

BALLARAT RAILWAY STATION THEATRICAL AUDIO TOURS

May 7th & 8th 2011

Amy Tsilemanis

The Persons of the Entertainment:

Woman (Amy Tsilemanis): the guiding voice and creator of piece, led by her fascination with rail, the station spaces and the lives within them. She guides both the physical and imaginative journey.

Signalman (Hedley Thomson): a creation of the narrator, for the purpose of taking people on a tour throughout the space and through various times in history. He tells the official station history when putting on a 'tour' voice, interwoven with his personal story and experience, including his sweetheart Izzy and introducing some of his friends along the way in the form of physical performers.

He is a timeless character- not of any particular age, caught between, representing the shifting nature of time and memory. He tries to keep a grip on his former job by reading old timetables with an air of madness. He wears a blue cap and loves smoking his pipe.

As all journeys weave in and out in a space such as the railway station, so too do the threads of narration, including moments of overlap between the Woman and Signalman, drawing them together in their musings.

(their two music themes are also linked)

Live action performers:

Frankie the ticket checker, deaf from pranks with detonators (Wes Howlett)

Bert the Squirt poster man, loves to sing as he works (played by Dean Bloetz)

Sally the Fruitseller, brings Signalman his tobacco (played by Sarah H S)

Barwoman, runs the RRR (played by Anna Lowendahl and Abbie Matthews)

Dessie the postmaster (Mark Barnard)

Additional voices in audio:

Alister Mew: Newsreader

Caitlin Dullard: Advertisement

*Blue font marks sound design

ROUTE 1 (FULL MOBILITY)

Begins at COACH HOUSE

People enter and are welcomed by Weave Length staff. Establish if more than three to wait for next run in 10/15 mins (tea and invitation to look in cupboard where tickets were kept, look at railway books and photo installation).

Briefing on how to use ipod, how tour works (pausing parts, look out for coloured flags etc)

When people are ready, either (1, 2 or 3) direct them to stand at the top of the stairs and press play on ipod.

Woman: Hello and welcome aboard, we do hope you'll enjoy your journey. We made it for you, and now it's yours... There are a few tricks to it though, so now is the sound, prop and safety check.

You should be able to hear this in both ears. Hello (left), hello (right)

Remember to take care crossing car parks and stay well clear of the yellow line on the platforms. And pay attention to the public, moving busily around you.

When you hear this voice, listen carefully and follow the instructions as closely as possible. Like this. Ready?

Look out the window. Is it Sunny? Rainy? Windy? Feel free to rug up with wintry wear from the hatstand. It could get chilly...

Do you have your platform ticket & envelope and pen?

Prepare to walk down the stairs and through the door.

After the following instructions press pause on your ipod. Make your way outside and turn right towards the main road.

Stand on the footpath by the missing fence paling, looking toward the signal box and press play. Press pause now.

Music

Ok, so this is the beginning. Or a beginning. It all started with a platform, a ruin or was it a freight train? Any way, I was lost to it. The railroad and this place, these people, all the woven lives...

I began to imagine an old man in a signal box. He has outgrown his usefulness. He is caught between. But he sits on, moulded to the room, the box, with a steaming cup of 'something hot,' his mind filled with timetables, maps, bells and levers, the complex 'forest of signals.'

Look up at the signalbox, Look! did you see him there? By the broken windows... Maybe not, but keep your eyes.. and ears...peeled...He'll tell you a story or two...(this man 'o' mine, silver haired and blue hatted...Is that how you imagine him?)

Walk with care to the traffic lights next to the Railway Crossing sign and press button to cross. After the following instructions press pause on your ipod. Cross safely to the other side of the road and proceed over the train crossing towards the signal box. Stop and stand by the flowers and press play. Press pause now.

SM music

Into strange voice out of nowhere (Woman): Houses and buildings are akin to a man's mind. They creak and crumble, show signs of fissure but keep on to stand the winds of time, and both too are a many-legg-ed thing!

Woman whisper: Go on, walk around the side and have a peek underneath. And see that no smoking sign? Pah, he. Smokes. Like a chimney.

Subtle clock ticking/clock winding up

Signalman (*startled*): Who said that?!

(*gathers himself*) So you wanna hear about this place do you? Well I'm your man, I'll say that. I'm as real as the next guy.

We'll take a little tour...through time... and the many lives of this station.

The paths, the doors, the windows- they've all got something to say...

Starts reeling off a timetable from years past as if very important, then remembers task at hand. Sound of papers and levers creaking.

Woman: You might want to sit down. Take a seat on the wooden edging. Railway sleepers perhaps? Take a load off.

Signalman: It's quiet up here now, just me and the birds, but it wasn't always that way, no...
(*proud, showing his knowledge and enthusiasm*)

This signal system was state of the art. Winding the wheel here to operate the gates, with connecting semaphore railway signals and telegraph equipment...

Engines would come in and out all night and day, and I'd send them on their way!

Newsreader: (*formal*):

Crackle... Mayor's Report 1898: It is imperative for the convenience of the public of this city that something should be done! Trains arriving and departing daily, fifty-four, wood and cattle trains and the ordinary shunting of engines daily, twenty, That is to say seventy-four times per day the street is blocked!

Signalman: bah! (*disregards and continues*)

This station was the crossroads of the community. Yesseree. And they'd take anything on the rattlers- gold, food, parcels, circus and farm animals. Gaw even corpses.....

It was impossible to have a crash (well nearly...) you couldn't have a head-on, cause you couldn't move one of the staffs until the other had been taken, signalman to ashcat- they were the firemen on the locos...

All done on those computers now, over by the clocktower somewhere. Useless bloody clocktower. Almost a hundred years it tookem to put in the clock, built 1891 and no clock til 1984!

Lucky I had me systems over here...gaw!

Signalman: And those monkeys on the signal gantry, over there by the crossing...

Woman: Stand and look from the signal box plaque.

Signalman: They had to refill the kero on the signal lamps and polish the brass while they were at it! Then the bosses would come check and if there was one fingerprint they'd have to do them all again!

Oh I did love me lanterns though- with the blue and red glasses, I'd set the trains on their way...And those trains, they were beauties...

Sometimes when I was working the late shift, me and Izzy would take the day to ride the trains, didn't matter where they was going... You'd think we'd be sick to death of trains but when we were on em, it was something else. She'd hang her head out the window and we'd eat in the dining car, and she wouldn't have to serve nobody...

If I knew the crew sometimes they'd let us on for free and one of those drivers, gaw he was a wreck of a bloke but he'd play tunes on the whistle chord and everyone would know old Fernie was at the helm...

Tune whistle

Just me now. Every day I see em come and go but me, I just stay here. In and out, go and stop, home and distant.

And my dreams too, they're tied to this place...(breaks out of reverie) Gaw it's drafty. Just having a smoke, you go ahead, I'll catch up with you...

Signalman (*repeating in stacato*):

Stop, start, look, listen

Come, go, home, distant

Woman: think, dream, hurry, linger

Eat. Drink. Forget. Remember

Signalman cough and SM music to fade

Woman: And so, We go a wanderin’

You will now cross back over the crossing and traffic lights the way you came and stand at the door at the back of coach house again. Press play when back at door where started. You’re getting the hang of it. Press pause now.

Woman: Ok. Hope you went to the toilet. Shoelaces tied? Ok lets go. *Steam whistle*

Music

Turn left along coach house and follow the yellow and green markings on the ground. Take care across the car park, years and years of goods rolling over this ground have left it pockmarked by wheels, furrowed by feet...

busy sounds of wagons etc

Woman: You’ll see a small greenish building on the left marked ‘ladies’ (*flags here*). Stop and stand by the gate looking toward the freight yard. You’ll see the big boxes, piled alongside discarded tracks and tyres... Go for a wander.

Concertina music and sounds of tent on the Ballarat Goldfields, 1854

Sounds of puffing on a pipe and throat clearing.

Signalman (*assuming voice of tourguide*):

Picture this: The city is going mad for gold, it’s less than ten years after Richard Sutton (that’s right- father of the inventor Thomas Sutton) drew crowds to his tent on the goldfields playing bush music and the railway is built, having forged bridges and cut through ravines, and the sound of the engine whistle is heard and settles in at Ballarat.

Sounds of steam

Signalman continues: April, 1862, and the first trip took councillors on the journey to Geelong and back, not without some trouble on the way with the ashcats having to jump off at Meredith to cut more firewood for the engine.

Wind and emptiness.

Woman: Wings and wheels and the dreams of men, here and there, now and then.

Woman: From the gate look to your right and walk towards ramp. Park yourself beneath windows near the old fire alarm.

Press pause if you’re not there yet, and play when you’re ready.

Signalman: Polished brass. As far as the eye can see. (*Assuming voice of tourguide*): That April day in 1862, celebrations were carried out with great pomp and festivity... In the evening a banquet was held at the Mechanics Institute full of ‘notable people.’

(*Recreate toasts*)

To the Health of the engineers and contractors of the Geelong-Ballararat Railway, namely Mr Higinbotham, the engineer in chief! Here here etc...

Shop windows were illuminated with stars of gas and the initials VR. The Victorian Railways.

Caitlin (recreated advertisement): A Choice Selection of Ball and Evening Dresses, of newest fashion and most exquisite designs, exactly suited to the auspicious occasion, The Railway Ball... now available at David Jones, cnr of sturt and armstrong sts.

Signalman: People complained of fares being too high (of course no change there!)

Music

Woman: Walk up the ramp past fire alarm and along, take care for weeds and pigeons.
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, stop at door 6 and peek through the gap in the door.

Music fade into Newsreader:

The goods shed is now ready for occupation. The building is a splendid affair both as regards space and substantiability. Three lines of rail traverse the way between the two platforms, over one hundred windows throwing light from the roof which covers in all of this spacious area of platform and railways...

Weave into Signalman: Where's that cat? Kept him here to keep the mice out of the grain. Izzy'd come and feed the poor thing. Keep scraps over and come and make sure he was fed...

Back into Music

Woman: Continue along to end of ramp and stand at the padlocked fence looking through to goods platform. (*red and green flags will be over there*)
Press pause if not there yet.

Woman: Beautiful

Signalman: Unique piece of heritage architecture that...

Woman: Follow the fenceline, see the bones of industry, of cats. Weaving our way...
Look out for and Stand on the no parking anytime marked on ground, then cross to the footpath and look for the Platform 2 entrance door. Watch out for cars.

Signalman: Ah yes, through the door. What! No door, they keep shifting things on me, Ah yes past the bushes, a little bit further...

Woman (*sings*): My signalman, stands on shifting sands...
Caught between...

Woman (*shake out, clear throat*): Stop at the end of bushes. Ok. Do you have your platform tickets ready?

Signalman: Ah, there's Frankie. Workin here like his father and grandfather before him. Deaf now, from all them pranks with the detonators... Show him yer ticket... You can't get on the train with that, just the platform.

This station is the crossroads of the community, everyone's passin through.

PERFORMER 1 checks ticket

Woman: Walk through the door, note the heritage door handle, and find a space to stand. New sounds and smells. Spend a moment looking at the maps on the walls, maps of time drawn with peeling paint, cracks, dirt, rain... feel the wooden floor... passageways from here to where? Wander over them.

Woman: To whom are all these travelling dreams addressed?

Different directions branching out like railway lines, maps, criss crossing, bell ringing, whistle blowing, where do they come to rest,
and on whose softly resting/ madly waiting... head?

Or to trees and distant houses, or caught up in the wind, lost, nowhere to alight,

directionless...

After the following instructions press pause on your ipod. Walk out onto Platform Two and stand near the old announcers box to your right then Press play. Take care on the platforms and be sure to stay behind the yellow line (danger zone!) Press Pause now.

Signalman: Damn busy on Platform 2 today. They must be heading to the picnic races, the Racecourse Specials...

Sound of horses hooves and excited children

Gaw, look at that beauty... she can ride (*steam engine sounds*). It used to be the main station over Platform 2...

Putting on tour voice: In 1881 The Minister of Railways the Honourable Thomas Bent opened the Ballarat Racecourse line wishing the success of the The Ballarat Turf Club by breaking a bottle of 'gold top' (only the best!) on the revolving wheel of the engine.

Smash! And cheers

Signalman: Go on, sing us a song Izzy

General cheers

SONG: 'You are My Sunshine'

Woman: Look down the platform away from the signalman's box.

Signalman (*shaking off past*): Ah but here we are and it's still midday. You'd think a railway station would have functioning clocks wouldn't you?

Woman: time stands still yet runs ever on...

Signalman: rolling, barrelling, ticking, streaming on, along the tracks both up and down- up was always to the city mind you...

Music

Woman: Walk along the platform towards clock.

Signalman: They tried to stop the pigeons with spikes on the awnings. They came back.

Woman: Turn left at the end of buildings on your left and stand at the edge of disused tracks.

Signalman: There were so many lines running at one point, nearly all closed now.

Woman:

lines to nowhere

Buried lines,

layers of earth and debris- tracks like telegraph lines, connecting beneath, gone now, with new things on top...

Music

Signalman repeating in stacato:

Stop, start, look, listen...

Come, go, home, distant

Woman: think, dream, hurry, linger

Eat. Drink. Forget. Remember

Woman: Take your time and continue walking up platform past pillars towards the semaphore arms that hang, rusted still, ripe for the picking of railroadiana, or is it railroadiana...Stop at the red light next to signal gantry and turn to look back towards the station.

To the left, the skyline, to the right the goods yard and panning further around, Black Hill...

Lean against the pillar or take a seat.

Stairs, ladders, chimneys, pathways- marked out in yellow or not, arches, bluestone, dust, concrete, rocks, driftwood, chocolate wrappers, bricks, rails, glass, wire, aluminium, tin, paint, bone, feather, fingerprints...

Weave in with the signalman repeating the train timetable from earlier

What are we made of? What moves us?

Take a step to the left so that you can see the clocktower- can you see the ladders?

Take out your postcard and pen, and address a passing thought or memory, a wish or fancy, to an imaginary traveller (from these days or days of past). It can be as everyday or extraordinary as you like.

Steam engine sounds

Take your time. Press play when you're ready to move on. Press pause on ipod now.

Woman: Hold on to your postcard and look out for where to post it on the other side of the station.

Walk back down platform toward bridge.

Music

Signalman: Hey there's Bert the Squirt, haven't seen him in a yonkers age. Does the posters along the platforms and he's got a voice on im- you should see the ladies swooning out the windows when he gets into it, big deep voice wooing away...

PERFORMER 2 comes up to people on tour, take hands and dances with them as he sings

Woman: Alright, enough of that- Walk down to door- you've got your platform ticket so won't be needing myki today

Signalman: Amen!

Walk around to stairs. Stop and look up. Walk slowly to top of bridge and look below.

Pipemoking and shuffling of papers. Signalman (assuming voice of tourguide):

: The direct line from Ballarat to Melbourne was established in December 1889 and due to an increase in patronage the station was upgraded, including a grand portico, stationmasters office and clocktower that were added in 1891.

Signalman (normal voice)- a clocktower without a clock, whoever heard of such a thing!

Woman: Are there any trains?

Signalman (assuming voice of tourguide): The Phoenix Factory was a huge Ballarat industry and icon and the company made 350 locomotive engines in 33 years for the Victorian Railways.

Signalman (normal voice): Pfft, they got closed down in 1906 when the government moved all the loco building down to Newport, or should I say UP? (*cheeky*)

They even had their own Brass Band, the Phoenix boys did.

Brass band starts

They played up here to celebrate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Signalman: 1887 and they had the place decked out in Chinese lanterns, and gaw those boys could play..Me and Izzy we danced and danced down there on the...what! They've moved it... (*confusion*) Oh and we met those royals too, well maybe not met.. the duke in 87, no 67,

and Lady Di in 83, after the fire that was... These buggers really knew how to put on a show! Polished brass, as far as the eye can see...

Music and excited crowd

Newsreader: Excuse me there, how are you feeling on this momentous occasion??

Signalman: Well it depends which way you look at it, doesn't it?

Woman: Or which side of the tracks you're on...

Newsreader: Oh... well... *Calls to someone else-* how about you little boy?

Fade out music

Woman: Look UP towards city then go to other side and look DOWN towards signal box. There's his house on stumps, ladder to the stars, to the signalbox.

Woman: Walk down the other side of the stairs and go left out onto Platform 1. You must be getting thirsty... Walk down the platform to your right.

SONG- 'I've Been Working on the Railroad'

Signalman: There used to be a fruit stall and store there near the refresh. And a lass with a basketful of fruit,... What was her name? She'd go round selling em as the people got on and off the trains, and she'd bring me my baccy too...

Should be here any minute I'd say... (*getting time mixed up*) Oh no, she's been gone a while now...

PERFORMER 3 *Fruitseller with basketfull of fruit.*

Woman: Enter the Refreshment Rooms
Press pause if not there yet.

Make your way through slowly and sit at the far end of the bar.

PERFORMER 4 *Barwoman serves them a ginger beer*

Signalman: Some strange things went on around here.... Look, I was never involved but I heard about them railwaymen Goose brothers. To get in with that crew you had to stand on one leg and drink 9 pints of beer, then you were sworn in and given signs, signs! And they'd have processions with songs and costumes. One of em called himself Grand Gander and he wore a 3ft long helmet with a bleedin' horses tail. One of the signs was pulling a cork from a bottle, meaning the brother was broke and in need of some watering, if you know what I mean, and you'd have to take him down to the nearest pub for a shout....

Sounds of a bustling dining room with jazz

Signalman: Ah me heart, Isobelle- she worked in the refreshment rooms. Oh that little hat and pinny, it did me in it did... And they lived up above in the clocktower... She really loved to dance, one day we snuck out onto the balcony and pretended we were right royalty waving down at the people... Sometimes I still hear her singing...

But the refresh... yes in the refresh, the Station master would come and report how many passengers were on board and any changes to the timetable. It took a train 3 hours from Melbourne to Ballarat, and trains to Adelaide, Mildura, Dimboola, Maryborough, Hamilton and Geelong also passed through full of hungry bellies and dry whistles... She used to laugh,

telling me how “Even before the train stopped people would run into the refreshment room to be served...then they’d be running when they heard the departure bell.”

Ring ring ring

Woman: Sit a while then leave the Refreshment Rooms. Press pause until standing outside again. Press play when back on Platform

Woman: Turn right and walk to end of buildings and round to the carriage shed on right

Signalman: In the lean times, some blokes (and ladies) couldn’t afford to buy a ticket so there’d be bums ‘waltzing their mathilda’s’ from town to town. Mostly goods trains they were, filled with stinky animals, gaw not my idea of luxury but it got them to their next ration card...

Gaw, sometimes we were cold and hungry too...But you’re put where you’re put, aren’t ya?...

Woman: Walk around to carriage shed and look through bars.

Signalman (*assuming voice of tourguide*): No standing area. Watch your step.

Woman (*determined*): Stand a while.

Signalman: Where the trains come to sleep

Woman: Secured with bluestone and barbed wire...

Signalman (*assuming voice of tourguide*):

“In June 1968 Ballarat heard it’s last steam engine whistle...”

The passing of the steam era in the mid 20th century was a sad occasion for most train fanciers. Gone were the whistles, jets of steam, distinctive coal smell and gone too were some of the engineering marvels of the 19th century.

EPITAPH TO A STEAM ENGINE

(Warren Fahey)

*My engine now is cold and still
No water does my boiler fill
My coke affords its flame no more
My days of usefulness are over
My wheels deny their want of speed
No more my guiding hand they need
My whistle too has lost its tone
Its shrill and shrilling sounds are gone
My valves are now thrown open wide
My flanges all refuse to guide
My clocks although once so strong
Refuse their aid in the busy throng
No more I feel each urging breath
My steam is all condensed to death
Life's railway over each station past
In death I'm stripped and rest at last
Farewell dear friends and cease to weep
Beyond the the carriage shed I sleep
Pause*

Woman: Walk along the bluestone shed towards the carpark, feel the stone, and look for the red Fire Alarm. Stand beside it.

Signalman: That didn't do much good when the fire took over the clocktower...
Repeating from earlier 100 years it took them to put the clock in, a hundred years...

Sound of sirens and clock tolling

Newsreader: Instead of carriages, fire engines flanked the Historic Ballarat Station building early this morning... 'Two clocks stopped at 5.05am, giving employees a chilling reminder of the exact time fire took hold.'

Signalman (*sad*) In the Refresh, Pies were fourpence (that's ah three cents) (*trying to be strong but reliving the pain*), and wages were four pounds (about \$8 a week) and the only protection against fire were red buckets filled with water...

Music

Woman: Walk to the edge of shed and stop. Watch out for cars.

Signalman: Right there, outside the carriage shed troops gathered in 1916 to catch the train to Geelong and to war... (*still feeling nostalgic*)
'The station was crowded with people to farewell the troops' and the Railway commissioners decided that gifts for soldiers would be carried free of charge...
I stayed. I stayed... (*mind wandering*)

Woman: Be careful of cars (*sounds of many boots on ground*), walk towards the grand front entry of the station and go inside.

Signalman repeating in stacato:

Stop, start, look, listen...

Come, go, home, distant

Woman: think, dream, hurry, linger

Eat. Drink. Forget. Remember

Signalman: That stain glass skylight survived the fire but lot's didn't... ash and twisted frames. (*Slipping time*)

Gaw, it's bloody cold in here, they oughta close it in, bloody freezing...

Oh but they've put the telephone in- a sixpence slot telephone machine! Well!

Woman: Nice and warm now, find a seat somewhere and sit a while.

They come and go (*echoing Signalman*), in and out, this way and that, commuters in the evening, tourists on the weekend... they swell and dissappear.

Woman: If you haven't written your postcard yet, take a moment to do it now....

Travelling dreams on the heads of wanderers-

Dreams of speed, dreams of ladders, dreams of need, dreams of calm, dreams of distance, dreams of home...

After the following instructions press pause on your ipod. You will stand up and walk around the waiting area. Take your time. Don't forget to look at the big map. When ready, press play and walk through to the booking office, once the busy postal area. Press pause now.

Sounds of carriages coming to doors, hustle and bustle, horses

Signalman (*assuming voice of tourguide*): Did you know, the Parcels department at Ballarat West (signalman- that's what they called this place when there was Ballarat east down yonder too) was first manned by a Mr Wills- brother of the one and only explorer!

Woman: Well, fancy that. Sit down or stand by the lockers and look out the window. Can you see the signalman's wheel? Steering the trains home, delivering dreams and signals. See the old parcel carts behind you. They'd be piled high...

busy sounds

Signalman (*cough*): I don't make it over that way much these days but Ah, Dessie the postmaster- poor bugger. They'd put anything on those trains. One day they got the willies scared outta them when a package arrived marked "Taylor, Ballarat" and whaddya know- all that was inside was a snake! This Taylor character never showed his face. We had a good laugh about that one.

Woman: Get your postcard ready to post with Dessie. See if he has anything for you.

PERFORMER 5 *receives postcard and returns another from bag*

Woman: Walk out the sliding doors and the big wooden doors, and imagine the horses lined up with their packages and letters...

turn right and walk toward the platform fence. Stand on yellow square (the yellow plastic road) and follow it to the end.

Woman: And now, as before, the people stream in and out, crisscrossing footsteps, making patterns on the ground, in the air...

Signalman: But there was nothing like those steam engines, slow and dirty but each like a living thing with it's own quirks and quirbles...
And there were none of those signal failures either!

Woman: Look to your left, at the building directly across from bustop

Signalman: Routes of story marked there on that wall, with faded posters and creeping ivy, layers of life...

Woman: Walk through glass doors and stand at red signal next to crossing and look across at signal box. Press pause if you're not there yet.

Signalman: Criss cross, criss cross, they come and they go...

(*repeat from earlier*) Every day I see em come and go but me, I just stay here. In and out, go and stop, home and distant.

And my dreams too, they're tied to this place... addressed to noone in particular...

And at night, before I go to sleep, I always see the ladders. Set against the charred walls, the shell of that once great palace, I begin to climb. Sometimes it takes all night- a whole night's dreaming- going from ladder to ladder, slipping sometimes, breaking bones, making discoveries, but then I reach the clocktower, and I stay there till dawn...

Woman:

He's tired now. Let him rest. In the land of steam, and brass, and smoke and glass...

Cross back to Coach House and return inside through the front door

SM music

When back in the Coach House people will be invited into the tearoom (with fireplace) and to reflect a moment. They can also leave their details if interested in Rail Heritage group etc