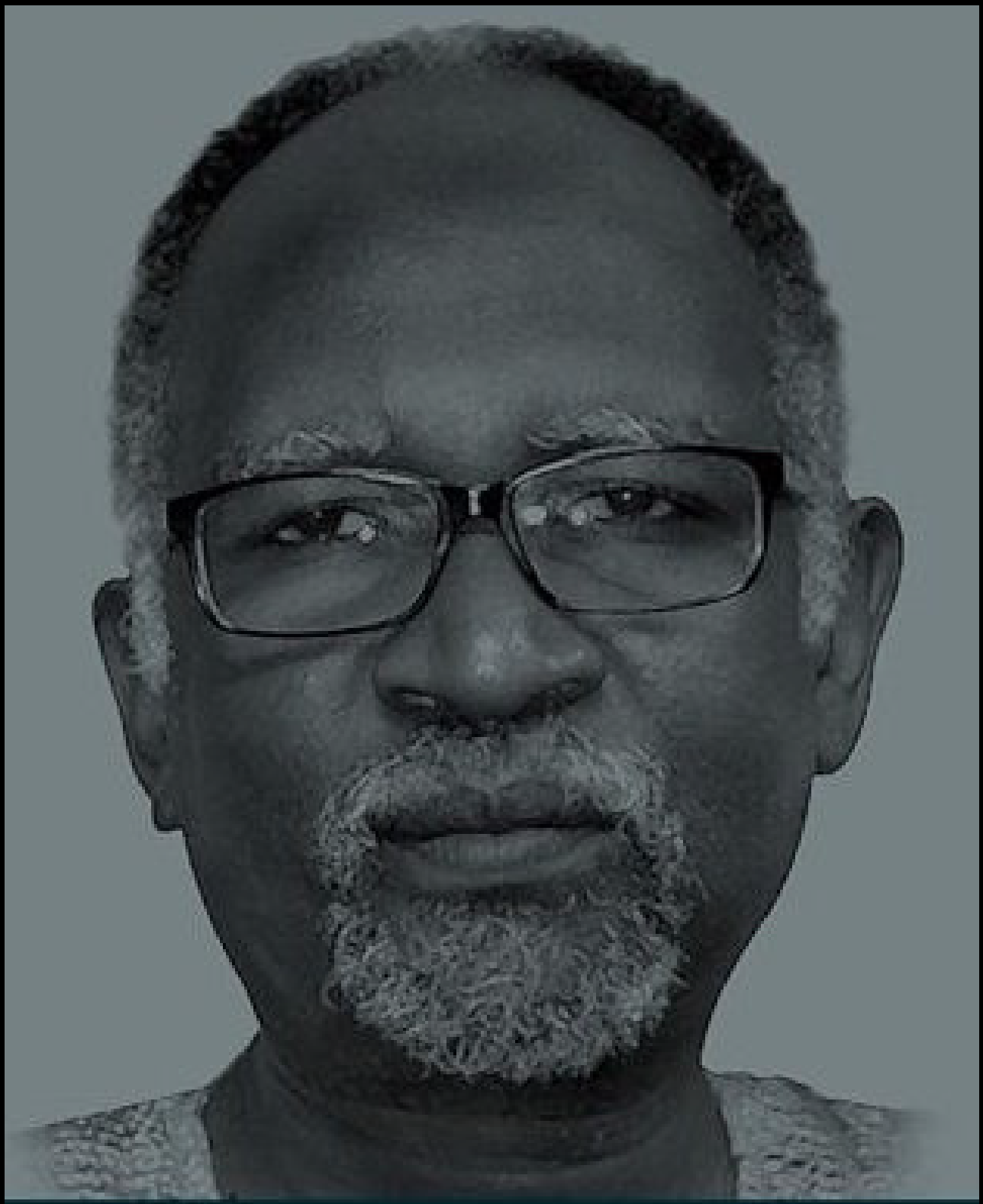




**SYNOPSIS OF PLAYS PRODUCED,
DEVELOPED OR WRITTEN BY**

Afeif Ismail

co-transcreated from Arabic by

Dr. Vivienne Glance and Afeif Ismail

***Synopses of Plays Produced,
Developed or Written
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Cover art painted by Emad Abdulla

An Explanation of Transcreation

Transcreation is an artistic reworking of a literal translation that aims to maintain the beauty and vibrancy of the original work. Transcreators attempt to present creative writing in a form of English that is accessible to a contemporary audience. They pay attention to the cultural, linguistic and artistic nuances in the writing, to honour the original atmosphere and environment intended by the writer.

Transcreation requires time and conversation with the original creator of the work to ensure the accuracy of language and artistic intent or cultural references. It is an opportunity for recent migrants with a first language other than English, to maintain their artistic practice within a short time of arriving in Australia.

Through transcreating their work, artists (in many languages, including English) have had an opportunity to interact and network with a wide range of international artists, publishers, producers, audiences and readers and to become productive artists.

Productive artists not only produce unique art in their own right, but are committed to expand their range of artistic activity in the community, and to be open to engagement with their own and others work. Transcreation is one example of how to be a productive artist.

Dr. Vivienne Glance and Afeif Ismail

FULL LENGTH PLAYS

The following FULL LENGTH plays for a general audience have been developed through various initiatives and grants

SHROUDS OR THE DEAD

3-weeks workshop development as part of the WA Theatre Development Initiative

Synopsis

‘The Shrouds or the Dead’ is an allegorical play for young audiences, which tells the story of three fishermen fighting over the ownership of a fish and how this small incident develops into a feud with severe consequences. This story is prefaced by two scenes that contextualise their story within the politics of our time. The play examines how well intentioned actions in the developed world could have serious repercussions in other remote parts, such as war, starvation and environmental destruction.

ACT ONE

Scene 1:

A ‘pregnant’ Crazy Woman enters and she interacts with the audience. She asks them simple questions, but the audience are told the obvious answer is wrong. She is an important catalyst for the performance, commenting from the audience, interacting with the other characters and becoming involved in the interventions as they occur. When the Blind Storyteller enters she sits and listens to him, at times imploring him to tell the audience her own story. The Blind Storyteller speaks directly to the audience as well as

with the Chorus that follows him on. He announces he will tell them a story from today and from the future. Importantly, this character wears a traditional costume and brings with him traditional African instruments (such as the harp-like Rababa, a drum, and the lute-like oud, possibly others). Whilst he sings and plays music, the Chorus dances throughout the performance space. A screen projects images of the death and destruction of towns and cities. A watermelon descends into the space looking like Planet Earth, and the Chorus greedily cut it up.

Scene 2:

This scene is set in an international political conference. It shows political corruption and how a political figure is seduced by power. It is playfully spoken in gibberish, and the performers will use this, along with exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, to convey the narrative. They discuss issues of global importance as the screen projects graphs and charts showing the world's resources. A pregnant, crazy woman interjects throughout the scene, speaking the truth as she sees it, but the politicians ignore her.

ACT TWO

Scene 1:

Three fishermen suffer the consequences of the political decision that the far away politicians enacted in the previous scene. They fight over the ownership of one small fish, possibly the last fish in the river. Their argument only ends when their local politician, who had represented them in the conference, steals the fish and runs away.

Scene 2:

The fishermen decide to join the militia to protect themselves from future oppression. They comically march around the parade ground trying to learn how to be soldiers, as the Blind Storyteller plays military songs. One of the fishermen bullies the others until they revolt against him.

ACT THREE

Scene 1:

The Blind Storyteller returns and comments on the play so far through music and song. He then falls asleep. The three fishermen enter, but they are even more desperate than before. They beg the audience for small items to ease their pain and hunger. Now in a graveyard, they carve their own headstones and wait to die. The 'pregnant' Crazy Woman returns and reads their headstones. She gradually becomes more and more sane as she removes her many layers of clothing, including her 'pregnant bump'. Now looking like a schoolteacher, she writes on her own headstone and lays down to die. The scene 'rewinds' in slow motion with only music playing, and then replays forward again. This time they write different words on their headstones in an unknown language and the projection shows five different stages of human evolution – from an ape to *Homo sapiens*.

The actors then address the audience, out of character, and ask them to offer suggestions on how they can finish this story, a common practice in Boal Theatre. The Dancers return and their movements now become robotic. They form a semi-circle, but this time, the Lead Dancer mimes pointing to the only the last continent on a map behind him. He lists

of many items on his fingers. The delegates, still as robots, clap and nod their approval. All of this is in silence. The Lead Dancer clasps his hands as a salute to unity and victory.

While this is happening the projector shows cockroaches crawling across the screen. The cockroaches become disturbed by the sound of a gigantic creature approaching. The delegates become aware of the screen, and are frightened. A giant spider appears on the screen, and starts to weave a web. The web falls onto the delegates and entangles them, but they are caught, struggling and screaming. Their noise wakes up the Blind Storyteller. He realises that life is short and we are all responsible for caring for the world.

UNSUITABLE HATS

Awarded a Stages WA Playwrights Consortium workshop, and further development, including a public reading, took place at the 'Write Local Play Global' One Theatre World Conference, in Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Synopsis

Unsuitable Hats follows a young African Man's journey as he struggles to integrate into a new county, whilst his parents are still living the past.

As, the African Man, a poet and storyteller, waits at a train station, he encounters several people with various prejudices: some good, some bad, some indifferent. The African Man isolates himself by listening to music through his headphones.

His younger sister is totally assimilated into her new society, forgetting about her own culture, the one that caused the loss of her identity and the tensions within her family.

The African Man's younger sister challenges her parents and their traditional way of living causing conflict and distress. He understands her, but cannot support her out of respect for their parents. In frustration, the younger sister decides to leave, bringing great shame to the family from their community where traditionally children only leave home to marry. The African Man would also like to leave to live with his Western girlfriend, but his

parents have arranged a marriage for him with a woman back in their home country.

Act One of Unsuitable Hats presents African Man's outer world, using Sudanese Theatre traditions where a lot happens in quick succession, each element providing small details that link to build the bigger picture. Act Two begins by following a more classical Aristotelian theatre tradition. It dramatises the African Man's inner world, but then slips into poetry and symbolism to reveal the dilemmas of this family caught between two cultures.

The following SHORT plays for a general audience have been produced or developed through various initiatives and grants.

3 SEEDS

The following 3 Short plays were produced by Always Working Artists and the Blue Room Theatre, Perth

IN GODOT'S LABYRINTH

Synopsis

This is a dark humorous short play, Godot arrives to be a witty witness to humanity's short sightedness and its belief it can control its destiny on planet Earth. He comments on many of the world's historical disasters, mismanaged attempts to solve the problems humankind made throughout history, such as the Moon landing, the sinking of the Titanic, assassinations and revenge of political figures and how in the end, there is no higher power to turn to. Or to blame.

WHY DO RATS

Synopsis

In *Why Rats Live Under Our Roof*, an African folk tale is given a burlesque vaudeville treatment. The First Man and the First Woman give birth to the First Child with the help of the crafty Rat. He uses the situation to his advantage, by tricky them to agree to him and his descendants living under their roof for all time.

ONE SEED

Synopsis

One Seed, is physical theatre with a shocking finale. Using surreal imagery and symbolism, but no spoken words, this work explores relationships: humans and the planet, humans living together; and men and women.

CIRCLES OF RETURN

The following 3 Short plays were produced by Ebony Theatre and Fringe World, Perth

HAMLET

Synopsis

This Hamlet is a self-centred bitter young man, who tells us of his sick plan to kill his mother, the king, her lover. Based on Shakespeare's Hamlet, but with a difference. This time Hamlet reveals how his childhood made him into this vengeful monster who plays games with people's lives and whose soul is eroded by his anger until it feels nothing.

NIRVANA

Synopsis

NIRVANA is a lyrical piece depicting the journey of a soul haunted by the world and its complications; the story of a woman fleeing to nature in search of answers and healing.

IN GODOT'S LABYRINTH – see above

CENTRE OF CIRCLE

Produced at the Festival of Theatre at the Sudanese Youth Palace, Omdrman.

Synopsis

A woman is waiting for her absent husband to return from fighting in a war. Meanwhile she struggles with a new born baby and very little money. When her child becomes sick she becomes desperate for help eventually persuading a doctor to prescribe expensive medicines for her. Her hope fades month by month and she sinks lower and lower into despair. Finally, an official letter arrives and she is elated to receive news from her husband, only to discover his is dead.

Both of these SHORT PLAYS were produced by Wujuma Theatre Community Group, Perth at an event to fight the stigma around issues of mental health within the Sudanese Community, as part of Mental Week.

HOPE

Synopsis

Two parents and their son escaped from their burning village in Sudan and run for days until they reach a refugee camp in Kenya. After eight years living in this dangerous and hostile camp, they arrive in Australia but they are all battling mental health issues. A Mental Health Support Worker helps them to settle into their new home.

YESTERDAY

Synopsis

An old Sudanese man is trapped in his trauma, and only lives in the past. Life is passes him by in his new home in Australia.

A friend and the man's daughter help him to fight his demons.

THE LABYRINTH

This ONE ACT PLAY is ready for production

Synopsis

In THE LABYRINTH one actress plays all the characters, including those projected on the screen and the recorded voices. It is an exploration of our sense of self, of who we are. Identity is defined as much by the people in our past and present as it is by our own internal view of ourselves. When all memory of the past is lost, how can we know who we are? Throughout human history we have moved from a communal identity to an individual one. Even with the technology of television and computers, we still need to rely on family history, community and our personal philosophy to know ourselves. It asks the question, if we could hold all the information about ourselves and our past, as if it were data on a computer browser, what would our lives mean then.

A Woman is asleep in bed in a furnished bedroom. There is a large wardrobe with a mirror on the outside, and bedside tables with various things on them. As the Woman sleeps her dream is projected onto a large screen upstage. It shows a white fog that cycles to grey, then black, like a computer screen saver. The Woman wears a long white dress, and is running, frightened in her dream. Her dress catches and rips until she ends up naked and bleeding, silently screaming on the screen.

The Woman wakes up in the bed. She has no idea who she is or where she is. She has no sense of herself and talks to her reflection in the mirror as if it is another person. The Mirror

answers, and is fed up with people talking to her all the time, wanting to know if they are beautiful, or too fat. When the Woman turns her back to the Mirror she has no idea where the person she saw has gone. She next finds a TV remote control and not sure what it is, she presses all the buttons. The screen projects the rapidly changing TV channels, and when The Woman stops, the TV stays on an advertisement for Funeral Insurance, followed by a morning fitness workout programme. The Woman begins to exercise, but stops, coughing and out of breath. She turns round and sees her reflection again. The Mirror is fed up and wants to go outside into the sunshine and blind everyone by reflecting the sun.

The woman tries to find her way out by feeling along the walls for an opening. She taps on the door and, noticing the different sounds between the two surfaces, she taps out the salsa rhythm. She tries to dance with her reflection in the mirror, but again loses sight of herself when she spins around. The Woman feels the walls again and this time she stops at the door. The door talks to her, worried that because he has been shut for so long his hinges may be rusted and he may not be able to open again.

The Woman sees a photograph of a child and her mother holding hands. There is a flicker of recognition. The screen shows an empty child's swing swaying back and forth. The Woman becomes a 4 year old girl playing hopscotch. She wins the game and calls out to her mother to come. The screen fills with brightly coloured butterflies. The Woman becomes the Mother looking for the girl, who is now playing hide and seek. Only the Girl's voice is heard. The Mother searches for her daughter but cannot find her. The Girl says she has won, and she will not come out until her Mother agrees she deserves a prize. She also tells her Mother what

she heard her older sister using a bad word and saying that their father had cheated on their Mother. The Girl wants to see a film and stay with her father all weekend as her prize for winning the game and not repeating the bad word. Her Mother will not agree, but the Girl refuses to come out. So the Mother eventually gives in.

The woman meets and talks to other aspects of herself and her life: her shadow tells her of the Island of Shadows, where all the shadows go when humans sleep, and how they live a full life for 24 hours a day, unlike humans, who spend 8 hours sleeping, 4 hours eating and the rest worrying themselves sick.

Each member of the Woman's family has their own view on her life, marriage and divorce. And with each of them she has had a bad experience. From this point on the screen shows how she really feels about all her family members: sister, brother, father, grandmother and mother. All the other aspects of herself, such as the Mirror, the Door, the Shadow, talk to each other and her family about The Woman too. The Woman becomes afraid that maybe she does not really exist, or maybe she is just thoughts, floating in the air like spoken words, or radio frequency waves waiting to be picked up by a receiver.

The day passes, noted by the clock shown on the TV screen during different programmes.

She almost remembers her past when she talks with her sister about her breast cancer. It is now late, and before going to sleep The Woman discovers a computer. She writes in her diary, and her thoughts are heard. She has a vague memory of Google, and she speculates if it is possible to have a human equivalent of Google; a way to download a

complete human mind since the time in the womb, up to now. She falls asleep.

The screen shows the same dream again with the Woman running, but this time all the characters are chasing her. At the end of the dream the Woman is again, naked and bleeding. The last character chasing her is her Shadow, who laughs and says "Welcome to the Island of Shadows." The screen becomes a big clock, with its hands turning rapidly anti-clockwise. The woman wakes up, and quickly takes some more tablets. She feels a sharp pain in her stomach. She runs into an ensuite bathroom and we hear the sound of her vomiting. The hands of the clock go frantically forwards and backwards at random. After she has finished vomiting, she blows her nose and we hear the sound of her peeing, and farting loudly. The toilet flushes with the sound of a tsunami wave, and the clock runs anticlockwise, as fast as a fan, until the hands disappear.

THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

THE AFRICAN MAGICIAN

This FULL LENGTH play was produced by Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Perth WA, Nominated for the Best Children's Play, AWGIE

Synopsis

The African Magician is structured around a series of children's games and activities: singing farewell to the sun; chasing the sun to the horizon; play-acting the Magician; dancing with grandmother; play acting a magician; watching the magician; playing the drums; dancing to scare away spirits...

Set in a Sudanese village where ritual magic is real and powerful, and belief and knowledge are in conflict, a 9 year-old tomboy, Grandmother's Daughter plays with three boys.

The eldest, Boy Two is cautious and fearful about the Magician. He tells the story of how the Magician turned a man into a leper. Boy Three is the same age as Grandmother's Daughter and he teases about wanting to be a Magician. Boy One is young, naïve and the others make fun of him and his questions.

Grandmother's Daughter leads her friends into the forest to secretly watch the Magician use his magic to heal a wounded monkey.

Threaded through this narrative is Grandmother's Daughter's relationship with her Grandmother and her widowed father. Known as Keeper of the Wisdom, he has a pragmatic,

scientific view of the world. In contrast, her grandmother believes in the Magician's powers, and teaches Grandmother's Daughter a dance to conjure up the spirit of her dead mother. She warns her not to listen to her father's crazy talk. But Grandmother's Daughter gives voice to her father's rational knowledge when talking to her friends, and she learns from him how to use a talking drum to communicate

Later that day, the Magician arrives in the village to lead a ritual to scare away evil spirits that will cover the sun in the middle of the day – a solar eclipse. Boy One is surprised to be told that he must follow the Magician's orders and lead the villagers in this important dance.

SON OF THE NILE

This FULL LENGTH play was produced by Nexus Theatre, Murdoch University

Synopsis

ACT ONE

A Sudanese village sitting on a bank of the river Nile. It is just before dawn, and there is a full moon. A group of women led by the elderly midwife dance in circles. They walk towards the riverbank, stepping to the rhythm of tambourines and they sing the ceremonial song about giving birth.

The midwife leads the pregnant wife of the Chief of the Village into the shallow water. The woman screams in her labour, the women sing and dance until finally the child is born. The child is the Chief's first son.

Suddenly Crocodile 1 and Crocodile 2 snatch the child from the mother and swim quickly away. They have been sent by the Queen of the Nile to kidnap the newborn son of the Chief of the Village. The mother jumps into the water and swims after the crocodiles. The women scream loudly and call for Buzagully, the Son of the Water, who lives nearby in his canoe. In a flash, Buzagully, the best diver and swimmer in whole world, jumps from his canoe and dives into the depths of the waves. Just then the Chief runs to the river, barefooted and confused, followed by the rest of the villagers. The Chief cries out and tries to jump into the water, but the villagers stop him. The Chief wants to know why the Queen of the Nile has broken an ancient agreement not to harm the Chief's descendents, and the Chief not to harm any crocodiles. He calls after Buzagully, promising him half of his fortune if he saves his son.

Buzagully swims past the mother and reaches the crocodiles. He struggles with one of them as the other escapes with the child. The crocodile has swum far below, further than Buzagully can go. He returns to the surface, bringing with him the drowned body of the mother.

The Chief is upset with Buzagully, and begins to strangle him. When the Chief's Grandfather appears he cracks his whip and orders the Chief to stop. The Grandfather has the power to talk to any animal living in or near the Nile River.

When the Grandfather is told what has happened, he calls for the Crocodile Bird to come to him by cracking his whip. The Crocodile Bird tells him there have been no crocodiles on the island in the middle of the river today. Then he summons the Hippo and he rides on its back to the island. As the Bird had said there are no crocodiles there.

Next he summons to him the Turtle, the Shepherdess of the Nile. The Turtle tells the Grandfather how the Chief had broken the agreement with the Queen of Nile. An evil Magician had tricked the Chief into hunting a crocodile and eating its meat, to ensure his child would be a boy, his heir. The Shepherdess of the Nile assured the Grandfather that the kidnapping was only a warning and his great-grandson would be returned in one week's time.

ACT TWO

The Shepherdess of the Nile now narrates the history of the last two centuries. She tells several stories about the Villagers, and about the creatures of the Nile.

The first story is about the initial agreement between the first Chief of the Village and the then Queen of the Nile and the Crocodiles. After a crocodile had eaten the son of the chief, the villagers started to hunt and kill the crocodiles. The Chief realized this would make all their lives hard, so he made an agreement that they would live peacefully together and not

harm each other. But Grandfather only agreed on the condition that he could punish the crocodile that killed his daughter by turning it to stone with a crack of his whip.

The second story she tells is about how the Village was destroyed in a great flood, and how all the creatures were swept away.

The third story is about the time when a crocodile ate Buzagully's father. Buzagully was only fifteen years old, and from that time on, he decided to always live in his father's canoe on the water.

The fourth story is about the birth of the current Chief of the Village. There was much rejoicing and feasting at the Festival of the Water. The Villagers and the creatures of the Nile rejoiced together.

One week has passed. The Village waits with the Chief and the Grandfather for the return of the Chief's Son. Meanwhile, a little further down the river, the Fisherman and Buzagully are celebrating the naming ceremony of the newly born Fisherman's Son. The Fisherman is a close friend to Buzagully, but his wife had just died in childbirth. During the ceremony in the river, Crocodile 1 and Crocodile 2 snatch the Fisherman's Son. After a struggle the Crocodiles escape with the boy.

The Shepherdess of the Nile tells the Grandfather to come alone to Crocodile Island on the back of the Hippo. The Queen of the Nile and the Grandfather renew their agreement not to harm each other. The Queen of the Nile promises she will return the Chief's son as soon as she gets back to her underwater Kingdom.

True to his word, the Queen of the Nile returns the Chief's Son, along with the Fisherman's Son. Crocodile 1 swims to the surface with both children. He is still tempted to taste

their young meat and so on the way he bites off all five toes from the left foot of the Chief's Son.

On the bank the Grandfather tells the Chief and the Villagers that the Crocodiles will not harm the Chief's family or descendents again. When Crocodile 1 delivers the children safely onto the riverbank, the Chief assumes that his son is the unharmed child. Thus he takes the Fisherman's Son as his own child and heir. The Fisherman arrives and claims the Chief's Son as his own. The Villagers rejoice and return to the Village.

The Shepherdess of the Nile narrates another story. She tells of how the Queen of the Nile found out what Crocodile 1 had done, and makes him stand trial. But when Crocodile 1 realises the punishment will be exile, he becomes a rebel. With a gang of other crocodiles he terrorises the creatures of the Nile and the Villagers for years to come.

Finally she tells the story of the Chief's Son and the Fisherman's Son who become close friends and play together in the water of the Nile. They love to play with the Mermaids of the Nile and the crocodiles. Their favourite game is to try to catch a crocodile's tail. When they play together, the Balloon Fish are always the referees.

The two boys are now ten years old. They come as usual to the river to play. Crocodile 1 and his gang are waiting for them, hiding under the water. They try to kidnap both children, but Buzagully saves one of the boys. The boy saved is the one with toes missing on his left foot, that is the Chief's real son. The Grandfather calls for the Queen of the Nile to come, and asks what has happened. The Queen of the Nile says she will save the child, but she must tell the Chief's Grandfather something important afterwards.

The Queen of the Nile, helped by Buzagully and the Fisherman's Son (the Chief's real son), have a big fight with the rebel crocodiles. They rescue the kidnapped boy (the Fisherman's real son), and the rebel crocodiles retreat.

When the Queen of the Nile returns the boys to the Grandfather, she tells him their story, about how they were given to the wrong families after their birth. During this story the rebel crocodiles sneak back and kidnap the Chief's real son, who up until now thought he was a poor fisherman's son. Buzagully and the Fisherman's real son, along with the Hippo, the Shepherdess of the Nile, the Brides of the Nile, crocodiles and all, dive in and rescue the boy.

Back on the riverbank, the sons are returned to their real families. The whole village and the creatures of the Nile celebrate the rescue, and the Chief decides to share his fortune with Buzagully and the Fisherman.

The Hippo tells them his day dream: to see all creatures on the bank of the Nile dancing, singing and blowing bubbles.

EUREKA

This SHORT MONOLOGUE received a public reading at The International Theatre of SCHÄXPIR, Linz, Austria

Synopsis

A cat chases a mouse. The sly cat tricks the mouse by pretending to be something he is not.

MOON'S MESSAGE

This ONE ACT PLAY is ready for production

Synopsis

A Sudanese folk tale about how the moon came to have the imprint of a rabbit's head on it's face.

OPERA LIBETTO

BRIDE OF THE NILE

This OPERA LIBRETTO was developed at 'New Visions New Voices' Festival at the Kennedy Centre, Washington DC, USA

Synopsis

This is the story of the Sultan of Tuti and his unquenching desire for a new bride every night. It is partly based on myth and partly on fact.

The Sultan is a great leader and a hero of his country. He has freed the country from the foreign raiders and is much loved. But all the wealth and honour bestowed on him corrupts this good man, and he becomes obsessed with only sleeping with beautiful virgins. In order to stay within his religious beliefs he has to marry each one, but on the second day of their marriage, he divorces them. All these marriages are carried out in secret, but to be divorced brought great shame on the woman and her tribe.

It was a tradition in those days for a poet to write a love poem to the most beautiful woman in his tribe. The poet is seen as the voice of his tribe. The Sultan uses these poems to find the most beautiful woman from each of the more than four hundred tribes in his country. He sends out a midwife, Alsarah, guarded by soldiers, to ensure the woman is as beautiful as the poet describes her, and most importantly, that she is still a virgin. Alsarah would then bring these virgins back to his palace, and prepare them for their wedding day.

One day the Sultan heard of Miriam, the Bride of the Nile. She is the most beautiful young woman he has ever heard

described by a poet. He longes to have her as his wife for one night. He sends Alsarah off to her village to bring her back.

The people of his country are becoming aware of the Sultan's secret, and so when the soldiers appear in Miriam's village they knew there is danger for one of their young women. The head of the tribe and of the village is Miriam's father. He has already promised his daughter as a wife to her young cousin, Mahmoud, who is also the poet who had written the wonderful love poem that had condemned his betrothed.

Alsarah comes to Miriam's father and tells him of the great honour for his family, that his daughter has been chosen to be the Sultan's bride, and he is to become the Sultan's father-in-law. Her father knows his daughter's fate, and the shame it will bring. He notices from Alsarah's features that she is from a nearby, related tribe, and he knows that the Sultan is from a faraway tribe. He reminds her of the nobility of their tribes and families, and that his daughter is like one of her own. While accepting that the marriage to the Sultan would be a great honour, he also lets her know that he is aware of the Sultan's secret, and that the divorce would bring shame on both their tribes.

Miriam's father is very wealthy too, and he offers to give Alsarah whatever she asks for. Alsarah thinks for some time, then she replies, "All I need is for you to trust me. I will save the honour of our tribes and your descendants from this great shame."

THE BLONDE SEAGULL

This OPERA LIBRETTO is currently written and ready for further development

Synopsis

This story is based on the life of Abdelrazig Ibrahim, my grandfather.

Seventeen year-old Abdelrazig is on a boat leaving the port of Constantinople in 1897. His father, Ibrahim, a wealthy Turkish nobleman, is at the port to see him off. His father believes that travel will be good for him, but he is also afraid he may not return. Mustafah, Abdelrazig's brother, a sea-going trader of guns and food, was going to take him on his next trip, and look after him, but he is sick and stays at home. Abdelrazig is excited about the adventure to see new people and places. The ship is a troop ship, carrying soldiers to Sudan, which was then jointly colonised by the British and the Turks. The Army General, who is a good friend to Ibrahim, promises to look after his son for him. They have agreed that Abdelrazig will marry the General's daughter when he turns eighteen. The boat sets sail, but Abdelrazig is very seasick for the first part of the journey.

They sail through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea and arrive in the port of Suakin in Sudan. They discover that the Mahadi's revolution is going on. The British General Gordon has been killed, the country is mostly under the rebel's control, but the port is safe for the time being. The General is ordered guard the port, and he tells Abdelrazig he must help, even though he is not a trained soldier. Because of his promise to his father, however, he will keep Abdelrazig as one of his personal guards.

One evening while on guard duty, Abdelrazig contemplates what it would mean to kill a man with his gun. The other guard with him, a hardened soldier, dismisses his concerns, saying the honour of their country is at stake. Abdelrazig tells the guard he has some business with the General, but secretly he slips away, leaving his uniform and gun behind.

The countryside around the port is harsh, arid, semi-desert, vast and sparsely populated. Abdelrazig leaves with only enough water for three days. He soon becomes hungry and has to eat leaves and grasses, whatever he can find. He walks only at night and hides in the hills during the day, as the soldiers are looking for him. He realises his life in Turkey had been secluded and pampered, and he was not prepared for the harsh realities of the desert in Sudan, but he cannot return and become a killer. He comes across a field of unripe wheat and eats it. He becomes sick in his stomach and the cuts to his feet become infected. He slumps down on the ground and drifts into a coma.

Early the next morning, Bakheitah and her father come across Abdelrazig in the field. They take him into their village of Abo-sham, and look after him. His pale skin and light brown hair make some people think he is an albino. Bakheitah names him the Blonde Seagull. She tends his wounds with medicinal oils and grasses, and feeds him camel's milk to soothe his stomach.

Three months go by and Mustafah has come to look for Abdelrazig. As a trader he travels widely and has many connections. He asks around and soon he hears the story of a pale man living in the village Abo-sham. He goes there and finds Abdelrazig, who is still weak. Abdelrazig says he will come back with Mustafah, but he needs to be stronger, as he was very seasick on the previous journey. Mustafah says he

will return in another three months, and Abdelrazig must not forget that he has an obligation to marry the General's daughter soon.

Abdelrazig's health improves, and he realises he really enjoys the simple ways of the village. It was the answer to life he had been seeking. Also he has fallen in love with Bakheitah, and she with him.

When Mustafah returns, after several delays, ten months have passed. He is astonished and outraged to find that Abdelrazig has married Bakheitah and they have their first son. Abdelrazig asks Mustafah to go back and ask their father for his blessing. He has honoured him, by naming his child Ibrahim, after his father. Mustafah is happy that Abdelrazig is content, but he thinks he is leading a miserable life in the village, after his wealthy life in Turkey.

Mustafah returns home and tells his father that Abdelrazig is married to a Sudanese woman and has a child, named Ibrahim. He describes the low living conditions of the farmers, and how he pleaded with Abdelrazig to return and forget this life. He knows how heartbroken his father must be, and how he was his father's heart and soul, while he, Mustafah, was his head and hands. His father is very upset and angry as Mustafah tells his story. He is ashamed that he must break his word to the General about the marriage, and the disgrace Abdelrazig is bringing to the family name by marrying a poor, African woman not of noble birth. He declares that he will cut Abdelrazig out of his will and disown him from the family. He will never forgive him, unless he returns alone.

On the long sea journey back to Sudan, Mustafah begins to think about how he will be his father's sole heir. On his return

to Sudan he tells Abdelrazig that his father gave him his blessing and supports his decision to stay with his wife and child. But he would be happy to see him whenever he chooses to visit. Abdelrazig wrote a letter to his father to thank him, and gave his word that by the end of the year he would try to visit with his family.

Mustafah did not deliver the letter, and when there was no reply, Abdelrazig sends another letter by a different ship, asking why he had not had a reply. This time his father replies, and in an angry letter, he tells Abdelrazig that he has cut him off and will never forgive him for the shame he has brought to the family. He blames his recent stroke on the distress the news of Abdelrazig's marriage caused him. Now he is paralysed from the waist down and his health is failing day by day. On hearing this news Abdelrazig falls ill, and again slips into a coma. He hallucinates and sees images of his life: his journey to Sudan across the sea, his life before in Turkey, Mustafah as a monster attacking his wife and son, scenes from the war, and so on. All the time he sees himself as swimming in the ocean but the island in the distance never comes closer. He is sick for three months and during that time a letter arrives saying his father has died. Abdelrazig only learns of this when he wakes from his coma. The village people help and comfort him in his grief, but he slips into a depression, wanting to be alone and day-dreaming all the time.

After a while his first daughter is born and this birth changes his state of mind. He decides to dedicate his life to teaching the villagers to read and write, and he sets up a school for the children and adults. After some time his reputation spreads far and wide and soon the school classes are huge. People from the first class become teachers and the school

grows and grows. People begin to think Abdelrazig has supernatural powers, and ask him to help in many ways. He would read from the Koran and miraculously a sick child would be cured. Each time he does something like this he is given a gift: gold, jewels or part of the harvest. All the time Abdelrazig denies his gift, saying it is God that cures, but the villagers still believe their superstitions.

Abdelrazig has a further two sons, but after the birth of his fourth son, Bakheitah dies. Abdelrazig carries on with his life as a teacher, and lives his life by the philosophy of whatever comes into his right hand he will give away with his left. Around the school he builds rooms with beds so any travellers would have a place to rest. The people of the village grow to love and respect him.

After many years of a peaceful life Abdelrazig's children grow up strong and healthy. His fourth son, Nasser is now seventeen years old. His two older brothers and his sister are all married, and Nasser's marriage is being arranged. But Nasser has never agreed with his father's philosophy of giving away his wealth. He has heard the story of his father's life in Turkey and decides that he wants to have his inheritance from his uncle, Mustafah. He find out that his uncle has a mistress and children in Suakin port, so one day he slips away and befriends one of his cousins, never revealing who he is. He uses his cousin to help him get a job on Mustafah's boat going to Turkey. On arrival in Constantinople Nasser threatens to reveal his uncle's other life, and demands some money from him to avoid a scandal. Mustafah gives him a large amount of money, but it is still only a small dent in his fortune.

When Nasser returns to Abo-sham, he lies about where his wealth has come from, saying he had some good luck and

worked hard for it. But Nasser is not wise with his wealth and he spends his money on prostitutes and drink. So he decides to return to Saokin and when his uncle visits his mistress, Nasser again demands money from him. Mustafah gives him some more, but says he never wants to see Nasser again. He tells him he knows what Abdelrazig's game is.

But once again Nasser fritters away his wealth, and for a third time he seeks out his uncle. Mustafah is very angry but after giving Nasser more money, he decides to visit Abdelrazig and tell him this blackmail must stop.

When Mustafah arrives at Abo-sham, Abdelrazig is overjoyed to see him. He offers him shelter, food and water, but Mustafah refuses everything. He would not even sit down, but delivers his message to Abdelrazig in the village square surrounded by everyone, saying he will not give him any more money, and he should be ashamed using his son Nasser as a messenger. He will not be blackmailed any longer. Was killing our father not enough for you, he said, do you also want to kill me?

Abdelrazig is so shocked that he falls into a deep coma. He again hallucinates, seeing his own trip to Sudan. He sees both Mustafah and Nasser as monsters, fighting each other, and all the war and misery of his country. As he lays on his bed, his eldest son Ibrahim watches over him. Abdelrazig breathes his last breath and dies. Ibrahim carries out his traditional duty and closes his father's eyes. As soon as he does this Abdelrazig crosses into the afterlife. He is now sailing alone in a boat on the ocean, but this time instead of an island, he sees a huge bubble floating on the water. As he nears it he can see an oasis and happy people inside. Closer, he sees Bakheitah in beautiful clothes, as young as when he first met her. Next to her is his father, Ibrahim, old but happy and

friendly to Bakheitah. Abdelrazig steps from the boat into the bubble and he is warmly hugged by his wife and father.

About the co-transcreator

Vivienne Glance has written and/or directed many of her own full-length plays, including 'Underground' and 'The Cat in the Box' (Blue Room Theatre, Perth), 'Dreams' & 'Bedroom Baby' (Pocket Theatre, Fremantle), 'Creatrix' (Freehold Theatre & Mae West Fest, Seattle), 'Into That Clear Place' (Edinburgh Fringe Festival), 'When in Rome' (Edinburgh Fringe Festival) and 'Titus A' (Chelsea Centre Theatre, London), as well as her short plays: 'The Comic's Tale' (Artrage & Darwin Theatre Company), 'Modern Gods' (The London Theatre, New Cross, London, runner-up Gold Dust Speaks award), 'Pillar of Water' (Putting On An Act at PICA, WEAVE Festival, Fremantle), 'Tal Afar/USA' (Putting On An Act), 'Possessions' (winner John Joseph Jones Prize & Prickly Pear Ensemble), 'Draniki' (Belarusian Dream Theatre Project, Canada, Latvia, USA), 'Opportunity' (Slice of Life Festival, USA) and 'Next Tuesday' (Putting On An Act, Perth; Parla La Donna, Turin, Italy; Short & Sweet, Sydney).

Her play 'Shaking the Tree' was showcased in the International Playwrights Festival at the Warehouse Theatre, Croydon, in London. Many of her scripts have been published or are available online at Australian Plays.

She was associate director with Prickly Pear Ensemble and worked on their productions of 'Keeper' by Steven Snell and 'Mosquito' by John Pratt.

She has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Western Australia, researching science in theatre. She was co-founder and co-producer of 'Supernova' London's first Science Arts Festival producing events at many venues,

including the Natural History Museum, London, and the Royal Institution.

This festival was supported by the Wellcome Foundation, the Independent newspaper, Arts Council of Great Britain, London Arts Board and the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Vivienne has directed numerous readings and workshops for plays in development helping with the conceptual realization of other playwrights' work, and given dramaturgy to many more to craft their work for production. She was also deviser and facilitator for a week-long short play development workshops at WA Academy of Performing Arts in association with Peter Cowan Writers Centre and has run many playwriting workshops.

She has been invited to be writer-in-residence at the Djerassi Resident Artists Programme, San Francisco, USA; Peter Cowan Writers Centre, Perth; The Arts Catalyst Science Art Agency, London, supported by a WA Playwrights Development Initiative; and Cummins Theatre, Merredin, supported by Stages.

She has worked as co-transcreator of the work of Afeif Ismail since 2004. This collaboration has resulted in: 'Circles of Return' (Ebony Theatre Company at Fringe World Perth), '3 Seeds' (Blue Room Theatre and Always Working Artists), 'The Shrouds or the Dead' funded by WA Theatre Development Initiative, and 'The African Magician' (Barking Gecko Theatre Company), which was developed through a Playwriting Australia Workshop and received an AWGIE nomination in 2012.

About the Author

Afeif Ismail is an internationally published poet and playwright whose works have been translated into German and Swedish. His unique identity as an Arabic-speaking, African Sudanese Australian, means his cultural identity is as a 'Son of the World'. His work in Australia has been recognized nationally through winning awards and nominations.

In 2017 Afeif was invited as an independent delegate to attend the Australian Theatre Forum, Adelaide. He was also chosen to join five other Australian writers as part of the Keynote Project, 'Performance Encyclopedia', run by Canadian performance company, 'Public Recordings'. His attendance was supported by an Artflight grant from the Dept. Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), WA.

In 2016 Afeif was a Writer/Director of Circles of Return at the Fringe World Festival, WA.

In 2015 Afeif was a participant PWA Industry Forum, Adelaide.☐

In 2015Afeif was Invited participant, Australian Theatre Forum, Sydney.

In 2015 Afeif won Naji Naaman's Literary Prize, Lebanon.

In 2014, Afeif Ismail was selected by The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, to be one of six International Playwriting Observers at New Visions/New Voices Festival of Works in Progress for Young Audiences.

In 2013, a short version of his play Unsuitable Hats was read at Write Local Play Global (WLPG) Shorts: Unexpected Connections, One Theatre World Conference, Cleveland Ohio, USA. Afeif's monologue Eureka was selected for WLPG Sparks

- Catalysts for Discovery at ASSITEJ International Meeting for the International Theatre Festival SCHÄXPIR, Linz, Austria.

In 2012, Afeif was invited to present on cross-cultural collaboration at the International Forum on TYA, New York University. The Forum is titled "Which Way TYA? Future Directions in Theatre for Young Audiences". His play for children Son of the Nile was performed at Murdoch University.

In 2010, his play The African Magician was commissioned and produced by Barking Gecko Theatre Company and nominated for the Australian Writers Guild award for best children's play in 2011.

In 2009, he was a recipient of an inaugural Western Australian Theatre Development Initiative for his play "The Shrouds or the Dead."

In 2008, Afeif was selected to workshop his play The Son of the Sun, with at Playwriting Australia's Canberra Workshop. Afeif was also awarded the inaugural Australian National Playwrights' Conference (ANPC) Bursary.

In 2007, Afeif was nominated for the Kit Denton award for Courage in Writing.

Afeif's plays (in Arabic) have been produced in many cities, towns and villages in Sudan including Khartoum, from 1986 to 2000. These have included , Doors, The Merchant, Starvation and The Centre of the Circle.

“Afeif’s plays make a unique contribution to Australian theatre and challenge Western audiences’ understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural artistic practice. Afeif’s work cannot be pigeonholed as “African”, although it sometimes employs African storytelling practice and takes an uncompromising position on African and international politics.

His theatrical inspirations include the Absurdist theatre of Beckett and the political theatre of Augusto Boal and Berthold Brecht. His writing is dense with topical and historical references and always spiced with his wry humour that invites us to laugh at humanity and ourselves.”

*Jeremy Rice, theatre director and Head of Education and Families,
Melbourne Theatre Company.*

Son of the Nile is a magical, hilarious and moving play set on the banks of the great River Nile in Sudan where the story is told by the River itself. *Son of the Nile* speaks of our contract with the earth, and of the importance of honour and trust, and keeping your word. “...*Son of the Nile* never becomes too heavy handed or moralistic; this play is simply a great helping of theatrical fun for all ages!”

*Dr. David Moody, director and Senior Lecturer, Theatre and Drama,
Murdoch University.*