Theatre Beyond Nationalism:
Participatory Art in the Cyprus Buffer Zone

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Abstract

The turbulent 20th century has left Cyprus with contested spaces scattered around its terrain. The period of inter-communal violence and ensuing war have left its two main ethnic communities living on each side of a buffer zone, which separates the island into two parts. Identity within the communities presents interesting trends, with the Greek Cypriot community (the focus of this study) developing a locally cultivated Greek nationalism, as well as Cypriotism at a later stage, both of which have rendered the buffer zone into a non-space. Through this paper, I propose that since 2011, the buffer zone offers an alternative understanding of community, through the participatory art that takes place there. Through the mechanisms of collaborative creation, the generation of new, temporary communities, which are engaged with social issues, and the focus on both process and result, new conversations arise, and new priorities are set within the artistic realm. Two plays are used as case studies, Shift, by Rooftop Theatre and Gülgün Kayim and BAM!, by Giorgos Neophytou, produced by Paraplevros Productions, which were presented within the buffer zone in 2014 and 2017 respectively, and grounded within and interacting with the buffer zone and its temporary communities, generating a new dialectic.

Keywords: participatory art, Buffer Zone, dialectic, theater, identity

> […] I see the Dead Zone as internal
> as much as it is external,
> as subdued by memory but, at the same time,
> directing remembering, a passive repository
> and an active catalyst. (p. 67)[2]

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[2]   S. S. Karayiannis, 'Zone of Passions: A Queer Re-Imagining of Cyprus's *No Man's Land*' (2017) 10 Synthesis 63–81.

Preamble

In the introduction of his 2012 book, *The Society of Horkates: The Cultural and Political Underdevelopment of Greek-Cypriots at the Beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century*,[3]Mavratsas starts off by counting his lucky stars that his permanent academic position allows him to publish this type of book risk-free. The book has a title that brings laughter to anyone familiar with the Greek Cypriot dialect and society, a title that can damage his effort at making a legitimate socio-cultural critique and can jeopardise his reputation as a sociologist.

However, in his insightful analysis in this and other books and articles, as well as in his conversations with students, colleagues and social agents, he moves beyond *what seems* and makes a lasting mark on the academic life in Cyprus. As a persona and as a thinker, he has maintained a focused critical stance of the Greek Cypriot community in the post-1974 era, in a rare combination of inspiring the new generation of Cypriots through his formal and informal teaching (among them, myself) and creating a deep impact in academic sociology, as has been noted by Nicos Trimikliniotis in his introduction of the present issue.

Introduction to Identity

The identity (and nationalism) of Greek Cypriots in modernity is summed up, for the most part, in the idea that Cyprus is part of the greater Hellenic world. In the context of the historical continuity of the Hellenic nation, from antiquity to present day, Cyprus is articulated as part of the narrative of irredentism and the Megali Idea (the reconquering of lands that had—before the Ottoman Empire—formed the Greco-Christian world, in order to form the new Greek state) by such significant nation-building figures as Paparrigopoulos.[4] In Cyprus, irredentism entered the

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[3] C.V. Mavratsas, The Society of Horkates: The Cultural and Political Underdevelopment of Greek-Cypriots at the beginning of the 21st Century (Athens: Papazisis Publications, 2012) (in Greek).

[4] C. Paparrigopoulos, *History of the Greek Nation: from Ancient Times to Present Day. For the Teaching of the Youth* (Athens: Τυπογραφίας Ανδρέου Κορομηλά, 1853) (in Greek). Paparrigopoulos' geographical framing of the Greco-Christian world is evident in this excerpt: '(...) Christianity continued to spread among the Greeks, and the pagans, frustrated by this fact, attempted, in the third century, and protected by the emperors, grave persecutions against the supporters of the word of the Lord, and countless Christians became martyrs at the time, in Alexandria, Caesaria, Smyrna, Antioch, Thessaloniki, Crete and Cyprus' / '(...) ο Χριστιανισμός εξηκολούθησε διαδιδόμενος εις τους Έλληνας, οι δε ειδωλολάτραι, αγανακτούντες δια τούτο, επεχείρησαν, κατά την τρίτην εκατονταετηρίδα, προστατευόμενοι υπό των αυτοκρατόρων, δεινότατους διωγμούς κατά των οπαδών του λόγου του Κυρίου, και αναρίθ-

consciousness of Greek Cypriot elites in the mid-19th century, together with communities in Crete and Asia Minor.[5]

In the historical timeline of Cyprus, the events of the first half of the 20th century leading up to the 1974 division of the island are well analysed by academia: the development of EOKA; independence; intercommunal strife in the 1960s; the military coup; and, the Turkish invasion in July 1974. According to Mavratsas,[6] there was a short repose in the development of Greek Cypriot nationalism in the years immediately after 1974, until the middle of the 1980s, with a simultaneous turn towards Cypriotism.[7] The nationalist narrative returned more firmly at that time, and is based on 'the case of Cyprus, (where) an irredentist movement has been transformed into a politics of identity'.[8] Emphasis at this stage was not on union with Greece any longer, but on the affirmation of the Hellenic identity of Greek Cypriots. Mavratsas referred to the tension between Greek Cypriot nationalism and Cypriotism, as a continuous condition in the island's political scene in his detailed overview of the socio-political developments in the 1974-1995 period.[9]

Arriving in the 21st century, the questions linger: as Greek Cypriots, are we or are we not *real Greeks*? Which part of our identity is connected to the *Greek nation* (and the body of the nation), and which part is connected with our local, folklore identity? To what extent has our geographic isolation (from the *national body*) constituted us *peasants*,[10] who simply need a bit of training in order to speak *proper Greek*?[11]

μητοι Χριστιανοί εμαρτύρησαν τότε εις Αλεξάνδρειαν, εις Καιρασείαν, εις Σμύρνην, εις Αντιόχειαν, εις Θεσσαλονίκην, εις Κρήτην και εις Κύπρον' (p. 85)

[5]   P.M. Kitromilides, 'Greek Irredentism in Asia Minor and Cyprus' (1990) 26(14) *Middle Eastern Studies* 4.

[6]   C.V. Mavratsas, 'The Ideological Contest between Greek-Cypriot Nationalism and Cypriotism 1974–1995: Politics, Social Memory and Identity' (1997) 20(4) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 717–737.

[7]   Ibid, p. 721, defines Cypriotism as: 'the idea that Cyprus has its own sui generis character and thus must be viewed as an entity which is independent from both the motherlands of the two main communities of the island, that is Greece and Turkey. (...) Thus, Cypriotism does not deny the Greek or Turkish ethnicity of the inhabitants of the island; it stresses however that their ethnic identity—and thus on a more general level, their culture—has also acquired sui generis features that not only differentiate the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots from the Greeks and the Turks, but also create some common ground between the two communities of the island (Lanitis 1963, The New Cyprus Association 1975, 1980).

[8]   Ibid, p. 718.

[9]   Ibid.

[10]   ʽχώρκατοι'.

[11]   For more on the complex relationship between Standard and Cypriot Greek linguistic varieties, and how that influences the diglossic situation within the Greek-Cypriot community: S. Tsiplakou, A. Papa-

Opening of the Checkpoints

The tension described above does not recognise the buffer zone, the dividing space between the two communities, as a real space. For Greek nationalism in Cyprus, the dominance of Greek identity in Cyprus is universal; it does not recognise borders, only the (Turkish) occupation. On the other hand, and according to Cypriotism, all of Cyprus belongs to Cypriots, without borders and in-between spaces, but dividing lines between Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking Cypriots. For the second group, crossing the roadblocks to go to the north side of the island is a formality to go to the other side. What is important is the action of going to the other, not the process of going there, and not the buffer zone. The first group, in its majority, rejects the crossing to the other side altogether.

Therefore, the opening of the Ledra Palace checkpoint in 2003 constituted a new paradigm in Greek Cypriots' understanding of their own identity, beyond Greek nationalism and beyond Cypriotism. This is due to the fact that the parameters framing the identity of Greek Cypriots bear no validity in the buffer zone, the binary between the communities is invalid in the in-between space: there is no embedded process of *other-ing*, there are no issues pertaining to control and sovereignty (other than that of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force, which is undisputed, at least on the official levels), and finally, neither Greek nationalism nor Cypriotism are recognised, since there are no mechanisms of identity creation there.

Therefore, who are we when we are in the buffer zone?

Ledra Palace and Home for Cooperation

Through this paper, I will attempt to answer the question posed above by analysing specific examples of theatre productions, as those that have taken place in recent years in the Ledra Palace buffer zone.

Ledra Palace, the first roadblock to open on 23 April 2003, has been the symbol of tension between the two communities since 1958. It has been a site of conflict in the late 1950s and 1960s, a prisoner exchange station during periods of violence, and a passage for members of one community (stranded or living) on the other side after the 1974 exchange of populations. More recently, the formerly shining diamond of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Ledra Palace hotel, has been converted

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pavlou, P. Pavlou and M. Koutsoyanou, 'Levelling, Koineization and their Implications for Bidialectism' in *Language Variation—European Perspectives* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin's Publishing Company, 2006) 265–276.

into barracks for the United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP), and the area around, as has almost all of the buffer zone, has been left to the decay of time.

Activities in the buffer zone had started, according to Psaltis and Cakal, even before 2003, with 'conflict resolution workshops lead by academics and conflict resolution trainers outside Cyprus or in the UN Buffer Zone under special permission from the UN',[12] These were carried out through the initiative of embassies, academic institutions or international organisations, and took place either at the Ledra Palace hotel, Pyla/Pile, or outside the island altogether. After the opening of the Ledra Palace checkpoint, communication and inter-communal activities mostly took place in the Ledra Palace buffer zone area, at the Ledra Palace hotel, Fulbright Centre and the Goethe Institute. Civil society itself began to drive the activities, and active citizens from both sides of the divide began to self-organise around conceptualising, fundraising and carrying out activities aimed at creating opportunities for people from the two sides to have contact.[13] Thus started a process of redefining the buffer zone, from a space of traumatic memory, to a new condition that is part of a process of growth.

Although authors have been writing about the buffer zone since the 1990s, with the work of poets and short story writers featuring in publications and volumes,[14] the performing arts in/on the buffer zone are a more recent development. In 2011, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research founded the Home for Cooperation in the Ledra Palace buffer zone area, providing a space where a new type of contact can be carried out between individuals and groups from the communities in Cyprus who are interested in inter-communal contact. This was officially marked by the first Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival in 2014, where, through the festival as an institution, the human body is now introduced into the space of the buffer zone as a legitimated means of expression.

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[12] C. Psaltis and H. Cakal, 'Social Identity in a Divided Cyprus' in S. McKeown et al. (eds), *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016) 235.

[13] Ibid, 235.

[14] Representative samples of authors and work have been published in the following two journal editions: S. Stephanides (ed.), 'Excerpta Cypriana' (Special issue on Cypriot Literature in three languages) (2009, Summer) 6(3) *91st Meridian*, available at https://iwp.uiowa.edu/91st/vol6-num3; A. Collett (ed.), *Kunapipi*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2011), available at https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol33/iss1/.

Process as Product

The Home for Cooperation and the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival introduced a new framework for creativity in the buffer zone. They inaugurated a new relationship between the performing arts and the audience, a new authorship of the art piece and a view of theatre based on a new parameter: participation. A large part of the analysis, which will follow, is based on the work of Claire Bishop, as encapsulated in her book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*.[15]

Temporary Communities

The traditional perception of audience members is that they are part of the broad public, that they constitute a presence in art where *aesthetic experience is simply offered*, since he/she is part of the outside public and not part of the group of artists who are producing the work.[16]

In writing about a new type of audience, Bishop uses the argument of art critic and academic, Reinaldo Laddage, in which he refered to the *creation of a temporary community*, as opposed to the outside public.[17] While the outside public constitutes a group to which an aesthetic product is simply *offered*, this temporary community *shares* a social problem, which it is trying to (re)solve. It is a community that is directly involved in the process of the solution of a real social problem, a group that wants results.

Collective Authorship

The new audience and the mechanisms that create it also create the conditions for a collective authorship: the ownership of the artistic result is the common property of this new community. This community is involved in the creative process, as a carrier or receiver or even as a non-passive observer of the change that can (potentially) be made through art. Moreover, the work carried out within the creative team and the temporary community leads to *consensual collaboration*, which Bishop mentions is 'valued over artistic mastery and individualism, regardless of what the project sets out to do or actually achieve'.[18]

The value of art, therefore, lies not only in the aesthetic element but also in a whole new system of values, which *also* rewards (the potential for) social change as

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[15] C. Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship (London: Verso, 2012) 19.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid, 20.

an element of success.[19] In order to highlight this discussion further, Bishop mentions the analysis of Swedish curator Maria Lind.[20] Lind writes about the work of Oda Projesi, an artists' group originating from Turkey. In 2000, they rented a house in the Galata neighbourhood of Istanbul and filled it with arts tools, thus creating the conditions for the neighbourhood families and kids to become involved in creative processes. Lind uses the project to show how broad public art can be in the context of contemporary art, but also how much it promotes quality in art, since art is being discussed from a critical perspective, taking into account moral standards and values, as well as social responsibility.[21]

One of the earliest examples one can mention from the local context of Cyprus, is the project *One Square Foot* (2003-2006),[22] a collaboration between Echo Arts / Arianna Economou (Cyprus) and Theatre Alibi (UK). The project had invited participating artists to work on one square foot of land in north and south Cyprus, as close to the buffer zone as possible. This led up to a process of a collective synthesis of the artistic action.

Although the examples we will be analysing in the buffer zone in Nicosia have a more systematic structure, in terms of both the framework they originate from (institutionalised festival and established theatre group) and the structure of the artwork itself (theatre plays and performance), than the examples from *Oda Projesi* or *One Square Foot*, it is significant to bear in mind how broad and legitimised collective authorship has become.

Collective Processes

In the case studies that we will explore,[23] it is the creation of relationships between people, social engagement, and interaction, which serve to highlight the artistic result

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[19]   According to Bishop, however, this encapsulates a danger: for the value of the artistic result to be undermined, under the weight of social (and many times, moral) factors.

[20]   M. Lind, 'Actualization of Space' in C. Doherty (ed.), *Contemporary Art: from Studio to Situation* (London: Black Dog, 2004) 109–121.

[21]   Like the preceeding term *collaborative art*, here we find *new genre public art*, introduced by S. Lecy (ed.), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1994), where she 'calls for an integrative critical language through which values, ethics and social responsibility can be discussed in terms of art' (p. 2). The book comments on the absence of collaborative art/ new genre public art, from the general critical study of contemporary art.

[22]   D. Hulton, 'Sites of Micro-Political Theatre' (September 2008) 30(3) *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art (PAJ 90)*, 94–103.

[23]   Other examples are Open Studios (2011), the exhibition Little Land Fish (2010), the collaboration between Satirikon Theatre and Turkish Cypriot Municipal Theatre of Nicosia (1980s—ongoing), the

in the context of *consensual collaborations*.[24] Perhaps the most important element is the change in the degree of importance of the results of artistic processes: 'it places the process over the product, or rather the process *as* product'.[25] Therefore, any tension does not concern only the result of the artistic process but the entire process of creation, validating, and legitimising both the moral and the artistic results.

In Cyprus, as in many other post-conflict zones, there have been, since the opening of the checkpoints, certain artistic projects that have been validated to a great extent because they primarily constituted work, which had a social agenda, since they aimed at reconciliation between the communities and fell under the *bi-communal* umbrella. There are various reasons for the existence of these endeavours, important among them was the relatively stable funding stream for bi-communal activities, accessible to Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In the years after the opening of the checkpoints, the main aim behind international funding for inter-communal work was to create opportunities for people from across the island to meet and (re)establish relations. Funders, such as embassies, the United Nations, and the European Union, tended to prioritise long attendance sheets with Greek and Turkish names on them as the sought-after results of their events, as the best way to judge the success of an event.

For the present paper, the works examined were not produced from such funding schemes. This disassociates them from a more programmatic (as opposed to a more organic) production and consumption of art. To explain further: on the one hand, the production *Shift* was presented at the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival, which is partly funded by the Home for Cooperation, whose institutional funder is the EEA and Norway grants. However, the Festival was borne out of the experience gained by the Home for Cooperation of scattered inter-communal performance work, while at the same time the Festival has adopted a rather experimental and marginal framework, that of the Fringe, that allows it a great deal of flexibility in terms of content and form. This makes the festival versatile: in the five years between 2014 and 2018, it has never had the same format, or hosted the same artists.

In relation to the production of the play *BAM!*, by Giorgos Neophytou, this paper examines the presentation of the play in the buffer zone in June 2017. It needs to be noted that the production was first presented to the public in Nicosia in No-

'Confrontation through Art' project by the European Mediterranean Arts Association (EMAA) and Rooftop Theatre (2014-2017), etc.
[24]   2012, p. 19.
[25]   Ibid.

vember 2015, and it was part of the repertory of a Greek Cypriot troupe, Paraplev-ros Productions. Its funding originated from government sources of the Republic of Cyprus (State Theatre and Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture). The play had already had a steady and successful run in the Greek Cypriot community, with little other than its topic making it a candidate for reconciliation.

Case Studies

Bishop has contributed two important concepts to this discussion around the redef-inition of art: the collaboration and participation as base values in both process and result.[26] The two theatre works that I will be examining constitute important stops in the history of theatre and performance in the buffer zone, and in the redefinition of the space in Ledra Palace, which are interventions to what Angelos Evangelou calls the 'archite(stru)cturality of the Cyprus border' (p.1).[27] This is both due to the creative process that produced them, as well as their content. The analysis will focus on the creation and production of *Shift*, a performance by Rooftop Theatre, in col-laboration with Gülgün Kayim (Buffer Fringe, 2014), and the performance in June 2017 of *BAM!*, by Giorgos Neophytou, a production of Paraplevros Productions.

Giorgos Neophytou's *BAM!* was first presented in November 2015 to the general public in the Greek Cypriot community, produced by Paraplevros Productions and directed by Evripides Dikeos.[28] In addition to regular performances in Nicosia and island-wide, the play was presented at the Mesarya Festival in north Cyprus (with subtitles in Turkish),[29] and in Athens, in the context of the *Week of Cypriot Theatre in Athens*.[30]

The summary of the play:

> *(...) an explosion in the buffer zone, or No Man's Land, finds two men in the wrong place and at the wrong time, a Greek- and a Turkish-Cypriot. Both*

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[26]   C. Bishop (no 16, 19–21.

[27]   A. Evangelou, 'The Cypriot Border and the *Architecture of Neutrality*'. *Technologies of Bordering: Creating, Contesting and Resisting Borders Conference,* University of Melbourne, Australia, 3–5 July 2019. Unpublished Conference Paper (Canterbury: University of Kent, Cantebury, 2019).

[28]   Cast: Costas Kazakas, Marios Stylianou, and Savvas Menoikou. Original music: George Kolias. Set and costume design: Melita Couta.

[29]   To the best of my knowledge, this the first play from the Greek-Cypriot community to be presented in a festival in north Cyprus since 2003.

[30]   The *Week of Cypriot Theatre in Athens* is organised by the Cyprus Center of the International The-atre Institute, and is funded by the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Cyprus.

have temporarily lost their hearing from the explosion and neither can figure out the other's identity. It doesn't take them long to realize they are standing in a minefield, where every move can turn them into shish-kebab. They share gestures, and mouth commonly understood words and they begin to have an idea of what they are talking about. Or at least they think they do. Actually they don't. So the funny misunderstandings begin.[31]

On 29 and 30 June 2017, the play was presented in the moat behind the Home for Cooperation, widely know as the Çetinkaya football pitch. The production was placed under the auspices of the Bicommunal Technical Committee for Culture, and was supported by UNIFICYP. The conditions for the presentation of the play were created at a time when the talks for the solution of the Cyprus Problem were in an upper spiral (the meetings in Crans-Montana, under the auspices of the UNSG were to follow in July 2017), and although the relationship between culture and politics is fascinating, it is the subject of another paper. For the needs of this analysis, we will focus on the collaborative creation and new spectatorship created by the performance in the space of the buffer zone. *BAM!* placed the creative team and the spectators in a framework of belonging that was defined by the buffer zone's space, and the relationship the average Greek Cypriot has with it.

The performance presents three main features that involve the creative team and spectators in a collaborative process: firstly, the use of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot linguistic varieties with recognisable common words and common cultural elements in the dialogue of the performance. The author mentions the common words in his note in the playbill: 'in the text I noted the common words (…). During the rehearsals, I realized that the director and the actors found their own means of communication'. The actors and the director collectively recreated parts of the dialogue of the performance, they became the link and the final stage in communicating the text to the audience.

When the play was presented, the actors became potential spectators, and the spectators became potential performers themselves, participating in their shared knowledge of the common words, which generated the comedy in the production. Let

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[31] Cyprus Mail, 'Heard the one about the GC and TC Stuck in a Buffer-Zone Minefield?' in *Cyprus Mail* (*23* June 2017), available at https://cyprus-mail.com/2017/06/23/heard-one-gc-tc-stuck-buffer-zone-minefield/. The journalist concludes by adding that the play is 'A clever and hilarious take on the relationships and fate of the people of this island, an allegory that breaks through the barrier of communication as we perceive it'.

us note that by 2017, the show had already been performed dozens of times, which meant that it had been *tried out* as a comedy, through applause or indifference, with laughter indicating how well it was communicated to the (Greek Cypriot) audience. Therefore, by the time it was placed in its *natural space*, the buffer zone, it had already created a communication environment between the scene and the audience.

The second point about the performance in June 2017 is that, although it is not a site-specific or a promenade performance, we can assume that the audience is not an *outside public*, but that the performance creates a new temporary community. The site connects the audience members with the *buffer zone as a dangerous area* (e.g., it is common knowledge that there are still landmines) and with the *buffer zone as a place of arrests* in relation to everyday Cypriot pastimes, such as hunting or harvesting snails or wild asparagus. The title of the *Cyprus Mail* article is telling: 'Heard the one about the GC and TC stuck in a buffer-zone minefield?'[32]. The buffer zone has become a space where danger and comedy are entangled, the fear of the unknown, with the security of a limited space, guarded by a peacekeeping force, as well as the predictability of the scenarios that can unfold there.

Finally, the presence of the UNFICYP soldier at the end of the play is catalytic in relation to the space, since it constitutes the placement of the performance in the site as an organic action, a strange homecoming. This inevitably reshapes the relationship of the space with the audience. The physical presence of the UN is a rare event in the theatre in Cyprus. Although UNIFICYP has been a stable presence on the island since 1964, its presence in both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot dramas is rare. Their presence in the project contributes to the normalisation of the performance in the Dead Zone.

The production *Shift* took place in October 2014, and was the result of the collaboration between Rooftop Theatre and US-based, Turkish Cypriot director, Gülgün Kayim. In January 2013, Rooftop Theatre, under the guidance of Kayim, held a workshop for actors and members of Rooftop at the Home of Collaboration, where theatrical mechanisms were explored to find hidden stories from the buffer zone in the Ledra Palace crossing, in the space between the two checkpoints (and beyond). The narratives were deconstructed and reconstructed theatrically for an audience in the buffer zone: the space where the stories came from. The tools used in the workshop came from sited performance practice, and the general field of the theory and prac-

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32   Ibid.

tice of cultural geography.[33] The workshop, and the temporary community created as a result, gave birth to the idea of *Shift*, a collaborative theatrical creation process, led by Kayim, the Rooftop group and actors, professionals, and amateurs.

The opportunity to create a complete performance from the skeleton produced during the workshop came soon, with the first Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival, in October 2014. A group of nine artists restarted the research process in the area of the Ledra Palace buffer zone, under the guidance of dramaturge Ellada Evangelou and the direction of Kayim.[34] The performance was presented at the Festival on 18 October 2014, and it had the form of a promenade, where the audience follows (and monitors) the action of the performance.

The work had a series of independent scenes, held together with the narrative of the surrealist work by Fernando Arrabal, *Picnic in the Battlefield,* a spine that appears after every independent scene. The promenade started from the moat area, with an installation of sounds and music from the entire city of Nicosia and two figures waving at each other from either side of the moat. The group was then taken from the moat area to the Home for Cooperation by their guide, an old-fashioned Greek Cypriot tour guide, who enthusiastically explained to them about the violent history of the Ledra Palace area. In front of the Home for Cooperation, the audience is asked to play a game entitled *To Pass or Not to Pass*, a parody of a television game show with questions about what things you can get across the checkpoints and what you cannot. The next scene was the dystopic monologue of Marcos Edward Selim, the ghostly waiter of the Ledra Palace hotel, and the performance concluded across the street with the finale from *Picnic in the Battlefield,* in an abandoned house in the buffer zone, with all the characters dancing to a cruel tango, as bombs are falling on their heads.

The process of creating the text and the performance, as with *BAM!,* was the pivotal element, with all the members of the troupe being actively involved in the production and processing of the material, and the techical set-up and placement in the space. The process started with the aim of creating a performance about the Ledra Palace buffer zone, with narratives stemming from the space itself. The ac-

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[33] Kayim drew much of her methodology from the work of Skewed Visions (http://www.skewedvisions.org/), a global collective of arts practitioners and theorists.

[34] Performers: Sinem Ertaner, Vasiliki Andreou, Marilena Kyriacou, Joanna Kordatou, Nadia Mowafy, Michalis Aristidou, Themida Nicolaou, Leda Koumide, Oya Akin, and Christophoros Liverdos. Production Assistant: Zoe Kakota.

tors gathered materials from targeted interviews, research, sound, and image harvesting, and the registering of formal and non-formal signs, for three weeks, from mid-September to early October 2014. Through a curation that aimed to produce distinct scenes and pockets of theatrical action, the dramaturge worked with the actors to formulate their material in a communicative and performative manner. The director's presence in early October (and until the presentation) created the performance itself, gave it an identity in the space, and added any technical aspects and opportunities for interaction with the audience.

Moreover, the production created a second temporary community from the members of the audience who followed the route dictated by the actors and the action. However, it was a different relationship to that of performance-to-audience in a theatre building, where leaving or changing seat, or doing anything other than sitting in your chair quietly is not part of theatre etiquette. Audience members could adjust themselves in the space, participate in the game show, leave and return whenever they wished, adjusting their experience in relation to their interests and needs.

Finally, the relationship of the production with militarisation is as interesting as that of *BAM!*. The militarised nature of Ledra Palace played a role in the rehearsal process, with the actors in the Arrabal scenes, who were wearing military attire, getting chatted up by UN peacekeepers in the buffer zone, considering that somehow, they were their colleagues. Indirectly, the UN peacekeepers are yet another component of the joint dramaturgy/participatory process of the creative group.

Afterthoughts (in place of a Conclusion)

As we speak, the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival is planning its sixth edition in October 2019 (of which I am happy to be the Artistic Director), and in June 2019 the first bi-communal group of young deaf amateur performers have performed their devised play *The Silence of the Mirror*. As the mechanisms of artistic expression continue to unfold in unforeseen and exciting ways around the buffer zone, we are reminded of Stavros Karayiannis' own unfolding of the complexities of the buffer zone, his consideration of the *identity negotiations* taking place around it, and ultimately, depend on it as a place of reference.[35] He allows it to become immersed in new meaning, and through a queer re-imagining, to become a *zone of passions*.[36]

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[35] 2017, p. 66.
[36] Ibid, p. 63.

With the stalemate in the talks for a solution to the Cyprus Problem, as the *contestedness* of spaces such as the buffer zone changes, it seems that art is doing what it always tends to do: produces work that is on the fringes of what is accepted or applauded, in places where you are unlikely to locate it (thus redefining them), and sets off small revolutions at the most surprising of times.

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