



SITE-SPECIFIC OPERA

A RE-IMAGINED MAGIC FLUTE AS A CATALYST TO THE
NARRATION OF FORT DASPOORTRAND HERITAGE

By Leandra Levenderis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Interior Architecture
(Professional) to the faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology.

University of Pretoria
November 2017

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2017

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In accordance with Regulation 4(e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses, I declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree of Masters of Interior Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

I further state that no part of my dissertation has already been, or is currently being, submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

I further declare that this thesis is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.

Leandra Levenderis

PROJECT SUMMARY

Site-Specific Opera: A Re-imagined Magic Flute as a Catalyst to the Narration of Fort Daspoortrand Heritage

Project Description: This dissertation intended to bring awareness to the cultural and historical value of the Fort Daspoortrand ruin, through the introduction of a temporary, site-specific opera. The opera as a catalyst aims to serve as an initial event to illuminate the beauty and drama of this old military ruin. The performance will encourage and enhance the appreciation of the fort, after which, if successful, another developer would be able to contribute more permanent function to the site.

Programme: Temporary site-specific opera performed at a heritage site

Site Description: Military Fort Ruin

Site Location: West Pretoria, Tshwane, Gauteng, South Africa

Address: Van Den Berg Street

GPS Coordinates: 25°43'58.9"S 28°04'36.1"E

Research Field: Heritage and Cultural Landscape (HCL) and Environmental Potential (EP)

Keywords: Site specific opera, Cultural significance, Heritage awareness, Preservation, Site awareness, Scenography, Temporary, Touch lightly

Chosen Client: South African Theatre companies or opera companies

Users: Public, Theatre goers

Interior Architectural Theoretical Question: How can the introduction of a temporary site-specific opera serve as a catalyst to bring awareness to the cultural and historical value of the Fort Daspoortrand ruin?

Interior Architectural Approach: The introduction of a temporary intervention to facilitate an opera and its scenes to create an awareness for the needs for preservation of the site. The design intends to take the audience on a constructed journey of site and opera, revealing the opera and architecture throughout the performance.

ABSTRACT

With the current upsurge of a technological era, there is an underlying global threat to the cultural development of theatre, especially opera. Therefore, there is a need for a paradigm shift that will re-imagine and transcend opera into the 21st century.

Site-specific opera merges the potential of theatrical entertainment and the value of an existing site. Both the location and the performance have the ability to remove the audience from their lives and submerge them in a fantasy or created reality. With the focal approach being the interpretation of the Magic Flute Opera at a site-specific location, a concept of cultural heritage awareness is revealed. With this in mind, the preservation extends into a consideration of the existing site. The site, Fort Daspoortrand, is currently in a state of physical degradation, and the decay of heritage and cultural fabric is prominent. Thus, the potential for preservation and cultural celebration arises.

It is proposed that through a site-specific opera performance of William Kentridge's adaptation of The Magic Flute by Mozart, a sense of awareness can be created for both the site and a South African interpretation of opera. The opera will catalyse the awareness of the site, and the scenography will act as a vehicle to bring site and opera together in a visual and spatial experience. Through the merging of opera and site, the heritage and cultural significance of both entities will be explored, allowing the opportunity for life to be breathed back into both the fort and opera in general.

The design intention of this project is to bring awareness to the existing fabric of the site, as well as the dramatic opportunities that the site naturally presents. In this way, the physical and cultural decay of both Fort Daspoortrand and opera are brought to the public's attention. The intention in this creation of site awareness is to promote an afterlife for the site, by exposing its character in an attempt to ignite future development at the site once the opera has finished. Through combining opera and site, the audience will be exposed to the beauty of the site and the cultural richness of opera simultaneously. The temporary design intervention aims to strategically link the themes of The Magic Flute with the characteristics of the site to explore the relationship between narrative, fort and opera. Emphasis is placed on how to take the audience on a winding and intertwining journey of the site during the performance of the opera adaptation. The fluidity and natural progression of the audience through the site will ultimately create a reflective and emotive understanding of The Magic Flute's theme of the journey from darkness to light.

SAMEVATTING

Met die huidige oplewing van 'n tegnologiese era is daar 'n onderliggende globale bedreiging tot die kulturele ontwikkeling van teater, veral in die ontwikkeling van opera. Daarom is daar 'n behoefte vir 'n paradigmaskuif wat opera sal her-verbeel en oorbrug tot in die 21ste eeu.

Terrein-gedrewe ("site-specific") opera bring die potensiaal van teatervermaak en die waarde van 'n bestaande terrein byeen. Beide die ligging en die optrede het die vermoë om die gehoor van hul daaglikse lewens te verwyder en hulle te onderdompel in 'n fantasiewêreld, 'n geskepte realiteit. Met die benadering wat fokus op die vertolking van "Die Towerfluit" in 'n terrein-bepaalde toepassing, is die bewustheid van kulturele erfenis as konsep aan die lig gebring. Die bewaring van die bestaande terrein val dan ook in hierdie fokus area van kulturele erfenis. By die terrein, Fort Daspoortrand, wat tans fisiese agteruitgang beleef, is die verval van erfenis en kulturele materiaal prominent. Daar bestaan dus die potensiaal vir bewaring en 'n viering van die kulturele geskiedenis van die plek.

Die voorstel is dat deur middel van 'n terrein-gedrewe opera opvoering van William Kentridge se vertolking van Die Towerfluit, geskryf deur Mozart, 'n bewustheid geskep kan word vir beide die terrein en die Suid-Afrikaanse benadering tot opera. Die opera sal belangstelling in die terrein aanwakker, en scenografie sal dien as tussenganger om deur middel van 'n visuele en ruimtelike ervaring die terrein en opera aan mekaar te verbind. Deur die opera en terrein saam te smelt, sal die erfenis en kulturele betekenis van albei elemente onderoek word, wat 'n geleentheid skep om nuwe lewe in beide die fort en opera aan te wakker.

Die ontwerpdoel van hierdie projek is om bewustheid te skep van die terrein se bestaande toestand, sowel as die dramatiese geleenthede wat die terrein natuurlik voortbring. Op hierdie manier word die fisiese en kulturele agteruitgang van Fort Daspoortrand en opera tot die openbaar onthul. Die voorneme in die skep van terrein-bewustheid is om 'n lewe na die ingryping te bewerkstellig, deur sy karakters te onthul in 'n poging om nuwe ontwikkeling by die terrein aan te vuur wanneer die opera voltooi is. Deur die opera en die terrein te kombineer, word die gehoor blootgestel aan beide die prag van die terrein en die kulturele waarde van opera. Die tydelike ontwerpignyging streef daarna om die temas van Die Towerfluit met die karaktereenskappe van die terrein strategies te verbind, en die verhouding tussen die verhaal, fort, en opera te ondersoek. Klem word geplaas op hoe die gehoor op 'n kronkelende en verwewende reis van die terrein geneem word gedurende die uitvoering van die verwerkte opera. Die vloeibaarheid en natuurlike voortgang van die gehoor deur die terrein bewerkstellig 'n besinnende en emosionele begrip van Die Towerfluit se tema van die reis van donker na lig.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Project summary .....	.iii
Abstract .....	.iv
Samevatting .....	.v
List of figures .....	.xii
Glossary of terminology .....	.xx
Explaining the content structure .....	.xxi

CHAPTER 1 – THEORETICAL CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction .....	.02
1.2 Overview of theoretical context .....	.03
1.2.1 Theatre Origins .....	.03
1.2.2 Western Theatre .....	.06
1.2.3 Asian Theatre .....	.07
1.2.4 South African Indigenous Theatre .....	.08
1.2.5 Considerations from the cultural diversity .....	.09
1.3 Theatre Stage Configurations .....	.10
1.4 Forms of Theatre .....	.14
1.5 Origins of Opera .....	.16
1.5.1 The decline of Opera .....	.18
1.5.2 Opera attendance statistics .....	.18
1.6 Conclusion .....	.19

CHAPTER 2 – RESEARCH PROPOSAL

2.1 Introduction .....	.22
2.2 Background .....	.23
2.3 Problem statement .....	.23
2.4 Research Questions .....	.24
2.5 Aims .....	.24
2.6 Significance of Study .....	.25
2.7 Research Methodologies and Methods .....	.27
2.8 Delineation and Limitations .....	.28
2.9 Overview of study .....	.28
2.10 Conclusion .....	.29

CHAPTER 3 – PHYSICAL CONTEXT

3.1 Introductions to the Context .....	.32
3.2 Site Selection .....	.32
3.3 Greater Context .....	.33
3.4 Pretoria .....	.34
3.5 Pretoria Fortification .....	.34
3.6 Fort Daspoortrand, the French fort .....	.34
3.7 Other Forts in Pretoria .....	.36
3.7.1 Fort Klapperkop .....	.36
3.7.2 Fort Schanskop .....	.36
3.7.3 Wonderboom Fort .....	.37
3.8 Broekscheur 318-JR .....	.38
3.9 Westfort Heritage Village .....	.39
3.10 Fort Daspoortrand - original function .....	.41
3.11 Fort Daspoortrand history .....	.42
3.12 Approach to site .....	.44
3.13 Views during the day .....	.45
3.14 Views at night .....	.46
3.15 Materials Analysis .....	.47
3.15.1 Natural Materials .....	.48

3.15.2 Man-treated Materials .....	.49
3.16 Site analysis .....	.50
3.17 Solar Study .....	.54
3.17.1 Summer Solstice, 21 December .....	.54
3.17.2 Winter Solstice, 21 June .....	.55
3.18 Weather studies .....	.56
3.19 Lunar study .....	.58
3.20 Conclusion .....	.59

CHAPTER 4 – THEORETICAL PREMISE

4.1	A prelude of thoughts	.62
4.2	Defining Site-specific theatre	.62
4.3	Architectural settings in Site-specific Theatre	.64
4.3.1	Elements of Interior architecture	.66
4.4	A place for scenography in interior architecture	.68
4.5	A thematic framework	.70
4.6	Consideration of Heritage	.71
4.7	Audience placement and site-specific performance.	.72
4.8	Audience-actor view	.74
4.9	A contribution to the domain.	.76
4.10	The finale of thoughts	.77

CHAPTER 5 – PRECEDENT STUDIES

5.1	Introduction	.80
5.2	Texture, Light and sensory exploration	.80
5.3	Projection, Scale and Light	.82
5.4	Temporary, Multi-level Theatre and Layering	.84

CHAPTER 6 – THE MAGIC FLUTE

6.1	Selection of the Magic Flute	.88
6.2	Overview, 1991 traditional version.	.89
6.3	Act 1	.89
6.3.1	Scene 1 - A rough and rocky landscape	.90
6.3.2	Scene 2 - A room in Sarastro's Palace	.92
6.3.3	Scene 3 - A grove in front of the temple (three temples, Wisdom, Reason and Nature).	.93
6.4	Act 2	.95
6.4.1	Scene 1 - A grove of palms	.95
6.4.2	Scene 2 - The courtyard of the Temple of Ordeal	.96
6.4.3	Scene 3 - A garden	.97
6.4.4	Scene 4 - A hall in the Temple of Ordeal	.98
6.4.5	Scene 5 - The pyramids	.99
6.5	Finale (Scene 6-10)	.100
6.5.1	Scene 6 - A garden	.100
6.5.2	Scene 7 - Outside the Temple of Ordeal	.101
6.5.3	Scene 8 - A garden with a tree	.102
6.5.4	Scene 9 - Rocky landscape outside the temple (night)	.103
6.5.5	Scene 10 - The Temple of The Sun	.104
6.6	End	.104
6.7	Character sketches	.105

CHAPTER 7 – CONCEPT, DESIGN AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1	A strategy for the design	.110
7.2	Design Informants	.112
7.2.1	Site-specific theatre	.112
7.2.2	Cultural diversity	.113
7.2.3	Heritage	.113
7.2.4	SANS 10400	.114
7.2.5	Elements of interior design	.114
7.2.6	William Kentridge	.114
7.3	Design intentions	.115
7.3.1	Temporary structures and sustainability	.115
7.3.2	Abstraction	.115
7.4	Design explorations	.116
7.4.1	General Programming	.116
7.4.2	Concept model of site circulation	.118
7.4.3	Concept models of audience movement.	.120
7.4.4	Scene location initial concept	.122
7.4.5	Scene location	.124
7.4.6	Audience movement	.126
7.4.7	Site Safety Hazards	.128
7.5	General technical considerations	.130
7.5.1	Circulation	.132

7.5.1.1	Initial stair and ramp exploration	.134	7.8.3	A link to interior architecture	.164
7.5.2	Functional Services	.140	7.8.4	Initial conceptual mood board	.165
7.5.3	Disability considerations	.142	7.8.5	Design Development	.167
7.5.3.1	Detail design	.144	7.8.6	Models as a tool for design exploration.	.168
7.5.4	Navigation of site	.146	7.8.7	Design outcome	.171
7.5.5	Energy supply	.148	7.8.8	Lighting Exploration	.172
7.5.6	Lighting types	.150	7.8.9	Initial technical exploration	.173
7.5.6.1	General Lighting	.150	7.8.10	Technical considerations	.174
7.5.7	Temporary structures Precedents	.153	7.9	Act 1 Scene 3 - A grove in front of the temple	.181
7.5.8	Materiality	.154	7.9.1	Scene Location	.182
7.5.9	Theatre Equipment	.156	7.9.2	Location Character	.183
7.5.9.1	Theatre set construction	.156	7.9.3	A link to interior architecture	.184
7.5.9.2	Colour in theatre	.156	7.9.4	Initial conceptual mood board	.185
7.5.9.3	Theatre lighting	.157	7.9.5	Design Development	.186
7.5.10	Sound	.157	7.9.6	Models as a tool for design exploration.	.188
7.5.11	Acoustics	.157	7.9.7	Design outcome	.191
7.6	The Template	.158	7.9.8	Lighting Exploration	.192
7.7	Scene Technical Considerations after design.	.160	7.9.9	Initial technical exploration	.193
7.8	Act 1 Scene 1 – A Rough and Rocky Landscape	.161	7.9.10	Technical considerations	.195
7.8.1	Scene Location	.162	7.10	Act 2 Scene 3 – A Garden	.201
7.8.2	Location Character	.163	7.10.1	Scene Location	.202

7.10.2	Location Character	.203
7.10.3	A link to interior architecture	.204
7.10.4	Initial conceptual mood board	.205
7.10.5	Design Development	.207
7.10.6	Models as a tool for design exploration.	.208
7.10.7	Design outcome	.211
7.10.8	Initial technical exploration	.212
7.10.9	Technical Consideration	.213
7.11	Act 2 Scene 5 – The Pyramid	.221
7.11.1	Scene Location	.222
7.11.2	Location Character	.223
7.11.3	A link to interior architecture	.224
7.11.4	Initial conceptual mood board	.225
7.11.5	Design Development	.227
7.11.6	Models as a tool for design exploration.	.229
7.11.7	Design outcome	.231
7.11.8	Initial technical exploration	.232
7.11.9	Technical Consideration	.233

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION

Conclusion	.239
Final presentation	.242
Thank you	.250
List of references	.251
Appendix A	.254
Appendix B	.258

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1 – THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Figure 1.1 Architectural development of the Western theatre Timeline (Author, 2017) Figures starting at the top a. http://www.slavrus.ru/osnawn/Rt/rt/lm_rt/rt37_2.jpg b. http://www.aviewoncities.com/img/athens/kvegr0045s.jpg c. https://us.123rf.com/450wm/galamik/galamik120200054/12461145-greece-athens-acropolis-theatre-of-dionysus.jpg?ver=6 d. https://heritagecalling.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/gosbecks-roman-theatre-c-peter-froste-and-colchester-archaeological-trust.jpg e. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Pompeii_amphitheatre_interior_exposed_1000px.png f. http://www.circopedia.org/images/9/99/Benneweis_%28c.1930%29.JPG g. http://images.slideplayer.com/37/10680009/slides/slide_13.jpg h. http://en.academic.ru/pictures/enwiki/65/Auditorium_Building14.jpg i. http://www.euroton.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/020642.jpg j. http://cdn.onlyinyourstate.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/French-Opera-House-1897-Moore-1.jpg k. https://portalv3.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/153/MyHotelFiles/ed670051-2136-4bd5-81a2-0641713b5b57_1488871584322-64x64-400x400-800x800.jpeg l. http://westendtheatrehire.atg.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Savoy_Aud02.jpg m. https://i.pinimg.com/600x315/63/be/0a/63be0aa5d33bfa8dbabb043b6c6184e1.jpg n. http://mir-teatra.com/uploads/posts/2013-02/1360875547_kennedi-centr.jpg o. https://www.standard.co.uk/s3fs-public/thumbnails/image/2014/01/10/08/Cineworld%20Leigh.jpg p. http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/media/images/42827000/jpg/_42827471_willowtheatre203.jpg q. http://images.mapsofindia.com/my-india/kingdom-of-dreams.jpg	.05
Figure 1.2 A collage of Western Theatre (Author, 2017)	.06
Figure 1.3 A collage of Asian Theatre (Author, 2017)	.07
Figure 1.4 A collage of traditional African theatre (Author, 2017)	.08
Figure 1.5 Proscenium stage plan and section (Author, 2017)	.10

Figure 1.6 Thrust theatre plan and section (Author, 2017)	.10
Figure 1.8 Arena theatre plan and section (Author, 2017)	.11
Figure 1.7 End-stage plan and section (Author, 2017)	.11
Figure 1.9 Profile theatre plan and section (Author, 2017)	.12
Figure 1.10 Sports arena plan and section (Author, 2017)	.12
Figure 1.11 Black box theatre plan and section (Author, 2017)	.13
Figure 1.12 Conventional theatre (https://www.seymourcentre.com/assets/York-1-auditorium.jpg)	.14
Figure 1.13 Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty (http://38.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lx640uC1Fn1qngddb01_500.jpg)	.14
Figure 1.14 Theatre Language Studio, Frankfurt (http://www.tlsfrankfurt.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/beginner_improv.jpg)	.14
Figure 1.15 66 Minutes in Damascus, participatory theatre (http://exeuntmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/66minutesindamascus-600x399.jpg)	.15
Figure 1.16 SZPERA 42 site-specific theatre (http://www.ruthieosterman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/89.jpg)	.15
Figure 1.17 Sleep No More immersive theatre (https://tse3.mm.bing.net/th?id=OIP.vmnCGJ9Y3JeQf6lZLxpBYAEsDI&pid=Api&w=270&h=181)	.15
Figure 1.18 Donizetti’s Maria Stuarda (https://bachtrack.com/files/5496-opera_seria_maria_stuarda2_adam_swann.jpg)	.16
Figure 1.19 Donizetti’s Don Pasqual (https://www.operanews.com/_uploaded/image/article/nycopasqhd14106.jpg)	.16
Figure 1.20 Timeline of the history of opera (Author, 2017)	.17
Figure 1.21 New Zealand statistics of opera attendance (Author, 2017)	.19

CHAPTER 2 – RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Figure 2.1 Table showing masters dissertations of the University of Pretoria (Author, 2017)	.26
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER 3 – PHYSICAL CONTEXT

Figure 3.1 Site location in South Africa (Author, 2017)	.32
Figure 3.2 Site location in Gauteng, concerning the distance of the site and, Pretoria and Johannesburg city centre (Author, 2017)	.33
Figure 3.3a Sketch showing forts hexagonal shape (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.34
Figure 3.3b Original entrance to the fort (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.34
Figure 3.3c Current entrance and approach to fort (Author, 2017)	.34
Figure 3.3d Entrance arch (Author, 2017)	.34
Figure 3.3e Detail on arch (Author, 2017)	.34
Figure 3.4 Forts of Pretoria, radial proximity to the city (Author, 2017)	.35
Figure 3.5a Sketch of Fort Klapperkop layout (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.36
Figure 3.5b Original photograph of Fort Klapperkop (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.36
Figure 3.5c Fort Klapperkop current condition (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/c1/Fort_Klapperkop.jpg/1200px-Fort_Klapperkop.jpg)	.36
Figure 3.6a Sketch showing Fort Schanskop pentagonal shape (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.36
Figure 3.6b Original photo of Fort Schanskop courtyard (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.37
Figure 3.6c Current image of Fort Schanskop state (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/f4/Fort_Schanskop_TopView.jpg/300px-Fort_Schanskop_TopView.jpg)	.37
Figure 3.7a Sketch showing Wonderboom Fort pentagonal shape (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.37
Figure 3.7b Original photo of Wonderboom Fort courtyard (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.37
Figure 3.7c Current image of Wonderboom Fort state (https://showme.co.za/pretoria/files/2012/05/DSC_0900-0011.jpg)	.37
Figure 3.8 Access and location of Fort Daspoortrand (Author, 2017)	.38
Figures 3.9a Old city hall (The heritage portal, 2017)	.39
Figures 3.9b Field with village in the background (The heritage portal, 2017)	.39
Figures 3.9c Rondavel shaped accommodations (The heritage portal, 2017)	.39
Figures 3.9d Illegal house (The heritage portal, 2017)	.39

Figures 3.9e Dilapidated structure (The heritage portal, 2017)	.39
Figures 3.9f Old church (The heritage portal, 2017)	.39
Figure 3.10 Aerial view of Fort Daspoortrand and Westfort Heritage Village (Author, 2017)	.40
Figure 3.11 Fort Daspoortrand original function (Author, 2017)	.41
Figure 3.12 Timeline of Fort Daspoortrand history (Author, 2017)	.43
a.Construction at Fort Daspoortrand started a (Van Vollenhoven, 1998)	.43
b.Construction at Fort Daspoortrand started b (Van Vollenhoven, 1998)	.43
c.Outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.43
d.Fort Daspoortrand after construction completion (Van Vollenhoven, 1998)	.43
e.First aerial photograph (Van Vollenhoven, 1998)	.43
f.Aerial photograph (Van Vollenhoven, 1998)	.43
g.Ruin at entrance (Van Vollenhoven, 1998)	.43
h.Details of state of site (Van Vollenhoven, 1996)	.43
i.Further damage at site (Van Vollenhoven, 1998)	.43
j.Fort Entrance (Author, 2017)	.43
Figure 3.13 Map overview of the site (Author, 2017)	.44
Figure 3.14a Photograph of Van den Burg street, the access road (Author, 2017)	.44
Figure 3.14b Old municipal reservoir (Author, 2017)	.44
Figure 3.14c Gravel road at the approach (Author, 2017)	.44
Figure 3.14d Approach to the fort (Author, 2017)	.44
Figure 3.14e Entrance of the fort is revealed (Author, 2017)	.44
Figure 3.15 Diagram of fort, showing views (Author, 2017)	.45
Figure 3.16a Photograph looking along the ridge towards the water tower east of the fort (Author, 2017)	.45
Figure 3.16b Photograph of the Heritage Village’s location to the fort (Author, 2017)	.45
Figure 3.16c Panoramic view of Atteridgeville, west Pretoria (Author, 2017)	.45
Figure 3.17 Diagram of forts plan, showing views (Author, 2017)	.46
Figure 3.18a Setting sun at the fort (Author, 2017)	.46
Figure 3.18b View towards Pretoria city centre (Author, 2017)	.46

Figure 3.18c View looking towards Pretoria (Author, 2017)	.46
Figure 3.18d View of the town of the northern side of the fort (Author, 2017)	.47
Figure 3.18e View looking along ridge towards water town (Author, 2017)	.47
Figure 3.18f View towards Westfort Heritage Village below (Author, 2017)	.47
Figure 3.21 Site Analysis (Author, 2017)	.51
Figure 3.22 Front elevation of the entrance (Author, 2017)	.54
Figure 3.23 Section AA through the length of the fort (Author, 2017)	.55
Figure 3.24 Section BB through the width of the fort (Author, 2017)	.55
Figure 3.25 Summer sun movements (Author, 2017)	.56
Figure 3.26 Winter sun movements (Author, 2017)	.57
Figure 3.27 Average rainfall over the year (Author, 2017)	.58
Figure 3.28 Temperature chart for annual averages (Author, 2017)	.59
Figure 3.29 Moon phases for 2018 (Author, 2017)	.60
Figure 3.30 Summary of weather conditions (Author, 2017)	.61

CHAPTER 4 – THEORETICAL PREMISE

Figure 2.1 Table showing masters dissertations of the University of Pretoria (Author, 2017)	.71
Figure 4.1 Collage of William Kentridges Magic Flute production (Flute, 2007)	.72
Figure 4.2 We Players performance of Macbeth at Fort Point, 2014 (We Players, 2014)	.74
a. Audience grouped and standing (We Players, 2014)	.74
b. Audience seated on floor (We Players, 2014)	.74
c. Audience proximity (We Players, 2014)	.74
d. Drama (We Players, 2014)	.75
e. Watching actors above (We Players, 2014)	.75
f. Natural sunlight (We Players, 2014)	.75
g. Proportion (We Players, 2014)	.75
h. Lighting placed to highlight architecture (We Players, 2014)	.75

i. Actor site relationship (We Players, 2014)	.75
j. Lighting (We Players, 2014)	.75
k. Existing structure (We Players, 2014)	.75
l. Natural sunlight (We Players, 2014)	.75
Site-specific performance (We Players, 2014)	.75
Figure 4.3 Audience surrounding actor (Author, 2017)	.76
Figure 4.4 Audience facing actor (Author, 2017)	.76
Figure 4.5 Actor above audience (Author, 2017)	.76
Figure 4.6 Actor below audience (Author, 2017)	.77
Figure 4.7 Actor on same level as audience (Author, 2017)	.77
Figure 4.8 Actor below and surrounded by audience (Author, 2017)	.77
Figure 4.9 Actor view restricted for audience (Author, 2017)	.77

CHAPTER 5 – PRECEDENT STUDIES

Figure 5.1 Projection (Driscoll, 2017)	.82
Figure 5.2 Spot lighting (Driscoll, 2017)	.82
Figure 5.3 Focal lighting (Driscoll, 2017)	.82
Figure 5.4 Emphasis using light (Driscoll, 2017)	.83
Figure 5.5 Interactive (Driscoll, 2017)	.83
Figure 5.6 Textural light (Driscoll, 2017)	.83
Figure 5.7 Focal object (Driscoll, 2017)	.83
Figure 5.8 Shadows and light (Driscoll, 2017)	.83
Figure 5.9 Interactive and taste (Driscoll, 2017)	.83
Figure 5.10 Smell and touch (Driscoll, 2017)	.83
Figure 5.11 Projection and reflection (Art21, 2016)	.84
Figure 5.12 Monument and ruin and use of water (Art21, 2016)	.84
Figure 5.13 Relationship between projection and architecture (Art21, 2016)	.85
Figure 5.14 Social commentary (Art21, 2016)	.85

Figure 5.15 Visual impact (Art21, 2016)	.85
Figure 5.16 Proportion and scale (Art21, 2016)	.85
Figure 5.17 Layering on existing architecture (Art21, 2016)	.85
Figure 5.18 Natural and artificial lighting (Read, 2005)	.86
Figure 5.19 Use of levels (Read, 2005)	.87
Figure 5.20 Exhibition installation (Read, 2005)	.87
Figure 5.21 Variations of height and use of multiple stages (Read, 2005)	.87
Figure 5.22 Projection Layers of visual information (Read, 2005)	.87

CHAPTER 6 – MAGIC FLUTE

Figure 6.1 Act 1 Scene 1- Traditional version 1991 (MET,2003)	.90
Figure 6.2 Act1 Scene 1 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005)	.90
Figure 6.3 "Zu Hilfe! Zu Hilfe" (Help me! Help me!) (MET,2003)	.91
Figure 6.5 "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja" (I am a bird catcher) (MET,2003)	.91
Figure 6.7 "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön" (This image is enchantingly beautiful) (MET,2003)	.91
Figure 6.4 "O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn" (Oh, tremble not, my dear son) (MET,2003)	.91
Figure 6.6 "Hm! Hm! Hm! Hm!" (MET,2003)	.91
Figure 6.8 Act 1 Scene 2 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	.92
Figure 6.10 "Du feines Täubchen, nur herein!" (Come in, my lovely dove) (MET,2003)	.92
Figure 6.11 "Bei Männern welche Liebe fühlen" (Men who feel the call of love) (MET,2003)	.92
Figure 6.9 Act 1 Scene 2 -William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005)	.92
Figure 6.12 Act 1 Scene 3 - Traditional version 1991 (MET,2003)	.93
Figure 6.13 Act 1 Scene 3 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005)	.93
Figure 6.16 "Wie stark ist nich dein Zauberton" (How strong must be your magic sway) (MET,2003)	.94
Figure 6.19 "Herr, ich bin zwar Verbrechenrin" (Lord, I am indeed guilty) (MET,2003)	.94
Figure 6.14 "Zum Ziele fuhr dich diese Bahn" (This path leads you to your goal) (MET,2003)	.94

Figure 6.17 "Schnelle Fube, rascher Mut" (Swift steps and boldness of heart) (MET,2003)	.94
Figure 6.20 "Nun stolzer Jungling, nur hierher" (Proud youth, come this way) (MET,2003)	.94
Figure 6.15 "Die Weisheitslehre diseer Knaben" (May the wise teachings of these boys) (MET,2003)	.94
Figure 6.18 "Es lebe Sarastro, Sarastro soll leben" (Long live Sarastro) (MET,2003)	.94
Figure 6.21 Act 2 Scene 1 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	.95
Figure 6.23 "March der Priesters" (March of the priests) (MET,2003)	.95
Figure 6.24 "O Isis und Osiris" (Oh Isis and Osiris) (MET,2003)	.95
Figure 6.22 Act 2 Scene 1 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005)	.95
Figure 6.25 "Soll ich dich, Teurer, nicht mehr sehn?" (Dearest, must I never see you again?) (MET,2003)	.95
Figure 6.26 Act 2 Scene 2 - Traditional version 1991 (MET,2003)	.96
Figure 6.28 "Wie? Ihr an diesem Schreckensort" (What? You in this dreadful place?) (MET,2003)	.96
Figure 6.29 "Bewahret euch vor Weibertucken", (Beware the wiles of women) (MET,2003)	.96
Figure 6.27 Act 2 Scene 2 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005)	.96
Figure 6.30 Act 2 Scene 3 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	.97
Figure 6.32 "Alles fuht der Lebe Freuden" (All men feel loves rapture) (MET,2003)	.97
Figure 6.33 "Der Holle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" (The revenge of hell rages in my heart) (MET,2003)	.97
Figure 6.31 Act 2 Scene 3 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005)	.97
Figure 6.34 "In diesen heil'gen Hallen" (Within these sacred halls revenge is unknow) (MET,2003)	.97
Figure 6.35 Act 2 Scene 4 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	.98
Figure 6.37 "Seid uns zum zweitenmal willkommen" (Welcome and second time you men) (MET,2003)	.98
Figure 6.38 "Ach, ich fuhl's, es ist verschwunden." (Ah, I feel that is has vanished) (MET,2003)	.98
Figure 6.36 Act 2 Scene 4 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005)	.98
Figure 6.39 Act 2 Scene 5 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	.99
Figure 6.41 "O Isis und Osiris" (Oh Isis and Osiris) (MET,2003)	.99

Figure 6.42 "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" (A little maid or wife) (MET,2003)	99
Figure 6.40 Act 2 Scene 5 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005).	99
Figure 6.43 Act 2 Scene 6 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	100
Figure 6.45 "Bald prangt, den Morgen zu verkünden" (Soon to herald the morn...)(MET,2003)	100
Figure 6.46 Pamina in "Bald prangt, den Morgen zu verkünden" (MET,2003)	100
Figure 6.44 Act 2 Scene 6 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005).	100
Figure 6.47 Act 2 Scene 7 - Traditional version 1991 (MET,2003).	101
Figure 6.49 "Der, welcher wandert diese Strasse voll Beschwerden" (He who treads this path of trails) (MET,2003)	101
Figure 6.50 "Tamino mein, o welch ein Glück!" (My Tamino, oh what joy) (MET,2003)	101
Figure 6.48 Act 2 Scene 7 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005).	101
Figure 6.51 "Wir wandelten durch Feugluten" (We have walked through the flames) (MET,2003)	101
Figure 6.52 Act 2 Scene 8 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	102
Figure 6.54 "Papagenal! Weibchen, Täubchen, meine Schöne" (Papagenal! Little wife, my dove, my sweet) (MET,2003)	102
Figure 6.55 "Pa-Pagenal! Pa-Pagenol!" (Papagenal! Papagenol!) (MET,2003)	102
Figure 6.53 Act 2 Scene 8 - William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005).	102
Figure 6.56 Act 2 Scene 9 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	103
Figure 6.58 "Nur stille, stille, stille" (Hush now, absolute quiet) (MET,2003)	103
Figure 6.57 Act 2 Scene 9 -William Kentridge version 2001 (Kentridge, 2005).	103
Figure 6.59 Act 2 Scene 10 - Traditional version 1991(MET,2003)	104
Figure 6.60 Act 2 Scene 10 - William Kentridge version 2001(MET,2003)	104

CHAPTER 7 – CONCEPT, DESIGN AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

Figure 7.1 Initial mood board development (Author, 2017)	110
Figure 7.2 Translation of mood board to photograph of site (Author, 2017)	111
Figure 7.3 Final concept and mood board (Author, 2017)	112

Figure 7.4 Photograph of slope August 2016 (Author, 2017).	113
Figure 7.5 Photograph of slop July 2017 (Author, 2017)	113
Figure 7.6 Site plan and overview (Author, 2017)	116
Figure 7.7 Macro illustration of site main access (Author, 2017)	118
Figure 7.8 View of the audience movement towards the Fort (Author, 2017)	118
Figure 7.9 Fort location at the top of the contours (Author, 2017)	118
Figure 7.10 Pathway leading from parking bay to Fort (Author, 2017)	118
Figure 7.11 Overview of the audience movement on site (Author, 2017).	119
Figure 7.12 Blue string shows the height movement of the audience (Author, 2017)	119
Figure 7.13 Overview of the movement around Fort (Author, 2017)	119
Figure 7.14 Conceptual illustration of the audience movement (Author, 2017).	119
Figure 7.15 View of expected audience movement (Author, 2017)	119
Figure 7.16 Overview of the scene to scene movements at the site (Author, 2017).	120
Figure 7.17 A focus on the first scene movement through the tunnel (Author, 2017)	120
Figure 7.18 Relationship between the scene to scene movement (Author, 2017)	120
Figure 7.19 Overview of audience and scene movement (Author, 2017)	120
Figure 7.20 View at entrance where audience and scenes meet (Author, 2017)	121
Figure 7.21 View of scene movement and audience movement (Author, 2017)	121
Figure 7.22 First additions of scenes on site (Author, 2017)	121
Figure 7.23 Focus on the entrance scene (Author, 2017)	121
Figure 7.24 Relationship between heights of scene development (Author, 2017)	121
Figure 7.25 Scene location concept sketches (Author, 2017)	122
Figure 7.26 Scene location concept ideas (Author, 2017).	123
Figure 7.27 Scene location layout (Author, 2017)	124
Figure 7.28 Audience movement layout (Author, 2017)	126
Figure 7.29 Audience movement levels (Author, 2017)	127
Figure 7.30 Safety Hazard bird's eye view (Author, 2017)	128
Figure 7.31 Initial proposed plan (Author, 2017).	130

Figure 7.32 Circulation at site (Author, 2017)	132
Figure 7.33 Corten steel weathering examples (https://i.pinimg.com/originals/3a/db/2e/3adb2ee4228d1a4d7f020dfd761adeb6.jpg).	133
Figure 7.34 Initial exploration sketches (Author, 2017)	134
Figure 7.35 Detail exploration (Author, 2017)	135
Figure 7.36 New steel staircase plan (Author, 2017)	136
Figure 7.37 New steel staircase balustrade (Author, 2017)	136
Figure 7.38 New steel staircase section SB-SB (Author, 2017)	137
Figure 7.39 New steel staircase axonometric (Author, 2017)	137
Figure 7.40 New steel staircase section SA-SA (Author, 2017)	138
Figure 7.41 New steel ramp plan (Author, 2017)	139
Figure 7.42 New steel ramp section (Author, 2017)	139
Figure 7.43 New steel ramp axonometric (Author, 2017)	139
Figure 7.44 Functional services plan (Author, 2017)	140
Figure 7.45 Portable ablution block (https://www.coateshire.com.au/getattachment/6cea9704-f4f7-4c53-b567-0dd1a757c5ea/toilet-blocks-hire/?height=508&width=508)	141
Figure 7.46 Portable disabled ablution block (https://i0.wp.com/www.supersafehire.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/wheelchair-accessible-toilet-suite.jpg?fit=150%2C150)	141
Figure 7.47 Repurposed timber palette bar (https://i.pinimg.com/originals/4d/b2/b8/4db2b8d75694a4344301c646d5ff6286.jpg).	141
Figure 7.48 Pop up bar installation (http://www.katexandra.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/24532.jpg)	141
Figure 7.49 Coca-Cola crates table and chairs (http://www.wrinkledchiffon.com/wp-content/gallery/food-hk/noodle9.jpg)	141
Figure 7.50 Oil drum table (http://www.placesettings.com.au/product_images/3144_11-10-2012_9490.jpg)	141
Figure 7.51 Disabled access (Author, 2017)	142
Figure 7.52 Initial scaffolding exploration (Author, 2017)	144

Figure 7.53 Swivel Coupler, Vertical joint (https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/t/rusty-metal-scaffolding-elements-closeup-photo-32003193.jpg).	145
Figure 7.56 Viewing platform, scaffolding plan (Author, 2017)	145
Figure 7.54 Flange Coupler, Horizontal clamp (http://www.seiryu.org.uk/ppp/battersea-ps/bps-08.jpg)	145
Figure 7.57 Viewing platform, scaffolding section (Author, 2017)	145
Figure 7.55 90° Coupler, Horizontal joint (https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/t/rusty-metal-scaffolding-elements-closeup-photo-32971390.jpg)	145
Figure 7.58 Pathway detail on site plan (Author, 2017)	146
Figure 7.59 Timber stake detail (Author, 2017)	147
Figure 7.60 Occupational Safety and Health Administration dBA chart (Driscoll, 2016)	148
Figure 7.61 Generator sound containment sketch (Author, 2017)	148
Figure 7.62 Table comparing energy sources (Author, 2017)	149
Figure 7.63 Lighting on site plan (Author, 2017)	150
Figure 7.64 Floodlight (https://www.steelcitylighting.co.uk/products/2-x-30-watt-110-230-volt-led-portable-floodlight#ex-detail-tab)	151
Figure 7.65 Shigeru Ban cardboard tube bridge (http://graphisme-photographie.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Paper_bridge2.jpg)	152
Figure 7.66 Stair structure of bridge (http://graphisme-photographie.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Paper_bridge2.jpg)	152
Figure 7.67 Context of bridge over water (http://graphisme-photographie.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Paper_bridge2.jpg)	152
Figure 7.68 Steel modular joint system (http://graphisme-photographie.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Paper_bridge2.jpg)	152
Figure 7.69 Steel roof structure over path (https://divisare.com/)	153
Figure 7.70 Repetition of timber structure (https://i.pinimg.com/236x/bb/c2/6d/bbc26d76a8e4ad971ddeb622f1614df--wood-structure-shade-structure.jpg)	153
Figure 7.71 Lightweight fabric and timber (https://i.pinimg.com/736x/5a/4a/ad/5a4aad967957e5f87b468fb3465dee37--water-tower-mallorca.jpg)	153

Figure 7.72 Timber and fabric structure (http://www.landezine.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/20111031-To-spin-a-yard-by-Atelier-Altern.jpg)	(Author, 2017) . . . . .	.167	Figure 7.122 Lighting details (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.177	Figure 7.149 Start of Act 1 scene 3 (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.190
Figure 7.73 Lightweight Structure (http://ilgiornaledellarchitettura.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Shimogamo-3.jpg)	Figure 7.95 Initial model post additions (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.168	Figure 7.123 Scaffolding detail (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.178	Figure 7.150 Ending moments of Act 1 Scene 3 (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.191
Figure 7.74 Bamboo structure (https://i.pinimg.com/236x/03/a0/1d/03a01d68cb5296af947be83e395c959d--wood-images-temporary-architecture.jpg)	Figure 7.96 Light exploration and project of Queen (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.168	Figure 7.124 Roscotex scrim (http://www.bbplight.nl/contents/media/l_chimera-4338qd.jpg) . . . . .	.179	Figure 7.151 Cardboard tubes representing reason (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.191
Figure 7.75 Nature build structure (https://inhabitat.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2014/04/Kagome-PPAG-Architects-1.jpg)	Figure 7.97 Lighting of existing structure (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.168	Figure 7.125 Back projection (http://superhometheater.com/images/RearProj.jpg) . . . . .	.179	Figure 7.152 Timber poles representing wisdom (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.191
Figure 7.76 Domestic materials (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.98 Lighting from behind scene (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.168	Figure 7.126 Spot Light (https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/b/theatre-spotlight-white-background-52125537.jpg) . . . . .	.179	Figure 7.153 Sticks representing nature (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.191
Figure 7.77 Domestic materials application (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.99 Audience view (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.168	Figure 7.127 Photos of models, final design outcome (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.180	Figure 7.154 Light illumination of structure (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.192
Figure 7.78 Greenstar rating summary (GBCSA, 2017)	Figure 7.100 Obstructed audience view (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.168	Figure 7.128 Plan of Act 1 Scene 3 location (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.181	Figure 7.155 Focal light on interior of room (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.192
Figure 7.79 Follow spot (http://img.diytrade.com/cdimg/574268/4115851/0/1186733280.jpg)	Figure 7.101 Positioning of audience (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.169	Figure 7.129 Sectional view of Act 1 Scene 3 (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.182	Figure 7.156 Light Highlighting structure (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.192
Figure 7.80 Shows a graphic representation of the design template used for each scene (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.102 Audience view range (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.169	Figure 7.130 View towards the playing area of the scene (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.183	Figure 7.157 Audience view towards performance (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.193
Figure 7.81 Plan overview (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.103 Finalized audience position (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.169	Figure 7.131 Overview of the rooms where the scene takes place (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.183	Figure 7.158 Projection layering for scene (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.193
Figure 7.82 Plan of Act 2 Scene 3 location (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.104 Audience locational view (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.169	Figure 7.132 View from upper level, looking at scene location (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.183	Figure 7.159 Cardboard tubes (http://wdy.h-cdn.co/assets/16/01/980x490/gallery-1452281638-gettyimages-71667449.jpg) . . . . .	.193
Figure 7.83 Audience-actor relationship section (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.105 Dark view of model (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.169	Figure 7.133 Audience view of scene (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.183	Figure 7.160 Timber columns (http://www.lacnedrevo.sk/games/images526/predaj-stavebneho-reziva.png) . . . . .	.193
Figure 7.84 Main entrance arch (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.106 Start of performance (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.170	Figure 7.134 Interior Architecture Principles (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.184	Figure 7.161 Natural sticks (https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DLPzwmPWkAAb76D.jpg) . . . . .	.193
Figure 7.85 Sunset at the Fort (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.107 Lighting progression of scene (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.171	Figure 7.135 Initial mood board collage (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.185	Figure 7.162 Scene overview (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.194
Figure 7.86 Approach to entrance (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.108 Growing light in tunnel (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.171	Figure 7.136 Interior Architecture Principles (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.186	Figure 7.163 Dimmer Control (https://britlitwiki.wikispaces.com/file/view/200dimmerRack.JPG/235658312/200dimmerRack.JPG) . . . . .	.195
Figure 7.87 Detail of arch way (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.109 Final development of scene (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.171	Figure 7.137 Interior Architecture Principles (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.187	Figure 7.164 Spot Light (https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/b/theatre-spotlight-white-background-52125537.jpg) . . . . .	.195
Figure 7.88 Interior Architecture Principles (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.110 Sequence 1 of light in tunnel (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.172	Figure 7.138 Paper walkway (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.188	Figure 7.165 Handing acoustic panel (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.195
Figure 7.89 Initial mood board collage (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.111 Sequence 2 of light in tunnel (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.172	Figure 7.139 Paper exploration (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.188	Figure 7.166 Act 1 Scene 3 plans (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.196
Figure 7.90 Initial exploration of site and scene (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.112 Sequence 3 of light in tunnel (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.172	Figure 7.140 Walkway paper idea (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.188	Figure 7.167 Upright details (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.197
Figure 7.91 Thematic exploration of scene (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.113 Sequence 4 of light in tunnel (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.172	Figure 7.141 Above view of paper (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.188	Figure 7.168 Act 1 Scene 3 sections (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.198
Figure 7.92 Sectional exploration of scene (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.114 Lighting on projection screen (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.172	Figure 7.142 Stick exploration (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.188	Figure 7.169 Materials comparison table (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.198
Figure 7.93 Related site, plan exploration (Author, 2017)	Figure 7.115 Further light exploration (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.172	Figure 7.143 Side view (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.188	Figure 7.170 Acoustic detail (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.199
Figure 7.94 Final concept sketch, includes site, themes and audience-actor relationships	Figure 7.116 Sectional view, audience to actor relationship (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.173	Figure 7.144 Same height (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.189	Figure 7.171 Final Model (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.200
	Figure 7.117 Perspective of tunnel entrance (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.173	Figure 7.145 Cross over (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.189	Figure 7.172 Plan of Act 2 Scene 3 location (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.202
	Figure 7.118 Back projection onto gauze scrim (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.174	Figure 7.146 Open effect (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.189		
	Figure 7.119 Lighting sequence (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.175	Figure 7.147 Height variation (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.189		
	Figure 7.120 Act 1 Scene 1 plan (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.175	Figure 7.148 Darkness view (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.189		
	Figure 7.121 Lighting section and elevation (Author, 2017) . . . . .	.176				

Figure 7.173 Sectional view of Act 2 Scene 3 (Author, 2017)	202	Figure 7.201 Cardboard tube detail (Author, 2017)	212
Figure 7.174 View of playing area from audience perspective (Author, 2017)	203	Figure 7.202 Act 2 Scene 3 Plan (Author, 2017)	213
Figure 7.175 Fragility and damage to site (Author, 2017)	203	Figure 7.203 Act 2 Scene 3 forest grid (Author, 2017)	214
Figure 7.176 Actor playing area (Author, 2017)	203	Figure 7.204 2050mm Cardboard tube (http://wdy.h-cdn.co/assets/16/01/980x490/gallery-1452281638-gettyimages-71667449.jpg)	215
Figure 7.177 Deterioration of the existing stairs (Author, 2017)	203	Figure 7.205 Cardboard tube detail (Author, 2017)	215
Figure 7.178 Interior Architecture Principles (Author, 2017)	204	Figure 7.206 Mirror upright detail (Author, 2017)	216
Figure 7.179 Initial mood board collage (Author, 2017)	205	Figure 7.207 Reflection of light detail (Author, 2017)	218
Figure 7.180 Initial concept sketch showing scene development (Author, 2017)	206	Figure 7.208 Act 1 Scene 3 final sections (Author, 2017)	219
Figure 7.181 Attempt at plan development (Author, 2017)	206	Figure 7.209 Act 1 Scene 3 model final outcome (Author, 2017)	220
Figure 7.182 Concept page of site, performance themes and set development (Author, 2017)	207	Figure 7.210 Plan of Act 2 Scene 5 (Author, 2017)	222
Figure 7.183 View from audience position (Author, 2017)	208	Figure 7.211 Section of Act 2 Scene 5 (Author, 2017)	222
Figure 7.184 Plan of cardboard tube layout (Author, 2017)	208	Figure 7.212 View from audience platform (Author, 2017)	223
Figure 7.185 Close up of tubes (Author, 2017)	208	Figure 7.213 Restricted view from platform approach (Author, 2017)	223
Figure 7.186 Actor view through tubes (Author, 2017)	208	Figure 7.214 View from audience platform (Author, 2017)	223
Figure 7.187 Exploration with less tubes (Author, 2017)	208	Figure 7.215 Actor playing area (Author, 2017)	223
Figure 7.188 Density of tubes (Author, 2017)	208	Figure 7.216 Interior architecture principles (Author, 2017)	224
Figure 7.189 Final view from audience standing position (Author, 2017)	209	Figure 7.217 Initial concept mood board (Author, 2017)	225
Figure 7.190 Start of Act 2 Scene 3 (Author, 2017)	210	Figure 7.218 Concept sketch showing existing (Author, 2017)	226
Figure 7.191 End of Act 2 Scene 3 (Author, 2017)	211	Figure 7.219 Emotive sketch exploring imagery (Author, 2017)	226
Figure 7.192 Reflections of Queen of the Night (Author, 2017)	211	Figure 7.220 Initial unpacking of the scene (Author, 2017)	227
Figure 7.193 Queen in the mirror forest (Author, 2017)	211	Figure 7.221 Initial model of scene (Author, 2017)	228
Figure 7.194 Layering of lighting and colour (Author, 2017)	211	Figure 7.222 Development of rounded form (Author, 2017)	228
Figure 7.195 Section showing audience view (Author, 2017)	212	Figure 7.223 Mimicking of the archways (Author, 2017)	228
Figure 7.196 Plan showing restricted audience view (Author, 2017)	212	Figure 7.224 Angular structure development (Author, 2017)	228
Figure 7.197 Metal anchor structure (Author, 2017)	212	Figure 7.225 Exploration of site and form relationship (Author, 2017)	228
Figure 7.198 Joining method (Author, 2017)	212	Figure 7.226 Development of triangular form (Author, 2017)	229
Figure 7.199 Bucket anchor (Author, 2017)	212	Figure 7.227 Focus on extending the architecture (Author, 2017)	229
Figure 7.200 Cable anchor (Author, 2017)	212		

Figure 7.228 Final model, in darkness, to enhance the form (Author, 2017)	229
Figure 7.229 Start of Act 2 Scene 5 (Author, 2017)	230
Figure 7.230 End of Act 2 Scene 5 (Author, 2017)	231
Figure 7.231 Tunnel lighting exploration (Author, 2017)	231
Figure 7.232 Light from the side of structure (Author, 2017)	231
Figure 7.233 Light to emphasise the existing form (Author, 2017)	231
Figure 7.234 Perspective of initial concept (Author, 2017)	232
Figure 7.235 Repetition of triangular form (Author, 2017)	232
Figure 7.236 Projection consideration of scene (Author, 2017)	232
Figure 7.237 Joining of structural elements (Author, 2017)	232
Figure 7.238 Act 2 Scene 5 key plan (Author, 2017)	233
Figure 7.239 Act 2 Scene 5 plan (Author, 2017)	234
Figure 7.240 Act 2 Scene 5 section and elevation (Author, 2017)	235
Figure 7.241 William Kentridge drawing with light (Kentridge, 2005)	236
Figure 7.242 Colour light filters (https://www.bron.ch/uploads/tx_bronproducts/broncolor_products_light-shapers_accessories-for-basic-reflectors_colour-filters-for-P65-P45-PAR-and-background-reflector.jpg)	236
Figure 7.243 Example of light filter texture (https://cdn.decoist.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Using-the-smart-lamp-to-add-personality-to-the-room.jpg)	236
Figure 7.244 Pyramid structure detail (Author, 2017)	236
Figure 7.245 Act 2 Scene 5 model outcome (Author, 2017)	237

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION

Figure 8.1 Final presentation scheme (Author, 2017)	242
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GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY

The following terms have been defined specifically for the context of this dissertation, to clarify the intended meaning by the author.

Abstraction is a term used to explain the reconstruction of one's thoughts in a symbolic and graphical manner, typically the use of metaphorical and representative imagery

Audience participation are the interactions which takes place between the audience and the environment, this can be influenced through the design.

Back projection is a form of projection in which the projector is placed behind the screen as opposed to in front of the screen

Concept is a non-tangible development of an idea.

Created space refers to the smaller areas within the environment which have been specifically considered and manipulated for this project.

Cultural fabric is the physical material which makes up an object, this refers to something of historical or cultural significance.

Cyclorama the largest single piece of scenery in the theatre, this dyed material is draped in an arched form "to encircle and

partially enclose the scene to form the back ground" (W. Oren Parker and Harvey K. Smith 1979:196).

Dramaturgy is "the theory and practice of dramatic composition." (Google online dictionary, 2017)

Drapery material can be made from various materials, these fabrics are gathered and hung from a support structure, they are flexible and dynamic for the performance.

Drops are large pieces of decorated material which hang on battens and are dropped down into the stage area, the bottom batten ensures the fabric hangs flat and straight.

Escapism is the psychological and emotional removal from one's everyday life, achieved through a created hyper-reality and fantasies where the spectators are encouraged to explore and use their imaginations.

Fourth wall is the term used to describe the metaphorical barrier between the audience and the actor. Typically, it is a physical separation, in the terms of a raised stage or orchestra pitch division.

Heritage awareness is the creation or emphasis on the existing historical fabric, be it cultural or physical

Immersive theatre is a theatre form which identifies the

audience as a co-actor in the production, this concept was defined by research Gareth White (2012).

Stage-lighting instruments "any device employed on the stage to hold a lamp in correct position, to direct and often shape the output of light, and to hold color media in the resulting beam" (W. Oren Parker and Harvey K. Smith 1979:444).

Theatre forms refers the diverse types of theatre performance which have been created over time, for example, experimental theatre, improvisational theatre and site-specific theatre

Theatre movement is the development of the non-typical theatre whereby its structure and idea contradicts the origins and formalisation of the traditional theatre.

The structure of this dissertation varies from the typical structures. To assist in clarity and understanding, the following explanation gives reason for the content order.

CHAPTER 1 – THEORETICAL CONTEXT

To understand the research proposal decisions, it is first important to give a contextual background to the study direction. A fascination triggered the initial interest with the theatre, and how it has developed over time. The chapter shows an investigation of the theatre origins, cultural diversity in theatre, changes in stage configurations, the invention of multiple theatre forms, and opera. Opera and site-specific theatre make up the main focus of this project.

CHAPTER 2 – RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal lays out the intentions and points of discovery which will be addressed through the dissertation. The problem statement grows from the decline of opera identified in Chapter 1 after which the research questions, aims, objectives, methods and limitations are explored.

CHAPTER 3 – PHYSICAL CONTEXT

Having identified site-specific theatre as the dissertation focus, a site needed to be selected. Chapter 3 is a site analysis, which focuses on the specific and carefully selected points of interest around the site. The heritage value of the selected site plays a key role in the design development.

EXPLAINING THE CONTENT STRUCTURE

CHAPTER 4 – THEORETICAL PREMISE

The main theory investigation is the focus of this chapter. Through the chapter, the research question is unpacked and argued. The open-air nature of the project challenges the typical interior expectations. However, the significance of the project is supported and validated in the content. The chapter builds the reader's understanding of site-specific theatre, the interior architecture relevance, and what is to be expected in the design.

CHAPTER 5 – PRECEDENT STUDIES

The three identified precedent studies, explore the use of lighting, sensory experience, projection, and performance. These existing works have helped to inform the design and the consideration of how to effectively use light and projection to layer meaning.

CHAPTER 6 – THE MAGIC FLUTE

The chapter gives the reader a general overview of the Magic Flute opera, introducing them to the characters, themes and environments of the narrative. The chapter consists of a film study of the 1991 version of the Magic Flute at the MET Opera House. Throughout the chapter, an introduction to William Kentridge's 2001 version, and visuals are explored.

CHAPTER 7 – CONCEPT, DESIGN AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter is divided into two main parts: the initial concept development and design and technical. The general programming, design, and circulation of the site is addressed, after which each scene is unpacked. Each scene's design and technicals aspects are addressed. This helps the reader follow the progression of each scene without the confusion of flipping through the book.

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION

The closing chapter of the book reiterates the development of the project, ensuring the research question is answered and the intention resolved.