

Phillip Adams ([00:00:02](#)):

I'm 79 today do the math. It means I was born about a week before John Howard as the second world war was breaking out. So my childhood took place during the greatest horror story in human history. When tens of millions, hundreds of millions died the era of Holocaust, a war, which ended with Russia and Nagasaki had amazingly segwayed into the cold war, which in many ways was as proud and profoundly traumatic as generations had to grow up under the under the mushroom cloud. It seems to me, it seems to me that you've, timing's everything I could have chosen a better time in history.

Phillip Adams ([00:01:06](#)):

I can't think, let me put it another way. There just, I can't think of a time, which was briefly so full of hope, which ended so full of disappointment. We came out of the sixties with the exuberant victory of the civil rights movement with the the overwhelming defeat of Vietnam. And we were looking forward to a glorious era. It would manifest itself in this country with golf Whitlam in the state with Don Dunstan, and it was good to be alive. It was so exciting. And then almost immediately things started to go belly up. I I find it hard to think that a world would you just got through Vietnam could possibly embroil itself in an equal madness, perhaps a greater madness of the of the middle Eastern ball that Wayne could have played such a major part in collaborating with the George W. Bush in inventing weapons of mass destruction to justify what goes on or is even worse now as the total disintegration of the region.

Phillip Adams ([00:02:48](#)):

But if we bring that close to home, if we bring it here, I just to amuse myself, I write down a list of, of the issues that I hold to be currently of significance around the place. And heavens above we're on the we're on the losing side in every one of them reconciliation, it remains as far away forever. The old restatement has being brushed aside by government refugees, the international calamity, the refugee movement in Australia, a national and international disgrace. Our treatment of refugees it's inspirational to the Trump administration. I mean, that makes you feel proud. Doesn't it? The great new threat about time in climate change, we started talking about climate change here at the festival take hides ago. And it seemed to me that one of the things that was going to happen, particularly with the death of the cold war was that this would bring humanity together, that we would find a common cause and do something about it.

Phillip Adams ([00:04:14](#)):

Well, as you know, as you know, we haven't side issues, I guess like the Republic, or seemed like a good idea, a new flag, oh, sign a drug laws. If there is a greater failure of public policy in modern history, it has to be the insanity of drug laws, which have made the situation infinitely worse and continue and continue to do so. Everyone knows they're nonsensical. No one has the guts, the guts to change them last Sunday, I cut the ribbon at a rally in Sydney to save the ABC. How extraordinary that after all these years, we are still holding rallies to save the ABC. And it's, it's serious. The ABC has never been in more profound danger. It's had its enemies. It's been under attack as long as I can remember, but I know from up close and personal, the attacks on the ABC survival on its very existence are tenacious, but then a public broadcasting, anything with public as the adjective, whether it's public health, public education, public libraries, having subpar public tour.

Phillip Adams ([00:05:45](#)):

That's the term that becomes not an adjective pride, but a target, a target for destruction. Domestic very, very little has been gained. Bigotry is appalling. I remember faith band was saying to me that she doubted that the the famous indigenous referenda would pass if if we had them today, why faith and we more bigoted? She said, no, but bigotry is better organized the phasing out of fossil fuel, the great barrier reef and the menace of Trump and [inaudible] hungry and Poland. So I was thinking about this and something remembered a story which I've long loved. And it's about another old culture like me sitting on stage being grumpy. His name was PEBLO Casals. And my Robin, he was a warrior with music and excels was his 18 80th at this time. And all the, the UN all the media had gathered in Madrid.

Phillip Adams ([00:07:08](#)):

And he was this guy who was an absolute symbol of defiance, an absolute warrior against everything that Franco had ever, ever stood for. And he's banging away. Like I'm going crook, being a grumpy old man. And suddenly he fell silent and there was a pause. And then he said two things, and I love the two things. They don't seem to fit together a all, they seem to be contrapuntal, but I think they fit together perfectly. And he said, the situation is hopeless. We must take the next step. And that is what we have to do. We have no choice, no matter how appalling the world, Trump is no matter how appalling our, his local allocate helicopter echo hearts, no matter how monstrous the risks and the danger and the cruelties that provide around the world, we have no other choice, but to follow Casals example.

Phillip Adams ([00:08:23](#)):

And as Casals said it than me, say it again, the situation is hopeless. We must take the next step. What can a singer do to change the world through art and ideas from Casals certainly helped change his world through his chiller. The best plan would be modeled themselves on Robin, Robin entre from post-war prospect to cold war Berlin. And then back again to every, every venue and festival in Australia, she's been making human meaning in a world that can always do with more of that in the CV. You'll see that she was clearly a child prodigy, but it's not entirely accurate. I happened to know that she was singing before she was born in usually much to the astonishment of the the people in the labeled as a singer. She changed a stuffy local musical scene by creating that sophisticated, intelligent cabaret space between the two establishments of classic and pulp reading, a saving hardening dust hardly helps. There is nothing. She has some time and energies, unlike mine, absolutely. An athlete undiminished ladies and gentlemen, let us welcome to the stage, the quite astonishing Robin Archer [inaudible]

Robyn Archer ([00:10:08](#)):

Thank you, Philip and Bon [inaudible]. Thank you so much. And thank you, auntie Georgina for your warm and so wise. Welcome this evening. I acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land we meet on this evening, the garner people of the Adelaide Plains. I pay my respects to their elders past present and emerging and extend that respect to all other first peoples joining us tonight and thank them all for their continuing contribution to our shared culture. It was the much echoed, still echoing cry of jobs and growth that reminded me of the German poet and playwright, Bertolt Brecht, poem, freedom and democracy, or the anachronistic procession. We'll get to that in due course. The words, freedom and democracy have long acquired a status of unquestioned ability, just like jobs and growth. They are words which lure us unwittingly into the equally questionable territory of core values. Things to be treasured when we have them and fought for when we don't.

Robyn Archer ([00:11:13](#)):

My experience is that the minute you start to dig a little deeper into the meanings of those words, you discover infinite shades of interpretation and misunderstanding. It is widely assumed that when the democratically elected representatives, we choose to govern the country on our behalf, all join in the chorus of jobs and growth. The majority of the populace is content with the idea that they are the most important things to consider in our lives for our futures and for the future harmony and stability of our country. Yet scientists, Brian Walker, questions, this continuing cry for growth. When what the planet urgently demands is reduction urgent reduction of our, our waste, our carbon footprint, and why the illusion of endless job creation when Japanese roboticist Hiroshi Ishiguro asserts that the process of evolution evolution over the next 1000 years or so will see us as no longer organic because the planet will no longer be able to support the organic human everything that we know now.

Robyn Archer ([00:12:15](#)):

And our, and feel as humans may have been fed into robotic forms, which by then will be much clearer, clever, more durable, more perceptive, and perhaps even more sensitive than we are and will not demand the organic forms of food and water and clean air, which the planet can no longer supply the organic human form mate, by then have found somewhere else in the universe to colonize. But here on earth, we might be over or as asks the t-shirt observed at London's Victoria and Albert museum for the current exhibition. The future starts here. If Mars is the answer, what is the question? Why focus on job model was now hundreds of years old robots are already capable of doing most of the jobs we do and will take over so many more in the future. Current thinking on the future of jobs seems no more advanced today than it was when communism's hope was that the machine age would free us up from daily drudgery and leave us all so many more hours for creative pursuits.

Robyn Archer ([00:13:20](#)):

This is what the smart robot will tell you right now in almost exactly the same words I'm going to do all that dreary work for you. So you will have more time for creativity, but who is teaching us, who is preparing us for this surfeit of creative hours? Where was the army of educators preparing an entire generation for the casualization of labor? We artists have learned to deal with insecurity, flexibility, constant change, and the gifts which sometimes unexpected periods of free time can offer, but free time outside the creative professions appears to be not so much about free thinking and the pursuit of knowledge, but having holidays and acquiring more status symbols, thus I question jobs and growth. And of course in some quarters, this will already be considered heresy, somewhat an Australian or an American not to accept just on face value. That jobs and growth are unquestionably the most important things.

Robyn Archer ([00:14:20](#)):

And remember, I have earned my living for more than 40 years now, only by contract, never an ounce of security, no holiday pay, no sick pay, no overtime, no such thing as scheduled weekends or nights off, I don't turn up. I don't get paid. So I don't speak from a privileged position of a secure job growth. I question and jobs have already changed and will change. Again. I question these notions, happy to be convinced that they are the most important things. If someone can argue convincingly for them, but I demand their interrogation just as I do freedom and democracy, just so the poet and playwright, Bertolt Brecht questioned these ideas. And in 1947, brutally satirized the catch cry of freedom and democracy. They too are words which are now being challenged and interrogated. A new, I should say, early on that the two things freedom and democracy are related, but neither guarantees the other nor are either as easily defined as most imagined.

Robyn Archer ([00:15:23](#)):

Brett's poem was written in 1947, presumably in California, widespread departed in October of that year, the day after testifying, before the house un-American activities committee, this committee, which appealed to Americans to denounce fellow Americans were set up in the context of American democracy. As my late mentor, his wife and Willard would always refer to it, having fled Germany's national socialism. Now fleeing America's democracy from California break spent a year in Zurich, but returned to Berlin and the years of construction, probably because of the offer to have a theater there, the tower to shift Val, where he and his wife Halena Vogel would establish the Berliner ensemble. What kind of a person does it take to look something squarely in the eye without compromise to understand just how bad it is yet still have hope. And in this case, more importantly, to believe that a theater company could help to change things.

Robyn Archer ([00:16:23](#)):

Brex was inspired by Percy Shelley's poem of 1819, which he wrote after receiving news of the Peterloo massacre in Manchester. Shelly's poem had been submitted to the examiner in the same year and after his death in 1822, his widow, Mary Shelley also submitted it, but it was not published until 1830, two more than 20 years after it was written. John Mullen has written Shelley's friend. The publisher Lee hunt felt that it could not be safely published. So-called gagging acts had been introduced to restrict published political protest. The perpetrators of the massacre had already been exonerated, but the organizers of the demonstration had been imprisoned. Shelly's mask of anarchy describes a parade of the ghastly powers, murder, fraud, hypocrisy, and finally anarchy pale, and a mounted on a white horse. And a key has a mark on his brow. I am God and king and law for me, whose politics were eventually shaped by the songs of the American protest movement of the 1960s.

Robyn Archer ([00:17:30](#)):

I hear in my own teenage voice, as well as that of Bob Dylan, whose songs I sang with passion with God on my side in Shelly's poem, anarchy represents the abusive and disruptive forces of those in power trampling, the multitudes who have surrendered to him and his followers, priests, bankers, monarchs, hope he's portrayed as a frail maiden, only rescued by the masses who in this prophetic vision choose at last to resist the grotesques oppressing them. And if then the tyrants dare let them ride among you there slash and stab a name and a hue. What they like, they didn't let them do with folded arms and steady eyes and little fear and less surprise. Look upon them as slay till their rage has died away. It is very definition of passive resistance and was inspirational stuff in London. A few weeks ago, breezing through tape Britain, I accidentally came across the JMT JMW Turner painting originally thought to relate to the four horsemen of the apocalypse, but was in fact, his response to this same poem, the Brex poem stares at post-war Germany with uncompromising gaze.

Robyn Archer ([00:18:46](#)):

The thing I have most admired in is this poet poets, never failing ability to see and describe the worst and not avert his gaze to maintain that there is always bad in the good and good in the bad think of mother courage. How do we feel such sympathy for a woman profiteering from war it's because he refuses to observe her or more importantly, let us observe her through a prism of cliché. He attempts to get an unadorned truths. Are we any longer able to see clearly, are we able to Pierce the clouds sometimes walls of cliché and half-truths and deliberate emission to see what's going on? Should this skill top the list of basic education for all? Is there not the most urgent need for every human being

young and old to be educated in the crafts of analysis and perception for all of us to have an equal chance to determine some authentic version of the truth?

Robyn Archer ([00:19:46](#)):

Not only does Brecht not shy away from admitting what he really sees and telling it like it is, but he actually described this vision of post-war Germany and with choices open to him, decided to return their freedom and democracy. Bertolt Brecht translated by John Willett spring returned to Germany. And in the ruins you could see early green Birch leaves unfold, graceful, tentative, and bold. As from many as Southern valley voters left their homes to rally forming a disjointed column underneath two banners, solemn who supports were all wormy eaten their inscription weather beaten though. It's just appeared to be freedom and democracy. Every church bells started ringing soldiers, widows airman's women, orphaned shellshocked, crippled, raped, open mouth. The Watchers gaped and the death could tell the blind who it was that marched behind such a slogan as maybe freedom and democracy at the head of feather brain saying with all his might and main alongs or fall, God save the king and the dollar clean, clean, clean in several verses Brecht observes the poorly hidden traces of Nazi sympathizers all now equally bellowing for freedom and democracy.

Robyn Archer ([00:21:11](#)):

He continues then the faceless trust directors, those men's patrons and protect us pray for our arms industry, freedom and democracy keeping step next March, the teachers toadying brain corrupting creatures for the right to educate boys to butchery and hate. Then the medical advisors Hitler's slaves mankind's despise us asking might they now select a few reds to vivisect three grim dawns whose reputation rests on mass extermination stake, their claim for chemistry, freedom and democracy. After them behold, the former editors of strikers, [inaudible] all set to protest unless we get freedom of the press next in line on us. Taxpayers, once renowned as Semites slayers gagged today want guarantees for the new minorities as for those parliamentarians who in Hitler's day were Ariens and now oppose as barristers freedom for such gifts as they is while the black market man asked why he came out on the March unconditionally replies to preserve free enterprise.

Robyn Archer ([00:22:28](#)):

And the judge. Now this is rich wields outmoded laws by which Hitler Hitler ISSED up to the hilt. He finds men like himself, not guilty. Poets painters and musicians seeking grub in good positions, noble souls, who now assure us they were no friends of the fewer, his strength through joy Dames, spies, drew, baiters, guest stars, investigators, tax gifts, interest stimulators, era dentist, liberator's blood and dirt elective allies winding over Hills and valleys. Belched stank squirted out their plea, freedom and democracy. And then the parade reaches Munich misinformed in misery. See it's baffled bourgeoisie, standing where their houses stood, lacking certainties and food. As the smelly column, staggers through the rebel with its banners by the brown house, there's a surge and six silent shades emerge in six cars. Those six assorted party members are transported while the crowd shouts. Now we'll see freedom and democracy.

Robyn Archer ([00:23:42](#)):

And he goes on to describe these three monstrous shades in the six cars, bringing up the rear bony hand, grasping a whip. First oppression takes a trip in a half track, furnished free by our heavy industry in a rusty tank, much greeted next comes plague. His breath is fitted to conceal his flaking skin. He wraps a brown scarf around his chin. After him, see fraud appear brandishing a jug of beer. You will get your

glasses filled when you have, let him take your children older than the Hills, and yet still out for what he can get. Stupidity staggers on board riveted. He stares at fraud. Lolling back as at a play murder. Two is on the way, perfectly at ease as he hums sweet dream of Liberty. Shakened by the latest crisis robbery materializes in field Marshall's uniform with the globe tucked under arm. Each of these six grizzly figures firmly based with ready triggers says that there has got to be freedom and democracy lurching.

Robyn Archer ([00:24:55](#)):

A huge hearse came last. Once those six monsters have passed inside, which unseen and Richard who can tell what race lies. Stretched cold winds blow a Requiem from the ruins over them. Former tenants of the flats that once stood here, then great rats. Leave the rubble in their masses. Join the column as it passes squeaking freedom as they flee freedom and democracy, can any of us imagined seeing a country in that way and choosing to go there to return there. Even though we had a perfect setup, not to have to return choosing to return and to make things better. Is it possible that one of the many criteria we might adopt to define freedom is the ability to look things squarely in the face. Sometimes the worst of things and not gloss over them, no runaway from them, but choose to stay and try to fix them.

Robyn Archer ([00:25:57](#)):

Perhaps this is not just compassion or civil, a human responsibility, but actually a part of what being free really means Shelly's earlier poems suggested what freedom is, what are they'll freedom, Oakwood slaves answer from their living graves. This demand tyrants would flee like a dreams. Dim imagery they'll are not as imposter. Say a shadow soon to pass away a superstition and a name echoing from the cave of fame for the laborer though, outbred and a commonly table spread from his daily labor. Come in a neat and happy home. They'll art clothes and fire and food for the trampled multitude, no in countries that are free. Such starvation cannot be as in England. Now we see there are justice now for gold, may they righteous laws be sold as low as are in England, thou shields alike, the high and low there out wisdom, free men, never dream that God will forever.

Robyn Archer ([00:26:56](#)):

All who think those things untrue of which priests make such a do science poetry and thought are they lamps? They make the lot of the dwellers in a cot. So serene, they curse it, not spirit patients, gentleness, all that can adorn and to bless art thou let deeds, not words, express dine, exceeding loveliness in the wake of Brecht's poem, there was a challenge to artistic freedoms and there's a whole other can of worms at the outset. Let's just be clear that artists are not completely free, not even in our own great democracy or indeed in other great Western democracies. One of the songs I sang last night in the third of my arts Centre, Melbourne concerts probably offended some in the audience, but I am free to sing it from the throat. Any opera, the ballad of sexual obsession included back in the program for obvious reasons at this time, a song written 90 years ago and still frighteningly pertinent in this moment.

Robyn Archer ([00:27:59](#)):

In other places in the world today, it would certainly have me silenced and perhaps jailed. I have often said that the arts are the safest place for a dangerous conversation. The question becomes, how do you set up that dangerous conversation? When certain representations are no longer tolerated the British playwright, David Edgar spoke eloquently on this. When Britain passed a law some years ago for bidding the glorification of terrorists or terrorist activities, he quoted the example of a playwright whose work

had been accused in a newspaper review of sympathizing with the terrorist character in his play. The young playwright sued the newspaper, the newspaper one, and bankrupted this emerging talent who had portrayed onstage a jihadist much admired by his followers. The critic of the play had simply concluded wrongly that the playwright also admired the central character. That of course was not the case. And ed got elaborated on the danger for all artists of being accused of direct association with the characters they portray on stage in visual art in novels.

Robyn Archer ([00:29:04](#)):

For some reason, it doesn't quite seem to count in the same way in films, villains of all kinds fill our various screens. We don't attribute to the writer director, a positive association. Nevertheless, the question remains, how can you ever construct the dangerous conversation without successfully and explicitly depicting the most evil of forces? How can an artist give us the enormous privilege of entering into a context of moral dilemma without convincing us for a few hours that we ourselves are at risk and forcing us to decide where we stand on an issue or what we might do when faced with danger, all this without ever actually being in peril. How is that possible? If you are not free to portray the villains and the way they are supported and encouraged by their followers, as well as those who expose them, the heroes, if you like the case that arose in directly from Brecht's poem concerned the freedom of the artist in 1980, during the Bundestag elections, a group created a political theater piece based on Brecht's poem.

Robyn Archer ([00:30:06](#)):

It was a street theater pageant performed in various places throughout Germany with vehicles and costumes and portrayals of the monsters as in bricks poem. And the poem itself was sometimes read as part of the action in a final car in the parade appearing amongst the grotesques was a figure interpreted as being one of the candidates in the upcoming election minister, president France, Joseph Strauss, one local jurisdiction sued the actor for defamation, especially in implying a link between Strauss and the Nazis. And they won the actor and company then took the case to the federal parliament and had that decision overturned. I haven't been able to research further yet to see what happened when it returned to the local jurisdiction, but the federal decision was significant. The Texas law school has a detailed account of the case online, but in short, the ruling was that street theater cannot be separated from formal theater or poetry or any other genre in terms of the protections given to artists.

Robyn Archer ([00:31:07](#)):

There's a fascinating description on that words, website of the failure to define art in absolutes, but a robust statement of the individual rights of artists to express their views without fear of breaking any law. And in fact, that very protection grew out of the worst excesses of silencing artists that is punishment and murder for expressing opinions that differ from those of the ruling national socialist party in the 1930s, not different from the cultural revolution under matter Mau or indeed the cultural dictates of many and oppressive regime unload. However, just to dwell on historical examples and claim us as somehow squeaky clean in all this. First of all, there are things which few would now not dare to include in art. I hesitate even to name the kinds of things which would see our exhibitions or plays shut down. Our songs struck off our books not published.

Robyn Archer ([00:32:03](#)):

Interestingly, there has been the recent refusal to publish Clive Hamilton's book, which criticizes China's influence in Australia will authors in future hold their tongue on that issue to avoid non-publication

ideas. Say that the majority of artists already exert a high degree of self censorship in order not to cause problems for themselves or their colleagues. We are not free to say exactly what we think well in some countries are for send others may well be free to do so as we are here, but at what cost in recent times, both Catherine Deneuve and Jermaine Greer have attracted huge criticism for saying what they actually think about the me too movement. And this is now in an atmosphere, much change from a time when a ticking off might happen in a mass media outlet. And over in a few days, don't mistake me. If me two managers to curb violent or uninvited excessive and predatory behavior, especially with the inappropriate exercise of power over anyone is involved.

Robyn Archer ([00:33:02](#)):

Then it's a good thing. It's a moment when he, the two self suppressed voices are unleashed, but surely freedom and democracy should mean that critical voices can also be heard. That's the essence of the freedom that we can have the conversation, not just jump on any popular bandwagon and make it hard for the real debate to occur. The dominance of social media now means that not only good and productive opinions can be widely shared, but outrage and misinformation and ignorance can be widespread, a million fold and last a very long time and have immediate effect and consequences. Majority opinion can now have devastating effects either way. And that goes for the process of democracy as well in order not to attract public criticism, not to feel that an artist is putting their career in danger or their family's income in jeopardy, many core issues of humanity are not addressed in the arts if addressed somewhat glossed over, not taken head on as in the Brit poem or if addressed head on what effect do they have visual artists, Susan Norrie addresses environmental danger head-on does it change policy with similar concern?

Robyn Archer ([00:34:17](#)):

Tacit Adeen portrays the landscape in monumental modes. Does the inspiration of landscape have just as powerful effect on policy makers as the political statement, nothing like a shock to a policymaker to spring them into action. The undeniable vision of torture dying sheep had a quick effect and rapid action, but does art ever have the same effect for this reason? I suspect the comment of [inaudible] remains forever with me in a panel in Amsterdam, this Iranian playwright playwright who had already been constricted into the army to do national service, who is still unable to get a visa to visit the USA said he often found people saying how hard it must be for him to do his work in Iran. He said, no, I do my work. I get shut down a few times a year. If I wasn't shut down, I'd know I'm not doing my job.

Robyn Archer ([00:35:13](#)):

Then he said, and this was the thrust, you know, in the west, you talk about your freedom of expression. You can say anything you want. I think you are free to say anything you want because no one is listening to you. And it's true. There are a couple, all of things that can shut an artists down in the current climate. We are all obliged as members of this democracy, to the laws, whether we agree with them or not. This demark democracy limits, many of our freedoms, we are forbidden for instance, to take other people's lives. Except if we are part of the defense forces who are obliged to kill on our behalf, but we are forbidden to take the life of someone we love most deeply, even when that person is in the worst extremities of pain and begs us to take their life. This of course yields up one of those powerful grotesques about time hypocrisy since we know full well that a blessing form of assisted dying takes place every day.

Robyn Archer ([00:36:09](#)):



In those places, that house, elderly people, we are living a lie and we simply choose to gloss over it. However, these are all things which in our democracy and artist is free to portray. Even with some sympathy or criticism of the killer, we are free to enter this dangerous conversation, but are we free to portray these things because no artists will ever stop war or get the law changed? Nope, that's not how it works. The artist finds a persuasive way to put the audience into that situation and someone or several or many people in that audience feel something. And if they feel it deeply enough, they may be compelled to go out and do something about the situation we are here free to criticize those we elected, but we have to be careful about how we criticize them or that could lead to a defamation case.

Robyn Archer ([00:36:57](#)):

And interestingly, critics and comics in the United States are freer than we are in that respect. We are free to create works of art about the worst aspects of our society. Let's say child abuse or domestic violence, but I doubt any artist is free to represent a child or wife abuser in any kind of positive light, a kind of Brechtian sympathy for even the minuscule. Good in an otherwise nasty character seems tricky these days, even those who get close to the topic simply portraying children in certain lights, for instance, can be shut down children in art, except in the most saccharin of context become a no-go area and satirizing or interrogating. Religion is now a minefield. We may have the illusion of freedom of expression, but there are now many shades of freedom, many micro-moments of self-censorship and the tendency not to fix the absolutely crystal clear gays and say exactly what one thinks of dwelt on the idea of freedom and the necessity to keep questioning what that word means rather than democracy, because it is surely become so evident that democracy is a loaded term.

Robyn Archer ([00:38:09](#)):

John Keen's excellent book, the rise and fall of democracy in its opening chapter quickly dispels any mythology around the idea of democracy. He tells us it was not invented in Athens, but centuries earlier east of Athens in the region, we now find Iran or Iraq. He opens up the idea of a concept that is different in different times and places, and always needing to change and adapt like freedom. It is concept to be questioned, not blindly and blindly accepted as something concrete and immutable, even though it is now the most popular form of government on the planet. Even this week, we are reminded with his widow's departure to Germany of Nobel peace prize Laureate, the late Lucia Bose plea for democracy in China, if core to the idea of representative democracy is a right to participate in the election of those who govern us and the acceptance that majority rules who can be surprised that I would question democracy and its fragile city.

Robyn Archer ([00:39:07](#)):

When the government I voted for was sacked by our monarchs representative and Jenny Hawking's book. The dismissal dossiya now makes plain that the palace was completely aware of what was going on. It was her research of John Kerr's. Private papers only made accessible after 37 years, that revealed how much the palace knew while we were being told they knew nothing. Her argument is that we had a right to know that in this democracy, we had a right to the truth. Incidentally, I was in rehearsal for my first opening opera. The day Whitlam was sacked. I walked into the rehearsal room in Hindmarsh and while director wall cherry and dramator John Willard were sparkingly aware. The rest of the company seemed undisturbed Wal and John immediately changed the ending of the play so that it was the governor general who descended from the clouds in the finale and save the robber maketh skin in the subsequent production in the Playhouse here.

Robyn Archer ([00:40:05](#)):

This deliberate piece of political commentary seemed to go absolutely unnoticed over the heads of the audience. And I ask again and again, does art really matter? Does it ever really make a difference? Most recently, Yasha Munk and David Runciman are among the many commentators on the current state of democracy, Yasha amongst the people versus democracy. Why our freedom is in danger and how to save. It emphasizes two emerging systems from the disintegration of liberal democracy, illiberal democracy. He cites Switzerland. That is democracy without rights and undemocratic, liberalism or rights without democracy. He cites the European union whose decisions are made entirely by bureaucrats and a parcel of largely disengaged politicians. Once you have this kind of framework, daily events feel clearer to interpret a couple of weeks ago, SBS television news began with a report on the Turkish elections. It showed images of a massive opposition gathering with a comment.

Robyn Archer ([00:41:08](#)):

It doesn't look like Turkish democracy is on the rocks, but followed with the commentary that this rally was not reported in the press or on Turkish television, which instead covered Erdogan's pet new project, a new airport. This is of course because of the government's control of mass media there. The report also added that during the state of emergency declared by Irvine 150,000 people have been detained. So yes, people free to vote, but what is the context of their vote with victory? Irwin has immediately begun the process of giving himself infinitely greater executive powers. That report on SPS was immediately followed by one from the USA with president Trump just two days after endorsing more liberal treatment of illegal immigrant kids, giving a press conference, surrounded by the families of people who had been killed by illegal immigrants. These are both examples of increasingly illiberal democracies, where greater restrictions in the mass media make it harder for citizens to determine the truth.

Robyn Archer ([00:42:09](#)):

Incidentally, in Ron Simmons, appraisal of the U S in his book, he tells us that violence there has increased by 10% in the last 10 years, that more than 50 people a month are shot to death in Chicago. And that suicide rates are up to the point where more Americans currently shoot themselves than shoot others. Can we any longer take seriously? The jargon of democracy, Mexicans have just had a turnaround election. Well, the new president and his left leaning party be able to take steps to avoid the last decades record of 200,000 drug murders and the murder of 133 politicians in the lead up to those elections run summon. And his book is the end of democracy. How democracy, ENS, ransom, and summarizes contemporary representative democracy is tired, vindictive, paranoid, self deceiving, clumsy, and frequently ineffectual. Much of the time it is living on past glories, but current democracy is not who we are.

Robyn Archer ([00:43:11](#)):

It is just a system of government, which we built and we can replace. He says there are good reasons for having stuck with democracy so far. We may have been worse off without it, but clinging on too long could do as much harm as giving up too early. It could be even worse. Now this is all stimulating reading, and there's not enough time tonight here to travel deeply into everything these commentators raised, but on the whole, it's pretty convincing that there's a crisis. And we only have ourselves to blame. If we're not prepared to look squarely at the challenges and work for remedies right now, as beers and bands as the measure of success late now in our galleries, big numbers and box offices, the main

measures of success of our festivals and the continuing image of our glorious landscape with a still deplorable lack of understanding of its meaning and ownership by its first peoples.

Robyn Archer ([00:44:03](#)):

You'd have to conclude that the lucky country is despite the longer hours. We're all working a lazy country, not physically, perhaps, but mentally, ethically, politically, and laziness would seem to be the perfect breeding ground for giving populism a free ride. I'm low two-door exact parallels between that time. I've spent so much cultural research on that is Berlin between the wars and the United States, but clearly the preconditions were all a large part of the population doing it extremely tough and feeling disenfranchised, a popular orator, rising to power through his promise of making the country great again, and offering dangerously oversimplified solutions to complex problems and saying, I know who is to blame, and I know how to fix it. Trump of course is not alone. Boris Johnson is playing the same game in oversimplifying the Brexit complexities. Again, we have to ask, how do we educate large numbers of voters old and young to dig beneath the surface of simplified solutions and dangerous promises?

Robyn Archer ([00:45:06](#)):

And how do we correct the laziness that just takes our political and cultural freedoms for granted. Now I'm aware that we have a combined audience this evening, those here for the festival of ideas and those here for the dance conference. So let me just return for a moment to that notion of freedoms inside and outside democracy. I've never really considered myself a dancer, but I've done a lot of it yet. When I look into my personal history of dance, there is a freedom there that many of us have experienced and rarely questioned. I recall with such joy, the Prash breakfast at Adelaide uni, just after the release of the Sergeant Pepper's album, we stood on the trestle tables. Pisters farts at eight o'clock in the morning, free dancing in a very, very sixties style and singing to the rafters. All you need is love one for nostalgia, but that moment is pretty irresistible.

Robyn Archer ([00:46:00](#)):

I know it never occurred to me that there were rules at other times. And in other places about the way you danced and in what context or rules banning dance entirely. But of course, dance has often been subject to the restriction of freedoms when it was first introduced, the Woolworths was considered too risky for many European societies. The idea of holding a partner was beyond the bounds of polite society. Men and women were not free to dance in that way. In colonial Cuba, the den zone afforded young men and women, a rare opportunity to converse the den zone is a kind of box step walks, hold dance at a steady pace. I've been invited by young men and old to dance this one with them in Mexico city, especially in the marvelous Selander Los Angeles and sell on Colonia at a certain point, the band doubles the pace.

Robyn Archer ([00:46:50](#)):

And this was the opportunity in colonial Cuba for the young couple to take a breather while remaining in the middle of the dance floor. Unchaperoned at last a private word or two could be had behind the cooling flutter of an elegant fan. I imagine cuing courting words along the lines of, I suppose if I could be out of the question. Yeah, but let's not imagine that such forbidden scenarios are only a thing of the distant past. I believe that in Iran, it is still not possible for women to perform in front of a mixed audience. In fact, when I attended the fudge theater festival in, there was one momentous event in which women were allowed to sing in chorus in an opening event that freedom, as I understand didn't last and in some cultures and genres, the rules of dance are very strict in Japan, a young maker going

through her training of song and dance, the very specific rules of Thai or Burmese classical dance, even the rigors of Western ballet, observing tradition often demands the limitation or modification of freedoms.

Robyn Archer ([00:47:55](#)):

And of course, we see this in the complex layering of meaning and ownership of first people's cultural expression, both traditional and contemporary. Some 40 years ago, I undertook a defect to, to Southeast Asia. One of the surprising destinations was then titled Rangoon. The exotic featured lard in my loud, in my excitement and anticipation. I was to be the first popular EITC to visit that country for 17 years, the entire period, which followed the assassination of the majority of the elected parliamentarians, including their father of democracy in their parliament house, researching costume protocol. I had the suburb designer and a senior fashioned me a forest green pants suit of trousers and waistcoat and a matching thing. Striped shirt with white collar and cuffs fastened by a pair of dad's cufflinks buttoned up is what we needed. There were many delays in sealing the engagement, and I was eventually informed that there had to be a full meeting of the Burmese cabinet to approve my visit.

Robyn Archer ([00:48:57](#)):

We were to be admitted on a number of conditions. One of which was Ms. Archer would not engage in excessive bodily movement on the stage. Let me add two small codeine to the story of that trip. The first is that when I arrived with my accompanist, the late great south Australian, Jerry Wisley Smith on a very hairy air Bangladesh flight, which had brought us from dukkha, where we had performed the night before the Australian ambassador to Burma, met us at the airport to take us to the residence and inform us that we would have to perform that night on a stage in the splendid tropical garden of the residence to an audience of invited guests. This was structured to invite the deciding officials to witness our performance so they could make sure about the excessive bodily movement on stage and other aspects of the repertoire though, our shed jeweled public concerts were to happen the following night, no tickets had yet been issued Coda to having been approved.

Robyn Archer ([00:49:53](#)):

The concerts went ahead in a big hall. That looked as if it had been used as a chook house, but to an appreciative audience. Jerry mentioned that it was a shame we hadn't yet, and we're not being offered an opportunity to witness Burmese culture. After the second concert, we were asked to join the minister of culture and his small entourage in the auditorium. The minister was a musicologist educated in Moscow, and we were much in favor. As we had worn on stage, the magnificent orchid corsage was brought to us and we had both done traditional elements of costume Jerry or a sarong. This was particularly appreciated since stress rules at the time were very strict. The singer who taught us a Burmese song to sing had been arrested and find some weeks earlier for wearing Western trousers in a performance. The song he taught us happened to be the minister's number one hit in the fifties.

Robyn Archer ([00:50:41](#)):

So it seemed this persuaded him to he'd Jerry's suggestion that evening with just a few of us watching, we experienced four performances of gamelan, chorus, and dance scores of performers, the like of which I had never experienced before and clearly summoned on the snap of a finger of all the Southeast Asian arts dance. I had been aware of. This was the most exquisite and pure I'd ever seen. It was perhaps precisely because of the strict cultural protectionism, the restriction of freedoms exerted by that government, that the tradition was preserved. So absolutely intact beautifully costume women

appeared with such delicate movement, such modesty and elegance. And then the women dancers appeared. We'd actually been watching only male dancers in the whole of the opening sequence. Now Mayan mark calls itself a democracy, but it is surely still one of Monk's democracies without rights at the end of his punk monk articulates.

Robyn Archer ([00:51:40](#)):

Yeah. His personal stance in the face of a crisis of democracy, he talks about the Stoics and the austerity of their approach in which to gain control. You must become indifferent to everything that surrounds you. He declared himself not to be a stoic because he is not indifferent to the plight of loved ones or the poor, or indeed the fate of democracy. But he finds wisdom in the teaching of the Stoics and writes when I am faced with the real danger, my incentives are always going to point me in the direction of inaction or acquiescence. I should probably say something, but what difference will it make? I should probably call them out on this, but how will I feed my family? If I lose my job, I should probably stand up to the government, but what will I do if it's loyalists come after me, Agra penis, then he writes was completely right on one important point.

Robyn Archer ([00:52:27](#)):

If I wait for imminent danger to figure out what risks I'm willing to take, I am likely to lose myself in the one moment that truly counts long before I actually face a dangerous decision. I am building up the resolve to do the right thing in the years to come. It may take more and more courage to stand up for what we hold. Dear. This is an admirable exhortation, but what still worries me is how it was great to see the young Americans mobilized for gun control. Got a lot of media, a lot of admiration. Did it change anything? I liked the way direct democracy worked in the debate around a nuclear waste facility here in south Australia, it was discussed people on both sides spoke passionately. And in the end, our representatives decided that the people didn't want it and set it aside. Good result.

Robyn Archer ([00:53:18](#)):

What a shame. I think there has been no such open consultation around the extended development of the casino here in Adelaide. Oh, what a sign that is the God of gambling of all that glitters in a world, obsessed with money, brazenly erecting itself. I use the term knowingly erecting itself in such shiny proximity to government and art and putting both to shabby shame. That's how free we have been here. Not to have been given the opportunity to say this is possibly not what we ever wanted. Maybe even not after a good, strong debate, what a majority wanted and had we had the opportunity to protest. What would the response have been in the name of jobs and growth? Well, the taxes on re-invigorated gambling will help provide you with, for instance, a new cultural center with a brand new spanking contemporary art gallery. Is that also the deal we would have agreed to?

Robyn Archer ([00:54:15](#)):

Are we all playing mother courage here? I should be singing the song of the grand capitulation. If we had even got that far to register our choice, even as we all in this room, I have no doubt share a concern about the way, the words, freedom and democracy, jobs and growth are still being bandied about as unquestionable. Even if we want to interrogate an object and questioned further, how do we do it? What avenues does this form of democracy actually allow? Of course the arts could be one answer, but as I've been suggesting, even if this challenge, these challenges are raised courageously in the arts, who exactly is listening, who he is. And even if convinced who acts over this weekend, you will be exposed to

many ideas, but will you believe your duty has done simply to have heard the ideas and to have about luxuriated in the exercise of your mind?

Robyn Archer ([00:55:10](#)):

It is after all a good thing to do. Do you believe that the expression of these many ideas, a privilege of our brand of democracy also demands you take action on the things that you have found persuasive and which require urgent action. Richard Dennis offers some suggestions in his recent quarterly essay, dead write how neo-liberalism ate itself and what comes next. He advocates the creation of a charter of rights, reminding us that quote, whilst some laws, grants, some citizens, some rights Australia is the only democracy in the world that lacks a bill or charter of rights, which no parliament can take away. He advocates the establishment of the national interest commission, the establishment of a federal corruption watchdog, and this Accords with Monk's greatest hope for democracy. And that is monetary democracy. He asks for the insistence on democratic education and a sovereign wealth fund Runciman resists solutions, but offers instead some lessons for the 21st century, mature Western democracy is over the hill.

Robyn Archer ([00:56:13](#)):

He writes it's prime is passed. We ought to acknowledge this. He describes a successful hundred year run and that there are still benefits to be had in anyone's declining years. He writes blind confidence in the future would be ridiculous at this stage, but while democracy has life in it, it has to be lived. The history of democracy will not have a single end point unless all human life does. He says that there will be successes and disasters, but quote, Western democracy will survive. It's midlife crisis with luck. It will be a little chastened by it. It is unlikely to be revived by it. This is not after all the end of democracy, but this is how democracy ends. We are also earlier reminded that in 1992, Francis Fukuyama in the end of history and the last man put ultimate faith in liberal democracy, ransom and maintains that the collapse of the Japanese economic miracle put paid to that hope.

Robyn Archer ([00:57:08](#)):

But interestingly sees both Japan and Greece as perfect examples of how democracy has the ability to delay absolute disaster and just keep muddling along keen in 2009, put his hopes in monetary democracy and along with mood in the promise and necessity of healthy institutions that monitor what our elected representatives are getting up to. He actually used India as the best example, he refers to the enormous cynicism at the time of independence as to whether such a wildly diverse country could ever survive the departure of its British rule. As it writes, the 60 year old Asian democracy is not just the world's largest democracy, a convenient cliché, but also its most compound turbulent and exciting prototype defined by various older and newer means of publicly monitoring and contesting power and representing citizens interests at all levels. It reinforces the conviction of this book. That is his book that democracy at all levels can be improved by changing people's perceptions and by humbling, those who exercise power over others and that the seeds of greater public accountability can be planted everywhere from the bedroom and boardroom to the battlefield.

Robyn Archer ([00:58:19](#)):

So what do we do here now? How do we imagine what it will require to be active and effective in this crucial moment? I often said of the arts and its endless quest for funding and support that if we could persuade the majority of the essential services we provide, then there would be no argument that people would demand funding for the arts, just the way they demand funding for health and hospitals

and the other things that keep them well and make them whole, in the instance of Richard Dennis's practical solutions, we would have to find ways to change the political conversation away from money and back to what we actually believe in and make it clear that our vote will go to those who will change the conversation, not just change the weight of the wallet. This is after all what Trump promised, not that he's delivering, but he won on that promise.

Robyn Archer ([00:59:12](#)):

And that's what the populist framework is about. Can we ever get away from more money in the pocket and back to what might matter more to us in this moment I had been considering thinking of calling this address, do the arts really matter? Or have I just been bullshitting all this time? The German twenties and thirties repertoire icing is filled with brilliant observations of the worst accesses of that time. Did it do any good? No. The German minority, the German majority voted in the national socialists on the back of a devastating depression, no jobs, no growth that need to blame someone that strong populist orator who persuaded them in a time of great severity, starvation, poverty. They were willing in one sense, understandably to trade freedoms on the promise of Germany being made great. Again, they were willing to submit to harsher rules and trade democracy for autocracy.

Robyn Archer ([01:00:17](#)):

The majority was persuaded by the strongest rhetoric to be complicit with the persecution and murder of artists and dissidents and homosexuals. And of course the entire Jewish minority enormous though, that was ransom and warns us that this is a very different world from twenties and thirties, Europe, and that we will not return to exactly that situation. It isn't identical, but it does point to similar forces at work and we can certainly anticipate different, but similarly dire circumstances. If we continue just to accept that what has become inkling empty slogans of freedom and democracy. This is perhaps a role that art can play to identify empty or at least grossly misunderstood slogans and Pierce through the hypocrisy and vested interests. In maintaining this disguise in the face of majority will the artists whose works, I continue to sing had no choice, but to get out some of those who didn't were murdered, some committed suicide, even some of those who escaped many of the artists of these times suffered much more extreme consequences than unmediated shaming on social media.

Robyn Archer ([01:01:28](#)):

Some had success elsewhere, but died early. Some were resilient to survive. The whole thing, Brett and his composer colleague Hanns Eisler were survivors. No, they didn't stop the horrors of world war two. It was a mighty wave against which they were powerless, but there's this. And perhaps in terms of that concept of freedom, at least we know where they stood. At least we have evidence of their awareness and their position. Brex wrote a poem in Finster and seitan in dark times. They won't say when the Walnut tree shook in the wind, but when the house painter crushed the workers, they won't say when the child skimmed a flat stone across the rapids, but when the great bores were being prepared for, they won't say when the woman came into the room, but when the great powers joined forces against the workers, however, they won't say the times were dark.

Robyn Archer ([01:02:31](#)):

Rather, why were their poets silent? I know it's not cool not to be full of hope and optimism full of TEDx type innovation and flash at the hip entrepreneurial-ism. And thanks be that there are a heap of youngsters with this kind of energy. Surely some good will come from some of those flash ideas, but it also seems to be helpful to be aware, do we dare say that we are in dark times, the devastation of the

planet's finite resources and the unchallenged call for growth. The movement of population has not seen since the dark ages and millions punished and living horrific conditions because of that force need to move. As I tell tales, in my concerts of those German artists at the peak of their careers in the 1930s, forced into exile and the need to reboot careers, are we sure we are welcoming and accepting the current tsunami of exam professionals as well as America and Britain and Australia then did.

Robyn Archer ([01:03:31](#)):

There is currently widespread starvation and poverty. If we are supposed to be the beneficiaries of a global economy, in which multinationals provide jobs and growth to this country, do the citizens of this country not have a global responsibility to, we take seriously those responsibilities, both environmental and humane, even in our own country. The original inhabitants died earlier from preventable disease and are incarcerated at rates way above their percentage in the population yet their art is the most valuable artistic export we have is not this. Some version of the grotesque hypocrisy in traditional democracies freedoms are increasingly limited in so-called democracies. The rapid implementation of autocracies the daily taking of multiple lives through acts of gorilla or sectarian or religious or official warfare. Is this not a couple of shades dark? At least I look at this with as clear and I as possible worming my way through the massive means misinformation and trying to get at some version of the truth.

Robyn Archer ([01:04:36](#)):

And at the same time, I want to say, I am hopeful that there are answers and there are solutions, there are smart people and good ideas and clear analysis and the job in perhaps for all of its shortcomings, as transparent as democracy that currently exists to persuade the majority, to look more carefully, to question, to challenge, and to use our vote, to put in place representatives who will make the changes we desperately need. As Dennis writes, the world is full of alternatives and choices. Neoliberalism's real power came from convincing us that we had none we do, and making them as the democratic role of citizens, not the technocratic of economists, nor of any self-serving elite. He also writes democracies only work when citizens are engaged enough to set national directions and trusting enough to step back and leave the details to their delegates. Instead, according to the dictates of neo-liberalism Australians have been told to leave the big decisions to the experts, experts.

Robyn Archer ([01:05:40](#)):

They no longer trust. So can art play a role in any of this well, spending less time in providing creature comforts as if there is no urgency as if there is nothing wrong, but instead assisting the efforts in creating awareness would help. And that doesn't mean it's all dire and dark artists are very, very good, like no others in our society in creating awareness amidst or, and laughter and beauty. That's what we can do. And, you know, I make a distinction between art and entertainment. Entertainment is precisely that thing that comfortably preserves the status quo and art is the stuff that stirs, not just in a masturbatory way, but stirs to action. Art that deserves to be called by that name is not comfortable. It will stir you out of your comfort zone, either through sheer overstimulation and excitement, or by arousing your passion or anger and stirring you to action.

Robyn Archer ([01:06:41](#)):

And in the end, even if the arts do not succeed in actually remedying evident wrongs, at least if they leave evidence of concern and effort, if successive generations can see that at very least we were concerned and understood what was wrong and what demanded change. Then perhaps we could beg the same treatment that Brett asked for one of his, and Iceland's late elegies because if not, if all that is



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left of our age is happy, ending musicals and comedies of manners, domestic dramas, and thrillers. Then perhaps the arts claim for significance and centrality will be seen as mainly just a heap of BS.

Speaker 3 ([01:07:26](#)):

You will come to the surface of the overwhelming deluge, which covered us. Just think about our weakness of that top time, which all of you escaped. Yes. We went as often changing countries as changing shoes through the walls of the classes disparaging each time we found on abuse and no sense of outrage, none less. We realize even hatred of debasement can distort your features, even anger at injustices. Can your voice hoarse? Oh, we who used to hope we'd create a basis for friendly nurse lover could be friendly you though when things are moving forward, so that man becomes a helper to other man. Look back on us with indoors.

Phillip Adams ([01:08:54](#)):

[Inaudible].