to offer creative suggestions?

I think the main environment that needs to be there in a

creative group situation is trust. Yes, trust in each other but also trust in yourself. We were all so young back then and the things we talked and wrote about were really heavy. But that was normal for us. We were the kinds of people who spoke about our issues so casually because they were a part of who we were. It was funny sometimes though, because we'd get asked by people if we were okay and stuff and we'd laugh it off. Something that we were always very big on was "What is said in this room between these people stays in this room between these people." Not because these things were secrets but because these were the pains and experiences of someone we loved and like family, we protect each other.

3. Reflecting back to our meetings, which were often after school, why do you think when we met we often shared food?

Honestly, I couldn't be there for the after-school things because I had other family commitments to keep, but on the topic of food sharing I think that it's just a thing amongst POC aye? It's just something we do. We share to nourish. We share to show love and pass on traditions.

4. When coming up with ideas for Lila, what were the main ideas that seemed to be unanimous for all of you, and why do you think they seem to be the common theme?

I think the one main idea that we all kind of shared was there being this barrier to the things we wanted to be. Obviously, the lead characters in Lila are conflicted between doing what's expected of them and what they want to do, and others in the picture saying that for whatever reason, the things that they aspired to be or do were not possible. That's something that the three of us felt especially being a part of a student body that had opposite backgrounds to us.

5. *How do you know when ‘asi is present? How does it feel? Can you give examples of when you were working together that you could sense ‘asi?*

So, we had this discussion on the idea that ‘asi is some feeling that you cannot fully and accurately describe. The closest we could get was as if you had goosebumps or something. I think for me being more of a writer in terms of the production of the play, I felt ‘asi through being able to take the experiences that we had collectively and turn it into something that was a product of all of us. There was a certain feeling ... like something or some spirit was guiding the process. It was also extremely therapeutic for us too, to be able to see parts of us in a script.

More so on a personal level, when I was performing spoken word poetry, I felt ‘asi in a way in which all the trauma and pain that has taken place in my past suddenly becomes healing to talk about. Like Lila, yes tears are shed, but after it all, it comes from a place of pride and finally making peace with the past.

6. *How do you know ‘asi is present? How does it feel? Can you give examples of when you were working together, performing or after the performance that you could sense ‘asi?*

Personally, looking back on all the poetry and speech competitions I did, I will say that it gave me the ability to finally be comfortable with myself and things I’d been through. Going to the school that we went to; it wasn’t normal for someone like me with my background to go to a school as prestigious and very Eurocentric. I hate to say that but I’d be lying if I didn’t bring that up. It’s tough to be one out of a handful of Pasifika students. Its even worse when you feel like you have to change yourself so that you are not labeled by the stereotypes that you had no hand in producing. I remember the first day that our school allowed us to go to Polyfest, that was a highlight

because it was the first time we were allowed to be fully immersed in our cultures during school hours. We had peers at other schools who fully embraced their cultures, and we didn’t. We felt ashamed to embrace ours because of our stereotypes and because academia was the prominent culture.

7. *What did working on projects like Lila and other things that you were involved in outside of school (like RockQuest or Polyfest) give you that the school curriculum didn’t give you?*

So, I’d say that what other projects gave me was a huge sense of self that I was lacking. It allowed me to connect to my culture too. In my family, my grandparents have always been very big on living in such a way that reflects success through education and sacrifice. Sacrifice including us kids not learning our mother tongue or our customs. So other projects allowed me to meet other second-generation Pacific islanders who felt just as lost as I did. It also taught me how to speak up for whatever it is that I find to be inhumane in our world.

8. *Can you think of ways in which secondary school education could bring the experience of ‘asi into the formal part of school?*

I’d say one huge way that secondary schools can implement the experience of ‘asi formally is by allowing sections or parts of the curriculum to be built around students getting to know themselves and their histories. Isn’t it just as important to know your own history as it is to know that of the rest of the world? In this way, students will be able to have their own epiphanies and be able to leave secondary school with an amazing sense of self. I think this would also help to mitigate mental health issues because we often face the greatest blocks when we feel as though we have lost ourselves.

9. *Do you think you enjoy it more because you are creative and perhaps the students that didn't enjoy it so much were not as creative or were they just not liking it because they wanted to stick with a more direct route of learning?*

I try to incorporate elements from music, like pitch and intonation and rhythm, in order to deliver a performance in a way that is true to the inspiration behind the piece. Depending on how you say a word, it changes the emotions that emit from it. Depending on your pace or volume you can show the urgency or the delicacy of the situation. From drama I've learnt how to carry the body and how posture and learning how to use a stage adds to your stage presence. We didn't really have much of a drama culture at our college so I guess that kinda slipped in whenever I was practicing for a poetry competition or speech competition. For example, when practicing for my Youth Parliament speech on second generation New Zealanders, I learnt how to hold myself in a way that showed what I meant for each word I said, to strike the core of what it means to be the generation furthest away from the land of our grandparents but still call it home. This came in the form of holding eye contact with people or shifting my gaze over the room.

10. *Looking back at Lila, what do you think students took away from the project?*

I think that students, particularly those acting, learnt that there is more to someone than you think. That just because someone goes to the same school as you, walks the same halls as you and even wears the same blazer as you, does not mean that they are the same. For some the purchase of a blazer is in essence the same as a loaf of bread whereas for others, myself included, it's a WINZ grant your parent/s/guardian has to pay back. I think that the themes in the play - like just trying to

make ends meet was something that had an impact.

For the three of us, I feel like what we took away from the project was just finally being able to be ok with who we are and our stories. We were happy to share these intimate parts because we hadn't been allowed to do so before.

I think that everyone has an innate moral compass that is always in pursuit of looking for something ... authentic. We are always drawn to the "come up story" and to the stories where sadness and loss plagues the lead. Projects like Lila help us to finally be authentic and share our come-up stories. That we go through what we go through in the hopes of achieving something great. I've always said that "We grow through what we go through" (I don't know if that is an already coined phrase but it sounds great) and so yeah, I think that loads of voluntary time will be invested in projects like Lila because it is a rare thing to find performances that offer you both the highs and lows of someone's life.

11. *What is it in your culture that you find difficult or helpful in daily life?*

I find the cultural significance of family to be helpful in my life. Having a community of people who love you and want you to be the best you can be is so, so, so pivotal. However, it does prove to be somewhat difficult sometimes when the things you want to do requires you to leave home since in the Cook Island culture and I'm sure many other cultures, sticking together means safety and security. I think also growing up learning to respect your elders helps immensely because it teaches you the value of respecting relationships between people who know more than you and how important it is to learn from your elders.

12. How do you know something you've created has hit its peak – it's there?

I know that something has hit its peak when I have this “aha!” moment. When I have a small idea and it morphs with an energy that is unmatched. And then when it gets to a certain point where I can't believe that I created whatever I'm writing (because it is so true to what I felt but could not find the correct words to describe it) that's when I know that something has hit its peak. It also helps to read it to people and watch their reactions. I remember Erin crying at my piece I wrote about my sister Angelique, and that was when I knew that that piece in particular was pivotal.



INTERVIEW 3: SHANNON MACDONALD

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA INTERVIEWEE:
SHANNON MACDONALD

Context:

Shannon Macdonald was a student at ACG Sunderland where I was teaching between 2016 and 2019. She was heavily involved in the school's extracurricular activities including various sports teams (including the senior netball team), Word Up (A spoken word competition for high school students) and Faiva Creatives. Shannon was a house leader and heavily involved in creating the faiva Lila in 2019.

Topic: Reflections on the faiva Lila and the nature of 'asi

Location: Zoom meeting online¹⁹⁶

Date: 11 September 2021, 4.00pm

Time: Part 01: 00:00:00–01:20:10

Recording device: MacBook Pro macOS Mojave Version 10.14.6

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed are excerpts from a broader talanoa).

CECELIA 00:10:46

Can you describe how you came up with the ideas? How did it come together? How did you know that we were on to a good thing?

SHANNON 00:11:14

Initially, we didn't know that we were going to do the production. We just started off doing workshops, expressing ourselves, writing down how we felt and how we related. Then, because we were each able to sense something between us, something was similar in all of our stories and everything we created, and so I think that's what inspired us to do something like Lila. After all of those creative workshops, we just did things which we thought people would relate to, although not necessarily our school - but minorities - and how, especially Pacific families related to each other. I think starting from not necessarily trying to please, but doing something we were familiar with. Each doing our separate things and then joining them together. That's kind of how it was created and just matching what was similar between us.

CECELIA 00:13:11

You didn't realise how much you had in common until we did the poems [...] and then you were throwing up ideas on the board. Did you find it helpful in picking out those things?

SHANNON 00:14:09

I found it allowed us to actually see what each other had been through, actually see what we could relate to, instead of just feeling it and get it written down. I feel like a lot of what we wrote on the whiteboards and on the big pieces of paper,

really shaped what we created. We used different stories from different people and I think that's what really made it emotional.

CECELIA 00:15:32

In the group, what do you think made it so that you felt comfortable to share your ideas?

SHANNON 00:15:57

I think it was because we all knew each other beforehand. We all knew

little secrets about each other which we wouldn't necessarily share with anyone else and we all knew that whatever was said, it would never get out. Even though most places say, "It's a safe place" - (they explicitly say that), we 'knew' we trusted each other. There was just a mutual understanding that we were all going through something and we were all vulnerable in that space, so we just wouldn't break it at all - not for anything.

CECELIA 00:17:13

The time we put into this was voluntary time. You guys had stuff to do, I had stuff to do, but for some reason we would spend hours on this.

SHANNON 00:17:36

We just really wanted to do it, we wanted some recognition and we wanted some story to be told that would never have been told in the history of the school ever before. I think for me, it specifically drove through that. When we went down

South (Auckland), we watched the play they did. Seeing how encompassed everything was, seeing how everyone in the audience knew exactly what was happening. We wanted some feeling, I guess, from an audience, which wouldn't necessarily be exposed to that.

CECELIA 00:20:29

Sometimes - we'd catch up after school and we'd share food. Was there any significance?

SHANNON 00: 21:21

I feel like it's a very Pacific people thing, every time I go over to my... (I reconnected with my dad's side more) it's always, 'Come over Sunday for lunch' and then we'll talk for hours. I feel like we didn't want it to be a formal kind of thing. Having food, it just made it feel more natural, instead of being in a classroom, just writing. It allowed us to talk as well, instead of just heads down. I feel like it just makes everything more comfortable. Everyone feels better with food.

SHANNON 00:23:23

We each bought something we enjoyed and so it just allowed us to just share what we like, and share something in common between us.

CECELIA 00:24:14

In any part of the production (coming up with the ideas - before, during or after the production really) was there any time that you felt 'asi'?

SHANNON 00:24:42

I think I felt it like three times during the actual production. One was when XXXX spoke and danced. Another one was with XXXX, when she spoke, and then the last one was at the end of the play. I know, it wasn't just me that felt it. Even though it was XXXX and my words coming through, it still felt like they made it their own, it was personal to them and they spoke so genuinely that it felt real and we could all see that they were also impacted by the performance.

00:26:06

I think when it directly relates to the performer, and when they do it so fluently when they just know everything about it. You wouldn't question if they wrote it themselves at all or if they had any relation to what they were saying. You knew that they understood it.

00:27:39

Like, even talking about it now, I literally have goosebumps.

00:27:49

I feel like it's more impactful to me as well, because I know. I can relate. I wrote that.

I'm just so proud.

00:29:19

I feel like you're having a physical connection - like we were all with arms around each other in a circle (before the performance). I feel like that in combination, with how you and XXXX spoke just made everyone feel like it was a massive thing. They recognized that but it was also that they're involved in it, and they were gonna be good, no matter what.

00:30:31

Now that I think about it, every conversation that I had with the audience about the play, there was no dullness, like it was all energy. It was all positive. It was all like a surprise, and even then we also had food!

00:31:17

It was like a pretty magical atmosphere at the end, and all the performers were jumping around their parents like, 'Did you see me?' or to their friends.

00:32:18

I feel like it was something completely new. Even though we've had plenty of productions, it was just the whole idea of having it made by students, through having a realistic story. Also, having everything at the end as well. People don't usually hang around after a production. Just being able to feel free together. It wasn't just something you watch. It's something that you relate to, something that you are inspired by, something that you actually take something from.

CECELIA 00:34:27

I'm sure she would have been so proud because she'd seen you go to all the meetings and then you coming home late, and so to see it now finally come to life would have been 'Oh, wow!'

SHANNON 00:34:46

[My mum] questioned why I put so much time into it. I wasn't obliged to do it, but I just felt the need. If we weren't going to do it then, it wouldn't ever be done. I truly believed that and

thought that. And who knows if it will happen again?

00:35:46

I can imagine it being student-made again, but I don't think it will be student stories or written by students.

00:36:27

It was so cool. My mum just thought it was great, she cried. But I still don't think she understood everything. Whereas when my dad spoke about it, I immediately was like, "Yeah, that's what I was trying to conceive throughout all of this." And not just one of those cliché stories. The purpose of this is to just keep going, it was - people do have more opportunities in some situations than other people and that's just the way it is. We can't control that. It's about what we personally do about it, no one else can do it for us.

00:37:55

Even if your parents say 'No', you have to stick with what you believe.

00: 38:41

And if you think about kids who are stuck in these situations. You know, a lot of kids get down about stuff and, and half of it is because they feel like they don't have the ability to have themselves heard. That's what I thought was really cool about that play and its ending. That's how it is sometimes, you know.

00:39:06

I feel also because we purposefully didn't write a conclusion - a typical conclusion, where it's a build-up, then a climax, then happiness - it allowed the audience to relate whatever they had been through. Instead of just ending it, telling them how it

ended, they were able to make that up, and they were able to reflect on that.

CECELIA 00:42:22

How did you prepare yourself for that performance evening?

SHANNON 00:42:35

I was probably the most nervous and showed it. I wouldn't speak during the group thing. I shuffled off to the side when XXXX and I went up. I think that's one of my difficulties – seeing something of mine and then relating that to me, not because I was ashamed or anything. I wanted to tell the story, I wanted everything to be known. I knew it was a success, I was proud of everything we did – I was just very nervous.

00:44:55

It was a totally new experience for me, I'd never done anything creative in that regard. I'd never done any dancing. I didn't really perform before, so creating something so massive which would be performed – it was all new so I just didn't know how to react. So, I just stepped back a bit – took a deep breath and just trusted.

CECELIA 00:47:40

Looking back at the activities that you did, you know how we did the poetry, going out to South Auckland and things like that. If we look back at those activities – how do you think we could involve more of that extracurricular stuff into the way we teach in schools?

see people working together really well, and forming something indescribable like something that can't be replicated. It's just fluid, it's just there. Creating more of those little groups to help ground people who each have something in common. I don't feel personal relations can be implemented in all schools, if that makes sense. I feel it was very specific to you like what student's felt with you and how you impacted their lives. I feel like that's very special. Only you could have done that, if that makes sense – in our school.

CECELIA 00:53:52

Do you think it could have been done in a formal class situation?

SHANNON 00:53:57

Not at our school, I don't think, because of the wide range of age groups, because of not feeling safe with each other, some not taking it seriously, some not mature enough. I don't think we could create that same feeling that we had.

00:55:00

I feel like they all wanted to do it, none of them were forced to do it. It wasn't just done, so that they could put it on their 'extracurriculars list' or whatever. We all had a mutual interest. In a form class there's a large amount of people who wouldn't understand or wouldn't want to participate. I feel a lot of international students in my form class wouldn't have.

00:56:14

There was nothing that related us together, apart from being in the same house, which to some people, means nothing. To me

SHANNON 00:48:32

To me, I don't think it can just be taught in schools, but what schools could do to support it, is to encourage Pacific people is just get a group together where it's not exclusive to Pacific people but it starts off with them sharing little things. I feel like what we did, what you did with each of us – like you spoke to me and XXXX – just spoke to us – just openly asking us how we are, and genuinely meaning it. Just creating a space for the students so they are able to talk and feel comfortable talking. I feel like that will inspire students to be more creative and to not feel so secluded. There's a barrier between school and home. Even though there is a barrier, it's not completely isolated from one another, because what happens at home does affect what happens at school which I feel like isn't recognised that much.

00:51:43

I think creativity, what we created, can potentially come from a class, choirs, drama – like little groups of people coming together and doing something that they all enjoy. I feel like that can create. Even in sports we can see a kind of 'asi, if that makes sense. We can see people working together really well, and forming something indescribable like something that can't be replicated. It's just fluid, it's just there. Creating more of those little groups to help ground people who each have something in common. I don't feel personal relations can be implemented in all schools, if that makes sense. I feel it was very specific to you like what student's felt with you and how you impacted their lives. I feel like that's very special. Only you could have done that, if that makes sense – in our school.

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00:56:14

There was nothing that related us together, apart from being in the same house, which to some people, means nothing. To me it meant something.

CECELIA 00:58:50

Do you feel like a lot of stuff that you did at school - the stuff that you did that was creative– do you feel like any of that is useful now moving on to the next step of life?

SHANNON 00:59:16

Yeah, in year 10 and 11, I spent hours on design and art. Those were the two subjects that took up my whole time. I prioritised that homework just because I really enjoyed it. In sports as well, even though it's not 'creative,' I like setting up different plays.

01:01:17

I had to create a dynamic within the team and then introduce different plays and just spend time on even learning new moves and working with different individuals – learning how they play. I feel like that's where my creativity was focussed.

In Year 12 and 13, I stopped drawing – I stopped doing all my creative stuff [...] as centre, I had to control the team. I feel like there's different forms of creativity, I'd lost just letting my ideas flow if that makes sense. I'd stopped writing things down and I'd only start again if things at home got really bad.

01:03:18

I feel like a person I can be very dynamic in terms of creative and logical stuff. I feel creativity can come through even in maths. When we create something, when we solve an equation, we creatively use our thought process to come to a conclusion, to come to something. I felt my creativity changed to that – even though it's logical – the ways I came up with an answer weren't traditional but I got there.

01:08: 50

That year we spent with you- after then - I've been so interested in my Fijian side. Even though it wasn't directly

Pacific people in the play itself – the way that I felt so comfortable – I instantly wanted to learn more and I have. I have learnt Fijian dances, I now have some traditional wear. I think it also helped my dad a lot because he'd never talk about Fiji or he'd never talk about how he grew up, but sometimes now we go on Sundays [...] It's helped him reconnect with his uncle and it's helped us learn more together which is cool.



INTERVIEW 4: VICTORIA KAHO

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: VICTORIA KAHO

Context:

Victoria Kaho was a student at ACG Sunderland where I was teaching between 2016 and 2019. She was involved in diverse extra-curricular activities such as Faiva Creatives, Kapa Haka and Polygroup. She was also one of the poetry writers of the faiva Lila in 2019.

Topic: Reflections on the faiva Lila and the nature of 'asi

Location: A questionnaire filled in and emailed to me online, due to lockdown restrictions disabling the use of formal traditional interviews.

Date: 5 October 2021.

1. What environment needs to exist for a wide variety of students to offer up creative suggestions when they are in a group?

A safe and connected space. An environment that makes everyone feel like they belong, to feel like they can relate. Having a greater understanding of what we've been through, being at a similar level to what others in the group have experienced too. I know for me, I can shut out any person who is not Polynesian, because having encounters with other races didn't turn out very good for me. Being the only "Islander" in my year level was hard because no one understood where I stood and therefore having an environment where others like me knew my sacrifices and understood the way I think. In our group there was XXXX and XXXX who weren't Polynesian in a way we see islanders, or grew up in a predominantly Polynesian way but getting to know them and them opening up to us first, really gave myself and others the safe and connected environment I was searching for. Knowing that they felt lost in their own culture made me feel more open to the group and with every single person in the group. Knowing I wouldn't be judged or looked down upon.

2. Why do you think when we met together, people often shared food?

Food is a way to anyone's heart in the Polynesian eyes. Coming together and eating is a way we like to share. And that's one thing I know from experience that every Polynesian family has no problem sharing food. As a group, I felt because we were connected we could rely on each other to be an ear to listen to or a shoulder to cry on. Always going back to our safe space

we had created. Which was the one place we felt safe and could be ourselves. When there was food involved everyone knew it was going to be a good time. Food made us more ourselves, it created a lot of meaningful conversations and venting sessions.

3. Can you please explain what gave you the courage to write a poem and be able to present it back to the group?

What gave me the courage was the sense of belonging. Knowing that it wasn't only just me who wrote a poem. Knowing I wasn't alone made me more confident. I struggled writing this poem, I am not good at structuring words because my mind is messy. I am shy so when performing it I could just feel my anxiety kicking in, feeling like I don't belong, I don't have a right to say these things. Having self-doubt about myself and what I wrote was hard for me because I did have personal struggles I had been going through at that time. I felt unworthy, but I still went up and did it because I had to at least try and seize every moment I could.

4. Can you explain how belonging makes an impact on young people's lives?

Having a sense of belonging is the one place someone can feel full and be themselves. Making this space happen is not what room you get put in or a scheduled period. I think it is the people around us that make us feel like we belong. The influences we have on each other, good or bad, it still creates a place where you feel safe and/or connected. It is crucial for our young bucks to feel like they belong, especially in this generation. Seeing how more and more young people have taken their lives because they don't feel like they belong anywhere, they feel like an outcast. So having somewhere

they feel safe, they feel connected is vital for the younger generation growing up to be comfortable in who they are and whatever they decide to do.

5. How do you know when 'asi is present in a performance? How does it feel? Can you give examples of when you were working together in any creative activity at school that you could sense 'asi?

I held back in the beginning because I was already considered a part of something that I had already known, which was education first. I finally got to join a cultural group, small, but to me it was life changing. I found peace at school. Practising in the Tech room felt riveting, I could feel goosebumps run through my arms and neck. I knew I belonged here at this moment. I never felt like that before. I could feel change. I could feel like we could actually change what was the "white" way into a diverse way at school. Looking around and feeling everyone's energy when practising and working on a Kapa Haka song together, or even just having a vent session. 'Asi was present and you could feel it as soon as you walked into the room we were in. You could hear it probably while walking down the corridor, belting out laughter or breaking out in song.

6. When you were working in the Word up team in 2018, how did you each, and collectively, build belonging when working together?

I know that most of us kept Word Up either to each other or to Ms Faumuina. I know that I never really talked about it to anyone outside of our group - about what I wrote or what

we were even doing. I really only talked to our group about it because we created an environment where we weren't judged or undermined by anyone. What we said was relevant to someone else in the group and included. I knew I was supported and could ask for help from everyone in the group. It was like we were all just comfortable because we had similar experiences growing up and similar ways of how we fit into the school. I guess we had a lot of common ground together. It just made it easy to build and create poems that were deep and meaningful about ourselves and our emotions.

7. Looking back on any of the activities we did (going to Polyfest, going out to Mangere Arts Centre to watch Heads Held High, Polygroup, Kapa Haka, Poetry Workshops, etc.) what did working on projects like these give you that the school curriculum didn't?

It gave me more than I ever got at school. I wasn't smart, I was more into sports but it was not a priority for them, I didn't fit into their academic profile. The activities we did meant more to me because I got to reveal my true self. I could be who I was and not worry about if I was good enough to go, or what I would earn if I completed any activity. I struggled to find myself within school, being able to belong to this group doing these activities allowed me to find myself my identity. Leaving school felt like an elephant had been lifted off my chest. The masks came off and I could see and learn the depth within myself.

8. *Can you think of ways in which secondary education could bring the experience of 'asi into the formal part of schooling?*

- Allowing and accepting that students need the freedom to express themselves.
- Learning and listening to what they need or want.
- Students need to create their own space to be free. They need guidance to greatness they know all students have.
- Accepting the flaws and the mistakes and understanding where their students are coming from.
- Teachers could take their own trips to Polyfest to learn about culture, to workshops about Polynesian families.
- The school reaches out to the diverse and wider community.
- Having fiafia¹⁹⁷ nights, having specific dinner gatherings at school maybe to get to know the families and the students.
- Creating a specific class where students can just chill, eat food, watch movies or even just talk to the teacher in the room or having an after school programme where they can go and feel safe and connected.
- Having them set a goal at these after school programmes so they have a purpose to staying after school and not out roaming the streets.
- Majority of schools need to think more about what they are teaching their teachers and how they need to connect with their students to a level where they can feel safe and be able to talk to their teachers as well.

¹⁹⁷ A night of celebration

- It starts with listening to each other, learning about each other and talking to each other.

9. *Why do you think you guys and the others invested large amounts of voluntary time in many of the projects we did?*

Let's just say by then we were like family. Both Charlotte and I came to support our family and the hard work everyone put into that production. I know that I was proud that our voices got to be heard where parents of students could hear the things we had to say. Even though they may have forgotten about it by now, it's safe to say we were there. I felt a part of it and I cried listening to our stories being told by others and being out there. Knowing we changed someone's point of view that night. I was proud to be a part of something so special and so unique that I can cherish for years to come. I know that I gave my time and effort to be there because that's how families work, no matter where you are and what you do we will be here rooting for you through the time we shared together. I sound so cheesy but I know for me having these projects got me to think more about who I was and who I wanted to become in the future. It made me realise what I was working for. I give great gratitude to every single person in that group, because they helped me to feel like I belonged and feel like I was something in a school full of black and white.

10. *What is it in your culture that you find difficult or helpful in daily life?*

My skin tone is white, so when people see me they don't know what I am. Having to tell people I'm Tongan not Samoan or any type of Asian and seeing their faces when telling them

I am Māori too is priceless. As shocked as people are, I'm considered a horse¹⁹⁸ because I am Tongan.

My own culture mocks me for not being dark skinned or not being able to speak the language fluently. I can understand, which is a very helpful tool to use against people who think I can't. This is a barrier however, I know that my culture is beautiful and I embrace it every day. It helps me to give a different perspective to other people's lives. I can help with what they struggle to understand about my culture and I love being open and being able to share. It is also helpful in my university studies, because I get to voice my culture through my papers, sharing my culture as much as I can to widen perspectives to everyone.

11. What is it, when you are working together with others, that helps your creative process get better?

Working together with other people helps to bring out ideas you thought you never had, developing on ideas that other people have suggested or contributed. For me, working with others helps to get my brain to race out ideas and help to understand other ideas from other people. I know that when I have motivation from other people's energy I seem to burst out with all these different ideas. This helps to create something new that's never seen before or even to create something that's been around for years and bring it back up with a new light. Getting to belong to a group makes me feel more comfortable to say what I am thinking. It helps to develop myself identity and let others see the light that God had created within me.



INTERVIEW 5: CHARLOTTE KAHO

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: CHARLOTTE KAHO

Context:

Charlotte Kaho was a junior student at ACG Sunderland where I was teaching from 2016 to 2019. She was involved in diverse extra-curricular activities including Faiva Creatives and leading the Kapa Haka group given that she was the most experienced and knowledgeable of Tikanga Māori.

Location: A questionnaire discussed online then, emailed to me, due to COVID lockdown restrictions that disabled a kanohi ki te kanohi interview.

Date: 5 October 2021.

1. What environment needs to exist for a wide variety of students to offer up creative suggestions when they are in a group?

I think a safe and inclusive environment where people can express themselves comfortably without feeling left out or judged. Having this type of energy around students helps with their creative process more positively because it gives them the freedom to feel free without having to censor what they want to say in an overly controlled environment.

2. Why do you think when we met together, people often shared food?

I think that when we share food it brings us together and sets a comfortable space for us to be in. Sharing food with other people can create close bonds and I think that it's just normal in our culture that we eat together and share because it's kinda rude to not at least ask .

*3. How did your participation in the small Kapa Haka group give you a sense of belonging at school, if any?
Can you explain how belonging makes an impact on young people's lives?*

When I was in Intermediate school I was very close to Kapa Haka and Te Ao Māori, but when I came to high school and they had no indigenous representation in terms of the school curriculum - not having Te Reo classes or a Kapa Haka - I was shocked (like a culture shock) because there were literally little or no Māori students. I kinda felt uncomfortable not being

surrounded with people who could relate to me and share the same experience I had back in Intermediate school.

When we decided to make a small kapa haka group I was kinda reluctant to try because there were not that many people, and I just wanted to blend in with everyone. But in a sense I felt relieved because there was something that I was good at and it made me feel more like I belonged with my peers at school - but it also made me feel like an outcast at the same time. As a young person still in high school, feeling like you belong to something has a big impact on young people's self-confidence and identity. Having supportive and safe environments to grow in helps enhance our sense of self-worth and belonging. Without this, it can have a negative effect on some young people that are still that growing. It can lead to an identity crisis and switching personalities to make others pleased. So it's very important that you find your own sense of belonging in yourself, which makes a huge impact on how you perceive the world and things you experience.

4. Looking back on any of the activities we did (going to Polyfest, going out to Mangere Arts Centre to watch Heads Held High, Polygroup, Kapa Haka, Poetry Workshops, etc.) what did working on projects like these give you that the school curriculum didn't?

Working on these projects made me become stronger and closer to my cultural identity because since the school curriculum didn't have anything to do with any cultural aspects, it made me not very interested in school and slack off a bit.

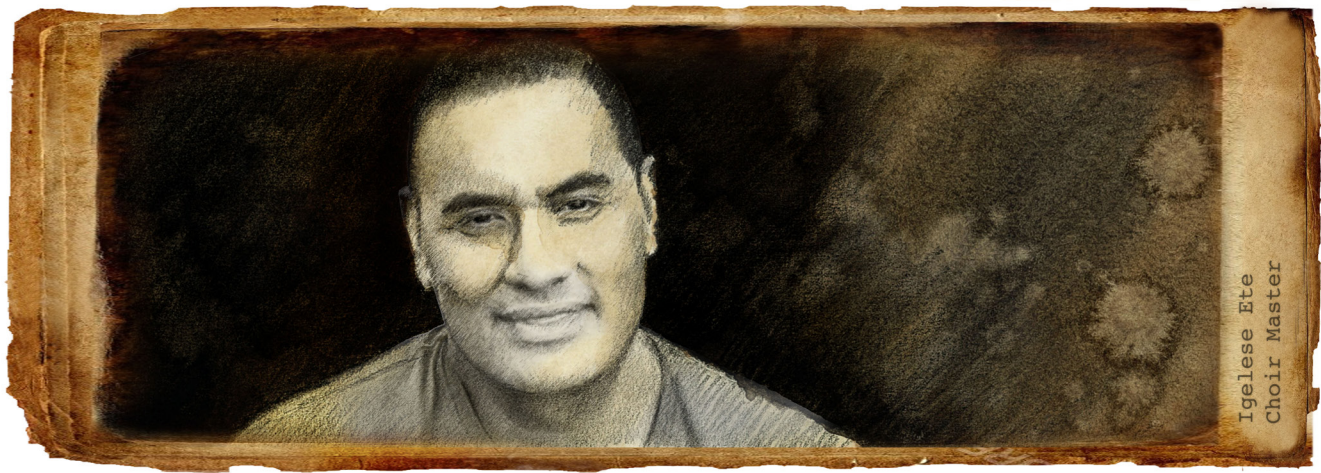
5. Why do you think you and the others invested large amounts of voluntary time in many of the projects we did?

For me it's natural to help out when there's something to be done, especially when I knew that Miss was involved with the production, it's only natural to support those you care about and respect. So in a sense, helping out - even though we were not participating in the production, just helps. After a full night I think we established a comfortable environment with each other. We could just chill and relax with each other after school or help with someone's work.

6. What is it in your culture that you find difficult or helpful in daily life?

As a kid I was around a lot of cultural influences and a part of Kapa Haka and Pacifica groups throughout Primary and Intermediate school, so that helped me a lot with Te Ao Māori and Turangawaewae so I find that helpful in daily life.

APPENDIX 2 : TRANSCRIPTS OF
INTERVIEWS WITH
OCEANIC YOUTH LEADERS



INTERVIEW 1: IGELESE ETE

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: IGELESE ETE

Context:

Igelese Ete is a Samoan musician, composer, choir master and educator. He sees music as a powerful tool to empower young Oceanic students.

Topic: The Nature of 'asi.

Location: AUT University WG Cafe, Auckland City, New Zealand

Date: 31 July 2019, 11.37am

Time: 00:00:00–01:05:02

Recording device: OPPO R11 7.1.1

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed here are excerpts from a broader, one-hour talanoa.)

CECELIA 00:00:00

What is 'asi?

IGELESE 00:00:19

When I'm teaching, when I'm working with young people, there is definitely ... from my perspective, that process when you can feel like something's been uplifted. There is some form of inspiration and empowerment done. There's a definite change in the atmosphere.

CECELIA 00: 00:40

So do you think 'asi is that?

IGELESE 00:01:13

Yeah. There's a different dynamic when I'm working with young people. The key has always been to inspire and empower and uplift. It comes about in certain ways and you can sort of feel it. It's probably different factors but I can sense that, when they feel like there's an uplift and there's a sense of transcendence.

CECELIA 00:01:40

How do you see it?

IGELESE 00:01:46

Well I don't see it but I actually sort of feel it. It's a feeling aspect, but when it comes it's hard to describe, because it's intangible but you can feel it, when you get goosebumps. There's something... something special happening.

CECELIA 00:02:55

Is there any way that you could describe it besides just being able to 'feel' it?

IGELESE 00:03:18

It's hard to define it because in my realm, it's not just in my Pacific Samoan environment because I'm in different choirs teaching different young people. Most of the time that's in that Pacific element. But I know through that process, there's always a moment I know; it's gone beyond just the physical and it becomes a spiritual experience. So, I definitely feel when it reaches that spiritual element. It could be anything, whether it be the spirit, whether it be the genealogy, whether it be family. I can't define what it is, but I know there is another level up to that which transcends, (from the Samoan perspective), there is the feeling that it's the spirit.

In Samoa there is the 'aitu spirit and I'm talking about Nafanua from my perspective, that's a strong, spiritual feeling as well. She was the spirit, she was the princess warrior, who lives through different chiefs or high priests as reincarnated. But for our people it's like Nafanua ... a living spirit, it's a god. I heard someone - Albert Wendt, saying, "Oh yeah, we should pray to Nafanua and ask for the blessings", which contradicts Christianity, but it's the same sort of element.

00:06:32

That's the old religion that it feels like, that the Pālagi 's are now tapping back into the indigenous knowledge; indigenous religions.

00:08:37

It definitely feels like a spiritual element. It definitely exists

CECELIA 00:08:43

Do you think it only appears when young people are doing creative things?

IGELESE 00:08:55

It's when everything aligns. It's like when I'm teaching, it could be a rehearsal process, or it could be a performance as well. But typically, it definitely occurs when we're combined together. There's that certain, it could be the musical component to it. Like when the music comes together, there's a certain harmonic sort of structure to it, it's a combination of different things.

00:13:11

I have been living in Fiji. We went out to a prison, because I do a lot of prison ministry and the choir is a new rehab sort of, for the prisoners [for] the young juveniles. We go out, we teach. There's a lot of emotion in it, because when you work with people, sometimes it becomes quite emotional. There are a lot of tears coming through, obviously, one of the components, because these guys are behind bars for offending, but at the same time that I'm thinking, there's a healing in that same process as well. So you'd have to find out how the healing process happens and the power of music and the arts to heal, and that must be in the spiritual realm.

00:14:31

I think it comes to that collective energy. Because if it was one person and they are doing everything by themselves, it's really different. For me, when I write songs, like one of the songs I wrote "Le lalolagi matagofie", I connect with it. Sometimes I cry when I'm writing them. So, it's in that emotion that's okay. It's emotional, but I think there must be a spiritual element to that ... when you're creating.

00:15:39

It's partly emotional, because you are connected with your emotions yourself. But it's got to be a spiritual channelling as well. You are taking it out to the spirits. They affirm it, and then you must bring it back. Spiritual?

CECELIA 00:17:40

You know when you do tau'olunga and there's usually one person or a few people in the tau'olunga ... is that similar in Samoan culture?

IGELESE 00:17:57

Yeah, taupou is the one person and then you have au'uli - the clowns around ...

CECELIA 00:18:11

That's like Tongan, you usually have one or however many girls, then you have the support people here, and then you have the audience over here, I do the performance, it goes out to you, you awhi me, and I wonder if that is how we get 'asi.

IGELESE 00:19:01

So, we say afi.

CECELIA 00:19:03

That's like the Māori word for support (awhi).

IGELESE 00:19:01

Just thinking about a term that Samoans say, "ua alu atu le afi" – (the fire is passed on). This means they return and they perform to the other group. They are passing the afi onto the other person, ua alu atu le afi. It's a similar perspective in Māori as in Samoan.

00:28:31

In performance, there's the sense of uplift and that's that transcendence where everyone combines together and if you think about it, when in our rituals of encounter for Samoans or Tongans, there's always that ritual of coming together in a circle; a definite spiritual element that we are combined together and everybody connects.

00:29:31

You've heard of the alofisā? It's the sacred circle. So, that's when, you know, all of the chiefs sit down the alofisā. This is what I use when I work with my choir, especially Pacifica Voices. The replication of that is the prayer, when you open, when you hold hands in the beginning. That's my circle of life or like the power of prayer. That's like the replication of our ancestors and alofisā the sacred circle, where everybody connects together. We're beginning, we're praying, we're affirming, we're grateful. That sets us up for whatever, it is almost attracting the spirits in that sense.

00:30:30

It's worshipping but also uniting for the spirit, then you're calling for the spiritual; the gods to come together. There's definitely going to be spirit in that.

00:30:58

Regardless of whether it's Christian or whatever element, there's definitely that spiritual realm that is involved in the process.

00:34:40

It is the creation, the creative process that you call in, because it is a spiritual exercise when you're creating something.

00:35:57

[Speaking in relation to fear] I think it's through the creative arts that you get rid of that. Those things. Like you have to be courageous to stand in front of people, through the fear of performance.

00:36:41

It is about learning that self-belief again, putting in your skills and performing together; and it doesn't matter if you get it wrong.

CECELIA 00:39:09

I wonder what it is with Pacific students that they will rarely give you an answer in class?

IGELESE 00:39:18

I sort of deemed that to be our parents parenting. [With] my

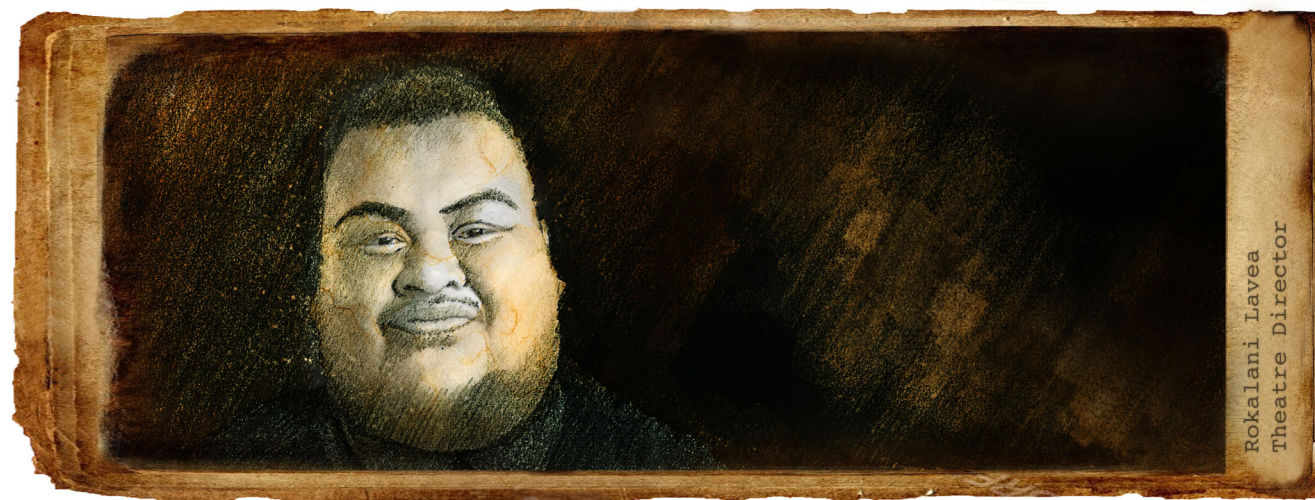
parents it was like, “You can’t talk back to me or you will get a hiding.” So it was only a one way street. They’d just tell me and they were right. They’re always right. The Pālagi way is that you are expected to question.

00:40:25

[In relation to choral singing] I want to teach through inspiring my students. Not to fear. Not through fear because that’s not going to open them up, it doesn’t affirm them as well. So for me, the beauty was when I saw them believe in themselves.

00:41:58

It’s like your own kids too, everyone has a different personality so I use a different approach for each of my kids. The challenge is, when you’ve got all these kids with different personalities, how do you approach everybody because everybody has a different need? I just always hang on the inspirational side; try to balance it. There are two elements at the same moment. You want to have a balance so they don’t become so sugar-coated and they think ‘Oh, the world is a beautiful world’, which it isn’t, because then they get to the real world, and life isn’t all easy. We should be teaching our kids the reality of life.



INTERVIEW 2: ROCKALANI LAVEA

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: ROCKALANI LAVEA

Context:

Rokalani Lavea is a Creative Practitioner who works with young people in the performing arts. He is a young New Zealand born Samoan man who tells the stories of young people living between a Pacific world and a Western one.

Topic: What 'asi is and how is it achieved.

Location: Mangere Arts Centre, Auckland City, New Zealand

Date: 2 May 2019, 1.30pm

Time: 00:00:27–01:31:42

Recording device: OPPO R11 7.1.1

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed here are edited sections from a broader, one-hour interview.)

CECELIA 00:00:00

When you use the word faiva today, how is it different from its traditional use?

ROKALANI 00.00:49

I reckon since it's a different time, it's a different age, we've adopted the things that worked from back then but mixed it into a different environment in a way, especially with how we're so westernised now (it's like colonised), so we're trying to bring what we had back then, to here.

I think in Samoa we also have fale aitu (do you know fale aitu)? I think [it's] basically what we are doing right now (performance with the young people) but back then, it was in the context of a Samoan village. It was a time for the villagers to gather together and just have full-on skits, laugh and be merry. It was all performance-based. We're just basically doing the same thing, but putting it into a colonised environment.

CECELIA 00.01.54

In Tonga we use the word mafana. When the audience feels mafana, then they yell out 'malie!' and when you put it all together it's called 'asi (so 'asi is like the presence of the unseen). I was trying to think of a Samoan term that might be similar and somebody suggested to me that maybe it's like an asiasiga, when you see spirits?

ROKALANI 00.02.28

Oh yeah, like a visitation of some sort.

CECELIA 00.02.33

I never thought about it like that, because Fale Aitu is like House of Spirit and then if you think of asi'asiga ...

ROKALANI 00:00.17

It's a similar concept, it's a visit to a different type of energy, a different power. I feel as Polynesians we have to stay true to our culture and to our roots but what we need to do is thrive off what we once knew, especially... Being Samoan, we are like a ... our culture is... we're full of orators, we like to talk a lot, we settle matters by talking – we settle matters by just communicating, you know like there's the ali'i ... the matai... there's all of that ... so all we're doing in performance, we're literally doing what our ancestors did. We're talking on stage, we're entertaining, we're giving each other energy – we're making them mafana – fulfilled, making them feel like – making them feel like they got something from it.

CECELIA 00.03.38

When you are working with this group of young people – that whole 'asi aspect – when do you experience it with them? Is it only when you watch the show that you experience it, or do you think when you are working with them, trying to get them to do stuff, did you see it then as well?

ROKALANI 00.04.09

I think it's [...] not something you can put a certain time on. It's like a process type of thing. It's when you are in the space and everyone is just vibing off each other, feeling like, the same energy – especially – it's most prominent when you're on stage

when people are watching because, there is the core cast and you are altogether. You have to feed off of each other, you have to feed off of each other's energy to work the scenes, to work in the music, to work in the choreography ... Yes you can get it in rehearsals, but that's when everyone is working as one.

CECELIA 00.04.45

So do you think the audience is an important part too?

ROKALANI 00.04.09

Oh, I think the audience is just as important as the performance itself. The audience is like a reflection of what we're giving them.

CECELIA 00.08.05

When you are working with this group of people, are you consciously trying to get them to get to that point, where it is māfana?

ROKALANI 00.08.45

I'll make sure that everyone is on the same page, be considerate of everyone, constantly keeping up with everyone, making sure – are they in the right space? Are they in the right mind frame to perform ...

00.09.25

It's making sure they all thrive ... if that means that we have to like to spend extra time with people to make sure they catch up, it doesn't matter if it's choreography or singing or just scenes in general, we'll make sure that everyone is working as one, like, no man left behind.

CECELIA 00.09.52

This is like being on a sports team?

ROKALANI 00.09.55

Yeah it is, but I think we work harder (laughs)...

CECELIA 00.10.01

I've seen you guys practising, you are here from the beginning of the day until the end of the day, and you are still here the next day. How are these young people still going?

ROKALANI 00.10.15

That's the life of a performing artist really. For a lot of these kids, it's their own decision ... They see performing art as not just a hobby or what people think as, "Oh we're just doing this for fun." A lot of them see it as a career path and a choice ... there is a platform for theatre, especially Pacific theatre, where we can tell our own stories by our own people... by us ... not just re-enacting other people's stories that won't really connect with us, or to us.

CECELIA 00.10.56

Do you think that's what draws young people in to keep coming back every year?

ROKALANI 00.10.59

Definitely. It's not just that, it's the environment that we set for them. It's very family-orientated as in, we always keep up with each other, especially when it comes to ... for example yesterday, one of our girls was feeling sick, three of the girls

from the ensemble went in and took all her parts of the show [...] we're so in unity with one another that if one, for whatever reason happens to fall out, someone can just step up and take the role and it's that strength that we all have together.

CECELIA 00.11.36

So it is like a family?

ROKALANI 00.11.54

In every environment, if you want people to give the most potential that they can give, if you want them to give their all, then you have to create an environment where they thrive. You can't just be like, "Do this, do this, this is strictly like this and strictly like that!" because what if they are not good at that? What if their specialties lie elsewhere? What I mean by family is that we give everyone the opportunity to just showcase what they can do, how they can do it and just work together. We are not limited to certain ways or certain processes of doing things.

CECELIA 00.12.00

I am also interested in how you have created this thing [the production]. Troy was saying yesterday that you kind of have a big idea of what you want to do but then you guys just kinda turn up and you give them some kind of guidelines but then sometimes the kids make up parts themselves?

ROKALANI 00.12.57

Yeah, I think that's what creates the family feel or the feel that we're all united as one because when it comes to directing ... it's not just us, it's everyone else that's helping us put the show together. It starts off broad and then we just kind of give people stuff to do and then they come back and they offer stuff and we

would never have seen it like that, but for some reason that works, that goes and... [We say] thanks for showing what you could bring ... The core cast just read the script and we tell them as much as we can, it's just a basic guideline, if certain sentences aren't working for you, it's coming out a weird way, if you don't like how it feels, change it up... change it to suit the way you feel. We had instances where our step mum [character in the production] she's Tongan, she didn't really feel her lines until she said them in Tongan and then she got it, it's that – creating the environment where you feel like, "I can do this, I don't have to be ashamed of me and saying something in my culture on stage"... It's creating an environment where you feel, and you think, "I can do this!" We're trying to put on something that everyone can relate to. We want the audience to go away feeling something. If they haven't felt anything, we haven't done our job; we haven't taken them to another place; we haven't made them forget about their lives and taken them into ... you are now in the world of Sinarella. "Come on a journey with us."

CECELIA 00.16.25

How is 'asi beneficial?

ROKALANI 00.16.36

I reckon the benefits of 'asi is just the kids ... educating them about their culture in general ... showing them what they are capable of, giving them the right to just fulfil their potential.

Not limiting them to think [...] this is all I can do. It's giving them the opportunity to just hit the ball out of the park.

00.17.53

In a world where we are kind of considered as minorities, seeing ourselves portrayed on stage gives us the feeling that we are more than we think we are.



INTERVIEW 3: DAVID RILEY

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: DAVID RILEY

Context:

David Riley is a writer and teacher who strives to get young people to read by inspiring them with positive stories from New Zealand and the Pacific. He also encourages his students to write their own stories.

Topic: What is faiva? What is 'asi and how is it achieved?

Location: Mangere Arts Centre, Auckland City, New Zealand.

Date: Wednesday 1 May 2019, 3.20pm.

Time: 00:00:00–00:37:35

Recording device: OPPO R11 7.1.1

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed here are edited sections from a broader, one hour interview.)

CECELIA 00.03.14

How would you define faiva?

DAVID 00.04:06

I can just tell you what we do? For example, this term coming, with Year 13 class, we're going to be doing a show based on a Cook Islands poet named Alistair Te Ariki Campbell. We're going to have his poetry intermingled in the text ... movement, song and sound made by the students and storytelling, trying to portray his life, which is a really amazing life ... born in Tongareva in the Cook Islands to a Pālangi dad and a Tongareva mum. Both parents died, when the children were really little and then they were shipped to New Zealand, to their dad's side ... to their grandma and she had no clue how to bring up these four little brown children ... and this was in Dunedin so she put them in an orphanage. So, just looking at the kind of contrast of their life as they were growing up in the islands with their extended family and everything that the Islands is, and then Dunedin in the 1930s and how that really affected him really, you know, dramatically ... a lot of trauma and experiencing racism as he was growing up which led him to denying – trying to deny his brown side and pushing it away ... so he had an identity crisis and ended up checking himself into a mental hospital when he was older and then he used poetry. Poetry is what helped them to get through, and eventually to make his way back to Tongareva ... There's a collection of his poetry but nobody really knows his life story.

CECELIA 00.07.57

Is this a process that you've come up with where you've decided that you're going to take the story and give some guidelines but then the kids come up with the rest of it?

DAVID 00.08.25

Yes, so I'm working with a director on it, she's really skilled at that. For the last four years, we've been working together with Year 12 students, making the Pacific legends for children ... I've been reading, writing the hero stories, I've been finding all these legends, Pacific ones. I want those stories to be told to our children so they can see that we have superheroes ... and our stories here are just as valid and worthy as a classic European story.

00.09.24

Every year, we did a different cultural legend and we put it on stage at the Vodafone Event Centre, and primary schools came to watch it. So the first year, I gave her the story and her husband wrote it into a play. The next year, I wrote it as a play and then the third year, we decided, let's try not doing it from a play script but let's try doing it more from the students creating the dialogue and the characters and the scenes – and we really enjoyed that way more than the previous two. So that's how we are doing this one as well. We will just give the students general tasks to do ... make something based on this, and then see what they come back with and then we just refine it ... it's more collaborative that way.

00.10.26

They'll come up with characters that you never would have dreamed of, but it's stronger because it's made by them and it's a character they've created, the dialogue they created...

00.11.53

I find ways around these things so you can incorporate students' strengths. We did A Midsummer Night's Dream last year, I think some Shakespeare plays will work ... I did Macbeth with my students. I've always seen that as a Polynesian play. It's got status ... their titles and jealousy... I used the No Fear Shakespeare ... there's a website ... one side has got the original and the other side modern - so I downloaded the whole modern version because we don't have to use the original and I just cut a lot out of it. Yeah, shortened it and we just made it Polynesian ... we set it in the islands - ancient Polynesia.

CECELIA 00.14.30

When you do faiva and then it creates this 'thing' ('asi), do you feel like because you did that, that it creates opportunities for the kids to feel that holistic thing ('asi)?

DAVID 00.15:50

Yes because, it's also about the way they like to perform too. For example, there were three students who really love dance in a particular class so we made them the three witches in Macbeth but they didn't chant the words. They moved, so they did like a contemporary light dance kind of feel to it and we made them albinos, because we didn't want them to be witches - because our community is kind of religious - so

they had to be figures who are on the outside looking in and who are kind of rejected by the, the main community, so we thought possibly albino's in ancient Polynesia might have been regarded as suspicious or pushed aside and so they could comment on society from the outside ... they had elements of chanting, a lot of it was movement, because they like to move, but some of the other students, the league boys, their stuff was more physical ... kind of masculine ... Some kids like words, some kids like language and speaking and poetry ... one of the students was really strong in Samoan culture so we got her to direct the scene where the king comes to Macbeth's house and creates a Kava ceremony to welcome the king. So, she directed it, she choreographed it, she brought all her knowledge in, to create that scene.

CECELIA 00.16.34

Do you consciously look for ways that kids can contribute to create that feeling?

DAVID 00.16.50

Yes ... it's always all about the audience and about the students ... we have grandparents that come and there are little children that come ... whole families ... The audience is important - it's for them.

CECELIA 00.18:38

How would you grow involvement in the kids?

DAVID 00.18.54

You're finding out about them, some students don't want to do anything - they just want to be told what to do and that's

cool, too and so you're finding out as you go, as well. We play games - some of our drama games show you a lot of those, you know, ones who have lots of ideas and those who just like to be told what to do, and like to follow and those who are just holding back but just need more encouragement. So, you can push those ones and some just want to do enough, they don't want to do more and you respect that because they may have a lot of stuff on their plate. Not everybody wants to get an excellence grade, they just want to pass on a pass, so you take that into account as well. So we're finding out about them, as we make our way through the project. You can learn a lot about students outside of class, you know, just like on duty on the field. There was one time I was on duty on the field, and I was watching some of the boys from my drama class and they were clowns, running around pulling each other's pants down. You know, man, cool. We're going to use this ... I definitely wanted to use their wackiness in a class more. So, just keeping an eye out and listening to what they talk about when they're leaving, you know, and when they're coming in.

CECELIA 00.23:34

When do you think 'asi is experienced in your creative process? Does it appear in the making as well as the final show, or do you think it only appears in the final show?

DAVID 00.24.14

No, I think it appears in moments throughout the process. We try to do regular showings of what we're doing to each other and it can be feedback to each other and sometimes, people will do things and we'll go, 'Man, that was mean, guys!' and

you can see the encouragement that they get from that and they start to get braver and to say 'yes', more. So, yeah, I think definitely it's in moments as you go. So, it's like all of us collaborating together but I think it's not only in the work, it's even when they're just sitting down together and talking and laughing and it's in the warm-up games we play, it's a trash talk ... talking smack with each other... and taking them out is a big thing for me ... with this one year 12 group. I wanted to take them out early because they don't know me and I don't know them and some of them are quite troubled ... and building a class culture is so important ... I think it's important in every class but it definitely is in drama, because it's collaborative and you have to work together. So one thing I wanted to do early was take them to town, eat together and the food court around the table like this, put all the tables together - we all had our BK and we sat – there was only 10 students, and then take them to see a show – Astro Man ... So, I took them to see that so they can experience live theatre ... what it actually looks like to have that standard of performance and focus ... and in the bus home, we're talking and we're laughing ...

CECELIA 00.27:16

So you experience 'asi then?

DAVID 00.27.18

Yes... of potential awakening, like, 'Wow, I thought... but now I can see.' Just being part of it opens up their minds to what can be... opens even for the younger ones to watch here ... it just opens up possibilities to them that they didn't think were possible before.

CECELIA 00.29:12

Can 'asi be beneficial?

DAVID 00.29.23

Yes and it has to happen ... that's what we're all there for. We are there to be a small time in this young person's life but, that time should be a time of helping them to see bigger than they were when they came, and then to leave and what they do with it after that, that's up to them. But definitely, our job is to open up, you know, their thinking to more – to be bigger and to be braver. Our language is really important ... things we say to them are powerful, either negatively or positively - whether they think that we believe in them or not. If they sense that we don't believe in them, man that hits hard. Teachers are important and they should be looked after. Students are important and should be looked after... All of us are important.



INTERVIEW 4: JOHN KENNEDY

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN KENNEDY

Context:

John Kennedy is an itinerant Music teacher at Te Atatu Peninsula Intermediate. He works with students within the Intermediate School and neighbouring colleges, supporting them as they form rock bands and create performance work.

Topic: What is faiva? What is 'asi? How is 'asi achieved?

Location: Sierra Cafe, Henderson. Auckland City, New Zealand

Date: 23 July 2019, 1.24 pm

Time: 00:00:00–01:03:20

Recording device: OPPO R11 7.1.1

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed here are excerpts from a broader, one-hour interview.)

CECELIA 0:00:00

What is 'asi'?

JOHN 00:00:06

... Most kids have the same basic issue with performance which is, "Oh, my God, I hope I don't stuff it up!" I mean, that's not the only thing going on but you can't deny that that's a lot of kids - that's top priority and I reckon what you're talking about partly, I see it sometimes with kids realising halfway through a performance that it's actually ... "no one's stuck ... I'm not stuffing up and neither is anyone else and actually, we're all having this really good time." That's when things start to become a bit larger than life. It's linked to that thing of just being able to quieten down the self-talk about, "Oh my God, please don't make a mistake, please don't make a mistake," to actually just be in the moment – that thing of just being in the moment and then they start to become more aware of the total experience, not just their bit in it. They start to see it as a larger entity ... "We're pulling this off, it's not awful, people are enjoying it, people are smiling" ... I can't really talk about something as culturally rich as a traditional Tongan one ... but I can talk about mastery and mastery, for me is one of the fundamental values that we want kids to achieve which doesn't mean being the best at anything, it means a sense that "I've got this" and that's ownership too and you stuff up less if you actually just own it, if you just do it, just do your thing, "do it!" It might be a little different from how you have been practising, but you're doing it, you're in it and that's the ownership thing. You are just absorbed into this.

00:08:12

It's important that people have a shared vision of what they're creating, not necessarily the content but the form of it ... like being a band ... Erin's band knows what they want, they sort of know what they want to sound like, they've got a shared vision and that's what actually helps them work together. There's probably some other really interesting forms to look at, like, my youngest son is really into the Drag scene ... they're houses, they're collectives ... So he's in a house called Muses and there's a bunch of them and they work together sometimes on shows, and they work on each other's designs and talk to each other and work together. In the end they produce an individual show but they are still a collective in terms of working together to create new stuff ... All the people in the house are performers, they're all working towards a drag performance, so an individual show but they work together as a group on each other's shows. I think collective structures are really interesting in that they bring people together who all have the same vision of what they want and they help each other... but they're all in it developing their own concepts. All the drag artists have their own personas that they develop, and they talk to each other about it. So they talk about the personas, they talk about what their content is, they talk about all that stuff, as well. So it just gives them creative support and I think that's a big part of being in a collective is just people supporting your creativity and actually finding a place ... where everyone has space. People bond together because they want to put on shows, they want to have an audience and they have to grow their audience by sharing with other people.

20:16:03

School - that's primarily the community for kids, unless they're really active in church.

CECELIA 00:22:05

Can you tell me more about the Muses?

JOHN 00:22:11

... It seems to me, there's a lot of Māori and Pacifica people that are in the drag scene now. They're really organised, just super organised, and they're all in these collectives that have their own sort of sense of style and sort of mission. There's competition between them as well so it's a massive scene - they're getting somewhere because they work together, you know, because they latch on to the group and get that support for what they're doing.

CECELIA 00:23:00

Do you think the collective thing is a new thing?

JOHN 00:23:27

Well I think it is a necessity nowadays, it's just an alternative way of organising things that works for people really.

CECELIA 00:23:40

Perhaps that's the thing - you own it because your whole group is in one mind for this thing?

JOHN 00:23:27

I think the hardest too is for kids to actually do stuff like that (performance)... Sports are so easy to commit to because you just turn up, there's your game. I think performing arts is much more difficult for kids sometimes - unless you're super talented. I'm quite interested not necessarily in kids, you know, they're not superstars, like there are kids that go on talent shows and they like, blow your mind ... a lot of the kids that I work with don't have that level of skill - they just really want to do music and I think not everyone ends up wanting to be on stage either - some people - just want to go somewhere and play with people. So to me, it's about kids just realising that's okay, if that's all you want to do that, that's fine, to turn up and play and want to enjoy it. It's quite interesting when the kids start talking about, "Oh we want to get a gig or we want to play shows and some of the kids don't necessarily ... they're not so sure about it, but they sort of go along with that. I just think there's a whole lot of different reasons that people get into music. And not everyone wants to be on stage either. Some people just want to play, just want to go somewhere and play with people, so to me, it's about just realising that's okay.

CECELIA 00:25:22

There's another group I know of ... they don't want to gig at all, they just like jamming together and they're not the greatest but they just love jamming together because they come up with really cool ideas. They will probably never do Rock Quest or whatever but for them, it's really fun.

JOHN 00:25:57

That's really important. I think it's a lot about - especially for kids and for young people particularly – "Well, this is ours - this doesn't belong to anyone but us." So, I think that's really important - the ownership thing isn't just about taking on board something that someone's taught you and getting really good at it, it can also be about, "Well, this is something that we have made that is ours and it's not a teacher's, it's not our parent's, it's not our big brother's and sister's... it's ours... and it might not be very nice and it might not sound that great... but it's ours... it might be a screaming mess but it's our screaming mess which is something to be proud of."

CECELIA 00:26:5

In that screaming mess you can still get to that climax ('asi)?

JOHN 00:27:16

That's joy – I call it joy! It's joyful – it doesn't have to be happy to be joyful – it just has to be fulfilling for the person... and part of that joy is, it's a group elation - you know, when everything's working well - it creates a nice feeling in the whole group. It's its own special thing, it's transcendent, it's actually that feeling of getting outside of yourself. Psychologists would call it 'flow' - the state where time disappears, where you lose awareness of yourself, where difficult things become easy... all sorts of interesting things happen ... and the brain changes.

CECELIA 00:30:26

Does that only happen in creative things?

JOHN 00:30:35

It's the self-fulfilment, it's really people in those optimised states ... it's more of the 'we' and not much of the 'me'. I think that it actually gives kids some relief, to actually not have to think about homework, stuff at home ... they can just get a bit lost in what they're doing ... a Marxist would say that, that's unalienated labour – that's a person and their work being one. We've alienated people from their labour to the point where most of the work they do is boring and is meaningless. If you connect the worker to their labour and the labour is meaningful ... Creative work is still work – it's labour – we don't necessarily see it as labour... creativity is quite universal.

CECELIA 00:35:07

Kids have said to me, "We like working with John because he just lets us be ourselves and he doesn't try to totally change our music."

JOHN 00:35:22

That's rule number one ... that's a good learning to have ... realise what you want, and stick up for it.

CECELIA 00:37:35

Do you think to grow confidence in young people, it's by just letting them be themselves?

JOHN 00:37:45

Yeah. Everyone says that all the time. The parents always say that about the bands when they watch them playing

competition. They say “They’re just being themselves”. There are some songs that some of the Intermediate bands are doing - I’ve said it really clear to them, “Don’t do this, because you think I really like the song... I actually can’t stand it, but if you really want to do it, we’re going to do it”. I’ve talked to the daughter of a friend of mine who does an Intermediate band programme somewhere else and probably for quite valid reasons the teacher comes in and says, “These are the songs we’re doing ... you don’t get to choose, we’re going to learn these ... this is what we’re doing”. Well, that’s a different kind of programme. It produces some learning, it’s not better or worse. It’s just that’s the way they roll. I’ve got a slower process when the kids are driving it. You don’t always get beautiful results. I prefer it, I see it more as a long game. I want them to have passion because I know how hard it is when they get to high school. I want them to have this time at Intermediate to really go, “What am I passionate about?” Hopefully they’ll keep going, rather than just having had something that’s been done to them for two years by a teacher where they might have learnt a few skills and a few different ways of playing. I think it’s really important to keep the perspective that they are really young and that doesn’t mean they can’t be amazing or do whatever they want to do. Some of them are really good at sports too and some of them are really academically strong and who am I to say what music is ... that’s their call. I don’t want them to do music to keep me happy. Some of them have got some tough choices to make if they are in a top netball team or whatever but they’re an amazing bass player ... somewhere along the lines, one of those is going to have to go a little bit ... and somebody will try to have everything like that woman who was a really good netball player who’s a rapper... JessB... Some people can try and do all ... to quite a high standard, right through high school then maybe have to make a decision but most kids have to find it because of parents and costs and

time ... I think it’s just good for them to have a really good, positive experience, not necessarily an experience of being in a really perfect band that can play amazingly but just to have their experience is their experience.

One of the bands that I had - that I got playing really amazingly - technically, at a very high level... three of the band members couldn’t stand each other! I didn’t really realise... there were seriously bad vibes ... and I was trying to get them to come back after they left Intermediate to come to rehearsals But they were like “Nah I don’t want to be in the room with them”. I do have a policy, that when you come here, it’s about the music, so if you’ve got something going on, we need to sort it out.

00:43:17

Rock music is a collective activity. Everyone’s contributing and it’s kind of “Do it yourself” and it’s kind of like – there’s probably a correct way to play that pattern on the guitar but if you can figure out another way... I mean... you’re going to put some bits of wood together – here’s a hammer and here’s a nail gun and here’s some glue – they are all different ways of doing the same thing. Notation is like that, it’s one way of doing something... I can get this wood together with some wire and some glue... a nail might be a very efficient way. Notation has certain advantages, reading music has advantages ... but it’s not music ... no one owns music ... it’s vibration ... it’s not like a painting, a painting is a thing; you can take that thing and walk out with it ... you can’t do that with music... I think lots of kids learn by ear, lots of kids learn off YouTube and there’s absolutely nothing wrong with that. If they need to learn something different, they need someone to help them learn what that is and it’s often about a music teacher having those options available to them and, if they really need to learn that they will learn it, they will learn it.

CECELIA 00:50:50

When you are working with kids yourself... that feeling of joy ('asi) that you mentioned... is that what you're aiming to achieve with these kids?

JOHN 00:51:02

I think that feeling of connecting with the audience and with each other and that will usually be the joyful thing that comes from it. I think that primarily it's the realisation... "I'm up in front of people and I'm enjoying this and they're enjoying it and that's that feedback loop. if you look at Intermediate, you've got Year sevens and Year eight. Quite often, at Year seven, you watch these kids being terrified and their feeling is relief... "It wasn't awful, we got through it, I didn't stuff up." They come back in Year eight and do more shows, then it's much more about, "Wow, that was fun!" You know that they're buzzing in a way that's quite different from that first show where they're just like, "Oh my god, I did that squeaky note ... and I did that ... but I survived it and I got through it."



INTERVIEW 5: TROY TU'UA

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: TROY TU'UA

Context:

Troy Tu'ua was born in Samoa and raised in South Auckland, New Zealand. He is one of the founding members and the artistic director of the Pacific Dance theatre company Sau e siva Creatives Ltd. He is also a an actor, director, choreographer and theatre technician. He has been the director of many sold out, April School holiday shows presented by the Māngere Arts Centre. This interview was conducted immediately after one of the matinee performances of his show Sinarella.

Topic: What is faiva? What is 'asi? How is it achieved?

Location: Mangere Arts Centre, Auckland City, New Zealand

Date: 1 May 2019, 12.18pm

Time: 00:00:00–01:01:34

Recording device: OPPO R11 7.1.1

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed here are excerpts from a broader, one-hour talanoa.)

CECELIA 00:00:59

Tongans call performance faiva, and faiva normally has sound, choreography and poetry integrated into it. Looking at what you have done here, you've incorporated all of these elements. For Tongans, a good faiva will create mafana, malie ... somebody has described this as 'asi, which is like the presence of the unseen ... you know, when it gets to a peak. When you are with young Oceanic people, do you purposely try to create this feeling?

TROY 00:01:40

I've been watching the audience come for the past six years, and you see certain things that they react to - for instance, when it's a joke, or when it's a dance or a siva or something like that, you can tell when the audience will engage. You either get a big roar during it, after it, or some clicking of some fingers or laughter that comes through, and then you know, 'Okay, that's where we need to keep hitting'. Over the past six years, I have always based decision making around that and adding some of my humour or my family's humour in there or what the cast brings to the stage, and then trying to be that outside eye and weave and incorporate everything together so it can be a story of laughter, fun, family, māfana ... and it's always a journey thing. It's taking the audience on the journey and that's what I love about storytelling. It's just getting a magnifying glass and putting it on the stage. I guess that's how it works. It's mixing a bit of my touch and what the cast brings in, what the audience love ... and people ask, 'How do you do it?' It's a team thing. When I come to do these shows, it's not until we get on the floor ... it's like, 'Okay, let's figure out what we're going to do today!' And then you see someone come with a beautiful voice and it's like, 'Okay, I know what we can do with that.' Someone comes with some amazing dance ... and then that's where it

starts ... 'Okay, okay, we can make a character around this ... and then we can make a character around that person ... and then, literally, you know ... you've got 10 different characters. You have an ensemble that will support those characters ... and then we've got a story.

CECELIA 00:04:09

So when you start, do you have a story in mind? So, in tonight's case, did you have the Cinderella story as the theme?

TROY 00:04:26

So, because it's a fairy tale, what we start off with is the title, so it was Cinderella. We go, 'OK the show we're doing this year, it's Cinderella.' We try to make it Pacific ... you go – Sinarella and that's what we have, and then we have to try and make the show out of that title ... I mean, we know the basics from the western world ... the story where the slipper falls off and whatnot, but it's like ... 'Okay, that's that ... we use it as a guideline and we change our characters ... there's still the ugly sisters – the aunties, you know, it's that sort of thing. So we basically come to the first day of rehearsal, auditions or whatever ... It's like, we don't know what we are expecting. Normally in the Western world, you'd already know. 'Okay, I'll shoulder tap this person ... they've done good shows, and I think they'll be perfect for this.' But here ... we just work with what we have ... that's the risk we take every year... and if it does come to missing one more character, then it would be like, a shoulder tapping thing or it might be like, "Uce, are you doing anything during April? Can you come and do this show?" Or, it's training up someone new to the scene and we go, "Okay, trust me, let me work with you and you'll be perfect" and then they start to believe in themselves. For example Sia,

she only joined to be in the ensemble, next minute, she's got lines in nearly every scene or she's got lines throughout the show and she never thought that she would be able to do dancing or hold down the scene, but, man, she's... her family are just overwhelmed by what she's been doing.

CECELIA 00:09:18

Would you say that this is a kind of contemporary faiva? This is a contemporary way for our New Zealand born maybe?

TROY 00:09:51

I guess so it is. I mean, it's hard to get opportunities like this in the islands, trying to put on a massive production with, you know, minimal funding. Yeah, I guess it is on stage, we were speaking English, but then we've got hints of our Pacifica languages weaving in and out there and going out and you know, and I always get the cast and I go... 'The moment you forget your lines, skip to your mother tongue and then you talk in your mother tongue because they've got the intention right and how they want to deliver the lines but sometimes, you know... anything can happen ... our stepmother ... she's so fluent in Tongan ... that's her first language ... Trying to get her to learn the whole thing, in English ... but it's like ... just speak in Tongan ... and when she does that... all of us backstage are like. 'Yep, that's our auntie!' [...] I think she knows her lines now, but I give her the license to keep playing because it's beautiful to hear our own language on stage and for our families to come ... be able to come to a theatre and hear their mother tongue on stage, it just makes them more connected to the character and we don't have to do much ... we just sing in Samoan ... it's when we see ourselves on stage, that's when we get connected so quickly and I think that's been our key over the years.

00:11:49

Last year, we had a massive Tongan parade that was happening in Otāhuhu. There was one of those scenes we had in "The Wizard of Otāhuhu"... We had this big scene where they went through the market and we had flags, red ... a sea of red everywhere ... and that scene everyone always left and said ... 'Man, that was māfana as!'... so, we always try to take hints of our own culture. We are always trying to find ways to incorporate things without losing the story ... We can all be māfana.

CECELIA 00:17:15

Do you think, because the cast has been with each other for so many weeks, that you've built this māfana so much, even just in the rehearsals so that everyone feels like they can play off each other naturally now?

TROY 00:17:39

I kid you not, I think there's māfana and there needs to be another word for māfana, like 'over māfana', because I think everyone is over confident now. Even the young ones who are playing up on stage but in character. I mean, they're safe to play and they know that you can add your flavour, you can keep it fresh in your mind. I keep telling them every week we circle up again, 'I know for you guys, it's going to get boring'. I've done this before, I've done a tour before that lasted for 12 months and we had to do it twice a day, every day to the end of the year and it was quite draining ... and I learned from there ... I always had to change things up ... Maybe this school here I'll come and do an accent in Irish or try to do an American accent for this show, but it was just to keep it fresh. 'You already know which parts are going to be draining for you

guys, but just remember, it's the first time the audience has seen it, so just make sure if you're going to play, going to have fun - have fun but still deliver the stories because at the end of the day, that's what these people are coming to see ... the storyline and the performance'.

CECELIA 00:19:51

Does this show get better and better? Or, is 'asi seen during rehearsals as well? Do you only see it as the show progresses?

TROY 00:20:18

Ideally you only see it when the show progresses. As a theatre director, you never want to peak early. The moment you peak early, there's nowhere else to go, you're definitely going to get bored, you're going to switch off and the only way to go is going down. So if we start high, we just keep getting higher

CECELIA 00:21:28

Do you think the audience is also involved in creating 'asi?

TROY 00:21:40

It's definitely that, but I always tell the cast not to play off the audience because not every audience is the same. There are always different audiences. You get audiences that listen and the moment you try to play off that, the energy in the show will start coming down and you've gotta keep going up and pushing through, because yeah they're enjoying it but they are listening more. But then you got the rowdy ones, like today, they were laughing and then it makes the cast on stage more rowdy. So yeah! Definitely, you feed off the audience, you feed off the energy ... but I always keep them grounded again ...

'Remember, every audience is different,' because I don't want them to get a shock.

CECELIA 00:22:39

What you're saying reminds me of how Islanders joke with each other, and they exaggerate the story...

TROY 00:22:52

... And that's what we call a ripple effect ... it's a vibe ... it's an energy.

CECELIA 00:23:16

... When you're doing this with the young people, do you think that they feel like they belong to something? Because ... one of the kids was saying, "Oh, yeah, this is like family" ... this must be just so warming to that child that she feels like, this is where she belongs...

TROY 00:23:46

It's warming to the child and it's warming for us as well ... that's how I base all my productions. It's around me, you, it's around family. The moment you treat it like a company or a business, then your teachings are wrong and then you're going to be treating people like slaves ... military, and it's not like that. I mean, we always start off our day with a prayer and we always end it with a prayer and we always circle up before we go on there and we always say, 'Think of one person in your family, you want to take on stage today, and take them on stage, and then you know, make them proud.' I always put that message in all my productions, even this one ... these guys know... It's always family first... I tell them, you know, 'We have to give an

amazing show ... your family's out there, they've come to watch us and they could spend that money on the bread and butter to feed the kids and that, but they come to watch you, so make them proud'. And that's what it is ... because our families are spending their hard work money to come watch our theatre show, I will always make sure we deliver because it's not fair, we will be stealing from our own families ... So yeah, we always make sure it's a family environment rather than a business.

CECELIA 00:25:22

I saw one guy at the door pull out like 15 tickets, and I was just like, holy heck!

TROY 00:25:33

That's probably one family ... they must have a Facebook chat or something to work out something and you know ... their effort to get here, shows how much as we have to do - the effort to get on there and deliver because they're going to go home and tell the rest of their families and I mean that's why the show speaks for itself, that it's a sold out season now. There's absolutely no seats left ... It's amazing. It's hard to get a sold out season especially seven shows before it even closes in South Auckland. It's awesome.

CECELIA 00:26:08

Do you think it makes a difference whether you're working with Oceanic kids? If you're working with other kids or young people? Would it have the same vibe?

TROY 00:26:27

No, it wouldn't, but the intentions would be the same, we're here to serve the story, we're here to show our family ... but the vibe will definitely be different. I mean, I've worked with different companies ... for instance I'll be here working with our family and then I'll go out and serve someone else's company and ... the vibe's different but the intention is to serve the story, it's to serve the characters, to make sure our families come in and they enjoy it, and they go home and they're, 'Oh, that was a well \$20 spent', rather than, "Man I just should have went and bought a Big Mac!" ... You know, that always goes through my head. The last thing I want is families to go home and go. "Maumau le taimi (waste of time) to watch this show.

CECELIA 00:27:24

When you say, "Just be yourself and make sure that you represent your family", do you think that's easy to say to a group of young people, because that's what their values are anyway?

TROY 00:27:48

Definitely. You don't even have to. It's just giving them the license to ... "Hey, can you play your auntie?" ... It's like, "Yep, easy!"

CECELIA 00:31:28

... You know, suicide rates are pretty high ... we have this holistic way of doing things ... but why are some kids so down that they don't feel?

TROY 00:31:54

... I guess we all have obstacles in life or goals in life where we wish we want to be in the moment and something stops

us from that, or some people stop us from achieving that, or you get influenced by bad things, then you start to think bad things. And even when you try and change your support base it is either too far away or your support base is the one that's making you think that your egos are too big and you just don't want to talk to anyone and you start to feel lonely. Our PI people ... we have a high rate of suicide in our community, but at the same time ... we've got a massive community, we're so tight, but ... we don't know exactly what our kids are going through, unless you're in their head or unless they talk, but some things are just hard to talk about ... and just tying it in with our show ... I've had people come in that feel like *** when they come in here and you don't force them you let them come back on their own time. Even today, I think *** wasn't feeling well. Yesterday she looked fine but each to their own, I'm not going to force her to come. I said, 'Cool.' We just alter the show... 'You're going to do this part, you're going to do this part, you can do this.' So I just got *** to check up on her to see if she's okay. I'm not saying she's going suicidal but ... when you talk to someone you don't know what they're going through, and I've looked in the corner before and I saw someone have tears but then I talked to them and it was ... 'One of my friends ... my family friends passed away.' So, we come together, and we pray and then we dedicate the show to their family ... in terms of the suicide ... it's a question that we've been asking for years... we can say, "We're here, we're here, but sometimes it's ...

CECELIA 00:34:56

Do you think, if kids feel like they belong, that this can become an avenue where they feel more open to talk?

TROY 00:35:10

There have been times like... productions I have done, after rehearsals... and there has been that one who might come back and ask, 'Can I talk to you?' I've had a lot of these moments, the cool thing about it is, they trust you enough to express what they're feeling. I remember a girl coming to rehearsals wearing short sleeves and they were just seeing the stripes on her arms ... and you go and take this person away and ask, 'Is everything all right?' And she was like, 'Yeah, yeah' ... They don't want to show that they are weak, but the moment you just open your door, then you just see ... it's being aware. You know your cast, you know your family, you know, your friends ... the moment you see, hear or feel something different about them, then trust your instincts... 'You all good uce?' ... 'You all good sis?' You just say that one line... and then they'll come up. Like myself, you've probably been depressed before ... I was 'that' person... 'I'm not telling anyone'. You go into your little box at home, you're like, 'this is ridiculous, why am I like this?'... and you know, you start beating yourself up and it's that ego thing. It's just trying to be the type of person who can pick up on these sorts of things or the ear or open arms when someone you know is feeling that sort of way.

CECELIA 00:37:21

You said instinct before, I was thinking about the word asi'asiga - when a spirit may be present. Do you think maybe 'asi has to do with when a person comes and they bring their all? You said, "Who are you representing today?"... then they bring their all. Maybe the audience can see aspects of that person in the performance?

TROY 00:38:29

Definitely, it's all that and more ... I'm just getting goosebumps, now. When you take someone on stage with you, your performance level already is like... 'Okay, I'm taking my late grandpa on stage with me and I'll make sure he's going to be proud when I walk on that stage.' When someone sees that performance, they can feel it's because they are going on with a purpose now. They're going on with that mana, that pride and representing someone especially, someone late in your family. I find if I ever go on film or TV or on to the theatre stage ... I just think back to my grandparents, even if my grandmas are still here, but they're really old now and they find it hard to come to the theatre. I say, 'I'm taking them on with me'... you just feel your performance level go to another level. I think that the audience can definitely feel it when you're being true to your character, when you're being true to yourself on stage, rather than playing these airy fairy characters. As you see in Sinarella, she really goes there. I think her father passed away a couple of years ago ... she's going on there with a purpose. People are like, 'Does she cry every night?' and I'm like, 'Every single show - she goes there... there's not one fake tear'. And they go, 'How does she do it?' and I go, 'Because she's playing the truth!'... I mean, if anyone talks to you like that ... of course you're gonna be disheartened as ... like man ... You're calling me useless, you're calling me ugly, you're calling me 'You scum' ... If you really listen to those words, man, it can really hurt you.

CECELIA 00:40:51

Definitely, I heard someone in front of me go, 'Is she crying for real?'

TROY 00:41:00

Yeah, she is actually crying. She's not going there and putting water in her eyes, she's playing the truth of that character.

CECELIA 00:41:10

When you tell the kids to represent, it's more than just themselves, it's all of us.

TROY 00:41:38

That's right. Yeah, I'm representing all of us, I'm representing all our families, I'm representing our whanau, our aiga ... we are representing everyone rather than 'It's all about me. I'm the main character'. You got the old cats looking out for the young ones backstage ... it's that sort of love ... sometimes I walk back here ... the audience doesn't see it, but you see the mayhem back here and you see other guys holding the door back for the others and directing - 'Oh you guys are on the other side' ... I've been in that world, where it's all everyone for themselves. You make sure you've got your cue, you make sure you're over there ... even if you drop a line on stage ... it's like, 'What's your line?' Here man, you have these guys jumping in ... it's always having each other's back you know... we do the mocking after ... mocking fun.

00:43:40

That's what a lot of people get wrong when they put on productions they go, "You must drill them" and I go ... 'I don't'. Man I would run things at like 50% and when it's time to actually run it then I'll say do it at 110% so I can just quickly see if it works, if it doesn't then I'll change it but some people run it 100 and then people get exhausted and they get tired and

then I know for a fact that it's the process that the ensemble, that the cast are judging your directions off because if the process is like a shitty one, then they won't want to come back.

00:44:21

People want to come back every year because the process has been smooth ... it's been easy, they know there's going to be a family environment, they know they are going to have each other's back, they know it's going to be fun. Rather than, 'again ... again ... from the top ... mistake, mistake', ... that only happens in the last couple of days when we're in theatre ... 'Okay, we need to switch on now. Keep 110% and then we go again ... that's only two days to three days rather than the whole five, six weeks of drilling ... it's too much – yeah, especially if you've got a 10-year-old and trying to drill them is like ... they're gonna have a stink memory. Now they're talking about ... what are we gonna do next year?

CECELIA 00:45:23

*With you doing this, do you have your own support system?
How do you make it work for yourself, because this is draining?*

Troy 00:45:44

It's draining and yeah, you do have to. My family is my number one support base at home. They know me, they know if I'm doing a show, they won't disturb me, but they'll be here on opening night. That's my parents. I've been doing shows for the past 10 years now and they have not missed one show, even if I'm not in it ... they're here opening night or closing night. That shows me that that's my support and that's why I do it.

00:46:22

... it's having a support base here and at home. You can never have too much support? Yeah, it could be support from work as well ... then you've got regulars in the audience with their support, you know ... coming every year.

00:47:46

... I tell my friends and families when I post it ... I always thank my friends and family who have supported me, you know ... no point putting on a show if there's no audience, and it's just been lucky enough, the last 15 shows I've put on throughout this last year and this year, they've all been sold out to the rim. Like it sold out here, sold out at Q Theatre last year... and why? Because, they enjoy their work, obviously but it's just that support.

CECELIA 00:48:27

... And I was thinking... because... maybe you make it more relevant?

TROY 00:48:35

It's relevant ... they connect with the culture; it's those two things. Make it relevant, especially for the kids, you know, and then having jokes in there for the adults as well.

People call it the kids' show, but it's not a kids' show ... it's a theatre show ... but it's slightly different because it caters for all ages and all cultures, even the two Pālagi old ladies that came in today, and they were giggling on the side and laughing. It's making sure we cater to everyone ... that's why it's been so successful.



INTERVIEW 6: MARINA ALOFESIO

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: MARINA ALOFESIO

Context:

Marina Alofesio is a Samoan spoken word artist. She sees spoken word as a contemporary form of faiva and a powerful tool to empower Oceanic youth.

Topic: The Nature of 'asi. – PART 01

Location: Hollywood Café - Manukau

Date: 3 August 2021, 11.08am

Time: Part 01: 00:00:00–01:05:02

Recording device: OPPO R11 7.1.1

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed here are excerpts from a broader talanoa.)

CECELIA 00:00:00

Can you describe what you do as a youth worker?

MARINA 00:00:23

In my role at Leva, I'm the Youth Development Lead. So one of my roles is to engage young people into Mental Health literacy and learning or talking to them about respectful relationships and intimate partner relationships. In my other roles, or like outside community roles within Word, it's more like helping a young person to develop their sense of voice or their sense of purpose through their voice - using spoken word poetry or rap, or just any other creative medium around storytelling, even with theatre - script, writing, things like that.

CECELIA 00:01:01

Do you find that most of the young people with whom you work, get into the performance side of it pretty easily or does it take them a while to work up the courage?

MARINA 00:01:17

It depends on who the young people are. For instance, I just worked on a theatre show called Brown Paper Bag and those young people that came, were creatives ... they recognize within themselves that they're a dancer or a singer or an actor or a writer. Whereas other spaces like in Secondary Schools, I'm working with different types of young people but I don't even start with the creative stuff, yet. It's more like, connection first, and through that connection, they're able to access the learning around the creative (even if they don't identify as someone who is creative or likes creativity), they are able to access it through that creative connection ... A lot of my

learning does come from learning from people like Grace Taylor and Ramon Narayan who built up Action Education. We kind of have similar methods, except maybe my world view – our worldviews can differ as well. Like, for instance, I'm Christian, so I will use a lot of prayer prior to any workshop even before I get in the room, but that doesn't mean that they're not using prayer too – they could be using karakia in their own way... we all have different ways of preparing for a space so for me, before I even come to the space, I have to go somewhere inside of me first – I can't even go in there yet...

00:03:45

I feel like sometimes it's trusting yourself ... Everyone gets a choice on how they want to be in the space. So I have to trust myself in the space. That's why I like going quiet or meditating. Praying beforehand is really important for me, as a facilitator / creative because it doesn't matter what happens I'm at peace in myself, I trust myself, I know myself. There have been spaces like, across the spectrum ... from those who are fully engaged to those who didn't want to be in the classroom in the first place, they were forced to be there. Yet, because I'm just in their presence and not like ... you know how young people can just tell - they know if you're faking. I feel like they know when you're nervous. That's why I'm like, I need to be confident when I speak to them.

00:05:48

For me, especially as a Samoan, it's that – “Who am I to speak?” Yeah. Now what's more important to me is, “What do I have to say, in this space, in this context, on this day”. “What is the most important thing to say today?” Because you know, not every class, school, youth group, community group, prison, wherever I am, looks the same. You can feel the spirit lead you

somewhere else. Sometimes you'll go there with your plan and go, "Okay, I've got the structure, this is what it's going to be" and then you get in there and based on the spirit, you can just sense it. Like ... "Oh, no, chuck that away, we're just gonna do this." I've been in those moments a lot. Which is hard. I don't mind the freestyling, like, "Let's just do whatever". But I'm also like a mum, too and I'm like, real aware of time but sometimes I need to stop my own ambitions, my own aspirations in that space and remember that these people have their own aspirations for the day. They had their own thing that they wanted to achieve by the end of the day - and sometimes it's not a poem! You'll be surprised at the amount of people who do want to just, (if I take away all the methods, genres of art forms), just want to share their story.

00:07:35

I had one of these most amazing experiences, that I'm never allowed to share - the actual story that was written. I was asked to do a workshop with homeless men and I was like, "Oh, I think I'm doing a spoken word workshop." Firstly, I had to introduce myself and I felt like, "Who the hell am I?" I was praying, please, whatever you give me God, like, that's what I'm going to bring." I remember going and then just saying, "Hey, my name is Marina, this is who I am. Listen, I'm a spoken word artist but If you have a story to tell and you want to tell it to me and you want me to write it down, I'm here on my laptop. If you want to write with me, write with me. If you don't, then don't. So some of them just walked off but one guy came up to me and he's like, "Don't look at me, don't talk to me, just listen and write. I'm gonna tell you my story"... It was like a movie - the story he told me but when I finished - when I got to the end, he said, "Now delete everything I just told you." I was so like, "Oh my gosh, I cannot believe, that was the most

terrifying and amazing story," but sometimes it's not about having a paper in my hand, and saying, "this is the amount of stuff we created today." It's about... "This is the soul that I listened to today and that person's soul touched my soul."

CECELIA 00:09:27

Man, I feel like crying just hearing that because it's like, "What an honour!"

MARINA 00:09:32

That's exactly the word, it's like, if we could just understand how much of an honour it is -when people do share. We (society) try to do this thing all the time... "Don't share!." That might have been the only time that person could share that thing with you. I was privileged to hear it. I wish I had that story but he told me to delete it.

00:10:18

You know the other part of it? There's listening and then there's - "Where is the hope?" If we're telling that same story for 10 years and it hasn't shifted or moved - like stories that keep us in the dark - how can we shift it? That's why for me, praying beforehand, praying during, praying after, is really important in my practice but you know, if I do it with other people who are maybe not comfortable with prayer, there's got to be some way that we can get to the other side, whether it's like, debriefing, or singing a pese or just having a laugh or a feed. There's got to be some way to like, come back to, "Okay, so that's your story, that's your life but the story hasn't finished yet! The story's

continuing. How can we make the story shift and change?" Sometimes it is little things. You know, with those homeless men, I was privileged to have that space with them but I was also like, Man! That felt like they were blessing me. I didn't feel like I was doing anything in that space. I just felt so privileged.

CECELIA 00:11:13

That's how I feel as a teacher. I don't really do anything; all I am doing is regurgitating information I've learnt. "There you go, there's the information" but...it's the "other" stuff then you go – "How cool is that!"

MARINA 00:12:17

I was at a school yesterday, sharing some stuff with them. I used a script and word exercise in the workshop. I always preface the open floors like, "You don't need to share anything that's hard. I just want to make sure there is confidentiality in the room but they then get up anyway and share. One particular young girl, she made us all cry by sharing something that was personal to her but I get scared sometimes when I am in the spirit or when I am moving, that things are gonna come out and how can I control it? That's why I like working in teams, even if my team is not there with me, I love having people that I can check in with and be like, "Hey, can you cover me? Can you pray for me? Can you listen to this?" It's my creative friends, not even my business teammates.

00:13:30

I think of us as vessels. We need people to hold us too. We can't just go in there and be heroes.

00:14:08

It's community aye, that's true community and I feel like that does get us away from heroics. There have been times, earlier on where I think all the world is on my shoulders, I'm going to save all these young people. We can't handle everything, we need a place for it to go. We can't go back home, we can't take everything back with us. This is why I really care to work strategically in certain spaces. It's because I feel for the young people that have to go back to the same environment. You know, you've uplifted them, they feel empowered but then they go back to the same environment.

It's like what do you do, what hope can I give this person? They've just shared all this stuff. I find that quite tough as a teacher. Because it's like, "this the only hope you have ... when you come to school, you feel okay but then you gotta go back to that ... that's hard!"

CECELIA 00:14:51

So, thinking about faiva? Does the creative work that you do relate?

MARINA 00:15:39

It definitely resonates. There's the spiritual element and the blessing that comes with unity.

Even if we're not on the same page poetically, like everyone's at different levels - it doesn't matter to me anymore. What matters to me is that space.

I worked in, like, a women's refuge centre for about two years, just doing poetry Tuesday morning, at the church in Mangere and just held space for women. I was like, why am I teaching

these women these things? But when I went there, you know, I went from a space of, "Okay, guys, listen, we're going to go through talking about what it's like to be a woman. using poetry using storytelling." When we were united on some of the things that we're going through. I felt like the spirit came in, in that sense like something shifts. It was amazing watching women going from timid, or someone that had a lot on their plate, seeing them soften or seeing them get tough because they needed to get tough. I had this one lady who I worked with for like a year and a half. We did this open floor at the end (she never shared poetry). Every Tuesday it wasn't her, it was everyone else. By the end, she got up and just was so confident we were like, "Who is this woman?" It's like, raising confidence in the areas that need confidence - everyone's different. Some people need quiet to have quiet confidence. Some people need a bold confidence to be able to stick up for themselves. Everyone has their little thing that they need but I feel like through talanoa, through storytelling, through creativity. For me, creativity is like the closest you can get to being a human. When someone shares their story with you, you get insight, you get to see into their life, and you no longer judge them by the things you saw on the surface. You know, these things you can only see at the front, you're like, "Oh, look who they are outside the book." The Bible says man looks outwards but God looks at the heart and you know, we are like that, we just look at the outer life and judge based on it, then they show us a little piece of themselves and things make sense and then the judgments come down. When the judgments come down, and the stones come down, it's almost like we are now one because, I'm not coming to you with my preconceptions anymore. I wish we could always be like that.

But I will even say, like, for me, I've got to check myself all the time. Like Rina, stop judging this person, you don't know this person's background. You don't know. You know that as a teacher. You can go to any school and see the ones playing up and just judge them straight away, "Look at that kid" and then you learn about their background and you're like, "This makes sense." It doesn't justify certain behaviour, but it does make sense.

00:19:41

It breaks down these walls or these things that are blocking us from connecting as humans. I remember going into some high schools and being told, "This is the really developed or accelerated English class and these people just don't care about English." I had so much more fun with those who didn't care about English, because they didn't have this mentality that, "I have to go in there and write this structured thing or like, be a certain way. I can just be honest with myself," and they embraced it fully. Whereas the other class I had, were kind of like, "I have to create the greatest thing." This builds barriers to exploration and creativity. The poetry, the storytelling, the sharing is like, we connect and we find things out, and we just start to enjoy each other.

00:21:33

The great thing about doing the creativity stuff is like, there's collectivism, this collective energy that you all create together.

TOPIC: THE NATURE OF 'ASI. – PART 02

Location: Le Va - Harakeke House, 15 Ronwood Avenue,
Manukau City, Auckland 2104

Date: 18 August 2021, 12:24pm

Time: Part 01: 00:00:00–01:05:02

Recording device: OPPO R11 7.1.1

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been
transcribed here are excerpts from a broader talanoa.)

CECELIA 00:00:20

*If you look at the work that you do, how would you describe
that as a contemporary faiva?*

MARINA 00:00:43

Maybe, if I describe who I am first. I'm a second generation
New Zealand born Samoan - raised here and didn't go to
Samoa 'till I was in my 20s, didn't get taught the language but

²⁰⁰ A Samoan chief functioning as an adviser
and debater on matters of public policy
and expected to be thoroughly informed
on matters of traditional lore ("Definition
of TULAFale," n.d.)

still love being Samoan - I think that adds to the flavour, as well.
Also, even as a Christian like - growing up as a Catholic - with
their rituals, regime and ways of entering into the spirit is kind
of changed in terms of me going to a more charismatic church
like Pentecostal.

Why I say that is - thinking about that and thinking about like
my identity, who I am the way I enter into spirit, I think it can
contribute to the faiva - to how I practice that art [...]-

If you think about - my father is a tulafale²⁰⁰ of our family - so
he's the orator of our village. His role is really based on his
fa'asamoa, his aganu'u, his language, his history, his knowledge
of proverbs of history, of genealogies and I see myself as like
a contemporary orator and the work that I do contemporary
in that spoken word is not traditional oratory but it has the
same principles of putting esteem on words and speaking with
Proverbs and speaking in poetic language. That's probably
the change - my generation also my upbringing and then my
change in terms of going from the way I worship in church
through quiet, solemn prayer, repetitive prayer, rehearsed
prayer to a more contemporary church of trying to follow
the Holy Spirit, praying whatever the spirit shows me, freely
worshipping with my hands, in dance, in song and even being
able to rap in church would be seen as contemporary - it's the
things that are similar, from traditional to contemporary is the
faiva on I believe, on Pacific nations, specifically Samoa and
Tonga as well, with the oratory with the being able to speak
spiritual words.

00:04:51

I was watching a guy who studied theology and his Pacific focus on temples [...] he talked about how there's the temple as we know through Scripture, the temple that we know as being our bodies then he was talking about modern day temples - places that people gravitate to worship, to spend time to be [...] just that symbolism of where people are at in their heart and that's reflected outwardly.

I think every age gives you permission or a new consciousness to be somebody something, that's where I think a lot of these multiple identities are coming from [...] before it was rigid and structured - this is the way it is - but as the spirit moves, because I believe that, I believe in a creator, our God is a creator. Genesis talks about his spirit brooding over the earth, as he created - him as creator is spirit. So for me, him as creator is able to make old things new - to renew things. So one of the things that I think is important in this space of art is where I am in my heart - where people are in their hearts. So I love that idea that poetry oratory in Samoan culture (lauga), expression of the heart, expression of where the people are at - and that's when you get from the seen to the unseen.

So like, from the intangible to the tangible, is because God first used the word – in the beginning was the word and the word was with God. So the word created - the words of a spirit created [...] at the same time, culture is so important - there's something about praying in your own native tongue. There's something powerful about singing native songs that invokes the spirit of the past - that's what I believe [...] It's trying to take the old and make it new.

00:10:05

I feel like, we are spiritual beings, everyone, whatever your faith is, we are spiritual beings first and so because we're spiritual beings, even in the physical world - know how it says where your treasure is there, your heart will be - it's where you put effort or emphasis on [...] it could be a sports field, it could be your grandma's house - I find it interesting to see what different friends of mine do to rest on a Sunday or how they rest from work - it's interesting to know how people interpret Sabbath - like taking a day off – because that's when the Spirit can rest and then start up again to be re-energised for the next day. Everyone has different methods and ways of doing that. What I like about art, because for me, I do call it spiritual work with the spoken word stuff. There is me being commissioned in schools or in communities and different places, then there's just me, speaking with my Creator, and I was telling you, before each workshop, I have to get into that zone. But then there's [...] I don't know if this makes sense but there was a long time, I couldn't let go through certain places because there were too many words like on billboards, in cities and stuff so I couldn't go there because it would be too overstimulating for my head as a words person who gravitates towards words ... I see words as spiritual - I see meanings in so many words [...] if I get in a lane with too many words around me ... it can make my mind go ... over-stimulated, making meanings out of too many signs and signals. I love being able to, like just not speak on the days that I'm resting and just have silence.

CECELIA 00:12:47

That's an interesting thing that you're saying that it is spiritual work and it's interesting that it's always been part of our culture, you know, and then how you relate it back to the beginning, there was the word [...]

00:14:56

In relation to spoken word and your work with young people. What do you think 'asi is or what does it look like to you and your work?

MARINA 00:15:09

I think it's a point of connection. Like heart to heart. I know I keep talking about my faith, but it's because I've experienced stuff in my life where I just know [...] I did a poem at the dawn raid apology on the weekend. There's just no way I could do it without having a sense my God loves me and that whether I stuff up or do well, it actually is not the point. The point is, I have someone who loves me, regardless of that [...] Isaiah 55 says, when the word goes out of his mouth, it does not come back and void and I find that when you're inspired, spiritually (that's why I'm telling you like, we need to do the work before we go into spaces in on ourselves, which is, could be prayer, meditation, resting, listening to stuff, switching off from the net). When the Spirit enters in, I believe we're like vessels and the spirit moves through us, through our words, or performance or our Siva or our energy and goes into and touches someone else's spirit so that relieves me from pressure because it's not me. I'm a vessel in space, but there's a spirit that enters and goes through and touches someone else's spirit, that's 'asi to

me. When I'm working with young people, and just praying for them, I'll say, "please, Holy Spirit go before me, please create a love, go before me." I'm not waiting for my own... It's not of my own effort but it's the inspiration that's coming through and it's inspiring others [...] I'll get people all the time saying, "Oh, my God, you inspired me so much"... but the cool thing is, I know, without a doubt, it's not me. I recognise everyone has gifts, my particular gift that God's given me is in the space of spoken word - that I be a vessel and he'll be able to touch young people's hearts with the words through the connection. It just relieves me of having to think it's, it's all on me to do that. Yes, I prepare properly - I really sit down and think about the exercises, I think about the young people, I want to know who they are. I will make sure I'm there early... I prepare for that but sometimes, like we were talking about the other day, you can just walk in, and something's changed in the atmosphere.

I have a friend who said that for her spoken word, when she hears it - she feels like new cities are being built inside of her. It made sense to me that if it's true that life and death is in the power of the tongue and how we speak, how we use our words matters, then words have the power to bring people up to pull them up or bring them down and if you think about young people's experience, if they are carrying words into their adulthood, words of death, curses, you know, even in our culture, using words as weapons, to hurt people, instead of using them as a weapon to support people to anchor them, to strengthen them [...] This is why it's really important for us who are parents or who are youth workers or who are teaching, whatever... to go back to us first. This is why I love writing to my younger self... some people are like, 'whatever... too

emotional!” It’s just sometimes we write to the younger self who didn’t have the words at the time.

At that 10 year old age, you’re homeless and you didn’t have the words but you knew something was wrong, you didn’t know what it was, you couldn’t articulate it and it’s not to remember you’re 14 or 24, 34 you’re like, “Hey, that was wrong and I need to say that out loud, acknowledge it and then I can move.”

CECELIA 00:21:24

So do you do that with your young people that you work with, where they have to address the younger version of themselves?

MARINA 00:21:42

I’ve tested certain exercises out and utilised exercises that from my friends and peers and it’s good being at Leva, you’re learning about clinical training [...] using the spirit and praying, asking God creator love, “please help me to navigate the space” ... sometimes it’s too raw for a young person to go back to that space. Sometimes it’s just about playing games and having fun with them. Honestly, there’ll be times when I might just get one poem out of one kid in the room. Or maybe we’re just going to sit there and freestyle the whole session, or just. I know I help them with spoken words but I’ve had times when young people are not literate and they can’t write, so that there’s not a barrier... It’s just can you speak, can you talk but sometimes it’s really important not to take them straight away to that vulnerable place [...] in the workshops they are

retreating in a memory, they are sitting still in a space and thinking about life and thinking about the story and that can be triggering. Even to just be asked, “what’s your story?” can upset someone. I’ve seen it so many times – So, when it comes to asking a young person to go back to their younger self, I try to say, “when you were five, what kind of superhero did you want to be or superhero power did you want to have? because there are good memories to tap into too - just to strengthen them first - we don’t want to go too deep. [...] Some kids love to tap into the present like what are the social issues that are happening today and what’s going on in life this morning? It’s really awesome to see young people trying and even those that are not into poetry [...] words matter, it’s not about being a poet’s, words matter - the way we speak to each other. It’s so important if you think about our names too - the names we’re called, even from birth, like how we call these names and who calls us them. The word, it matters.

CECELIA 00:26:22

Does ‘asi happen while they’re working or only when it’s being performed?

MARINA 00:27:14

I think it’s all encompassing, it all matters. The way we engage with each other, the way that we connect, or don’t connect - all matters - can change the atmosphere [...] you know you drew that picture, I see that in a different way too - you being the microphone, and stepping into that space - to be a voice or a messenger in that spotlight. The powerful thing that

comes as a listener, is when I'm so hooked and engaged in it - it's doing something inside that I can't even... sometimes some people, they can't even understand the words, but... it's hitting them inside and it's the same when you're up there... it's only happened to me once... where I've been on stage, and I'm just, I'm not performing anymore... I felt an out of body experience, where I'm like, I felt I stepped back and I was watching myself perform. It's only happened once to me, but it was like, "what was that? What just happened?" That's why I mean about us being spiritual beings before physical beings. So I feel like that point where we're no longer relying on our flesh but we fully rely on our spirits and no longer we rely on the concrete stuff but we've moved to the abstract and we're not afraid to be in the abstract. I think that sometimes when we are too scared to go into that realm because of our fears, it means we're blinding ourselves from a potential, a potential pinnacle that we could get to. The word talks about a veil that's in front of our eyes, and we can't see the spiritual because there's no connection to - the vā between us and the Creator but when that veil is lifted up (and we always say as Christian, 'through Jesus, the Son of God') ... when the veil is lifted and torn, we're able to see more clearer we're able to see things in the light. That's critical for me (and it's personal because of what I've experienced) I know that the Holy Spirit is in the room, when I'm able to feel and sense the spirit, I don't even need to talk anymore as the facilitator, you can feel it - the spirit is able to help us in our soul because you know us creatives, we're so close to the soul and emotional, we could feel things deeply but the spirit is more than just evoking things from the heart that are sad, the spirit is joy, is love, is gentleness, is self-control, there are many different fruits - that's what - I know. I'm

not operating out of a space of fear, intimidation, timidity out of a space of...

"Do they like me, are they connecting with me, do they think I'm cool?" but more so operating out of, "Hi, this is who I am" and they are the same - we're both reciprocating that and they're like, "yep, this is who I am too" and it's fine. We're no longer wearing masks... man looks at the outer but God looks at the heart - it is in our nature - we just see physically too, we can pre-judge things... you can go to a school and think, 'Oh, these kids are fine,' next minute, you're like jamming with them, hanging out with them. It's when you're able to take it back to, "It's not about me, it's when they want to shift as well with you, when a young person says in their heart and their spirit, 'let's go, let's do this'." I can try all these tricks and these games and sometimes it works... I'm able to make the poetry accessible but a lot of times, it really depends on that young person going, "okay, I'll go with you, let's go on this journey of words, rediscovering, unpacking words, unpacking my story... let's go there." That's when you're in, that's when you're like, "okay we're connected."

00:34:05

I work in youth development. And I always say it's up to that person, we provide the environment, we prepare, we pray, we try to be as resourceful as we can but the strength comes from when they decide I want to be here. with you in this space. It's even like that in relationships. You can feel it when someone is with you in the present and you're having quality time - my kids know, they can tell, when I'm in the space with them.... They're like 'mum, I asked you three times!' and then I'm like 'oh my god, sorry, sorry, sorry.'

You can make the kid feel - when you're mesmerising, you're looking at them and you know, it's like love. Not just intimate partnerships but even just friendships in like siblings - I'm really close with my siblings and I just know it's a space – it's a vā I can go to, to rest because a lot of times, like, when you're meeting new people, and because you know in my work, I'm always meeting new kids and when they sign on, they become poets for a long time, and you're hanging out with them for life... I've known poets like, we've been doing our 20s together, now we're doing 30s together, I've known young people from when they were Year 9 right up to University, and then they get jobs - there's a lot of people I meet that are new, and I've never met them before - even going overseas or across New Zealand, ethnicities, different backgrounds [...] and I'm going, 'what am I doing?' When I question my authority or my space, I'm tricking myself, and I start to create or foster a heart of timidity. but when I start to say, 'okay, it's not about me, it's actually about this person, and I'm here to create a space, and they're invited in the space, and they can choose to be there - whether they want to be there in spirit, whether they want to be there with joy, or with learning or whatever [...] it's powerful, because then it means you can actually connect with people when I'm just a human [...] that's what happened with me in women's ministry too - being able to sit with women, we've all just going through different things – it really humbled me being there [...] I remember going to a men's prison and doing like a workshop in that space, and just going, "oh, my gosh!" I was so nervous because I had all these preconceptions, again, fear and when I got into the space, it was like the deepest workshop I've ever been in - obviously, because they had time to reflect and were very reflective and a lot of the ones I had were very remorseful of things that had happened and had got the time to be still and to contemplate so I was not trying to do anything, it was all coming off of them naturally - you try to get them to a stage in

the story where they're going from concrete stuff to abstract - playing with words but for them it was - just lay it all out - this is the story, this is my story, this is how I feel, this is how I am, this is how I'm being in the space. Yeah, that was one of the best – "wow." I came out of it going, "I just learned so much!"

CECELIA 00:38:34

You know when they can tell that you're invested, they want to be invested - is that what 'asi is the – like what you were saying right at the beginning - connection, that kind of connection - a deeper connection - It's not just your surface level stuff?

MARINA 00:38:34

Yeah. I think if it's really entering a spiritual realm, an unseen world, I believe love is in the tangible and intangible. Love is not just something you can buy. It really takes effort, and energy - you know, how they talk about ahi kā, the fire – working with the fire and being able to like and being able to, like sitting around the fire and everyone's adding fuel into the fire – it's burning and it's getting bigger and bigger. It's reaching up into the spirit. When I'm connected and this young person is connected, and that young person and the next young person or this woman, this man, it's like we're both contributing to it and it's getting bigger and bigger and bigger – the fire's getting bigger and bigger. That's why I feel like - not even poetry – thinking about something like protests - when one person is chanting and another person's chanting, and they're going, they're going and you can feel it! I went to the 'black lives matter' protest last year and you could just feel there was something in the air – you could just feel it. You feel it when Māori do haka, you can't even explain it, you can just feel – something has changed – it's shifted in

the spirit – it's awakening something – I think when we are doing things collectively, it's powerful, it's so powerful when it's genuinely collective – when everyone's decided 'let's turn up, let's do this – not because I have to but because I want to – I want to be here, my spirits here, I'm joining with the person to my left, to my right. At church we refer to our fellowship as a spiritual army and we don't let each other go, we fight for each other, we fight for each other's lives. I see that in a sense with my poetry peers or my youth worker peers, that we hold on to each other and we don't let each other go and we connect back with each other. I have best friends – when I go through stuff – y'know because you have to unpack that stuff that goes on with the young people – I can come back and say – and this is what happened – I love telling joyful stories (about each of the experiences with the young people) but also having room to pray about that young person that you met because sometimes the conditions... I feel stink when they have to go back to certain spaces... like I did some work in a youth prison, when we first went in there was so much noise, banging doors, disruptions but we ended up just rapping and writing stories and it wasn't even about the method or the medium, they just loved us coming – you know how sometimes (well for me) love is consistency, love is a sure thing, it's security, it's a stable thing, you know it's going to be there so if I'm ever doing this kind of spiritual work in a space with a young person, I always think what is the safe thing that's here for them. I truly believe that they are loved, I believe God loves them [...] you are teacher right, you are regularly with them, I'm always trying to connect with those teachers who are with them – people who are gonna constantly be with them and just sat, 'hey, your group was amazing, this is what happened during the space, I just wanted to let you know' ... just kinda giving notes and hoping that those people will take that on board, especially if they've (the young people) brought up areas of concern around

the stress... sometimes when you invoke that kind of spirit, other things can come out too, there's the ugly side of it too, not that I've experienced the worst of the worst but there've been times... expecting room for young people who have just shared a poem... being prepared for the other side which is harder... you would know as a teacher... there'll be a day where it's like 'wow, what just happened today?' but still not judging that young person for it or judging yourself – 'it's my fault because I did this'... I had one workshop where a young person threw a chair at me and I just recognised from what he told me in his story, from how his behaviour was – I was just like, 'don't judge him at this moment.' Yes I put my foot down and I was like, 'you cannot use violence towards me – ever – putting my foot down and using my strength to hold that space for myself, to keep myself safe, at the same time I recognised he's just going through a lot of things – it doesn't give him permission to treat anyone like that but when you do that kind of work you can't expect everything to be roses...

In relation to 'asi – what confounds me and my work – I'm going back to my faith again – what confounds me and what's profound is Jesus to me because for me - this is my own personal relationship with Jesus - Jesus is my perfect example of someone who truly bared burdens with us and listened and held space - for me and my children – I've seen evidence and experienced so much so it takes the weight off me to think – 'I'm not the answer to their problems – I'm not, I'm not the answer to their story, I'm just one part of the story but for me what's just so profound is the love of God of Jesus, that the story is not over, the story's going to continue and I believe in eternity. I believe there's another life for us – another door. That's my personal conviction and faith, not that I go into schools and go, 'hey guys..' I really hope that those who are seeking, the bible says, knock at the door, open, seek and you

will find – ask and he’ll dine with us, he’ll sit with us – what keeps me so secure and confident is that especially if I don’t have that village – family or my friends – it’s happened to me before – I know I’ve got God – I know I’ve got the spirit – The spirit is omnipotent and omnipresent wherever you go – even last week – that’s probably the most nervous I’ve been for a performance / ceremony – I couldn’t invite any of my family because it was so strict – but I was like, “I really wish one of my family was here, my dad or my mum or my friends or my kids” – I was just sitting by myself and I was just like – God is here with me, the spirit is here with me so I’m gonna be ok, it’s gonna be fine. The same way you speak those words out to a young person you have to speak it back into you, you need that to come back inside here first in your heart – I need that love from me – I know now because I didn’t know this before – that love is not just for service, it’s also for replenishment, it’s also for rejuvenation, it’s also for you – y’know – it’s not just for giving out – so there’s part of it that’s very private to me and that I have to preserve – I’m learning – I love to go out there and help – but I’m learning ‘hey take some for you, take the whole thing for you because mate you’re gonna need it.’

CECELIA 00:47:58

Because if you go with only half a tank – then that’s all of it gone

MARINA 00:48:07

And that’s why you can come back from this kind of work ‘wasted’ – emotionally, mentally and you think, ‘what just happened, I didn’t do any physical labour but the mental labour is just as ...’



INTERVIEW 7: RONGO ATKINS

INTERVIEWER: CECELIA FAUMUINA

INTERVIEWEE: RONGO ATKINS

Context:

Rongo Atkins is a Te Reo Māori (Māori language) teacher at Rangeview Intermediate School and also the school Kapa Haka tutor. She is well known in the West Auckland community for her contribution to Kapa Haka and the betterment of students and families connected to the Intermediate School and Rutherford High School.

Topic: The nature of 'asi

Location: Recorded Zoom meeting online201

Date: 8 September 2021, 7.00pm

Time: 00:00:00–06:01:31

Recording device: MacBook Pro macOS Mojave Version 10.14.6

Transcribed by: Cecelia Faumuina. (What has been transcribed are excerpts from a broader korero).

CECELIA 00:30:10

I was wondering if you could explain a few ideas in Māori that are located in other Oceanic ways of thinking related to spirituality when teaching kids creative stuff?

RONGO 00:30:18

Wairua is always there.

00:32:25

Malie is mārie (harmonious) to us and māfana is Mahana (warmth).

00:33:24

The ihi that you feel, especially when you are on stage with the kids. It puts it into another level when you are doing it with the kids. A lot of the performances, we do it on the stage with the kids, there are very few performances when we are not up there on the stage with our kids when they perform.

00:34:32

I feel very disconnected if I’m not working with them, like when I was teaching tukutuku in the Pituku class (bilingual class). I would just sit there or walk around and get bored [...] I should go and help be a partner because tukutuku is done in pairs and it’s good for making conversation. It’s good mahi (work) for collaboration.

CECELIA 00:35:41

Do you find that when you are doing creative things, that the

young people talk to you a lot easier than when you are not doing things together?

RONGO 00:35: 59

Definitely yes, they talk a lot.

00:36:18

They just chill out and you know that’s what Kim our new Technology teacher said. I asked her how her tukutuku was going with Colwill (a group from a local school) and she said she just taught it and then she sat down and started doing it with them and she said, ‘Wow the kids just all chilled out and they sat there and all started talking about everything in the world.’ She said, ‘I wish I could video what these kids were coming out with - all their feelings.’

00:37:55

Some of them come from hard backgrounds but when they started doing tukutuku, that just chilled everyone out.

50:06

It used to be funny when I was younger we’d train them hard (at kapa haka) we’d go to wananga and then for our chilling out with the kids, we’d just play tackle [...]

50:45

You know doing that kind of thing with the kids when they’re young, really chilled out our kids and we were like humans to them. But I suppose it’s easy with Māori kids and our Pacific Island kids because they’re used to that way. Kids don’t like you trying to be somebody else, they like you being you and

they're very good readers of who you are. if you try and be somebody else they'll just think, 'Ugh plastic.' They try to draw you for relationships, they try to draw with the people that they know in their own whanau who are like you. I have a lot of kids who go to me, 'Geez whaea you talk just like my nanny' and I'm like 'I thought you were going to say auntie – nanny sounds too old!'

When we are on the floor we are quite serious with our kids, especially if we are working towards a competition. They know when we're on the floor we don't muck around but when we're off the floor, that's the time when they can get to know us. In the kitchen, I get to know the kids a lot because I man the kitchen at school. That's where you can have a good chill with the kids and with the parents – it's with the parents too. It's building that whole relationship with the whanau and with the kids – and giving them some of their own independence too. They've got to build their own characters within the group when they're learning kapa haka.

CECELIA 00:53:53

For Māori and Pī / Oceanic teachers, it seems normal to us to have a relationship with parents as well as the kids [...] The time that I did do faiva with my students, one parent was always coming around, trying to find out, 'When is my kid going to be home? Do you guys need any food? (and then they'll come and drop some food). Parents are a huge part.

RONGO 00:54:02

Yeah and you know without that we wouldn't be able to function. We'd be too tired tutoring the kids but some people have different ideas, different values. Some parents have different ideas or values in the city whereas it would just be

automatic in the country. In the city, people can be very selfish with their time; they don't give of their time like some other parents do. Some parents come every week, every time we have wananga, they'll just come in and cook - even if they're not rostered on. But there are some who make up every single excuse not to come. I just say to the kids, 'I don't think I've seen some of your parents here helping in the kitchen, can you ask your parents please?' and then they go home and ask. It's the parental time – it's the parents that don't give of that time but a lot have to work, on a Saturday, they have to work and/or Sunday's so a lot can't give of their time, but it's just an hour of your time, I'm sure you can spare an hour of your time to come down and just cook some kai.

CECELIA 00:55:28

In Kapa haka there's song and words. Are the words poetic?

RONGO 00:55:53

Yes, they have to be. Sometimes we don't know those words too because they're really old. My pāpā had all those nga moteatea202 books and they were very gifted in poetry. Back home on the east coast they also have nga moteatea wananga, so people go home and they look at all the different writings and the poetry that pāpā wrote for the people to use.

00:58:45

You know when we say our pepehā we say 'Ko Waitakere te maunga' they would get up and they would say, 'kiatuatua o te maunga o Waitakere, titiro au e ta awa...' They would make up a story. They wouldn't say it how we say it now. When I hear how we say pepehā now I think, 'We shouldn't be saying it that way, we should be saying it more poetically' like our old kuia used to say.

CECELIA 01:00:59

Some of that is lost but where I noticed it comes back is when some of your people write songs or raps, a lot more of that metaphoric speaking comes back in that way.

RONGO 01:01:00

We do it naturally because we have to fit all of those words into a beat and we're good at doing that, good at learning the beat of things and fitting all of our words into that; because in Māori, it takes a lot of words to say one thing like 'Awesome' is 'kia mau te wehi!' These four separate words say one word in English, so you've got to fit everything into a beat of a song. So you have to be poetic otherwise you're never going to fit the meaning of that. Māori don't translate literally, we translate for the meaning of what we want to say [...] 'Google Translate' messes up our language and it messes up our kids.

CECELIA 01:04:07

What do you think makes the young people who do get involved, want to keep returning?

RONGO 01:05:13

I think they come because they feel that they really like the songs, the tunes and they want to have some sort of identity for themselves. That is one thing they can do for themselves without their parents being involved. They can do what they want to do, because they are either part Māori or some of our kids aren't Māori at all; they're all different nationalities. When they sing, especially when they sing hard and when they haka

because it really gets all their adrenaline going, especially for our boys. We thought all our boys were soft and only one of them could lead and then I found out when I asked them to lead that they all can lead and it was really hard too. The other kids were like, 'I didn't know he could lead whaea.' Yeah, just give them the opportunity aye. I think it's the haka that really gets that ihi out – that inner strength aye, that wairua each of the kids have – that's what brings it out. I think it's a good release of stress because they can yell as loud as they want and they can growl because it's almost like a growl when they haka and they can feel it. They can feel it from around them, everyone else coming up and y'know when you are in a group when you're singing with a group that can sing and that can haka, you can feel that ihi coming with everybody, so you want to go up there with them as well. You want to travel that road with everybody else to bring in that sound. It's all about bringing in that quality sound and being part of it. Aye, the kids want to be part of a whanau within school.

01:07:40

Before I got there, there wasn't much of that going on. They had a Māori culture group but it wasn't very active so you know as long as you've got goals for the kids and tell them what the goal is for the year, and I give them a schedule for our kapa haka so that all the parents are all on board at the start of the year, and then this is how much you have to pay. It gives them a sense of purpose to drive what's in them already. I reckon it's innate; it's born in them. It's not something they've learned from their environment, and the natural rhythm that most of them have [...] and when they're performing together as a group, it brings the wairua because they want to get to their

common goal. If we have a performance in front of the school, our common goal is to stand proud, don't relinquish anything. You know we just put our 100% in when we're performing in front of people because that gives another, different wairua too, when you are performing in front of people aye. So your performance with your group is different from when you are doing it in front of an audience. Our kids get a bit bored in practice because they don't lift their game and then they always get growlings.

01:09:48

Once they come in front of an audience everything just all steps up to another level because they know that it's their own show and then they go up another level when they get into costume. It's very different if we do a performance in their uniform to when they get into full costume with their moko on. Everything changes and you can feel that wairua just going boom like a sky rocket.

CECELIA 01:10:27

What do you think the change is? When everyone's all in the uniform and they've all got the moko on? What do you think the thing is that spurs them on?

RONGO 01:10:54

It's all about putting on the show, that's all I am aiming for – getting on stage and putting out their best. There's a lot of things – discipline – that's the one thing that I haven't mentioned and it's all about that discipline because I think out

of everything that's one of the big things that we concentrate on with our kids. If you haven't got that discipline with a group, go home. Our kids know we are very structured and we are very disciplined but we can have fun as well – that's why we have fun with our kids, it's our utu. It's our utu back to them, it's our payback time. The kids are really awesome, they seem to get that ihi off each other because they hear in the singing that they can get up there.

01:13:28

It encourages others to do the same thing too. Some of them are not so good – they think that they're good, but they are flat. But you know, I was really surprised about my five boys – I think they're my quiet boys, but they can lead. Now we have five quite good leaders in our boys for leading the group. Not so much leading outside, off stage stuff because there is a different wairua about being on stage. Off stage with our kids when we work with them, it's about giving them opportunities. We give them an opportunity to audition as a leader, they have to lead different practices and different performances and XXXX will just choose.

01:15:28

We have to select our leaders way ahead of time because they have to be taught how to lead a group.

CECELIA 01:15:45

How can we put more of this into state education?

RONGO 01:15:51

It's very hard if teachers aren't able to give that time to the kids. It's time - that's the main thing because we've so 'had it', by the end of the week on Friday - teaching a full week, marking books, coaching teams for sports – We get to our weekend and we've had it but with kapa haka, I know all those who are right into kapa haka, we don't do that. Weekends are our kids' weekends and our weekends and we spend them together and that's what you have to do. You have to step out and take some of your family time to make sure the job gets done and gets done well and not half pie. Some of these people want to put groups into regional competitions but they're still at the baby stage. Don't even go there y'know. Go home. That's why we run XXXX, that was one of the reasons - to bring up that standard in West Auckland, to bring our kids up to standard, so we actually can compete better when we go to Auckland regionals.

01:17:38

The thing is, we need resources – the teaching resources and outside community resources and we need money to koha to those people who teach our practices well. It's got to be taught well so once we get that all into gear and give our time, then maybe things will step up a bit; when we do kapa haka and we have more quality groups.

CECELIA 01:19:30

People don't realise how much time goes into these things.

RONGO 01:21:02

You build that relationship with the kids and they are really loyal to you.

01:21:10

You give them that time, your whanau they have to come with you and they have to do what they have to do.

01:22:07

It's those relationships. There are teachers that do build relationships and then there are those that go from Monday to Friday, that's all they'll do. But teaching is more than that. It's a whanau.

01:24:50

It's all about watering that plant.

01:26:06

They (the kids) are loyal. They can identify, it's all about that identification aye, it's all about self-confidence.

CECELIA 01:31:48

The young people you work with [...] especially if they are the ones coming to wananga and they're staying after school and they're doing things with you all the time [...] do you think it builds a way forward for them?

RONGO 01:32:27

I think that kapa haka is good for everything. It's just got so

many positive things about it. It really encourages our kids to connect with themselves, with what's in their own blood and with the reo (language) as well because they want to be able to speak it fluently. Learning their reo when they sing these songs, they know what they are singing about. There's a big difference between a group that just sings to sound neat, there's a big difference with a school or a kapa haka that knows what they are singing about, they sing the songs differently. You can tell it in their actions – they know what they are singing about that's why we always try and emphasise that to the kids – always know what you are singing about so you can emphasise that in your whole facials, in your whole body, because it's not just about getting up there and singing a couple of tunes and waving your hands around, it's all to do with the kupu (words) that come out of your waha (mouth). The kids just want to be part of it, they want to put up their hair, get done up and they want to put a moko (tattoo) on their face. It's all about having that identity within a school, within a big school like ours because they don't have anything else that's cultural but themselves. It's theirs so it's a place of belonging for our kids. So many things about kapa haka are so good for our kids and giving them opportunities [...]

01:35:28

It's really just promoting our way of life [...] it's all about whanau.

01:36:15

It's a little bit different from teaching math. I don't see a whanau connection with that, but you can connect math within your culture and what we do like with tukutuku [...] relate all

the things that they (the young people) are learning at school put all of that into everything that they do and relate all back to kapa haka [...] It's all about integrating all of those subjects because they all relate to each other.

CECELIA 01:41:34

What is your experience of 'asi in kapa haka? You talked about it coming out when the kids are performing, they want to be part of this bigger thing. Does 'asi only happen when they are performing on stage or can you see 'asi building up to the performance?

RONGO 01:42:12

I saw it when we took our kids to Auckland Regionals. We didn't enter, we just took them to have a look at it so that they could see the calibre that was up against you know, when we do go in. When they came back I asked them, 'How did you enjoy that?' and they said, 'Wow whaea, did you see that group in green, they were cool aye whaea, they could sing!' And that's what my goal was, for them to see that, and to say that when we got back and just to see how they can push themselves to that level – so that they know what level they have to be at to be on that stage.

The three groups that performed that day, were in the top six that go to Nationals so I said, 'You've seen three of the best.' So we had a talk about that and they said, 'Yeah whaea we know what you mean now about giving it on stage.' So yeah I think it's always a build up to that and when they finally get onto stage and off stage (there's an off stage presence as well -

that ihi that they've done the job when they get off stage), but it's the actual going to stage - that sense of pride when they are walking onto the stage – you feel it with the kids.

CECELIA 01:46:19

Is asi experienced during the creative process? Can you get asi in rehearsals or is it only in the final performance?

RONGO 01:46:37

It does, ihi has to come from that practice time because if we don't get enough power and that ihi comes in our group, then they're not ready for the stage and then when you get them onto stage, it goes up another level. Sometimes we even take up the note of the guitar because the adrenaline is pumping so hard, when they get to the stage, we can up the level (note) and then they won't even know it because they're so hyped and then you're like, 'Far out they can reach it!' It's a real struggle trying to get them to reach notes in practice because they think that they can't get it, but I suppose it's a different sort of ihi when you are still creating your programme, your performance bracket. I think it hits the climax when you get an opportunity on stage, that wairua just ... you either do it right or ... sometimes you make mistakes. I remember a boy running onto stage and he flipped over because the stage was all wet ... but he picked himself up pretty well and got up, did a pukana and ran on... that's how you do it man!

CECELIA 01:48:29

How can we bring it into our learning more so they can do anything - have this belief that they can do anything?

RONGO 01:49:44

I remember the performance XXXX just had a few weeks ago, a charity dinner in Mt Eden, it was a huge affair. Our kids (there were only about 20 of them) got in there and the first item that they did, nobody clapped and it wasn't until the fourth item that people clapped. It really stunned our kids. They are not used to not being appreciated. Afterwards I said to Wiremu who was taking them that night, 'You know why people didn't clap?' He said, 'No whaea.' I said, 'Because you didn't stop after each song.' He did a medley of songs, four in a row and you didn't stop until it came to the haka part then when the boys did the haka then everyone was like, 'Woah.' I said, 'You've got to stop your songs so that people can appreciate, reciprocate. It's no good for our kids 'cus they'll feel stink because they're not getting any warmth from the audience.' That's why the audience didn't clap. I was in the audience and I was watching the audience, they went to clap but then you were onto the next song. That's very rude when you're clapping and they are already onto the next song so they didn't clap.

01:52:55

The kids need an audience to appreciate them and boost them up.

01:53:08

The audience is very important, that's part of your performance actually; the feedback from the audience. Wiremu said, 'That was a hard audience that night' and I said, 'No, there was nothing wrong with the performance, it was just the timing of it.' The kids were feeling it

01:54:14

That's their prize, it's their, 'Thank you for all that hard work that they've done.' I've seen a lot of sad bus rides on all my travels back from comps that we've done because we didn't get anywhere but then I've seen some buses where we didn't get placed for anything and they were still happy.

XXXX didn't get anything at Polyfest this year but we brought them in like champions at the marae. We always bring our kids back in at the marae and all the ex kapa haka students come back and we bring them in hard and we have a korero and they're tired as anything since they've all been up since three o'clock and it's just bringing them home so that they don't feel that they've let us down. It's picking that wairua up and then bringing them home and letting them know, we still feel proud of them because that's a big thing working in those continuous weekends and lunch times to put a performance for Poly group and you get knocked back to 10th place – that was a big kick in the guts for our kids this year. We've never been in that place but they knew that they had done well, that's why they didn't feel so bad. I thought I'd see more tears, more kids really cut down but they weren't because they knew they had done an awesome job, they could feel that ihi on stage and they did exactly what their tutors taught them so they felt proud.

That's what it's all about, making sure that the kids have still got that mana intact and that wairua intact. It's up to the whanau to lift them when they come after performances when there's competition. That's why I like non comp stuff. You know when you can just get up on stage and just sing our hearts out and have a good time and have a good laugh and then go home. That's what competition does, it plays on our kids – it takes their heart really and you feel for them. Our kids will bounce back – they're resilient and our whanau are resilient because they will bring those same kids back and then the rest of the younger siblings, they'll come back and we'll do the same thing again with them for the next five years at XXXX college. We've been through a lot of generations of whanau around this place and they still come back and now we're in the third generation still coming back.

01:58:28

About a month ago we had a knock on the door and my daughter went to get it and came back and was like, 'Oh this boy dropped off some fish mum'. I said, 'Who was the boy?' She said, 'Oh I dunno, he just gave it.' I rushed to the door to try and see who it was but they'd gone. About two weeks after that, he brought over some avocados, this time he stayed at the door and I said, 'You're one of the Malos over there?' and he said, 'Yes whaea, that's from my dad, he said to bring them over here because we've got enough.' This boy didn't get on stage at Polyfest this year but he could see us sewing up all the costumes and everything and I didn't say much to him but I just measured him, put on everything and made sure everything fit him, met his whanau and three months after that, they bring us over fish and we've been living in this road 20 years now

and that was the first contact we had with the Malo family from across the road.

02:00:02

That's what it builds aye, it builds that whanaungatanga (close connection between people) aye and you don't even know it's gonna happen y'know, but one day it will happen.

02:00:50

Aroha atu, aroha mai

02:01:25

Te poipoi – we call it te poipoia – to nurture.

02:01:43

There's a lot of words but they've got deep meanings to it. I would think of 'asi as like awhi to us but in a deeper sense. To look after or to poipoi, to make sure that you nurture those relationships and build those relationships with our kids. Sometimes we don't have enough time to nurture those kids. I feel sometimes a lot of the kids slip through my fingers and I don't have that time to even just sit down and have a korero with them [...] You give up a lot of time when you are in kapa haka, you give heaps of time for other people's kids.

02:04:12

If you are right into kapa haka you'll be in a group – your own group or you'll be teaching a group so immediately you're going to be giving up all of your weekends or some of your family time so you're really going to have to balance. When

I get home on a Sunday, I'm stuffed. All my whanau come out and they help me unload my truck because I have all the kitchen in the truck and they already know when I pull up in the driveway, I back it up to the doorstep and they just unload my truck, with all my blankets and my mattress and then I just go lie down on the couch, have my cup of tea and I conk out on the couch for about three hours!

02:05:21

Amorangi reminds me, 'Yeah mum we know you've had it when you have your sleep and you always have your cup of tea when you get home.' They all just know the drill, they've been born into it so I thought, 'That's how it has to be, that's life.'

CECELIA 02:14: 15

XXXX was probably the most memorable place I've ever worked where we were all a bit lost but we kind of belonged together.

RONGO 02:14:31

When they performed in front of the school that day they performed, how did they feel after they'd finished their performance?

CECELIA 02:14:39

Well they said that they felt proud of themselves but the audience was 'nah.'

RONGO 02:15:01

Appreciation aye. It's a real key part to how they feel when they give their ihi. When they give their all and then if they don't appreciate them by really being enthusiastic like not just a clap and enthusiastic cheer for them y'know then they don't get that tautoko aye, they don't get that support.

CECELIA 02:15:29

Charlotte said, 'when I was doing that performance, I looked out at the audience and I felt nothing and I just wanted to sit back down ... I started off giving it my all but by the end of it, it was almost like I was ashamed to be up here,' and I was like, 'that is hard!' You know, this is a girl who knows kapa haka...

RONGO 02:16:14

She was good at it

CECELIA 02:16:16

She was and we all knew in our little group, we all knew she was good at it and so when she got up on stage and then afterwards she was like, 'I'm never doing that again!' We felt sad for her.

RONGO 02:16:35

She knows that ihi that will come from the support of her whanau and y'know what she's been doing at Rangeview Intermediate and she knows the appreciation when you put

your everything out there to the audience aye, for anything – that's not just kapa haka – that's just performing in general and if you don't get that positive feedback from the audience that could kill your soul, it just cuts real deep.

04:52:33

I said to my nephew, 'What happened, what was this thing saying to you?' and he was saying 'There's voices in my head saying I'm hopeless and get rid of yourself.'

CECELIA 04:53:13

It's that constant – from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep it's that same thing, 'You're useless. Why are you still alive? Just kill yourself now' – Man you just can't handle it when you're being told that the whole day every day for years it's like, 'Oh man, I just gotta go now.'

RONGO 04:54:50

Y'know some of the things I've said to the kids, I'm like, 'ohhhh!' My mouth just lashes...

CECELIA 04:55:12

We all do that I think and I think a kid can tell if it's for instruction or if it's someone just being mean to you and with most teachers you know it's just instruction but every now and then there's a teacher who actually says something to be mean.

RONGO 04:58:23

I can see where you are coming from, from where the wairua part's coming from. The mana of a person really and that wairua that's really fragile. Our wairua is really fragile and we gotta look after it, that wairua of each person. We are in charge of that.

CECELIA 04:58:55

I think as a young person you are very fragile because you don't know much about it so you kinda need to rely on these adults to nurture it in you but if they don't know how to nurture it in you then man you're stuffed.

RONGO 04:59:15

We've always been brought up to be tough, 'cus our uncles always expected us to be tough and sometimes I think of kids and I look at them and I think, 'Geez just toughen up man, just harden up' and I think we can't force how we were brought up on other people's kids.

APPENDIX 3 : STUDENTS’ POETRY
INFLUENTIAL IN THE STUDY

LIVE UP TO SOMETHING

FIRST VERSE

I looked into my eyes for the first time
And truth it finds me
No fear of the end
And I, I won’t feel,
I’ll focus,
I won’t feel I listen to impulse
I need to live up to something

CHORUS

And I am weak as I am young
I’ve seen it all before
It is so quiet in my own room
I feel so secure
I see my eyes looking back at me
And truth it finds me,
No fear of the end
And I won’t feel,
I’ll focus,
I won’t feel I listen to impulse
I need to live up to something
I need to live up to something

SECOND VERSE

There is excuse for being human
Thought I’d find a god in a bottle
I am young I am also underage
Fingernails cut crescents into my palms
as bodies sway I kiss the stars good night
Well we will all find our place
And I am as weak as I am young
I’ve seen it all before
It is so quiet in my own room
I’ve seen it all before

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6125 miles

6125 miles is all it takes
for you to leave and
pack your bags.

Abandonment,
your poor fragile masculinity
crumbled for the next
woman to nurture
Until you destroy her heart
and search for another soul
to love then abandon

Your children,
Your family
Never in your vision
6125 miles
blinds all that you see.

Your blue sunken eyes
only sees the airplane window
6125 miles to your 'home.'
You treat her like dirt
The earth's brown interior
Beautiful Mother Nature
crumpled by your

savage words
The very 'dirt' that bore
you in the year '61.

Fresh meat is all you see
on the market.
Young faces to milk then
send to the abattoir blues.

My 13 year old mind
never able to comprehend
until now.

I want to scream
I want yell until your ears
bleed that this,
Is not okay
Not fine
But I guess I am fine
Be a good man
for someone else.

Do you think
I like writing poems about you?
Pouring my heart out
so that the stranger in a seat
can understand the hurt.

But of course not –
you never came to watch me perform .
My puffy eyes only see
the destruction
you pushed off
on your path to ‘home.’

our daily, weekly, monthly words
thrown at me.
It doesn’t bother me anymore.
17, 10pm, Tuesday night
sitting on the bathroom floor.

My first breaking point.

My heart into two (flow)
Valves split, veins tore
My numbness fin-al-ly gone
I feel your pricks,
sharp darts aimed to mess up my mind,
make me feel like I am no good

But guess what
I own this little thing called life.
It’s wrapped around my fingers

Without you –
I have become this amazing woman.

I now know sitting here of what I want to see,
what I have and need to say in my adolescence.

I am not ‘cool’ with your savage words
The daughter born of Mother Earth
is not okay with your trife.
If 13 year old me could have understood
She would’ve run 6125 miles to end the world
for you.

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CONSUMING THOUGHTS

Let the ocean consume me,
While I stand here, rooted to the ground;
Sand burying my feet.

The sea rises with time.
Every negative thought pelting down, from the sky;
Gathering at my ankles.

Storms of emotion take down the trees;
That used to stand beside me on this land.
The waves crashing into my knees.

Waist deep in freezing waters.
I am numb, but I can still see the horizon;
The last beautiful thing left in the wake of darkness.

All the waves, rips and tides
Pull me from what I once knew, down into the depths.
My roots keep me under, anchored, trapped.

Rumours, insecurities, my past,
Shoved down my throat;
Salt water is now filling my lungs.

My last gasp for survival, fighting
However, I choke
My breath collapses;
And I don't have the strength to get back up again...

Unconscious,
I feel weightless.
Nothing around me,
Alone once again with my thoughts

Events flash past my mind,
Imagination creating millisecond images, videos;
All the memories where I mean something.
I am happy, laughing, smiling... genuine.

The feeling of sunlight caressing my cheek,
A warm surrounding blanket,
In a world that is nothing but cold.

A taste of salt returns to my throat.
I choke, but this time the water leaves my mouth,
coming out in spits.

Handfuls of my decisions which led to myself becoming more
hurt,
Laid out in front of me,
I have a choice.

I once pushed everyone away:
My consuming thoughts based from others' opinions of me,
Causing a sea to rise,
crashing into the faces of those closest to me,
Leaving myself to drown in my own solitude.

I want to float and watch the sun rise,
For it to be the beginning of light in the wake of darkness.

© Shannon Macdonald (July 2018)

ANGELIQUE

Sometimes I feel
as if I am talking to the wind
because of the way that my words cling to the air
in desperation
It's the same as when sirens blare at midnight.

They say that you should pray
every time you hear a siren
and I do
but the thing is
I only ever pray for you.

I dreamt of you and you were dressed in ivory
Your skin was glistening and your hair was braided
as strong as the woman
who bore us
who bore us
who bore us
before I was left alone,
I was left alone at about five weeks old.

I see you and you are dancing with the angels
You laugh and you play

You play with the hands of those who ushered you away
Whose wings are soundless
But his motions could easily knock the life out of us
If they really wanted to.
Little sister keep playing
Because God is looking at you
He's looking at you
He's looking into your eyes
To see the souls that were left behind.

Every time that I cry,
I raise my head to the sky and ask
Does he see me?
Does he see me because
I'm sure as hell not dressed in ivory
I'm always wearing ebony because every day
I'm healing and I'm grieving
And I'm mourning
the loss of you.

Gemini
We're meant to be Gemini
In my dreams we are always Gemini
But we always have to
Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!

because it's only a dream
Nana said it was only a dream...
It's not a dream.

Today's our birthday Angelique
We're 17 and birthdays....
Are the worst days
Dad would always come a day late

He'd always leave a cake at our front door
But forget to leave himself there too!
At least I like to think that he forgot...
Made the card easier to read in the end.

"Happy Birthday"
I love you
I love you
I love you
If my cards were on the table Angelique
I'd tell you that I miss you
I'd tell you that I always think of the places we'd go
Of the people we'd see
But it's all in vain.

I had a dream of you last night
You held me in your arms so tight
And you told me that it was time to let go

I said no,
no..
No you can't go
You left me once before
Not again.

You were gone...
You were gone
And it was at that moment
I realised
That my entire life
I've only ever been talking to the wind.

© Fania Kapao (2018)

MA'ULU'ULU (Sprinkle / light rain)

We are not just what - is clear to see
We are Oceania – children from the sea
Living in two worlds - divergently
We live in yours and we offer you ours
We live in yours and we offer you ours

A collection of - fragrant flowers,
Woven together - as garlands
Today is a - significant time
The beauty of - living in the va.
The beauty of - living in the va.

We offer more - than just knowledge,
More than humour - and good laughs.
More than stature - togetherness.
See us clearly, hear our voice
See us clearly, hear our voice

We are not just what - is clear to see
We are Oceania – children from the sea
Living in two worlds - divergently
We live in yours and we offer you ours
We live in yours and we offer you ours

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APPENDIX 4: THE RESEARCHER'S POETIC WRITING

AMATAGA (Beginning)

I teach here
So my kids can go to a school
With opportunities
I never had
growing up

When they flow through these gates
They look like me
.... many years ago.
Being dropped off by a parent
Who is sleep deprived and irritable
From working night shifts
To make ends meet

I take these kids
To festivals
“Glorified picnics”, my colleagues tell me.
So they can hear their stories
Poetry, sound and dance
From cultures less bleached.
Giving voice

Proud and raw in the world.
The kids who join the ‘cultural’ group.
The ones who stay
To find something deeper.

Creating from the centre of their lives
Faiva
Woven as fine mats
Beaten as Ngatu
That they knock together
Into harmonies
Sustained by choirs at church
Family gatherings
And kava ceremonies

Voices finding connection,
The kids from in between
The Plastic Polynesians, fia Pālagi,
The ‘afakasi - half castes...

Belonging to each other.

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SASA LE PEFU (Beating Dust)

Exploding light
In a concrete world
All sprains and pain
Pushed aside
Pride
Taking control of his limbs.

In motion
He is fearless
Feet skimming the ground
Solid yet fragile
A conqueror of worlds.

The troubled relationships,
School work piled high
The tyranny of success
Becomes as chalk
Dust beaten to nothing
By the rhythm of his feet.

He pounds out frustration
Angry, bitter, sad...
Sudden fire in the light.
Then he crumples to the floor
With heaving breath

He releases pain
Cracks in a tangible existence
Reveal a young god
The heart
The body
Powerful in his movements
Illuminating

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ĀWHĀ (Storm)

Thunder booming
Swearing in the hallway
Kicking shit
Talking sass,
Fuming.

She has spoken to Ms
Disrespectfully.
Unleashed fury...
“Fuck off!”
“Bitch”

She crashes into the room
Fury churning
Slumping on a chair
She starts ...

Mimita vale
“Went to a party last night
Got drunk ... wasted - It was all good times”...

Fa’anoanoa

“Sometimes I hate my life...”

Silver linings

Narcotic storm clouds

She buries herself in headphones.

And from beneath we hear...

Spat rhymes

About her life

Torn and shaped

Flashes of light

Tearing at the darkness

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LIUSUAVAI (Melting)

He is a young man rising
Cooler than cool
Hair slicked back
Woollen jumper on a hot day
Hiding bruises
From the night before.

Working before school
to help make ends meet
He is 15
The eldest of six
Carrying burdens
that don't even belong to him

He walks quickly
Late for school.
Detention again.
When asked his name
He will give another boy's
To keep a low profile.

Tired
Serious
He tries to absorb numbers,
countries, verbs and sonnets...
Promises for a ticket

out of his life
Stomach rumbling
He unwraps jam sandwiches
He's put together
at the crack of dawn,
already stale on the edges
Curling in his fingers

He is a pretty boy
But cold
Unresponsive
To the extended family member
who lives at home
Who tries to touch him

He says nothing
He tries to help his parents
Tries to be a good role model
to his younger siblings
Tries to be a good student
But he is failing

Silence
Suppressing
Shame
He is melting away.

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PEPE TAIMANE (Diamond Butterfly)

She disrupts my concentration

Flickering beauty...

Personality uniquely her own ...

Bursting with excitement

Bright

Princess

A model student but...

No one sees the struggle beneath

Caught in a war between love and hate

Thrown back and forth

The referee

The frantic peacemaker

A child – healing adult fears

Here at school

She scrambles to involve herself

But they say ...

She is in every freaking club

But she can't even make "all" the meetings!

She remains positive, friendly

Making others feel treasured

She gets carried away

In the hallways she greets you with a chest pump

But they say

She's too touchy feely man...

Random...

Coming up to me and rubbing her boobs in my face ...

I think she's gay

She struggles to balance her identities

Yet accepts everyone

She is torn between two

Ashamed to speak her mother tongue in public

They say,

Why is she in Kapa Haka man?

She ain't even Māori!

Grooming worlds into something stable ...

Helping students

Helping teachers

She is polite.

But they say,

What a wanna be!

Trying to be a teacher's pet

Have you heard her swear man

She's such a potty mouth

Pretending she's innocent

And then she sings ...

Songs of the heart,

Composed in nights of uncertain shadow

Her voice transforms,

Lightness into being.

Pālagi to the world,

Singing songs of the heart

The sound of her spirit

Enduring.

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PĀ I LE LAGI (Hit the Heavens / Gate to Heaven)

She don't wanna do no ethnic shiz

She hates performing in front of the 'other' kids

Last year was kapa haka

She stood and bolted out the lyrics

With such strength

Only to be crushed

By students who looked blankly

Confused

While she sang her heart out

Questioning culture

Within these four walls

Shattered

She now thinks

I will blend in

I will be white

I will be Pālagi

When the explorer's first came to the islands
My people looked out to sea
And saw the clouds of sails billowing in the sun and the wind
With masts of their ships hitting the sky
Pa – Hit
Langi – The heavens
These new, spirited people.

Pālagi
She holds the heavens in her hands
And the voice of her ancestors flow through her when she
speaks
When she sings
She can pierce your heart
Those who understand
Those who know
Drink her voice and are quenched
Their spirits awaken.

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'ASI (The presence of the Unseen)

Hidden
Between the cracks
In unknown spaces
Moving slowly through time


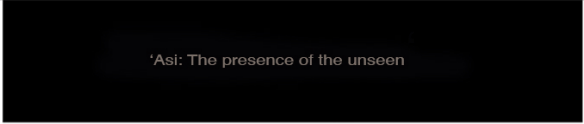




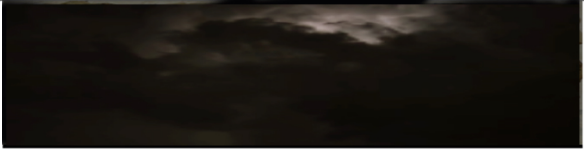

You have existed
Through generations






We have awoken
To discovery
Conscious
Of your flow ...
Of your reaching out
Your embrace.

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APPENDIX 5:

ARCHITECTURE OF THE PERFORMANCE FAIVA | FAI VĀ.

PRODUCTION DESIGN	FAKATĀTĀ / FAIVA HELE U'HILA	SOUND /PERFORMANCE
<p>FORMAL OPENING SPOKEN PRAYER DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Reverend Siosifa La'akulu, [Stage left].</p>		<p>SILENCE LOTU KAMATA (Reverend Siosifa La'akulu)</p>
<p>Part 01: TITLE SEQUENCE DESIGN: Pin spot expands to include full stage, then at the end of the performance fades to black.</p>		<p>FAIVA HIVA - TE'E (ANCIENT SAMOAN SONG OF THE SPIRIT): Faiva Creatives and Cecelia SUBTLY ANIMATED TYPE</p>
<p>Part 02: POSITIONING THE RESEARCHER TALANOA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left]. Animated fakatātā on screen.</p>		<p>TALANOA: (SPOKEN NARRATIVE) 'THE PRESENCE OF THE UNSEEN'. Cecelia.</p> <p>BACKGROUND SOUND MIX</p>
<p>Part 03: LO TA NU'U PERFORMANCE DESIGN: Black room – Fade up – full stage lit [Stage left]. Animated fakatātā on screen.</p>		<p>FAIVA HIVA - LO TA NU'U: Favia Creatives and Cecelia.</p> <p>KARANGA: Kuia</p>
<p>Part 04: AMATAGA FAIVA TA'ANGA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left]. Animated fakatātā on screen.</p>		<p>FAIVA TA'ANGA (SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE): Cecelia.</p>
<p>Part 05: SASA LE PEFU FAIVA TA'ANGA FOLLOWED BY TA'ANGA HELE 'UHILA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left] - then cut to black and video plays fullscreen.</p>		<p>FAIVA TA'ANGA (SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE FOLLOWED BY VIDEO): Cecelia.</p>
<p>Part 06: AWHĀ FAIVA TA'ANGA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left]. Subtle ta'anga hele 'uhila on screen.</p>		<p>FAIVA TA'ANGA (SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE): Cecelia.</p>
<p>Part 07: LIUSUAVAI FAIVA TA'ANGA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left]. Subtle ta'anga hele 'uhila on screen.</p>		<p>FAIVA TA'ANGA (SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE): Cecelia.</p>

PRODUCTION DESIGN	FAKATĀTĀ / FAIVA HELE U’HILA	SOUND /PERFORMANCE
Part 08: PEPE TAIMANE FAIVA TA’ANGA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left].		FAIVA TA’ANGA (SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE): Cecelia
Part 9: PĀ I LE LANGI FAIVA TA’ANGA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left].		FAIVA TA’ANGA (SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE): Cecelia DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION - Ships on ngatu
Part 10: ‘ASI & FAAFETAI FAIVA TA’ANGA DESIGN: Black room – Fade up - pin spot on Cecelia [Stage left].		FAIVA TA’ANGA (SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE): Cecelia DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION - Cosmos on ngatu
Part 11: FAIVA HIVA FA’AFETAI I LE ATUA Hymn sung by Faiva Creatives and audience .		MA’ULU’ULU (PERFORMANCE): Faiva Creatives - "We are Oceania" DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION - Subtle ngatu
Part 12: LOTU FAKA’OSI (FORMAL CLOSING PRAYER) DESIGN: Stage lit. Reverend Siosifa La'akulu, [Stage left].		SILENCE LOTU FAKA’OSI (Reverend Siosifa La'akulu.

APPENDIX 6:

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTERS AND
INFORMATION SHEETS

INITIAL APPROVAL



AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

20 October 2017

Welby Ings
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Welby

Re Ethics Application: **17/292 Asi - the presence of the unseen**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 20 October 2020.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

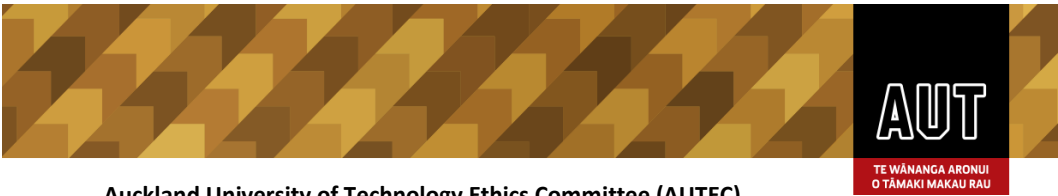


Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: cecellaumuina@hotmail.com

APPENDIX 6:

ETHICS APPROVAL AMENDMENT TO
EXTEND SCOPE



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

9 February 2021

Welby Ings
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Welby

Re: Ethics Application: **17/292 Asi - the presence of the unseen**

Thank you for your request for approval of amendments to your ethics application.

An extension until 31 December 2021 has been approved.

I remind you of the **Standard Conditions of Approval**.

- 1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
- 2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
- 3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
- 4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
- 5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
- 6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
- 7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: ceceliafaumuina@hotmail.com

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Consent Form

Project title:

‘Asi – The presence of the unseen

Project Supervisors:

Professor Welby Ings, Dr Jani Wilson

Researcher:

Cecelia Faumuina

☐

I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22nd October 2018.

☐

I understand and agree that I will be identified by name in the research and in any publications from the study.

☐

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐

I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐

I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

☐

I agree to take part in this research.

☐

I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes☐ No☐

Participant’s signature :

Participant’s name:

Participant’s Contact Details (if appropriate):
.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 20 October 2017 AUTEK Reference number 17/292

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

2 July 2015

page 1 of 1

This version was last edited in June 2016

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Participant Information Sheet

This Information Sheet is intended for the Youth Leaders participating in my research.

Date Information Sheet Produced:

22nd October 2018

Project Title

‘Asi – The presence of the unseen

An Invitation

Talofa Lava, Malo e lelei, my name is Cecelia Faumuina. I would like to invite you participate and provide input into my research around the ideas of faiva and ‘asi. The research will contribute to my PhD qualification.

I am conducting a research project at AUT University. The project is interested in a modern idea of *faiva* (performance art that includes sound, movement, images and poetry), and seeks to understand how young creative people work individually and together and find the spirit [Asi] that becomes apparent in a final production or exhibition.

The study will span three years. I would like to observe how you work with young people using creative thinking and skills to develop performances. I will be asking you questions with regards to your experiences of working with young people and with an emphasis on how you develop or observe a spirit in their performative work.

Images of you, your work and written records of your opinions may appear in my doctoral thesis and future publications I may write about the research. However, if you are uncomfortable with any recording taken of you, you can ask for it to be removed up until the time that I write up the thesis.

What is the purpose of this research?

I seek a deeper understanding of contemporary, urban, youth-oriented Pacific art that crosses borders of performing, singing, illustration and oratory. I call this contemporary faiva.

I am interested to know if the way that young people work creatively with each other might provide them with a stronger sense of identity.

I am also interested in the spirit that emanates from work as it is being developed or performed.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I am asking you to consider participating in this study because I know that you:

- Currently work creatively with young Oceanic people or have done so in the past
- Are interested in the success of Oceanic people in Society
- Were raised in Aotearoa/New Zealand and may understand the struggles Oceanic youth can face.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

