Introduction

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In 2017, two teams of collaborators – one in Australia and one in South Africa – embarked upon a remarkable project. Each team created their own performance from the archival traces of a satirical cabaret called *Prinz Bettliegend* (*The Bedridden Prince*), written and performed by prisoners in the Jewish ghetto at Terezín during the Second World War.[1] Their engagement with these traces resulted in two vivid performances that not only brought the past into our present but put that past into dialogue with deeply felt local and contemporary concerns. In this book, we present both of the resulting scripts. Most of the chapters, however, document the creative process itself: essays by several members of each production team reflect upon the development and rehearsal processes, from multiple points of view. I hope that our experiences will inspire others to embark upon similar journeys.

Why was this project so remarkable? First of all, our source materials regarding the production in Terezín in 1943 – a poster, a collection of songs and some survivor testimony – defy almost all expectations of Holocaust-related art. The Czech-Jewish prisoner-authors had created a Czech-language show with a German-language title, a satirical fairy tale that critiqued themselves and their fellow prisoners rather than the Nazis, a comedy that explored some of the most terrifying aspects of life in the ghetto.[2] Second, due to the fragmentary nature of those materials, we had no choice but to construct a new plot. We had the license, born of necessity, to re-imagine the show, which inevitably put it into dialogue with the creators' present-day concerns. Finally, we were supported by a project called Performing the Jewish Archive (PtJA), funded by a £1.8 million grant from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. This grant enabled us to establish ideal conditions for collaboration with host institutions in each country, working with colleagues who shared our concerns and our fascination with this material. We had adequate funding, a suitably long development and rehearsal period, and a forum in which to present the performances to the local public: PtJA's series of performance festivals titled Out of the Shadows, which were held in the USA, the UK and the Czech Republic in 2016, and in Australia and South Africa in 2017.

Later in this introduction, I will describe the history of the project, the history of the ghetto itself and the structure of this book, but first: what were our intentions with the project, and what are our intentions with this volume?

With two such diverse teams of collaborators, different individuals entered into the project with different goals and questions in mind, and these are explored in the essays in this book. One question, however, was shared by all: how could we make *Prinz Bettliegend* speak to today's audiences while remaining true to the past from which it came? The archival traces were too fragmentary to allow a painstaking reproduction, even if that had been our goal. Instead, both teams approached the project as the creation of something new: a performance generated through the encounter of a particular group of artists, in a particular institutional, political and social context, with the work of the Terezín artists. Guided by principles regarding the history, theatrical style and mood of the original, which will be explored later in this introduction, both production teams pursued and developed themes that resonated with them and their audiences while remaining true to the realities of life in the ghetto. In Sydney, where the actors' ages spanned a wide range, the plot revolved around the question of responsibility to protect the young. In South Africa, with a multiracial student cast on a campus rocked by protests, the cabaret interrogated the intersection of race, power and privilege.

Another reason to stage these plays is to engage with a question that can be explored through practice as research: why did the prisoners engage in theatrical performance? In this particular production, the question was more specific: why might prisoners in Terezín choose to grapple with questions of power, corruption and privilege in a life-or-death situation with a cabaret? As Dr Katherine Johnson, a scholar of historical re-enactment argued while still a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Sydney, certain kinds of historical understanding can be gained through 'somatic activities' – that is by going through the motions (Johnson 2015: 196).[3] As she writes, '[s]omething of epistemological significance occurs through the experiential process of this practice, in moments of apparently purely affective engagement' (2015: 197). While engaged in the same types of activities as the prisoners, using the same satirical approach, and in particular with the same music setting the mood, what did we learn from our moments of affective engagement? That is, what did we learn about how participation in theatrical performance might have made them feel – and thus, why and how that might that have been important in the ghetto? I will return to the question in my conclusion.

A third reason for engaging in this project arose in South Africa: how might questions about staging the Terezín plays shed light on larger questions of cultural appropriation? More specifically, on a campus that was being torn apart by issues of representation, in particular by alleged incidents of blackfacing, how

were the students to engage with a play written in a Jewish ghetto, when not a single member of the cast was Jewish? In Australia, due to meaningful Jewish participation by our producer, Joseph Toltz, and our advisor, Terezín survivor Edith Sheldon, we never questioned our right to engage with this material, even though we did not have any Jewish cast members either. The South African production team could not help but ask this question, and their struggles to answer it run through all their chapters. Again, I will return to this question in my conclusion.

What are our intentions with this volume? Of course, we want to present the results of our process – the scripts and videos, the results of decisions made, of problems solved, of answers found – but we also want to preserve the process itself, present our questions and our methods, even the things we got wrong, in hopes that they will inspire others to try such projects. We also want to preserve an aspect of the development process that every theatre-maker knows: sometimes the most profound moments of revelation – the things that happen in the rehearsal room that change people's lives – don't make it into the show. We also wanted to preserve and reflect the multivocal nature of the project itself by incorporating the voices of students, artists and scholars as individuals and in dialogue with each other. As a result, some of the chapters are actual edited conversations (Chapters 4 and 8, in which the directors and I look back on each show, and Chapter 7, in which the student actors reflect on their experience). Other chapters, while written by a single author or pair of authors, describe in detail the contributions of others involved in the project. As a result, readers have the rare opportunity to see individual moments of creation from multiple points of view.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will describe the history of the project, the archival traces from Terezín, and the preliminary practical steps and shared principles that guided our re-imaginings. I will then engage with the history of the ghetto itself, and the history of the original production of *Prinz Bettliegend*, before briefly describing the individual chapters.

The origins of the project

I have been researching the cultural life of Terezín since 1998, focusing specifically on the incredible variety of theatrical performances that took place on the many stages of the ghetto. At first, I drew mainly upon survivor testimony; scholars believed most of the scripts had been lost. As I interviewed survivors in the Czech Republic in 2004–05, however, something unexpected happened: scripts began to turn up in private collections and small archives. I edited my anthology of those scripts, published first in Czech and German (Peschel 2008) then in English

(Peschel 2014), with performance in mind, anticipating that scholars and theatre artists would bring them back to the stage. I included brief introductions to each play regarding the creators, performers and productions in the ghetto, and extensive footnotes based on interviews with survivors who kindly agreed to comment upon the scripts and, in particular, to explain the jokes – because almost all of them were comedies (Peschel 2018).

Prinz Bettliegend was the only incomplete work published in that collection; the material, although fragmentary, was too intriguing to exclude. As my late colleague, Dr Eva Šormová, had discovered through interviews she conducted in the 1960s, the Terezín performance was created by a collective that formed around four young Czech Jews: writer and actor Josef 'Pepík' Lustig, actor Jiří Spitz (after the war, Jiří Štefl), lyricist František Kovanic and designer and actor Ota Neumann (Šormová 1973: 50).[4] According to Štefl, the only one of the four known to have survived the Holocaust, Lustig wrote *Prince Bettliegend* as a satirical fairy tale intended to criticize favouritism and corruption in the ghetto (1963).

Although Lustig's script was lost, the songs, a poster and survivors' memories of certain key moments in the show were preserved. Regarding the songs, as Joseph Toltz documents in his prologue and chapter, survivors remembered Kovanic's Terezín-specific lyrics, which he set to well-known jazz melodies by one of the most popular composers of the 1930s: Jaroslav Ježek. Ježek directed the orchestra and wrote the music for interwar Prague's renowned Liberated Theatre (*Osvobozené divadlo*) of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich. In fact, the souvenir poster created for the Terezín performance of *Prinz Bettliegend* even credits Ježek as the composer (see Figure F.1). The poster provided additional clues by naming the characters in the plot: it lists all the members of the troupe and the roles each actor played. Three actors, in addition to Štefl, survived the war and gave testimony about *Prinz Bettliegend*. In my anthology, in addition to publishing the lyrics of the songs, I included their descriptions of specific plot points, to gesture towards the songs' original setting.

The opportunity to bring *Prince Bettliegend* back to the stage finally arrived when, in 2014, six colleagues and I were awarded a £1.8 million grant by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council for a 40-month project called Performing the Jewish Archive.[5] The project focused on our research about musical and theatrical works created by twentieth-century Jewish artists who had continued to create during their imprisonment, internment or forced emigration. As the centrepiece of the project, we created our own forum to present these recovered works to the public: a series of performance festivals titled Out of the Shadows that took place in the USA, the UK, the Czech Republic, South Africa and Australia.

Just months after receiving the grant, Australian co-investigator Joseph Toltz and I, both fans of Ježek's music and the songs from *Prinz Bettliegend*, began

discussing whether we could reconstruct the show for both the Australian and South African festivals, scheduled just one month apart. By late 2015, Petrus du Preez at Stellenbosch University, near Cape Town, had confirmed his interest and later entrusted the project to his colleague Amelda Brand. By late 2016, Joseph, as the producer of the Australian festival, had approached his former professor at the University of Sydney, Ian Maxwell, who agreed to direct the performance there.

The plot outline and development principles

Since both directors were planning on devising their scripts in collaboration with their actors, all we needed to begin the process was a plot outline around which they could improvise. The song lyrics, the poster and the survivors' testimony revealed the beginning and end of the play, and several plot points in between. In fact, the plot points revealed that this was not technically a cabaret, but what the Liberated Theatre called a revue: a form similar to cabaret in that it included music, dance and individual sketches, but with a more unified plot.

In brief, the show opened with a jazz overture, set to Ježek's melody 'Civilization' ('*Civilizace*'), which described the history of Terezín and the establishment of the ghetto in comic terms.[6] In a subsequent scene, a Wizard casts a spell on the Prince, who then cannot get out of bed. A trickster duo named Hocus and Pocus try to help the Prince, but various misadventures ensue in their encounters with fairy-tale versions of the leaders of the ghetto: the King, the Princess, the Ministers of Finance and Health, etc. Finally, a Girl in the audience begins crying, distressed by the Prince's plight. The other characters speak to her, reassuring her, paradoxically, that the prince will remain bedridden and therefore all will be well. In the rousing finale song, lyrics addressed directly to the audience encourage the prisoners to persevere.

Based on these clues, I constructed a more detailed plot outline upon which the actors could build, guided by three principles that later carried over into the development process to guide their improvisations: fidelity to the history of the ghetto, to the theatrical style of the Liberated Theatre and to the comic mood of the piece.[7]

Regarding the history, we were committed to basing our re-imagined performances upon the very specific conditions and events of Terezín. That is, the play could not become a generalized Holocaust story with a plot that led inevitably to Auschwitz and death. Therefore, I only added plot elements that conformed to the historical reality of the ghetto. The logic of this world, however, is not intuitively obvious; for example, why was it desirable for the prince to remain bedridden?

As survivor Luděk Eliáš explained to me when I asked him about the play, the German word *bettliegend* was an official designation in the ghetto, indicating a person who had been prescribed bed rest due to illness (2005). Such prisoners were exempt from labour, but more importantly, they were also exempt from the transports leaving the ghetto (Adler 2005: 285).

It is almost impossible to overstate the prisoners' fear of the transports and their desperation to avoid them. Although the true horror of their destination – most went to Auschwitz – was not revealed to the prisoners until near the end of the war, they represented a terrifying journey into the unknown. As survivor H. G. Adler wrote, 'Fear of deportations made fear of death seem insignificant or even replaced it' (2005: 669). Therefore, the prisoners resorted to various ruses to avoid them – for example, trying to persuade a ghetto doctor to diagnose them as *bettliegend*. How might a doctor cause the symptoms that justified such a diagnosis? Survivor Jiří Franěk had described such a ruse to me years earlier: that an intramuscular injection of milk would induce a high fever for a few days. This combination of mysterious illness and possible cause provided the engine to drive the plot of the re-imagined performance. It also introduced a potential ethical quandary for the characters to grapple with: all prisoners knew that, if they were removed from the transport list due to illness, another prisoner had to take their place.

Regarding the theatrical style of the performance, we took inspiration from the same model that had inspired the prisoners: the Liberated Theatre of Voskovec and Werich. Obviously, Ježek's melodies had to be retained. Not only did they set the mood but including them served to acknowledge the prisoners' love of his music.[8] We also retained the Liberated Theatre's revue form. Finally, we based the roles of Hocus and Pocus on the characters that Voskovec and Werich normally played in their own revues: a pair of comic figures who drive the plot forward, often by bumbling their way to a happy ending.

Finally, the comic mood of the performance had to be preserved. On the one hand, we respected the Terezín artists' choice to deal with their own situation with optimism and humour. On the other, we wanted to encourage present-day audiences to engage with the performance in a way that is not typical for Holocaust-related works. In her 2004 book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed argues that emotions in public narratives serve social boundary-drawing functions (2004: 10). Certain emotions in public discourse, such as fear, make societies maintain boundaries that keep others out; other emotions, such as joy, tend to dissolve such boundaries. I wanted present-day audiences to relate to the Terezín prisoners, not as objects of our pity – an emotion which creates extremely complex boundaries – but as artists and entertainers who brought their audiences the desperately needed gift of laughter.

The development process

Each of the authors in this volume will describe their own role in the development process; briefly, here is mine. In July 2017, I travelled to Sydney for a month-long development and rehearsal period. When I arrived, Joseph and musical director Kevin Hunt had already begun to explore Ježek's music with the actors; later, the performance would be accompanied by a twelve-piece student jazz orchestra. In addition, a group of undergraduate theatre students, taught by the head of the department Laura Ginters, joined us to document the entire process as part of a module on Rehearsal Studies, which draws on ethnographic theory and methodology. After Joseph, Ian and I revised and expanded upon the plot outline to create more detailed scenarios for each scene, the actors started improvising dialogue around those scenarios. Due to fortuitous accidents of casting – specifically, the age gap between the actor playing the Prince and the rest of the cast – a theme soon emerged that dovetailed with the historical reality of Terezín: the desire of the Jewish leaders to protect the young people of the ghetto.

While the Sydney production was in rehearsals, the South African team was developing their own. In mid-July, I passed the expanded plot outline to Amelda, with the understanding that she had complete freedom to alter it in any way. Her musical director Leonore Bredekamp, inspired by Kevin's charts, created a hybrid of 1930s jazz and klezmer music for a five-piece ensemble. The performance by the multiracial student cast was inspired by the text developed by the Sydney performers and was developed through similar methods of improvisation, but their production diverged radically due to their interest in addressing issues of more immediate interest in a South African context: the intersection of race, power and privilege.

The Sydney production, titled *Prince Bettliegend: A Cabaret from Terezín*, was performed during the Out of the Shadows festival to sold-out audiences on 7, 8 and 10 August 2017. The South African version, which retained the original Terezín title *Prinz Bettliegend*, was performed in Cape Town on 13 September and in Stellenbosch on 15 September. The South African script presented in this book is a revised and expanded version performed at Stellenbosch University's *Woordfees* (Word Festival) in March 2018.

History of the ghetto

Terezín is located about 40 miles northwest of Prague. It was built in the 1780s as a fortress complex to protect the northern border of the Austrian empire from the Prussians. After the First World War, when the European borders were redrawn,

Terezín found itself in the new state of Czechoslovakia, and it served as a base for the Czechoslovak army. Between 7000 and 8000 soldiers and civilians lived in the barracks and houses within the Large Fortress. During the Second World War, after the Nazi occupation of the Czech lands began in March 1939, the Gestapo used the Small Fortress as a prison, mainly for political dissidents.[9] The Large Fortress became an extremely overcrowded Jewish ghetto, with trains constantly coming and going, and a population that fluctuated between approximately 40,000 and 60,000 people.

Why the incoming and outgoing trains? Terezín's main function was as a transit camp. It served as a place where the Nazis gathered the Jews of Central Europe – mainly from Czechoslovakia, Germany and Austria – before sending them on to the death camps and slave labour camps in the East.

In order for Terezín to function smoothly as a transit camp, the Nazis made two key decisions that affected the nature of the cultural life. One was to maintain relatively liveable conditions so that Jews receiving their deportation orders to Terezín did not resist the transports. Terezín prisoners were not subjected to the type of back-breaking slave labour that many would encounter in later camps, and there were no gas chambers in the ghetto. Nevertheless, over 33,000 prisoners – mostly the elderly – died of disease, starvation and despair. For the young and healthy prisoners, however, the cultural life did not take place in the shadow of certain death but, rather, in the expectation that they would return to their former lives after the war.

The Nazis also concealed the destination of the transports leaving Terezín, to reduce the risk of an uprising in the ghetto itself. These transports, usually of 1000–2000 prisoners, left the ghetto at irregular intervals. The Nazis cultivated the belief that the transports were going to a labour camp, or that prisoners were being sent to build another ghetto. In reality, the vast majority went to Auschwitz.

In these unusual conditions, in the tension between radical uncertainty and tenuous hope for the future, a stunningly active cultural life sprung up, initiated by the prisoners themselves. It began on a very modest scale. During the first six months of the ghetto's existence, from November 1941 until summer 1942, Czech civilians were still living in some of the houses in Terezín. The prisoners – in this period, all Czech Jews – worked during the day and were confined to separate men's and women's barracks in the evening. The first performances – simple, improvised programmes of songs, poems and sketches – took place in those barracks. Jewish leaders of the ghetto, apparently fearing that the prisoners might be punished, requested permission for these performances from the Nazi commandant, and permission was granted. The Daily Orders of 28 December 1941 state that *Kamaradschaftsabende* ('friendship evenings') could be held on the condition that the programme be submitted in advance for approval

(Šormová 1973: 22). As the cultural activities continued to expand, the Jewish leadership decided in February 1942 to establish an administrative body to oversee them: the *Freizeitgestaltung* ('Office for the Administration of Leisure Time'), or cultural department.

After the last members of Terezín's civilian population had been moved out, the second period of the ghetto's existence – from July 1942 until September 1944 – began. This phase was marked by greater freedom of movement and greater national diversity. On 6 July 1942, the barracks were opened and the prisoners occupied the entire area inside the Large Fortress, except for certain buildings and spaces designated for use by the SS. During the day, the prisoners were allowed to move about the town, but an evening curfew was strictly enforced. A month before this, on 2 June 1942, the first transport from Berlin arrived; the Czech Jews were no longer the only national group in the ghetto. Transports from German cities continued to arrive for months (Lagus and Polák 1964: 337–41). Because many German-Jewish families had focused on helping their younger members emigrate, these deportations increased the average age of the prisoners (Bondy 1989: 298). The same was true of the Austrian Jews, almost all of whom were deported from Vienna. Between 21 June 1942 and 10 October 1942, thirteen transports brought almost 14,000 prisoners. Their average age was 69 years old (Niklas 2009: 90). This influx of prisoners led to a crisis of overcrowding. In September 1942, the ghetto temporarily reached an unsustainable maximum population of almost 60,000 prisoners, and almost 4000 prisoners died in that month alone. By the end of 1942, the mortality rate and a wave of outgoing transports in September and October had reduced the population to an extremely overcrowded but sustainable level of between 40,000 and 50,000 prisoners.

Although the new freedom of movement was a vast improvement over confinement in the barracks, overcrowding created many difficulties. People lived literally packed into barracks and civilian homes. The Jewish leaders, in an attempt to protect young people and those doing essential labour in the ghetto, provide them with increased rations, but this meant the elderly suffered terribly from hunger and thousands died of malnutrition. Tensions among the prisoners themselves made the situation even more difficult. For example, some Czech Jews resented the German and Austrian prisoners for overpopulating 'their' ghetto; the newcomers resented Czech control of some of the most advantageous jobs, especially those associated with the food supply.

Despite the difficult conditions, the cultural life flourished. An organizational chart of the *Freizeitgestaltung* from this period lists more than 30 divisions, including German theatre, Czech theatre, cabaret, opera and vocal music, instrumental music, lectures in different languages, chess and several sports. *Freizeitgestaltung* administrators controlled rehearsal and performance spaces in various locations

in the ghetto. By the summer of 1944, theatrical performances were taking place in at least eighteen different locations, ranging from cellar rooms and attics to relatively well-equipped theatres. Performers ranged from experienced, even famous professionals, such as the renowned German actor and director Kurt Gerron, to young amateurs who gained their first theatrical experience in the ghetto itself. Although the diversity of the ghetto increased still further in 1943, when small groups of prisoners from Holland and Denmark began to arrive, the languages of performance remained overwhelmingly Czech and German.

And the Nazis allowed it because the cultural life served a new purpose designated for the ghetto: its propaganda function. Late in 1943, the decision was taken to let representatives of the International Red Cross visit the ghetto, to try to convince the world that that news of concentration camps and gas chambers was simply anti-German propaganda. As part of a labour-intensive project, the *Stadtverschönerung*, or city beautification, prisoners were forced to renovate a carefully prepared route through the ghetto to make it look presentable. The long-awaited visit of the Commission, which included three international representatives – two Danish and one Swiss – took place on 23 June 1944. The visitors were accompanied by several SS officers, representatives from the Reich Ministry of International Affairs and from the German Red Cross. The commission followed a prepared path through the ghetto with stops at the bakery, the bank, a performance of the children's opera *Brundibár*, and further sites of interest (Adler 2005: 172–78). The members of the commission, in spite of certain doubts, expressed their general approval of the standard of living in the ghetto (Bondy 1989: 439). Apparently inspired by the success of the visit, the Nazis ordered a 'documentary' film about the ghetto to be created, directed by Kurt Gerron (Margry 1996). A partially edited version, created from the footage shot in August and September 1944, has been preserved and offers a last glimpse of hundreds of prisoners.

At the end of September 1944, the period of relative stability came abruptly to an end. A wave of transports from September 28 until October 28 carried away 18,000 people, including the majority of prisoners of productive working age and almost all the artists involved in cultural life. Only 11,000 prisoners remained, many of them elderly and ill. Those who were healthy and capable of work, mostly women, struggled to manage the most essential operations of the ghetto. Conditions began to stabilize by the end of 1944, and by the spring of 1945, it was clear that the war would end soon. When it arrived, however, it was not the moment of triumph the prisoners had hoped for. On 20 April 1945, prisoners on death marches from other camps began to arrive in Terezín, starved, ill, and with horrific stories of their experiences. Some of the Terezín prisoners died of illnesses they contracted while trying to care for those prisoners. On May 5, the last of

the SS officers left. On May 8, Soviet tanks on their way to Prague went through Terezín: the ghetto was liberated (Blodig 1992: 190).

Lustig and Spitz's 'Stolen Theatre'

Prinz Bettliegend was written and performed in the spring of 1943, after the ghetto's population had stabilized late in 1942, during a period of respite from the transports.[10] During this eight-month period, the cultural life of the ghetto thrived. A sample of the offerings for February 1943 reveals the diversity of interests the *Freizeitsgestaltung*'s programming served:

> CONCERTS: Jewish liturgical music, opera arias, *Journey though the Land of Music* (premiere), Raphael Schächter's Hebrew Choir (premiere) – 20 performances altogether.
> OPERAS: *The Bartered Bride, Rigoletto* (premiere – the *Freizeitgestaltung*'s anniversary performance), *The Marriage of Figaro* (premiere) – 10 performances altogether.
> THEATER: Wolker's *The Tomb* (premiere); a revue, *Youngsters not Admitted* (premiere); a cabaret by the Stolen Theater; Cocteau's *The Human Voice*; opera evening; Thoren's cabaret with skits; evening of songs from Erben's *Flower Bouquet*; puppet theater; *Women's Dictatorship* – 50 performances altogether.
>
> (Bondy 1989: 365)

A closer look at the theatre offerings reveals the wide variety of the prisoners' national, linguistic, cultural and even political affiliations. For example, the author of *The Tomb* (Hrob), Jiří Wolker (1900–24), was a young Czech avant-garde author who had been adopted by the Communists as one of their own. *Youngsters not Admitted* (*Für Jugendliche Verboten*) was an evening of slightly racy German-language comic songs and sketches. *Flower Bouquet* (Kytice) by Karel Jaromír Erben (1811–70) was a Czech classic from the National Revival period, and *Women's Dictatorship* (*Diktatur der Frauen*) was a German-language three-act comedy from the early 1930s.

The troupe called the Stolen Theater (*Vyšlojzované divadlo*) – clearly named after the Liberated Theater (*Osvobozené divadlo*) of Voskovec and Werich – was Lustig and Spitz's troupe. The 'cabaret' listed in this schedule was most likely the first show they created together: *Let's Meet at Philip's*, about a group of Terezín prisoners who hold a reunion after the war (Šormová 1973: 50). The troupe later created two full-length revues: *Prinz Bettliegend* (written in the spring of 1943 and performed the same year) and *Ben Akiba Lied* (written in the summer of 1943 and

performed in 1944). Although survivor testimony and archival documents have been preserved regarding all three performances, *Prinz Bettliegend* is the only one of the three shows for which a full cast list and songs were preserved.

Where does *Prinz Bettliegend* fit within the context of Terezín theatre as a whole? Lustig and Spitz's Stolen Theater was one of several theatre troupes in the ghetto. The leaders of the various troupes came from different countries; they were of different nationalities, ages and political leanings. Inspired by different theatrical traditions, their opinions varied wildly regarding what theatre in the ghetto should do. For example, on one end of the spectrum, 40-year-old Myra Strauss-Gruhenberg, performer, writer and wife of Viennese cabarettist Leo Strauss, coordinated several German-language troupes that performed in the ghetto clinics and housing for the elderly (Peschel 2014: 225–39). They aimed to ease the suffering of the most miserable prisoners by providing an hour of laughter and forgetting. On the other end were politically oriented performances, such as those created by young Czech leftist Karel Švenk. Švenk, according to his fellow prisoner Josef Taussig, 'managed to create lively, current and aggressive cabaret' that demonstrated it was possible to 'attack […] the most burning, most important abuses of the period' (Taussig 2001: 340).

Taussig perished in the Holocaust, but drafts of two essays he wrote on cabaret troupes in the ghetto were preserved. He divided cabaret into two types: 'purely entertaining', which he criticized harshly, and 'tendential' cabaret that agitated for change (2001: 310). Although he praised the one troupe in the ghetto, Švenk's, that in his view tried to live up to this ideal, he acknowledged that other troupes had different goals: 'truly aggressive humour stirs people to activity […]. That, however, ghetto-humour does not do and does not want to do' (Taussig 2001: 314).

He used the term 'ghetto-humour' to describe 'a strange type of cabaret' specific to Terezín which, although it 'engages with the most current questions, nevertheless cannot be described as tendential cabaret' (Taussig 2001: 310). That is, even if such a cabaret criticized truly problematic aspects of ghetto life, 'the main point is not that satirical attack; it is only a means to the end of humorous effect' (Taussig 2001: 314). He pointed to Lustig and Spitz's troupe as an example, quoting their own lyricist, František Kovanic: 'Pepík's satire did not bite; it was kind-hearted. For him, satire was just a theme. He wanted people to laugh, to have a good time for an hour' (Taussig 2001: 314).

Kovanic, at the time Taussig quoted him, was already speaking of Lustig in the past tense: he died of an illness in the ghetto in January 1944. Kovanic himself perished after he was deported to Auschwitz in September 1944. The fate of Ota Neumann is unknown. Of the four co-creators of *Prinz Bettliegend*, only Jiří Spitz (after the war, Jiří Štefl) is known to have survived.

The structure of the book

Unlike most anthologies, in which chapters are linked only by theme, this book presents chapters linked by shared experience. The essays provide multiple perspectives on the same performances, and in some cases, on the same moments of performance. In some of the chapters that are based on conversations among multiple participants, I have added brief italicized introductions for clarity, to help the reader join us midstream in conversations that started earlier and, in some cases, are still ongoing.

In the Prologue, the institutional hosts for the Australian and South African productions, Joseph Toltz (Performing the Jewish Archive co-investigator at the University of Sydney and producer of the Australian Out of the Shadows festival) and Petrus du Preez (chair of the Drama Department at Stellenbosch University) describe their reasons for embarking upon the project.

In Chapter 1, Ian Maxwell, director of the Australian production, focuses on specific, emotionally fraught moments of creation to illustrate a development process that, rather than being driven by a single research question, was conceived of as 'primarily, an artistic undertaking, albeit one framed by a matrix of scholarly and ethical concerns'. He describes in detail how the professional performers he recruited from Sydney's contemporary performance scene, working with designers, directors and musicians from the University of Sydney, created a 'complex matrix of expertise, knowledge, and experience' from which, through improvisation, there emerged a new *Prince Bettliegend*.

In Chapter 2, Laura Ginters, former head of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Sydney and convenor of the department's Rehearsal Studies unit, shares the insights her students derived from applying ethnographic theory and methodology to the rehearsal process of *Prince Bettliegend*. In Rehearsal Studies, rather than a diary-like summary of events, 'students are encouraged to identify moments which seize their attention and to tease out from an analysis of their fieldnotes the full significance of the moment or interaction observed'. She draws extensively from two exemplary student casebooks, which combine keen observation and analysis with reflections on the students' own position as researchers and observers.

In Chapter 3, producer and musicologist Joseph Toltz and music director Kevin Hunt explore the significance of jazz composer Jaroslav Ježek's work for the Terezín prisoners and the development of the music for the 2017 performances in Sydney. Joseph builds upon his prologue by revisiting his ethnographic encounters with Czech-Jewish survivors, during which they vividly recalled the intense meaning the songs of the Liberated Theatre took on in the ghetto. Kevin analyzes his work with tertiary music students, professional actors and international

researchers to adapt Ježek's song for the production and describes his students' part in the creative process as, together with the actors, they created sound effects and new musical underscoring to enhance the performance.

Chapter 4 presents excerpts of a conversation that Ian, Amelda and I had in September 2020, shortly after the first drafts of most of the chapters were completed. Together we looked back upon the development process in Australia and on aspects of that process that were mirrored in South Africa. We recalled the visits of Terezín survivor Edith Sheldon to our rehearsals, and Ian evoked Marcel Mauss's concept of the 'gift economy': the obligation to engage with the Terezín artists' work as a gift we had received, and the obligation to bear it forward. Key issues in the Australian development process manifested themselves differently in South Africa; for example, in the ways that a cast in their fifties versus a cast in their twenties absorbed and animated the responsibility weighing on the Jewish leaders.

In Chapter 5, Amelda Brand, director of the South African production, describes the challenges of exploring this story of Jewish experience with a nine-person multiracial student cast at Stellenbosch University, formerly a bastion of white Afrikaner culture. In a political moment when questions of cultural appropriation were hotly debated on campus, she and the students found permission to engage with *Prinz Bettliegend* through intense study of the history and engagement with the humour in the original script. Drawing upon Michael Rothberg's notion of multidirectional memory, she describes how they ultimately conveyed the prisoners' world to their audiences while linking it with the complexities of their own.

In Chapter 6, Leonore Bredekamp, musical director of the South African production, describes the ways in which her small ensemble of student and professional musicians balanced and supported the large Stellenbosch cast. Using Kevin Hunt's charts as the point of departure, they incorporated klezmer influences into the music for their five-piece band. They were conscious that that this could be seen as a form of cultural appropriation, but in the end, they decided to embrace the opportunities this style of music presented to insert musical commentary into the songs – for example, using the clarinet as a voice that could jeer at the action on stage, to give the songs 'a playful and at times satirical edge'.

In Chapter 7, Amelda talks with several members of her student cast, almost three years after the 2017 premiere. The students share their perspectives on the development process and the effect the show has had on their subsequent engagements in the arts and politics. They look back on the importance of their collective conversations about race in the midst of on-campus scandals, and the virtues of clowning as a way to engage with the difficult history of Terezín and their own post-Apartheid society. They also reflect on the emotional impact of the final moments of the show, when each stepped forward to describe the fate of the Terezín actor who played their character in the 1943 production.

In Chapter 8, Amelda, Ian and I resume our conversation, this time focusing mainly on the South African production and questions of cultural appropriation. The development process at Stellenbosch unfolded in a pedagogical space with students who were just beginning their development as artists. They were also struggling with questions of self-identification versus the identities being imposed upon them – a situation which gave them a unique perspective from which to understand the Terezín prisoners' relationship to their own Jewishness. We discuss whether performance can help us find a way to move past arguments that prevent us from engaging productively with other cultures, given the frequent inevitability, in theatre, of speaking from a place that is not our own.

Chapters 9 and 10 present the scripts that emerged from each development process, including links to recordings of the public performances. Although the texts themselves, developed from the same plot outline, share certain common features, the detailed stage directions and illustrations make clear how each manifested its own themes. Chapter 9 presents the Australian script created for the Out of the Shadows festival in August 2017, and Chapter 10 presents the South African script, revised after our festival in September 2017 for Stellenbosch University's *Woordfees* (Word Festival) in March 2018.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I return to a question I have explored for years: why did the prisoners choose to do theatre in the ghetto? I also take on and engage with a new topic, inspired by the South African students: how might debates regarding cultural appropriation manifest themselves in productions of these plays?

To conclude this introduction I will simply reiterate my hope that this book will encourage other theatre artists to embark upon similar projects. All the chapters reflect problems, challenges and tensions we encountered in the process of creating and staging *Prince Bettliegend* but also convey a profound sense of just how worthwhile this project was, for artistic, pedagogical and even metaphysical reasons. As Ian focuses on the notion of bearing the gift forward, I cannot help but think about the possibility of bearing it backwards. Might the combined energy of our efforts in 2017 manifest itself, somehow, in 1943, leaving Lustig, Kovanic and the rest of the Terezín cast with a perhaps momentary, certainly inexplicable yet oddly comforting sense of timelessness?

NOTES

1. The ghetto is known in Czech as Terezín and in German as Theresienstadt. Both will be used in this book. The German 'Prinz' and the English 'Prince' will also both be used. All translations from Czech- and German-language sources in this chapter are my own.
2. Czech and German were the most widely spoken languages by the prisoners in Terezín. Although Czech Jews were the largest national group in the ghetto (followed by German

and Austrian Jews), all official terminology (names of ghetto institutions, positions of leadership, administrative and even medical terminology, etc.) was in German. As explained later in the essay, the title of the play satirizes one such term.

3. I am grateful to Laura Ginters for drawing my attention to this source.
4. Dr Šormová kindly typed up excerpts from her 1960s interview notes at my request in 2007. I am grateful to her for her own book – the best analysis yet published regarding Terezín theatre – and for this valuable archival resource.
5. For information about this project, see https://ptja.leeds.ac.uk.
6. Ježek's melodies can easily be found online; search by his name and the Czech-language title (see the appendix for all Czech-language song titles).
7. See this plot outline, including the titles of Ježek's songs, in the appendix.
8. See Joseph Toltz's section of the prologue and of Chapter 3 for more on the prisoners' and survivors' relationship to Ježek's music.
9. The Czechoslovak state ceased to exist from 1939 to 1945. During this period, Slovakia was an independent client state of Nazi Germany, and the occupied western Czech provinces from which most of the Czech Jews were deported were known as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.
10. There were no outgoing transports in November and December 1942, a brief wave from 20 January to 1 February 1943, then no new transports until September 1943 (Lagus and Polák 1964: 347).

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