Michael Finneran
Michael Anderson   *Editors*

Education and Theatres

Beyond the Four Walls

Landscapes: the Arts, Aesthetics, and Education

Volume 27

Scope

This series aims to provide conceptual and empirical research in arts education, (including music, visual arts, drama, dance, media, and poetry), in a variety of areas related to the post-modern paradigm shift. The changing cultural, historical, and political contexts of arts education are recognized to be central to learning, experience, knowledge. The books in this series presents theories and methodological approaches used in arts education research as well as related disciplines—including philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology of arts education.

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Michael Finneran • Michael Anderson
Editors

Education and Theatres

Beyond the Four Walls

Springer

Editors
Michael Finneran
Department of Drama & Theatre
Studies, Mary Immaculate College
University of Limerick
Limerick, Ireland

Michael Anderson
Sydney School of Education and Social
Work, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
University of Sydney
Sydney, Australia

Foreword

Bringing Down the House

Welcome to this substantial, authoritative and significant collection of chapters which together provide a contemporary perspective on theatre and education work that makes innovative connections with audiences and peoples. From sacred national theatres to prisons and hospitals, from out-reach to in-reach and from babies to seniors and veterans across three continents, this book is a compelling analysis provided by the world's leading theatre education professionals and academics with a specialist interest in theatre education for democracy, hope and pleasure.

What binds the very different projects, partnerships and purposes contained in this book is a concern with cultural politics with democratizing access to theatre as audiences and makers, bridging the gap between the historical privilege of mainstream theatre audiences and the democratic entitlement of all people to tell and hear their stories, make and respond to art and discover a public space for dialogue and proposing change.

We have here examples of theatres that have found innovative and inspiring ways of handing over the keys to new theatre audiences and under-represented artists, producers and writers – declaring themselves as open house and guiding children and young people into the mysteries and rewards of theatre buildings and their programming. In other cases, theatre has come out of the house and gone into the communities, venues, schools, work places and other spaces and institutions where the people are. Projects have covered a spectrum from teaching artistry skills to developing critical and pleasurable responses to complex theatre and using theatre for social and well-being engagements that enrich, recognize and embolden the lives of marginalized and challenged populations.

These interventions are political in the sense that they all to a certain extent seek to reclaim theatre as the first invention of democracy – as a public and shared critical space, as catalytic places and as a part of local, national and international dialogues and expression rather than as mere entertainment for the few. They seek to make and protect public spaces and places where people can develop the artistic tools for

meaningful interaction, expression, critique and participation in public life. The interventions are also political in their aspiration to reverse the histories of elitism that have excluded significant majorities and minorities, their presences, their voices and their experiences. They are political because they are based in carefully negotiated and established successful partnerships between theatre boards, sources of funding, artists, academics, schools and other civic services and the target audiences for the work. There is a striking common thread around authentic concerns to make theatre with and for under-represented groups rather than as a paternalistic gifting of the theatre to the uninitiated.

In all of the countries represented in this collection, we find an informed awareness and angry passion that our poorest children and young people in particular are being denied access to the arts both in schools and in their communities. The knock on effect is to stifle the diversity that is the social engine of creativity in theatre in all of its forms. We are all poorer for this lack of diversity and opportunity. The chapters of this book show how theatre education is finding funding and support to work with those most at risk from an artless development.

Most strikingly these chapters document and analyse the transformational effects of critical artistic pedagogies that are developing in theatre as art-making processes and in participatory arts education work beyond the theatre's walls. Many of the theatres included here celebrate ensemble-based practices, active participation and the belief that enlightened rehearsal room practices led by a new, young, diverse generation of artists, directors and producers can have a transformative effect on the lives and aspirations of others. They are living the principle that methods used to produce theatre that is thoughtful, disturbing, beautiful and fresh are equally vital to the artistic and social needs of the many, and that culturally sensitive professional methods can deliver a theatre entitlement that stresses plurality, active creation and active responsiveness.

Beyond the house, brave theatre artists, teachers and others are building a coalition of resistance. They are introducing arts education pedagogies that encourage critique, mindfulness and challenge, providing children and young people with priceless opportunities to see and live in the bigger picture beyond the neutered space of the formal curriculum. They consciously do this in the face of increasingly narrow and mindless curriculum reforms that silence thought, breed hatred and mistrust and seek to blind our children to the obscene levels of global cultural and economic inequality. Again this is an urgent reclaiming of theatre's democratic purpose to mirror and disturb. This collection records how over recent decades the radical pedagogies of theatre and of arts education have found new synergies, mutual benefits and some healthy challenges to orthodoxies in both fields.

As the Warwick Commission showed in England, we all pay for the arts through our taxes and lottery tickets, but only a tiny percentage of us attend theatres that receive that public subsidy. But there are examples here, from big publicly subsidized producing houses, of thoughtful and innovative education, co-creation and outreach projects that are important models for any authentic programme seeking to reach out to those who do not come.

At a different place in the spectrum, there are stories of small companies, solo practitioners, those without buildings and dedicated to hyperlocal and place-based concerns – theatre in this place, in this institution, community hall and population. Here we find a reimagining of theatre's role in place-making – how theatre can make a meaningful and respected contribution to public life at a local level, how theatre can help people to share, imagine, delight and manage where they are, where they are from and where they might be headed. It is a reimagining of local theatre as part of the politics of place and as an open and inclusive gathering space. These place-based stories also provide us with detailed understandings of the impact of small-scale interventions on the health and well-being of a wide range of communities and their sense of worth and identity. Theatre can be everywhere for everyone.

Many of the theatres in this collection face difficult choices between programming new and classical work, between avant-garde and commercial shows. Choices are made even more difficult as public investment in theatre in many countries recedes alongside the expectation that theatres will augment their revenues through increased box office and philanthropic returns. How do theatres offer commercially successful programmes that have integrity and continue to extend the reach of work that is challenging and sometime difficult?

This struggle to programme with integrity and reach is being transformed by the seismic shifts in the demographics of the cities served by these theatres, which are destabilizing traditional assumptions made about the inclusiveness and representativeness of programming and how theatre buildings and their employees present themselves and engage with their cities. Migration; strengthened ethnic, faith and other identities; increasingly youthful populations; and visible inequalities at street level all present challenges to how theatres programme, engage and employ the diversity of their cities. The education work described here is often part of a theatre's attempts to re-examine what their offer is, who is excluded and whose talents and cultural riches are not being developed and represented. Education is often seen in these cases as the most potent means of actualizing new theatre identities and experiences for a modern age.

The culture may be changing in some countries represented here, at policy and funding levels as governments scramble to discover and mine the creative resources and diverse talents of their peoples in all their variety for economic as well as social reasons. In order to survive, theatres have always been inspiringly quick to sniff out and secure any means of funding that lets them produce art. The diversity imperative is picked up in these chapters as a social objective, but it is also an economic one.

The culture of the boards of the nationally and internationally significant theatres represented in the collection is also changing – the need to prioritize accessibility, inclusiveness, education and the reach of high-quality programming is shaping how boards distribute their resources, programming and impact on children and young people in particular. In some instances, this has been a pragmatic response to funding requirements and the need to reinvigorate a predominantly wealthy, pale and stale traditional audience base. In other cases, boards recognize the commercial and artistic rewards of working with diverse artists and encouraging new audiences

drawn to these voices and their physicality. Some chapters dwell on the ethical and complex negotiations and struggles both with and against the effects of neo-liberalism and the urgent agendas of social and environmental chaos. And these accommodations and resistances are traditionally part of theatre's democratic purpose.

The chapters also break new ground in how we research and represent the work of theatre-based partnerships, how we capture multiple points of view and accurately describe multiple often ephemeral effects, how we use artistic and other means to solicit authentic and honest reflections from the subjects of the interventions and research, how we balance different sources of data to encompass both macro and micro descriptions of impact and how to record artistic and social process and the detail of contingent and contextual factors on the shaping and delivery of interventions. The chapters deploy different methodologies and standpoints, but all in their own ways seek to privilege the voices and experiences of learners, participants and the key change agents over externally imposed researcher objectivity.

In some chapters, academics provide us with a necessary theoretical foundation for the work described – a theoretical foundation that seeks to embrace critical theory and the hope of breaking the inevitability of Bourdieu's foundational pessimism about cultural entitlement and legitimacy. But there are also writers who are activists outside the academe – education workers, artists and others who burn with the need to share and proselytize the benefits of bringing down the house – opening doors, minds and hearts through their work in often challenging and demanding contexts.

It is heartening to be reminded of theatre's endless quest for relevance and innovation based on a belief that people of all ages can learn to access, own and make a future theatre for the many not the few.

University of Warwick   Jonothan Neelands,
Coventry, UK

Contents

Part VI   Redefining Engagement

Contributors

Michael Anderson Sydney School of Education and Social Work, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

George Belliveau Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

Courtney J. Boddie The New Victory Theater, New York, NY, USA

Selina Busby The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, The University of London, London, UK

Sally Chance Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Jennifer DiBella Roundabout Theatre Company, New York, NY, USA

Peter Duffy Department of Theatre and Dance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA

Stig A. Eriksson Drama Department, Centre of Arts Communications and Culture, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway

Robyn Ann Ewing Sydney School of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

Michael Finneran Department of Drama & Theatre Studies, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

Barry Freeman University of Toronto Scarborough, Toronto, Canada

Kathleen Gallagher Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Sandra Gattenhof Creative Industries Faculty, School of Creative Practice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Sarah Gregson Learning and Participation, Newbury Corn Exchange, Newbury, UK

Terry Greiss The Irondale Ensemble Project, New York, NY, USA

Natalie Hart Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Kari Mjaaland Heggstad Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway

Katrine Heggstad Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway

Steven Holochwost Wolfbrown, Cambridge, MA, USA

Heidi Irvine Queensland Theatre, South Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Jolyon James Arena Theatre Company, Bendigo, VIC, Australia

Jonathan P. Jones Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions -Educational Theatre Faculty, New York University, New York, NY, USA

Andy Kempe Institute of Education, University of Reading, Reading, Berkshire, UK

Baz Kershaw Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Judith Mc Lean Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Christian Leavesley Arena Theatre Company, Bendigo, VIC, Australia

Lindsey Buller Maliekel The New Victory Theater, New York, NY, USA

Mitch Mattson Roundabout Theatre Company, New York, NY, USA

Fiona McDonagh Department of Drama & Theatre Studies, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

Emma Miles School of Education & Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK

Helen Nicholson Department of Drama, Theatre and Dance, Royal Holloway, University of London, London, UK

Peter O'Connor Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

John O'Toole Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Mon Partovi Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Monica Prendergast Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada

Richard Sallis Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

John Nicholas Saunders Sydney Theatre Company, Dawes Point, Australia

Christine Sinclair Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Alvin Tan The Necessary Stage Theatre Company, Singapore, Singapore

Rachel Turner-King Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Prue Wales Research and Interdisciplinary Studies, The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Anne Wessels Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, Canada

Michael Wheeler Queen's University, Kingston, Canada
National Theatre School of Canada, Montreal, Canada

Joe Winston Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Dennie Palmer Wolf WolfBrown, Cambridge, MA, USA

Part I
Setting the Scene

Theatres and a Spectrum of Engagement

Michael Finneran, Michael Anderson, and Fiona McDonagh

Abstract This chapter frames the ideas and structure of the book. It defines the parameters of the collection of studies published in the volume and looks at the manner in which work in education, community, and outreach are core to the function of many contemporary theatre venues and companies. The chapter proposes that in these uncertain and changeable times, it is incumbent upon theatre professionals to innovate and diversify in the ways in which they engage with communities and make the work of their venues and companies accessible and relevant to new and diverse audiences. Equally important is the critical analysis of such work, in order that models of best practice are laid down and analysed. Core questions for consideration include those about intent, the nature of practice, guiding policies, the relationship of the work to the 'core' functions of the organisation and the manner in which success is measured. The chapter proposes a spectrum of engagement of the ways in which contemporary community work reaches beyond the four walls of the theatre, and positions the chapters of the book as representing five groups of distinct but interrelated and overlapping nodes along that spectrum of engagement.

Keywords Theatre · Drama · Education · Engagement · Spectrum · Community · Partnership

M. Finneran (✉) · F. McDonagh
Department of Drama & Theatre Studies, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland
e-mail: Michael.Finneran@mic.ul.ie; Fiona.McDonagh@mic.ul.ie

M. Anderson
Sydney School of Education and Social Work, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
e-mail: michael.anderson@sydney.edu.au

1   Introduction

This book is about theatres and the ways in which they both educate and engage with the world. It is about both explaining why theatres (venues, companies, artists and practitioners) are a vital part of the humanising force of the arts; and about capturing models and practices for rigorous critique so that they may be replicated elsewhere. In the foreword to this volume, Jonothan Neelands reminds us of the democratic, pedagogic, transformational and radical practices that come about when partnership is enabled in the theatre. The openness and collectivity he identifies as central to the success of such work can only come about through looking to extant models of best practice and sharing them, but also by bringing about culture change in our venues and organisations so that they are open to the types of partnership required and can see worth in the outcomes of such innovation.

The book explicitly and deliberately seeks to exemplify best practice in how theatres, in the broadest possible sense and through their engagement, educate. The challenge that we lay down from the outset is not to look on education, outreach or community work in theatres as separate to a 'core' function of the life of a theatre but as part of a continuum of activity: a spectrum of engagement within and beyond the four walls of a building. The work contained in this volume joins a growing and loud collective of voices concerned with mapping the progress and extent of this spectrum of engagement.

2   Why This Book and Why Now?

This idea for this book was conceived on a crowded subway train in Manhattan. The editors were attending a conference and musing on the tendency for many in the arts, ourselves included, to 'reinvent wheels'. One of the wheels we tend to recreate are programmes that emerge from theatres for schools and communities. Many theatre companies undertake programmes of work through their companies and in their venues that are not necessarily destined for the main stages. These programmes are known in varying ways; sometimes as outreach or extension programmes, sometimes as community engagement, sometimes as education or youth programmes, or by various other titles. Across the globe we see theatre companies developing practice that is then reproduced in other places and spaces with little or no reference to what has been learned from past endeavours elsewhere, which are sometimes very similar in form or content. Whether this is due to the often independent and commercially sensitive ways in which theatres operate, or whether it is through the absence of a strong and vibrant community of practice, it is, in our view, an impediment. It inhibits the global field from developing an informed body of practice that might lead to further growth. While we're not claiming that we are the first to notice or even do something about this, we, with the contributors in this volume, seek to create a lively, collaborative and engaging discourse that promotes ongoing local

and international partnerships. This seems especially pressing to us now as the demands on theatres, on schools and on communities have become more complex in the context of shifting twenty-first century realities. This opening chapter seeks to engage with those realities and to contextualise to some extent the forces in society, communities, schools, and elsewhere that have led us to the current context within which partnerships exist between theatre organisations and the communities they serve, and moreover with regard to the ever evolving and changing nature of that engagement.

Our sense in compiling this work is that the enthusiasm for new modes of collaboration and engagement reflected in this volume comes from a number of places, the forces of which lie alongside each other to varying degrees in the stories being told here. It is borne from a marked 'social turn' within much theatre practice and a growth in the desire of theatre organisations to seek deeper connections with their communities. This has led to an unprecedented opportunity to rethink what theatres do, and with whom. This is a welcome, voluntary change in direction within the sector. The change is also borne of a forced evolution of practice in the sector, something we will dwell upon in greater detail at a later point. And it is most certainly a reality of the changing nature of twenty-first century life.

In the past, significant claims have been made about the power and possibility of drama and theatre to bring about change to both individual lives and indeed the world. This core belief in a good and worthy change is the basis of much work in the fields of drama education and applied theatre, as well as being the traditional driving imperative behind many of the education, community and outreach projects associated with major theatres and theatre organisations. An unquestioned or mythologised belief that theatre as a positive and agentive educative and social force is an inherently troubling and counter-productive basis for practice. We and the contributors to this book believe in what Neelands has called in the foreword, a 'theatre of possibilities', however we are also keen that it is one which is deeply and rigorously questioned.

Therefore, at no point does this book wish to be a critically disengaged volume, a simple litany of victory narratives. It does, however, aim to understand and celebrate success. We wish to identify the characteristics of that success so that we can better understand it, and use it as a template for further success elsewhere. To do so is not an easy task. Throughout this book, we will identify some of the tenets of what successful (in the sense that we understand it here) theatre partnership and engagement work may look like. In doing so we will critically extrapolate and identify characteristics which may be used to build a framework upon which a critical narrative of success, and not a hollow rhetorical 'roar of victory', can be based. This chapter begins these discussions. It will outline some of the critical concepts in the development of practice beyond main stages in theatre. We acknowledge at the outset that this is a potentially difficult task. So, in this opening chapter we do not seek to provide a series of answers but rather to survey the landscape and suggest possible thematic pathways that the chapters will detail and extend.

From the outset we do need to address and be clear with regard to who is included and who is excluded from this work. We acknowledge that the contributions in this book are predominantly from a western theatre tradition and are located within what

is regarded as the Global North. This acts as a limitation on the book and the emergent discussion. Some approaches which originally emerged from South America, Africa and Asia infuse and inspire much of the debates that we see in these pages, and yet countries from those continents are under-represented here. In charting success in innovation work in theatre partnership and engagement, we choose to look in the first instance at those programmes and innovations which were most advantageously places and inevitably those which are best resourced. The fact that many of those which we found are located in the largely white, Anglo-European world is a commentary in itself about inequity and global distribution of resources. It is our belief that the discussions begun here, and the lacunae identified here need to be broadened and diversified, and we are excited by the prospects of further volumes that deepen enrich and extend these perspectives. These future conversations hold particularly significant possibilities in the examination of international partnerships from non-Western theatres, and from cultural and ethnic traditions which are not traditionally building-based in the way in which many of the examples contained in these pages are. We hope in some small way that the perspectives here can inspire, provoke and illuminate ongoing discussions, debates and collaborations with regard to what we understand to be an ever-broadening spectrum of engagement in the theatre.

3   These Liquid Times

We have entered, in Zygmunt Bauman's terms, a phase of liquid modernity:

> … in which all social forms melt faster than new ones can be cast. They are not given enough time to solidify, and cannot serve as the frame of reference for human actions and long-term life-strategies because their allegedly short life-expectation undermines efforts to develop a strategy that would require the consistent fulfilment of a 'life-project.' (2000, p. 303)

These new fluid social structures make imagining what might constitute the engagement between communities and theatres in the future, somewhat difficult. In the immediate past, it has been relatively straightforward and embodied through a clear division of tasks. The business of theatres was largely to entertain, and depending on the epoch, occasionally question or provoke. The business of communities was to socially regulate, educate, support and engage their members. Within communities, formal education was the business of schools, and informal education the business of family units, peer groups and places of worship. When the idea of theatres as places of education and engagement in ways other than the lived portrayal of literary works began to emerge, it largely emanated from the United Kingdom and occurred within a revolutionary post-war context of rebuilding society and as part of a broader societal drive to ensure that totalitarianism would never again rule. Nicholson (2009, 2011) charts this emergence and growth. Thus commenced a twentieth century blurring of genres between the work of theatres and communities,

especially schools, which has proven to be fruitful for many and intoxicating for those of us who live and work within the blur. Over the course of the last 50 years, the work of education, outreach and community work has primarily been in the realm of three distinct and inter-related purposes: arts (drama/theatre) education; socially productive applied theatre projects, e.g. in road-safety or HIV awareness; and also community development for the purposes of audience development, either driven by the needs of individual organisations or at the requirement of funders.

What was clear to us as editors from the outset of our work in compiling this volume is that the 'liquid times' within which we live have disrupted our under-standings of engagement, both in form and content, but also in motivation. They have evolved significantly over the past decade in particular, and we argue, will continue to do so at a similar rate. Such a case arguably renders a volume such as this already outdated by the time of publication. That may well be the case, however we would argue that it in fact makes the critical interrogation of narratives of success contained in these pages, all the more urgent.

The socio-cultural forces driving these changes are multifarious and broad and unique to each and every specific context. They all bring with them, as change inevitably does, a number of distinct challenges (that we who believe in the possibilities of theatre as a social and educative force, face), and which the stories gathered in these pages seek to grapple with. In no particularly order of significance, and in broad terms, some of the following issues impact upon our work in this area.

The Demise of Old Audiences

Theatre as an institutional form is arguably in a time of pre-paradigmatic crisis (Kuhn 1962) in terms of the ways in which audiences engage with it. The changes in audience desire and engagement, brought about by general societal change and by the influence of televisual and online media, are forcing rapid innovation and diversification within theatre. An associated period of new 'scientific' discovery is in full throe, whereby new modes of engagement are beginning to emerge. We suggest that this volume charts many of the experimental modes of this period of 'scientific' discovery, charting a new spectrum of engagement with theatre companies and venues, and before the formation of a new, definitive paradigm of how theatre audiences engage.

The Reinvention of Community

Changes in the very nature of community are palpable and visible in much of the Global North. We are transitioning from a geographical understanding of what community entails (a street, a parish, a county) to more globalised and virtual communities. Communities of practice and of shared interests now have profound meaning in the absence of traditional neighbourhood or geographical communities. These new communities are typically more dynamic and less embodied, often offer great support in some domains given their shared interest base, but also less in others; and are at once more and less liberal in their tolerance of difference and dissent. But, they also do not fulfil many of the traditional and occasionally ritualistic functions of a community, thus leaving lacunae (Bauman 2001). One of the challenges in this

reinvention of community is the place within it of the arts and engagement with the arts, traditionally at the heart of many community rituals and celebrations.

The Challenge to Politics and Democracy

The events of the months and years prior to the publication of this book point to a marked change in the politics of some countries in the Global North. Seemingly 'stable' political nations such as Turkey, the United States and the United Kingdom have been somewhat destabilised because of events which bring us to question whether the democratic political ideal is any longer the norm. The proliferation of new technologies changes the nature of engagement with dramatic form, as discussed, but also poses broader challenges with regard to the relationships citizens have with their home state. Fundamental amongst these is the question as to what we might consider as normative political behaviour. The changes in Global North socio-political contexts, which can be clearly charted in the normalisation of heretofore extremist political behaviour, makes demands of both the arts and our communities, particularly our schools, as it runs to the heart of what it means to be a citizen and to have agency within the life of a nation.

The Rationalisation of Education

Changes to the perceived societal role and function of education, with a general tendency towards 'back to basics' and 'value for money' agendas are evident across many of the countries of the Global North. The forces driving these are multiple and powerful and the phenomenon is often sarcastically referred to by its critics as the *Global Education Reform Movement* (GERM). Even before such a movement began to gain momentum, the arts have generally struggled within schools and the new policies derived from these socio-cultural trends tend to sideline them to an even greater degree.

The de-prioritisation of the arts within formal schooling is an important consideration for this book. At its heart is what Schechner (2013) describes as the efficacious function of performance, broadly understood here to be the educative function of the arts and particularly theatre, which for the majority of the contributors to the book is not so much a function, but more of an imperative. The structures that have emerged in society over hundreds of years such as discipline based learning, fact-based knowledge, passive audiences and students and a tacit acceptance of what the 'core business' of theatres and schools are, will continue to be challenged by the liquidity of modern times. That said, we do know that theatre and drama do provide access to some of the must have skills of the twenty-first century: creativity, collaboration, critical reflection and communication (Jefferson and Anderson 2017). So, even in increasingly liquid times the dynamic, shape-shifting aesthetic of the theatre can take a prominent place in helping our communities to contend with looming challenges and opportunities. Theatres require education and community partnerships to engage beyond their four walls. Without them, their work ceases when the curtain drops. Of all the challenges posed to the arts by these liquid times, the most immediate rising challenge for theatres and its associated community of scholars and practitioners more generally is the active defunding and de prioritising of the arts and arts education in our communities and schools.

4   The Challenge to the Arts and a Challenge for the Arts

A renewed enthusiasm for connection between theatres and communities is critical currently because the arts and arts education are under siege. Arts education has been systematically and in some places aggressively cleaved from the curriculum (Adams 2011; Ewing 2010; UNESCO 2013), from classrooms and from teacher education (Cutcher 2014; Oreck 2004). This recent systematic removal of arts education from the United Kingdom curriculum is just one example of a tendency to view arts and theatre/drama education as an optional extra. This is not an isolated occurrence. As Selkrig and Bottrell (2016) claim, the current discourses and practices in schooling have pushed arts education to the periphery:

> Arts education provision in schools is often cited as one of the casualties of the current dominant educational discourse in many parts of the world. This discourse is premised on hierarchical compliance regimes that focus on standards and reductionism. Similarly, knowledge/skills transfer is gauged through measurable outcomes and high stakes testing. This has led to the education of young people in most developed and some developing countries becoming performative in nature. As a consequence, evidence is emerging that arts education can be pushed to the periphery (p. 57).

This downgrading of arts in the curriculum has occurred simultaneously with often savage cuts to the arts sector (Cuccia and Rizzo 2016, p. 109). In the face of the twin threats of reduction of the arts in schools (through decreased time and resources) and in theatres (through reduced governmental funding for the arts and increased reliance on earned revenue and philanthropy), it seems to us timely to consider how the arts education sector and particularly theatres and communities might learn from each other, and how they might collaborate creatively to generate programmes that are relevant, effective and engaging for the audiences (considered in the broadest possible sense). The opportunity here is to understand how international projects have the potential to live within our local communities, and also meet the needs of a more integrated and diverse international education sector beyond that for which they were originally designed. Contained in these pages, there are case studies of theatre companies and their partners who have worked with communities (which some of us may have not considered as traditional audiences) such as prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities and community organisations. One of the striking features of these connections is their determination to make drama/theatre available and relevant to new and diverse audiences. Such a determination needs a brief exploration of the possibilities that theatres hold as spaces for work which might be regarded as 'pro-social'.

5   Beyond the Four Walls: A Spectrum of Engagement

The main business of theatres is to entertain through the staging of plays, right? Well, right and wrong. It is certainly the case for some theatres in some towns and cities, and it certainly might be the primary preoccupation of many, but it also

largely depends on what kind of a theatre you might happen to go to, and where in the world it is located. In the white, Western world (the Global North as we have referred to it here), there can be a troubling tendency to look on theatre from a singular, canonical perspective, as is the case for all the traditional art-forms:

> the idea of the arts as essentially European high culture, though no longer hegemonic as it once was, still finds expression in some of the major art houses around the world (Belfiore and Bennett 2007, p. 136).

This singularity of mission finds further expression in the types of works that tend to find life on the main stages of these companies and venues. It is a generalisation, but many belong to what Jonothan Neelands describes as a private, literary aesthetic tradition of theatre (2004, p. 14). While theatre companies throughout the world trade on their main stage offerings, we argue that an "oral, communal aesthetic tradition" of theatre (2004, p. 14) is often taking place alongside this other tradition. In the work that might be characterised as oral and communal, theatre companies are working with community members through theatrical approaches to educate, advocate and empower. At times, there are direct connections between the two aesthetic traditions, such as if, for example, an exploration takes place using Augusto Boal's strategies, of the themes of social justice arising from a main stage performance of *Death and the Maiden*. Other programmes engage with their communities without the need to make reference to a production that is currently in performance, by undertaking work such as building literacy in schools through drama and theatre techniques.

Yet, what has become apparent in preparing this volume is that a multitude of practices exist within and around what are described as mainstream theatres. This book deliberately seeks to unsettle any perception of singular and linear relationships between significant, established theatres and the audiences (or perhaps communities) which they serve. It aspires to looking beyond the stages and plays of those venues and companies, and instead to interrogate how these theatres engage in a range of ways with their communities, framing the theatres not just as entertainers but as leaders; framing the participants not just as audience but as members of a community of practice; and framing the practices not as alternative, peripheral, or add-on activities, but as core to the operation and policy of these theatres and as part of a well-developed but fragmented field of international practice.

Schechner's concept of the ludic braid (2013, p. 70) posits that there is a fundamental relationship in performance between entertainment and education (efficacy). At times this relationship is oppositional and at other times it is integrated. When we consider the programmes that are outlined in this book, this construction becomes a little inadequate. The various motivations and approaches that companies take to engage with the communities are more complex than entertainment or education alone. In these pages, you will see discussion of audience development, outreach, engagement and social justice. This work defies a simple definition and calls, in our view, for more nuanced understandings of how theatre companies position themselves within educational and social spaces. While there is no doubt that Schechner's braid is still alive in the theatres represented here, an understanding of their

motivations is complex, unique to each distinct project and lies beyond any potential binary of education or entertainment.

The contemporary nature of the relationship between theatres as places of entertainment and places of education is most comprehensively captured by Nicholson (2009, 2010, 2011). She is optimistic about the state of play in this arena, and points out that at best this work develops practices which are responsive to the 'narratives and cultural memories of the participants' (2010, p. 152), as well as being artistically imaginative. Nicholson implicitly warns of the importance of avoiding confusion over nomenclature, as well as eschewing a linear chronology in charting the evolution of this type of work, noting instead the need for a critical genealogy:

> Theatrical experiments in educational and community settings are complexly interwoven with the dramatic and educational innovations of their day, and this means that the practices of theatre educationalists often offer insights into why theatre was considered a necessity in its time and how it spoke to the culture and society of the period (2010, p. 153).

Nicholson's analysis reminds us to take careful account of contexts and history in the development and delivery of these 'theatrical experiments'. We need a nuanced understanding of the pervasive educational and social policy that creates demands in schools and communities as a critical factor in understanding why theatres create these programmes. In this book, we argue that the case studies presented here constitute a spectrum of engagement that reach beyond the four walls of the theatre.

This is appropriate given the emergence of a range of participatory modes in the cultural sector in response to the liquid times that we live in. The work in this volume is evident of a distinct move from a binary of on/off engagement with communities to companies, individuals and venues which are now locating themselves along a continuum of practice in this domain. We suggest that the work contained in the volume represents five distinct but interrelated and overlapping nodes along that spectrum of engagement. These are:

- **Tradition and innovation**: Work that builds on a solid and perhaps traditional basis of educational or community practice in theatres, but which has begun to innovate away from that base.
- **Moving beyond the main house**: Engagement work that takes place at a step removed from traditional spaces – which is somehow beyond the main house and which perhaps strives to redefine artistic spaces.
- **Artists in education and beyond:** Artistic practices which have an unambiguous and unapologetic educational focus and basis, linking directly with the formal education system.
- **Agentive partnership:** Partnerships and practices which have a relationship driven by agency and efficacy, and which seek to affect change in participants.
- **Redefining engagement:** Work which is ground-breaking in how it redefines engagement and pushes the boundaries of what it means for members of communities and societies to engage with theatre organisations.

In our initial discussions with our contributors about this book we strongly encouraged them to be analytical, critical and courageous in the way they wrote

about their work. While it is obviously up to readers to make that judgement, we feel that these contributions make a critical contribution to establishing and generating a coherent understanding of theatres and their partnerships. Some of the key questions we asked them to consider were:

- **Intent** – what are the philosophies and ideologies driving some of the work in this sector?
- **Practice** – what innovative ways or working are evident in this analysis of work and in what way can their success be translated to other cultural milieu?
- **Policy and relatedness** – how does the work in this domain link back into the values and practices of the company or venue as a whole and how central is it to the 'core' function of the organisation?
- **Success** – how do the facilitators and funders of the work define what successful work looks like and how it is achieved and measured?

The discussions in the chapters that follow, clustered loosely around the nodes above, and oriented around the key focus questions, allow us to begin to define, through snapshots of practice what the activities of this sector constitute, and where they might be located along a spectrum of engagement between theatres and society. The chapters also develop a range of perspectives that focus on policy, intent and success. This matters so we can stop reinventing the same wheels, and that we might genuinely learn from the efforts of others in our community of practice. The work in this book also allows for an analysis of the practices that exists so we can understand the gaps on the spectrum of engagement. It seems to us that these gaps in our collective knowledge are quite significant, and this discussion goes some way towards identifying what is happening, where and for whom. Critically this selection allows theatres and those who work with them to establish who is not being catered for. Of course, an identification of these gaps is only the first step. A collaborative set of strategies is required to develop more effective and networked approaches to understand and engage with work in theatres that extend beyond main stages. Collaboration involves building and sustaining partnership.

6   The Role of Partnerships in the Twenty-First Century

Partnerships are one way through which we can combat some of the challenges of a liquid modernity, but also make theatre programmes beyond the main stages relevant and engaging for non-traditional audiences. One of the persistent missed opportunities (at least when we talk about education) is the often-piecemeal partnerships between cultural organisations, schools and broader communities. We are not arguing that excellent work is not taking place but rather that there are missed opportunities when these partnerships and the programmes they produce are not described, analysed and shared beyond the local context. Too often, this results in perennial pilot project syndrome and a persistent need to reinvent the wheel with regard to education and outreach in theatres. In this book, we have really only

focussed on theatres but we are aware of other cultural institutions that in themselves are storehouses of culture such as those in the GLAM sector (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) in many countries and cities creating highly productive partnerships with communities, schools and universities. In our view this work deserves a broader audience. This matters so that when policymakers ask 'what good is the theatre?' (or libraries or art galleries or museums), we have robust and thoughtful ways to respond which have been rigorously tested in the field and critically evaluated. If we can demonstrate that partnerships have the potential to deliver distinctive and effective learning opportunities and community benefits for diverse populations, funding resources will follow. Of course, if we fail to provide evidence for these programmes funding may also disappear. Several international organisations have also emphasised the centrality of partnerships in order to enable our communities to survive and thrive in liquid times.

Over a decade ago in 2005, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provided a series of scenarios as a way of describing what schools might be like in the future. Scenario three was one of the most optimistic. It imagined schools as places that work in high-level partnerships across the ages:

> In this scenario, the walls around schools come down but they remain strong, sharing responsibilities with other community bodies. Non-formal learning, collective tasks and intergenerational activities are strongly emphasised. High public support ensures quality environments, and teachers enjoy high esteem (p. 21).

While these scenarios were, and continue to be speculative, they do point to an opportunity to rethink the relationship between cultural organisations, communities and schools. The OECD scenarios focus on schools as pivot points for many communities and the concept of partnerships and shared connections that they embody are implicitly and in many cases, explicitly critical to the work of theatres throughout this book. The 'siloing' that we have witnessed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century of different disciplines and sectors has done little to prepare our education sector, theatres and our community generally for the looming liquid challenges of the twenty-first century that will require citizens to be skilled collaborators, creators, critical reflectors and communicators (Jefferson and Anderson 2017). Drama and theatre companies work daily in the domains of communication, creativity and collaboration. They understand imagination, problem solving and design. Within theatre companies there is a storehouse of capability that sits at the centre of twenty-first century capacities. The challenge is to find feasible, effective, efficient and relevant ways to share these with a community that needs these skills more than ever.

There is significant possibility in increased engagement through partnership. Despite the many obituaries written for the theatre it remains resolutely alive. And not only alive, but it continues to seek connections and to actively explore its place as a contributor in several sectors. It is perhaps possible to conceive of a theatre that does not partner or engage with educational work. A theatre that sits alone, presenting but never engaging. The cases explored in this book suggest this is not the reality and that theatres are constantly seeking ways to engage with their schools and their

communities. While in the past organisations may have hidden behind the mantra of 'core business' to reject partnerships, this is becoming less feasible as the realities of the twenty-first century will demand stronger connections and partnership between institutions, communities and education. In our view this is an opportunity and a challenge for theatre companies to forge partnerships that have real influence and impact on their communities–theatres that are culturally and socially aware and enthusiastic about the role in engaging partnerships and collaborations.

7   The Changing Nature of Twenty-First Century Partnerships

Partnerships between arts companies, communities and education are not new (Hunter 2015) but the affordances of rapidly evolving technologies in western societies means that the opportunities have exponentially multiplied. Global partnerships can enable students all over the world to connect with the world's cultural resources, if they have the means to do so, the equity of which, is of course an important issue in itself. It is now relatively commonplace for the Royal Shakespeare Company or the National Theatre in the United Kingdom to produce high quality broadcast performances that reach vastly larger and different audiences than traditional live performances (Bakhshi et al. 2010). Yet, access to these cultural assets is only part of the picture. Effective engagement (and learning) that is immersive and participatory occurs when audiences become participants and makers using the tools of creation that theatre and drama offer. One way this has become more feasible is through the emergence of pervasive and inexpensive networked technologies (Cameron et al. 2017) that will allow participatory engagement to be a reality for those not geographically local to a theatre company or venue. The opportunities now available for people transforming from passive receptors of culture (e.g. recorded theatre) to *makers*, where they can engage with these partnership spaces as active contributors, is in our view, the necessary next step in taking advantage of the affordances of new technology allied with the opportunities that the networking of cultural organisations provide. While there is considerable further potential for the integration of curriculum, technology and cultural resources, this is currently occurring sporadically. The emergence of new technologies and greater levels of understanding in resource design, delivery and pedagogy will support this change. The continued digitisation of cultural archives will further accelerate the access and malleability of these cultural resources. Mary Ann Hunter articulates the qualities of these partnerships as they are now, and as they might be:

> … schools must scaffold opportunities for this interplay of certainty and uncertainty as well as model what a curious and discerning approach to life's many available communities of reference might look like. At this historical moment, however, it takes more than the schools and dispositions of teachers alone to do this. Caught in the difficult dilemma of contemporary schooling, teachers must themselves connect with other communities of reference to

collaborate on offering quality education. Professional artists make natural partners in this effort…Curiosity and inquiries are the professional tools of trade (2015, p. 369).

Hunter (2015) nominates the benefits of strong partnerships (in this case with artists in schools) and their ability to awaken curiosity and inquiry in a liquid world. Partnerships that position a collaborative making process at the centre of the learning have the potential to radically alter the relationship between education, cultural institutions and society generally. All of these places become not only sites of reception, but potentially for invention, co-creation and innovation. Inherent in this opportunity is a challenge for communities, schools, education systems, theatres and other cultural institutions to reorient themselves; making them more outward-focused organisations who understand that silo thinking is a remnant of a bygone era that is dangerously inappropriate to the needs and expectations of our community in the twenty-first-century.

8 Overview of the Chapters

Within this broader socio-cultural context of liquid times, with its inherent challenges because of the death of old audiences, the reinvention of communities, the societal challenges to politics and democracy and the rationalisation of education, we now move to introducing the theatres and practitioners who can assist us in locating our practices along a spectrum of engagement. As the reader moves through them, we suggest that our caveats around intent, the nature of the practice, issues of policy and relatedness and the metrics of success employed in the work are kept to the forefront of your mind. So too, a watchful eye should be maintained as to the challenging and ever-evolving nature of partnerships being described in these pages.

The case studies presented in the 20 chapters ahead are on a spectrum of engagement; between work that is strongly connected to main stage performance to programmes that have only the most tangential connection to a main stage theatre. You may also notice that some theatre companies such as Queensland Theatre Company (QTC) feature in more than one chapter. We did this purposefully to signify the multiple perspectives that one company and even one piece of work can generate. All of the work featured here however has in common a sense of searching for a way to engage people *with* theatre and drama *and/or* through theatre and drama. We have not been prescriptive about the way these stories are told so in some chapters you will see a focus on history and others you will find an emphasis on describing practice. To us this reflects the diversity of approaches and cultures in this fascinating sector.

The volume is organised into five sections, all driven by the five nodes on the spectrum described earlier in this opening chapter and each of which we have used to conceptually gather chapters which speak to each other, though they may be somewhat different in style and focus and in their adherence to the overarching theme.

9   Tradition and Innovation

Opening the studies contained in these chapters, the work of Tarragon Theatre Company in Toronto, Canada is first. Kathleen Gallagher and Anne Wessels prompt us to reconsider how relationships between theatre companies and schools might work by reframing what learning and theatre can mean. The chapter offers reflections on a 17-year relationship between scholars and theatre-makers to examine the ongoing and as of yet unmet potential of this relationship. In Joe Winston and Mon Partovi's chapter, 'Within the Girdle of These Walls' the nexus between school transformation, Shakespeare and the Royal Shakespeare Company is interrogated. Their account asks us to consider how theatres might be a change agent to imagine transformed learning and teaching. In another kind of partnership Michael Anderson and Peter O'Connor's chapter considers how creativity can be enabled for schools through innovative partnerships between places of high cultural capital and schools. The Creative Leadership in Learning program was a collaboration between the Sydney Opera House and The University of Sydney and schools. It invited four schools (in its pilot phase) to identify an issue in their school and then partner with the Sydney Opera House, The University of Sydney and a teaching artist to devise creative strategies to engage with the issue. The chapter describes the initial processes of partnership and discusses some of the challenges and opportunities that emerged in the programme. The Queensland Theatre Company in Australia features in the final chapter of this section, as Sandra Gattenhof and Heidi Irvine explore the patterns that emerge in that company's education programme. They critically reflect on the work to date and the likely evolution of these programmes.

10   Moving Beyond the Main House

Remaining with the Queensland Theatre Company but offering a different perspective, John O'Toole's account reveals some of the pervasive features of the schools and theatres nexus that lead to connection and sometimes disconnection in partnerships in the history of that organisation. In their chapter Rachel King and Baz Kershaw consider a trans-disciplinary model for artist-academic collaboration based at the Warwick Arts Centre in the United Kingdom. The project partnered academics from biomedicine and economics with regional and national artists and theatre-makers to engage with young people living in socio-economically deprived and ethnically diverse areas of Coventry (UK). They argue that these kinds of collaborations could create a new model for trans-disciplinary research dissemination and public engagement for the higher education sector. Remaining in the United Kingdom, we then read of Selina Busby's exploration of the National Theatre's Connections program. Connections has been one of the most prominent theatre

'outreach' programs engaging several thousand young people for over two decades. Her chapter "'The Biggest Youth Theatre Festival on the Planet': National Theatre Youth Connections" considers how the programme fits into the cultural and educational landscape in the UK and considers its contribution to personal and social transformation for the participants. Natalie Hart and Joe Winston's chapter concludes this section, and focuses on three groups in the Young Rep programme at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, again based in the UK. The chapter explores the young people's connection to theatre through an analysis of spatial dynamics, ethnicity and social class.

11   Artists in Education, and Beyond

One of the programmes that is not tied directly to main stage programmes but draws from the theatrical energy of a theatre company is The School Drama Partnership at Sydney Theatre Company. Robyn Ewing and John Saunders describe the ways the programme has engaged teaching artists to support schools using drama to interrogate contemporary literary texts for children to enhance deep literacy learning. The chapter considers the outcomes of the project seen through the theoretical context of the collaborative zone of proximal development. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the impact of the programme and a consideration of issues of ongoing sustainability of these kinds of approaches. One of the powerhouses of theatre activity and innovation has been New York City, USA where this book was first imagined. The opening contribution from NYC that considers theatre companies programing work beyond their four walls is Jennifer DiBella, Mitch Mattson and Jonothan Jones' examination of Roundabout Theatre in their chapter "Education at Roundabout: It's About Turning Classrooms into Theatres, and the Theatre into a Classroom". Working with over 18,000 students and educators across 265 schools their work must rate as one of the largest and perhaps most complex in this collection. In this chapter, they discuss the way the company uses main stage programming to engage and connect young people with the rich content of main stage theatre. Returning to Australia, we next encounter Christine Sinclair, Richard Sallis, Christian Leavesley and Jolyon James chapter on Arena Theatre Company. The chapter describes an experience for 8–12 year olds where they were audience and active participants in two thematically linked experiences – a main stage theatre production and an interactive theatrical event. The chapter explores the potential in these kind of hybrid experiences as a way of creating a unique learning experience that recruits dramatic play and process drama to directly inform and deepen theatrical experiences for young people. Back to New York and Lindsey Buller Maliekel, Courtney J. Boddie, Dennie Palmer Wolf and Steven Holochwost's chapter explores one of the key themes of this book – measuring the impact on young audiences of theatre and associated programmes. In this chapter, they consider the Schools with Performing Arts Reach Kids (SPARK) programme

that intends to bring theatre education to elementary and middle schools where it is not and has not been part of the curriculum.

12   Agentive Partnership

Opening this penultimate collection of chapters, George Belliveau and Monica Prendergast's chapter "Shadows of History, Echoes of War: Performing Alongside Veteran Soldiers and Prison Inmates in Two Canadian Applied Theatre Projects" looks at the concept of 'inreach'. Working as applied theatre practitioners they describe the project and discuss the issues related to the roles of teacher and actor that were part of this innovative and 'risky' project with precarious communities of participants. Katrine Heggstad, Kari Mjaaland Heggstad, and Stig A. Eriksson's chapter, "Visiting Schools for Visiting Theatre. Researching a Drama Workshop and Young People's Response" considers a collaboration between the Drama Department at Bergen University College and the city theatre in Bergen, Norway. The study explores a programme designed to engage 15-year-old students with a main stage production. The authors make some striking observations about the connections between theatre education participation (or the lack of it) and the young people's ability to connect effectively with the performance and the associated activities. Peter Duffy and Terry Greiss' chapter tracks the history of New York City's Irondale Ensemble Project and its attempts to engage young people. In "Irondale Ensemble Project: Creating Community in Neo-liberal Times" they critically discuss the role of 'politics', 'place' and 'audience' in the development and delivery of programs for schools and young people. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the sustainability of partnerships in a climate of neo liberal attacks on the arts and education. Finally under the heading of agentive partnerships, Prue Wales and Alvin Tan explore the effectiveness and impact of Singapore Theatre Company's Theatre for Seniors programme. The programme that aimed to provide a pathway into professional theatre has been, according to the authors, a great success.

13   Redefining Engagement

Beginning a selection of studies that pushes the boundaries of theatre work, we move from the older participants to the very youngest with Emma Miles and Helen Nicholson's exploration of a year-long programme for early childhood students based on the performance *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too*. Their chapter details the process and explains how these young people become "educated in theatre-going, as well as by theatre going". "Reach Out and Relax: Extending Access to Theatre for Families Living with Disability" is Andy Kempe and Sarah Gregson's description of a project which investigates how young people with special education needs and specifically autism spectrum disorder can be supported through 'in-reach' activities.

Their chapter focuses on the proliferation of relaxed performances by examining a performance at the Newbury Corn Exchange. As seen in the Miles/Nicholson chapter, another area of engagement that has expanded rapidly in recent years is the work of companies with the very young. In their chapter, "The Dance of Life" Judith McLean and Sally Chance detail a professional conversation about the role of the teaching artist, arts-based learning practice and infant development theory in the creation of a program/performance called 'The Dance of Life'. Our extensive collection of cases concludes with Barry Freeman's chapter which considers notions of success as they relate to the National Arts Centre's (Toronto, Canada) SpiderWebShow. Working with Michael Wheeler, their discussion calls for an understanding of the possibility of place (such as the NAC) for creating advocacy and discussion and for institutions to value this kind of activity in theatres as success.

Notwithstanding the limitations we have identified earlier, this collection of chapters does provide a broad survey of theatre programmes which extend beyond the four walls of theatre venues and organisations. As editors, we have had the benefit of working with these cases and their authors over a substantial period of time. With the benefit of this 'helicopter view' we thought we might offer some tentative suggestions about the possible shape of the future of this kind of work.

14   Possible Futures

The future that we glimpse by virtue of the cases here is a series of new and enhanced networks that share ideas, resources and practice for the benefit of their partners and communities. Whilst it may be more convenient to continue to work individually and to remain 'siloed' in our own limited contexts, the challenges we face to make theatre relevant and critical to the lives of people is perhaps more pressing that it ever has been. What this means strategically is that companies need to build partnerships with communities, schools and universities where their values and missions align, irrespective of their location. While this is not without its difficulty the work we glimpse here provides a practical way to start those conversations.

Additionally, this work requires the development of a sound theoretical and research base. While many companies have been involved in sometimes systematic but often piecemeal evaluation, the sector lacks a coherent and methodical approach to research that is international, theoretical and seeks connections between theory, practices, audiences and intent. This is problematic insofar as we do not have sufficient knowledge about our impacts, successes and common challenges in this work. In short, we cannot always see what works and what doesn't. When this is the case, we remain likely to continue reinventing the wheel. The future we imagine for the sector partners universities with companies to understand their work beyond main stages. What this looks like will ultimately be up to the theatres, schools and communities themselves but the developing affordances of networked technologies could make for an effective and relevant international consortium of researchers, theatre workers and schools all working toward ways to make their practice more

effective for all. This approach offers potential efficiencies that will appeal to those who 'count the beans' in theatre companies and cultural policy more broadly. Instead of constantly inventing approaches and methods this collective approach could see theatres sharing increasingly scarce resources for more sustainable impact.

Of course, there are objections to a collective approach and indeed the inherent dangers of cultural flattening because of a more globalised approach. There are significant and critical cultural differences of which organisations need to take full account. Additionally, many of the approaches detailed here are not readily adaptable. We're not calling here for some sort of theatrical cultural essentialism but rather a way to learn, engage and grow from each other's practice.

15   Conclusions

As you read this book, we hope you that you feel as we do, that the riches of practice, partnership and insight we see in these stories are replete with possibility – full of treasures and opportunities that demand sharing beyond individual theatres and national borders. As theatre practitioners, theatre managers, policymakers, educators and others read these cases, we hope it will inspire not idle wonder at these riches and innovation of our sector but instead prompt an inspiration to act. We hope that it inspires organisations to understand the opportunities that are implicit within drama and theatre for learning and engagement and seek to use that to create new and enduring partnerships, to educate, provoke and rejuvenate our schools and our communities. There is no doubt that we live in liquid times. One of the ways that we can engage and respond to these times is to consider how we transition and transform our practices to meet the challenges that complexity, chaos and contradiction presents to theatres, schools and communities.

While many inside and outside the sector may argue that the role of theatres beyond main stages is trivial and peripheral to 'core business', the work here argues strongly to the contrary. In these slices of practice, we see a theatre, research and education community who are ready to take on all the challenges that the twenty-first century presents. There is deep compassion, ingenuity and integrity in the work that we showcase here and it is these values and capacities that will ultimately, in our view, make the difference. We believe that drama and theatre has a distinct and critical role to play in the lives of our young people and our communities as a participatory and active process to enable them to know and interpret human experience. Returning to Jonothan Neelands' contribution in the foreword, it is our belief that these projects and the insights we can gather from them showcase the best transformational effects of critical artistic pedagogies, which can help us in building a coalition of resistance in offering a political as well as an artistic response to the challenges of liquid modernity. If this view is shared in theatres, as it clearly is as evidenced through the cases in this book, all of us must redouble our efforts to organise, research and collaborate to make the riches of these stories available more widely in our venues, companies, schools and communities.

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Part II
Tradition and Innovation

Staying the Course and 'Here to Question': Envisioning Education at Tarragon Theatre as an Integral Goal and a Reciprocal Practice

Kathleen Gallagher and Anne Wessels

Abstract This chapter analyses a long-standing relationship between Toronto's Tarragon Theatre and local schools, colleges and universities and in particular, the University of Toronto. Contextualizing this relationship in the larger historical landscape of cultural and educational policy and global migration, we chart the change in focus from simply offering plays to young people, to developing youth skills to enable them to become full artistic participants in the life of the theatre.

In describing our different histories with Tarragon we, as authors, bring to this chapter recent experiences and those that go back 20 years. To offer a present-day youth perspective, we introduce a case study of a young playwright (and former University of Toronto student) who has been an active participant in recent educational programming at Tarragon. She suggests that Tarragon's engagement of youth through intensive playwriting programming is important but that she did not, as a young artist, feel fully integrated into the artistic work of the theatre. We conclude by recognizing the scale of this theatre and its potential for youth programming, which is moving slowly and steadily towards becoming more vital to the ambitions of the theatre in spite of the constraints of available funding.

Keywords Theatre · Education · Artistic programming · Youth · Cultural policy · Canada · Case study

This chapter will explore an important and long-standing relationship between a very successful producer of theatre in Toronto, Canada- Tarragon Theatre- and education and researchers at the University of Toronto. The story of the relationship speaks eloquently to the always interesting but often misunderstood or

K. Gallagher (✉)
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
e-mail: kathleen.gallagher@utoronto.ca

A. Wessels
Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, Canada
e-mail: anne@tarragontheatre.com

mis-characterized relationship between theatre and education. Too often in arts circles, education is limited by a narrow notion of learning, either tied to curricular content or utilitarian ideas about what it means to be educated. Too often in education circles, theatre is not fully appreciated for its capacity to imaginatively engage with younger and older populations, across social differences, and through diverse experiences. This chapter will draw from a 20-year relationship between scholars and theatre-makers who continue to probe the possibilities of a more fully realized relationship between theatre(s) and education.

Formal education institutions like schools, colleges and universities inform the programming at Tarragon and, at the same time, Tarragon programming informs curriculum at universities, colleges and secondary schools. Generally speaking, the differences between these institutions, their organizational cultures and educational and artistic projects, make them both very important to young people's educational journeys and to their own institutional growth. Helen Nicholson (2011) draws on Ruth Little's work done at the Young Vic in London where a 'reciprocity' is created to both stimulate youth to create and to realise how that work in turn feeds the larger theatre as an organization (p. 208). Nicholson states:

> This emphasis on reciprocity places learning at the centre of the life of the theatre. Without a willingness to learn and engage in dialogue, all theatre becomes intellectually stale, artistically lifeless and emotionally moribund and enlightened theatres have learnt to listen to the voices of young people both as audience members and as fellow artists. (p. 209)

The young people, then, are not just the recipients of theatre education programs but are also a source of vitality for education departments in theatres and theatres organizations more generally.

The Performing Arts Education Overview (2011) is a Toronto-based collaboration of arts advocacy organizations, "which aims to raise the level of understanding and practice by performing arts companies in Toronto of engagement, access and audience development" (p. 5). The Overview suggests that in 50% of the arts organizations they surveyed in the city of Toronto, education is 'integral' to the organization while "another 30% indicated that 'arts education is important within the organization, but not integral" (p. 11). The extent to which an education mandate is central, and conceived as an interchange with young people, is important to consider. We would say that Tarragon is actively pedagogical in three ways. First, like many theatres, the theatre designs programs to educate audiences. Secondly, it focuses on the cultivation of artistic practices and skills necessary for the art of theatre, such as developing professional playwrights, the next generation of artistic directors, and youth as emerging artists. Thirdly, this theatre promotes relational pedagogies that engage schools, colleges and universities as well as community organizations such as Fred Victor.[1] Interestingly, the Overview also found that only 43% of the organizations had developed partnerships with colleges and universities (p. 26). Tarragon organizes specialized programming for university and college groups who see the

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[1] Toronto's Fred Victor in its 2014–2015 Annual Report states, "Our mission is to provide responsive, accessible and innovative housing and services for people who are experiencing homelessness and poverty, and to work for a more equitable society" (p. 2).

plays. Like many other theatres, Tarragon offers educational opportunities that differ from what is offered at schools because the programs create relationships between young people and living theatre artists engaged in their work. On offer, for instance, are programs for youth to experience live theatre through workshops, play-going/talkbacks and play creation/playwriting. As well, the artistic work at Tarragon informs the content of course work and curriculum at secondary and post secondary institutions and current Artistic Director Richard Rose often visits university and college classrooms as a guest lecturer. One example of the theatre and its relationship to university curriculum is a credit course being offered at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario where students come to Tarragon to work as administrative interns. Also, Tarragon was the site of a course that studied embedded criticism at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Students would attend rehearsals of the plays they were to review so that they could more fully understand the artistic and political intentions of the artistic team. Professors also interact with the theatre as trusted advisors and lecturers while current research completed in universities offers important rationale for the implementation of new programming at the theatre. It is clear that formal education institutions and Tarragon mutually inform one another and this, we have observed, makes for a very strong starting place.

To further probe the multifaceted exchange between educational institutions and this particular theatre, we offer in this chapter a shared account of our involvements with education at Tarragon that is complemented by the case study of one of the youth who participated in different aspects of Tarragon educational programming over several years. Before we turn our focus to the particulars of her experiences and how this exemplifies aspects of Tarragon's youth programming, however, we will provide important context for the theatre, drawing from archival material from Tarragon, interviews with the theatre's former education directors, and our own different associations with the theatre. Our context-setting also offers an historical account of Canadian cultural production and arts policies, particularly the project of nation-building. We will moreover illustrate how, over time, conceptualizations of youth shifted from a notion of 'audiences of the future' towards a more fully realised sense of youth as practicing artists in their own right.

1   Historical Context and Changes Over Time: Tarragon's 48-Year History

The Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, Canada is a highly successful mid-size theatre company, with a seating capacity of 313 in its two theatre spaces. One of several mid-size theatres that came into being in the experimental heyday of the 1960/1970s, it remains standing and even growing where others have closed their doors. It is perhaps notoriously known as the only among its peer companies that has kept its books "in the black" over its 45 year history. We will consider, in the following pages, why this might have been the case, hypothesizing at the outset that its combination of building from the ground up, nurturing new Canadian playwrights, and

taking calculated risks realizing, as it has, that experimentation needs a solid footing, may be some of the reasons why the theatre company has enjoyed artistic, critical, and commercial success. Over its 48-year history, the company has only had three artistic directors and five general managers. To say the administrative leadership at the company has been stable would be an understatement. While there have been six successive education directors over the company's last 20 years of education programming, these different leaders have also consistently leaned upon the broader education community, prizing long-term commitments.

Tarragon is certainly considered one of the most stable and successful companies in the city of Toronto, and likely in the country. In its two spaces, they have premiered over 180 new works. Importantly, it has been a critically and financially successful company through many different arts policy landscapes and successive governments. Another of the keys to its success, we will argue in this chapter, is its ability to rethink itself, to adapt to the times, and to maintain a committed subscriber base through its calculated experiments and its uncanny ability to bring young and older people and accomplished artists into productive relationships.

2   Why Education? Why the Arts?

'Why education, why the arts?' is a provocation addressed in The Performing Arts Education Overview (2011) "that shows that experiencing the arts as a child is the primary factor leading to future arts attendance and engagement" (p. 41). But the importance of engaging youth in the arts is not simply to ensure healthy future audiences that will sustain existing theatres. In its 2010 Annual Report completed by Ontario's *People for Education,* an education research and advocacy organization, they argue that exposure to the arts is important to the well-being and skill development of young people, saying "the arts provide students not only with direct skills in music, drama, fine art and dance, but also with core competencies that affect all other forms of learning and growth" (p. 16). The skills they list include creative expression, responsibility, concentration, communication skills, self- discipline, goal setting, hand-eye-coordination, cultural and historical awareness (p. 16).

According to The Performing Arts Education Overview (2011) the focus of educational work in theatres has changed over the last 15 years:

> Traditionally, organizations have viewed arts education programming as a means of building audiences for the future. Years ago, this would have meant simply offering a student discount or providing additional matinee performances. Today it requires increased resources as arts groups develop student workshop programs, artists-in-the-classroom sessions, post matinee question and answer periods, resource guides and professional development opportunities for teachers to name a few examples. (p. 3)[2]

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[2] This Toronto-based survey interviewed audience members in multiple performing arts organizations regarding their engagement. The report states that it was "a first-time, collaborative initiative by Toronto's creative performing arts companies to hear directly from their audiences on what motivates them to attend and what helps them connect more deeply with the work they see on stage" (p. 5).

Unquestionably, Tarragon has participated in this significant shift in arts programming, moving from a model that facilitated audience reception to a fuller agenda that includes the creation of theatre and the development of youth artists and teacher artists alongside professional artists.

3 Our Different Involvements

In 1979, J. P. Lucas, Tarragon's then "Special Projects Co-ordinator", sent a letter to teachers in schools, writing, "to accommodate the increasing demand for student groups at Tarragon we have decided to start a special mid-week matinee performance during our 1979–80 season". Twenty years after this, in 1999, Kathleen, in her teacher educator and researcher role at the University of Toronto, was approached by the then General Manager Mallory Gilbert (1972–2006) to meet with her and the then artistic director Urjo Kareda (1982–2002) to discuss what might be possible and mutually enriching between the theatre and the university. Tarragon theatre is not, and has never been, a theatre for young audiences. It does not program its plays with the formal education community in mind. It is an 'adult' theatre. And yet, in those early meetings with Kathleen, she realized that there was a real interest on the part of the theatre leadership to create more enduring, engaging and reciprocal relationships with the secondary and tertiary teaching community who often brought students to performances at the theatre precisely because of the consistent quality of the work produced there and not because it was somehow deemed 'appropriate' for younger audiences. As a high school teacher in an earlier life, Kathleen had regularly brought her own students to Tarragon because of the quality of their shows; it had been an important support to her high school drama program.

Former Young People's Theatre artistic director Maja Ardal's (2003) controversial plea to merge TYA and adult theatres would have had resonance for Kathleen's high school teacher self. Ardal writes:

> Children are not as literal-minded as many would have us believe. They understand metaphor and they understand imagery. They understand that theatre is an experience to reflect upon, not to obey, that theatre is an imaginary world of 'what if' and not the 'only world'. They understand that there are more people in the world than just the 'good' guys and the 'bad' guys. They know that there are grey areas, when good people do bad things, and that people who do bad things are not automatically bad or tidily redeemable.
>
> We need to show children the messy aspects of life. As artists we are not here to answer. We are here to question, and to invite our audience to question with us. In the end, do young people not prefer to see theatre that everyone else, regardless of age, sees? Do they really want to sit in the theatre just with their own age group? Do they want to sit with 400 other children and feel like a pack rather than individuals?... If adult theatres merge with TYA companies, people of all ages will enhance the atmosphere of theatres. (p. 196–7)

Ardal's provocation offers a plausible explanation for why many secondary school teachers choose to bring their students to this 'adult' theatre. In matinees designed to accommodate the school day, however, the audience at the adult theatre could be comprised entirely of youth. Although the matinee audiences at Tarragon are primarily secondary school students, a growing number of seniors groups from continuing education programs at universities and from neighbourhood housing for seniors attend these daytime performances and the talkback conversations that follow.

Anne has a different history with Tarragon. As a former actor, many of her colleagues have performed, and had plays developed and produced, on Tarragon's stages. As a former secondary school teacher, she attended the educational programming offered at Tarragon and it was at one of these events where she first encountered Kathleen who was interviewing Canadian playwright, Joan MacLeod about her play, *The Shape of a Girl* that focused on gender and race-based youth violence in a Vancouver suburb. Here we have programming that might meet Ardal's goal of mixed audiences of young and older people and an example of adult theatres as a forum in which the stories and challenges facing Canadian youth are told.[3] We also have in this an example of how the early days of Kathleen's engagement with the theatre led to programming for secondary school teachers that was meant to offer professional development and strengthen their relationship with the many teachers who chose, year after year, to bring their students to an 'adult' theatre.

Anne's doctoral work, which was, many years after the MacLeod interview at Tarragon, supervised by Kathleen, looked at the relationship between theatre-making and young people living in the suburbs. Her research sites included the rehearsal halls in which the play, *Concord Floral,* written by Jordan Tannahill was developed with two artistic collaborators, Erin Brubacher and Cara Spooner and ten youth, eight of whom lived in suburban Toronto. Some of these rehearsals took place in the studios at Tarragon where then Tarragon Education Director, Brubacher (2011–2014), worked.

Anne's dissertation research is relevant for two reasons: (i) it introduced her to the cast of *Concord Floral* and the youth actor (and later playwright), Erum Kahn, whose story forms the case study in this chapter and (ii) it has provided a rationale for the new focus on the suburbs in the education programming that she has implemented at Tarragon in this past year. Here is another important dimension to the relationship between academia and education departments of theatres in that the latter can put into action the findings and implications of current research in the field of drama education and applied theatre. Upon completing her doctoral work, Anne found herself in the surprising position of taking on the Director of Education role at Tarragon, following Brubacher's departure.

It is from these interesting and different, yet intersecting, histories that we come to write this chapter together.

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[3] MacLeod's most recent play produced at Tarragon in 2014, *The Valley,* focused on the mental health challenges experienced by a young man and his vigilant mother.

4   The Larger Canadian Context

In his letter addressed to teachers telling them about the 1983–1984 season, then Artistic Director Urjo Kareda writes, "Participating in the creation of new work in a living theatre will provide an intensified excitement and perspective for your students' education. It is through the interpretation of our culture, and our observation of its changes, that we can best define ourselves. The theatre is a quick and effective reflection of that culture". We hear in this early letter that the impulse to create theatre was deeply intertwined with the Canadian search for its national identity.

Twenty years later, writer and cultural critic Max Wyman (2004), in his illuminating text, *The Defiant Imagination: An Impassioned Plea to keep Culture at the Heart of the Canadian Experiment*, proposes two seemingly contradictory realities: the first speaks to a long-term struggle to tightly fasten arts education into formal curriculum and learning institutions across the country; the second articulates the complexity of sustainable cultural producers across a vast country such as Canada. Regarding arts education, the state of affairs he articulates is clearly a global phenomenon. Admonishing education authorities in Canada, he writes:

> For too many decades we have let our responsibilities to our young people languish. Despite the often heroic efforts of individual educators who find ways to communicate the values of culture and the arts to their charges, it is impossible today to say with any conviction that our school systems treat education in the arts and humanities with vision and insight. Generation after generation of students graduate from our schools with only the faintest notion of the riches that are rightfully theirs. Most provinces and territories have articulated impressive statements of principle regarding the inclusion of the arts in the school curriculum. But as economic pressures have intensified, the teaching of arts and culture to the young has increasingly been seen as a non-essential element of the curriculum – a subject that can be shoehorned into the timetable as an option after the so-called basics have been properly taken care of. Because of that it has become regarded as the refuge of the mediocre and incompetent, or as something anyone can do, and it should be a matter of shame to the entire country that no systematized approach, built on deep-rooted recognition of the long-term values of a broad grounding in cultural studies and liberal arts, yet exists in our education system. (p. 54)

Undoubtedly, this is a state of affairs that is well understood across many national borders. And in such a context, it is no surprise that some teachers turn to arts and culture organizations to bolster the possibilities for their students or embolden their own weary spirit. In the context of Tarragon, it is equally true that the theatre turns to education to access dynamic teachers who are actively fostering new student-written work in their classrooms and in the playwriting festivals they organize. Tarragon has turned to schools as the most democratic way to connect with youth. The programming does not depend on students who are 'in the know' because they attend specialized arts high schools but access to the theatre comes from the teachers who bring all their students, and from school boards such as the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), Canada's largest, who are willing to subsidize tickets for more socio-economically disadvantaged schools.

Canadian cultural producers, however, have their own struggles. Wyman's analysis:

> Much of the current health of Canadian culture is tied to a complex network of protective regulations and controls, built on the idea of levelling the playing field for Canadian creators. The CRTC; the Canadian Television Fund; tax credits; licensing requirements; ownership rules; significant investments in CBC-Radio Canada; the National Film Board and Telefilm Canada: these are all ways to ensure that the voices of Canada's artists continue to be heard. Despite regular calls from free marketeers for a loosening of these restraints, Canada is not the only country to find such measures necessary. France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands and Australia, among many others, operate a variety of initiatives designed to enable their creators to flourish. (p. 193)

Theatres, like Tarragon, are always being asked to respond to changing conditions that include new conceptualizations of nationhood as well as an aging population. Tarragon theatre was created with a mission to develop and produce new Canadian work at a time when Canadian identity was consciously and intentionally being explored and defined. What happens to this national vision as the country transforms from three central cultures (Indigenous, English and French) to a globalized community in which many nations and languages, cultures and heritages congregate. Is theatre based on this earlier vision of Canadian nationhood still relevant and viable? And how might educational initiatives in theatres explore and contribute to these changing conditions of national identity?

The theatre has had a loyal and consistent subscription base from which to build its seasons but as the population ages will subscription funding be viable to new generations of audiences? The Creative Trust's Audience Engagement Survey (2010) interviewed audience members in multiple performing arts organizations regarding their engagement.[4] The survey found that audience members "would like to get more of a glimpse at the 'process' behind the performance, be it videos posted online or actually attending rehearsals or hearing interviews from the creative team, performers and crew" (p. 21). Tarragon actively creates educational programming as a means of engaging audiences beyond subscriptions. The theatre offers opportunities to attend free lectures and for a modest additional program fee, subscribers can attend first read-throughs, dress rehearsals and a variety of curated and quite intimate conversations with the theatre artists. To keep their subscriber base strong, Tarragon offers these additional educational opportunities as supplements to subscribing.

With such a high degree of collaboration with schools, colleges and universities, the theatre has to operate in response also to educational policy that has caused political unrest and teacher labour actions. As governments attempt to rein in public education spending, collective bargaining becomes challenged and in response, teachers have taken strike action and adopted work-to-rule initiatives that can

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[4] The report states that it was, "a first-time, collaborative initiative by Toronto's creative performing arts companies to hear directly from their audiences on what motivates them to attend and what helps them connect more deeply with the work they see on stage" (p. 5).

preclude them from organizing field trips and professional development. Under these conditions, much of the educational programming for youth can slow to a halt.

Into this complex and challenging cultural and educational policy landscape, we now insert the story of one young student's engagement with this Toronto theatre. We need ultimately ask questions of the scalability of this particular case study, but not before we wade into the detail of the experience, to mine for the reader what is possible in that vibrant space between education and theatre(s).

5   The Invigorating Space Between Education and Theatres

As we have outlined, there are three strands of pedagogical programming at Tarragon: (i) a focus on broad audience education, (ii) on artist development, and (iii) on collaboration with schools, colleges and universities. Our focus is on the third strand, comprised primarily of educational initiatives with formal education institutions.

Tarragon has developed a breadth of such programming that continues to engage schools, colleges and universities. Mary Wood, who worked in Education and Outreach at Tarragon from 2000 to 2003 describes a variety of programs that included a collaboration with the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto to create and develop a "week-long teacher PD [professional development] in the summer of 2003, including "The Collective Creation" and partnering with OISE, Passe Muraille [another mid-size theatre] and UTS [University of Toronto Schools, a secondary school associated with the University of Toronto]" (M. Wood, personal communication, September 1, 2015). Andrew Lamb (2003–2008) followed Wood and became the first Education Director with a budget earmarked specifically for education. He explained that funding agencies began to ask how theatres were building a sense of community and his programming actively took on that focus. He worked closely with teachers, implemented workshops in schools, and developed an Education Advisory Board that included Kathleen (A. Lamb, personal communication, August 28, 2015).

This Education Advisory group is an example of the longer-term collaboration between academia and the theatre as members of the education community advise the theatre's Education Department on issues of relevance to students and teachers. Anne's current Education Advisory includes secondary school teachers, early career drama teachers who do not yet have positions, and graduate students at the University of Toronto. Unlike previous advisory groups, there is a gerontologist who also earned her doctorate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Kathleen continues to be an honorary member of the Advisory who generously offers her advice and guidance.

We now turn our attention to the case study of one of the youth participants in the youth programming at Tarragon because her example suggests a fertile intersection of education and theatre artists working in this particular professional theatre. Through this case study that follows a young woman, Erum Kahn, we see how

Tarragon programming cultivates her artistic growth, which in turn feeds an ethnographic research project that eventually informs the wider educational and artistic programming at Tarragon. We begin by considering the ways in which Kahn's participation in the youth programming at Tarragon has benefitted her as an artist and also as a university student. In her comments, she also expresses some of the limitations of the educational programming and offers the theatre a clear direction for forward movement.

6 Case Study

6.1 Fresh Herbs: Spring Training Project at Tarragon

Kahn participated in Tarragon's youth program *The Spring Training Project* (STP) led by Erin Brubacher, then Education Director. The program engaged 15 youth from diverse cultural communities and geographic locations who worked on theatre and performance skills to prepare them to become an acting ensemble for the plays that had been written by youth playwrights in Tarragon's Young Playwrights Unit (YPU). Brubacher describes the STP in the program notes for the 2013 public performance, "The Spring Training Project, in many forms throughout its 23–year history, has always been a place for aspiring theatre performers ages 15–19 to cut their teeth" (p. 2). She describes the variety of theatre artists who worked with the youth to hone their acting skills, their capacities to collaborate and "how to be present in our creative explorations, how to ask questions and how to listen to each other and to the work we are developing" (Brubacher, p. 2).[5]

6.2 Concord Floral

It was from this group of youth that Erin Brubacher, Jordan Tannahill, and Cara Spooner cast *Concord Floral. Concord Floral*, then, was not a Tarragon initiative but there was overlap in terms of the players. The play has enjoyed three productions at three other professional theatres: Canadian Stage, Theatre Passe Muraille and The Theatre Centre. Anne, in her researcher role, observed the rehearsals and performances of the first two of these iterations of the play.

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[5] In 2014, The Spring Training Project was discontinued and the educational department refocused on more intentionally working with youth through schools and teachers. This cancellation was intended to place the educational opportunities on a broader footing that would include more youth accessed through schools.

6.3   Young Playwrights Unit at Tarragon

Following Kahn's involvement in the Spring Training Program, *Fresh Herbs*, she joined the Young Playwrights Unit and was mentored by established Toronto playwright, Andrew Kushnir, (one of the Playwrights-in-Residence at Tarragon and whose play, *Wormwood,* was produced as part of Tarragon's 2015/2016 season). Currently there are 13 Playwrights-in-Residence at Tarragon. These playwrights are writing plays that will be dramaturged, developed, and read to the public in Tarragon's annual Playreading Week. It is also from this pool of work that Tarragon typically builds its upcoming seasons. This aspect of artist education at Tarragon, the Playwrights-in-Residence, beautifully intersects with the youth programming through artists mentoring the young playwrights. In Kahn's case, her play, *Noor* focussed on the tensions a young woman faces as she negotiates her Muslim religious and family life following the death of her mother. Her play was presented publically in a Tarragon studio in May 2014.

About Tarragon's youth programming and its influence on her artistic development, Kahn writes:

> Tarragon's educational program greatly impacted my artistic development by providing an open learning space where I was constantly surrounded by an environment of professional artists and projects. By engrossing myself in such an invigorating atmosphere, I felt like a vital part of the theatre itself and thus carried over the notion of identifying myself as an artist as well. Moreover, being involved in both YPU and STP allowed me to immerse myself around a diverse group of artists who transformed my view and understanding of what theatre making and performance art even is. These artists greatly encouraged the need for engaging in dialogue throughout our work processes and continuously questioning what the work we create says about ourselves as artists and our perception of society. (E. Kahn, personal communication, August 17, 2015)

Curious about whether Tarragon programming had become integral to Kahn's post-secondary schooling, we asked her how her experiences at the theatre, working with Brubacher, informed her current university studies:

> A large portion of my experiences at Tarragon through both the writing and acting programs dealt with confronting my own vulnerabilities and constantly taking risks no matter the outcome. Of course, over time I was able to better develop and shape those outcomes into productive results, but I was made to feel confident in a space that encouraged failures and continuous room for improvement. As I transitioned into university, I realized how important and valuable these skills were for the kind of work expectations required of me. My work ethic and self-discipline were two areas which helped me through my university studies. (E. Kahn, personal communication, August 17, 2015)

Although Kahn acknowledges the benefits and learning of such projects, she also suggests that the educational opportunities at the theatre are not fully integrated into the rest of the theatre:

> While I was involved with YPU and STP, I felt like an integral part of Tarragon and the work it produced. However, as I think about it more and more, I realize that the vast majority of the work we created was conducted in a separate sphere away from the actual focus of the theatre…There was a strange imbalance of feeling like a 'fellow artist' at Tarragon while also not having a fully reciprocating feeling of inclusion from the rest of the theatre. (E. Kahn, personal communication, August 17, 2015)

Analysing her comments, Kahn suggests that the Tarragon programming holds youth as 'important' but perhaps not 'integral' to the theatre's work. On further examination of the interview data, it would be a misrepresentation of the research participant to suggest that she wanted to be treated as a professional. Kahn's comments emphasize the need to articulate this commitment of support to youth but also to demonstrate the value of these young artist programs and their relevance to the organization itself. Here, we see again Nicholson's call for reciprocity and careful thought as to how to effectively listen to the voices of young people as fellow artists. How to accomplish this while still upholding the central mandate of the theatre will be the focused work of the education department in the coming years.

7 Erum's Involvement in *Concord Floral* and University of Toronto Research

Erum, at the time of her participation in the STP at Tarragon and her subsequent involvement in the first versions of *Concord Floral*, was a student at the school where Anne had taught for many years and was the second site of her dissertation research. Erum was an important participant in Anne's study because she could discuss the intersections of both sites: the rehearsal halls of *Concord Floral*, two drama classrooms and the school grounds at Branch Secondary School located in suburban Toronto.

From Anne's dissertation (2015), Kahn talks about the travelling into the city with the other youth and the social nature of both play rehearsals and "subwaying" together (p.126). She highlights the importance of these kinds of programs that happen outside schools and outside the small French Immersion program where her social exchanges had become predictable. She describes how her involvement in the play creation process was 'different' in that she never knew where it would go on any particular day. Clearly, the artistic processes fascinated Kahn as she was learning alongside artistically-curious youth beyond her own neighbourhood and secondary school.

Kahn's experiences of the suburb and her artistic pursuits were significant to the dissertation research, which is now informing new education initiatives at Tarragon that intentionally engage youth living in the suburbs. For instance, the focus of the Young Playwrights Unit in 2015 was to bring young playwrights from secondary schools located in the suburbs to the downtown theatre to be mentored by the Playwrights-in-Residence. That same season a second initiative was started that took a play from the early seasons at Tarragon and offered it to suburban secondary schools to explore. This initiative inquired into the ways that youth made the play relevant in the contemporary context of the suburb. The interchange between research and programming at the theatre, and the engagement of geographically diverse populations of students, is clearly developing.

8   The Limits and Advantages of 'Small'

One obvious critique, in a world of 'bigger is better', is that the theatre programming engages a relatively small group of youth. Owing to Tarragon's commitment to free programming for youth, in 2014, for instance, 17 youth participated in the Spring Training Project. In the case of the Young Playwrights Unit, only between three and five young playwrights can be accepted into that program every year. Perhaps, though, the 'small' nature of the programming is part of what is unique and makes it different from the larger structures of mass schooling or the graduated studio classes of larger theatres. The small scale of the programming was certainly one of the real strengths of Erin Brubacher's educational vision implemented at Tarragon. Reaching out to the often forgotten suburban young artists is a vision shared by both Brubacher and Anne. The Tarragon theatre deserves some credit here for supporting the peripatetic visions of its education directors, but we must also remember that the theatre has proven itself to be steady and successful over a 48-year history. Part of the key to its success, we have concluded, is knowing what it does well and not over-extending its reach.

Programs like the Young Playwrights Unit and the Spring Training Project reflect Tarragon's long-standing mandate to develop 'new Canadian work', but they also illustrate how those early efforts of a fledgling education department have grown into programs well beyond the workshops for teachers that Kathleen envisioned with Urjo Kareda and Mallory Gilbert two decades ago. Building on existing programming, and through conversations with youth and the academic community, this theatre aims to more fully recognize youth for their importance as audience members, as valuable sources of feedback on artistic work and, finally, as 'fellow artists'. In 2015 many of the cast of a revisioned *Much Ado About Nothing,* set in a largely south-Asian suburb of Toronto, attended talkbacks with school groups because they found the youth responses to the play so enlightening. Their engagement with the young people recognized the importance of a 'reciprocal' dialogue. What might it take to imagine education as a wide and deep project within a theatre, or to truly think theatre as one of the riches that is the rightful inheritance of young people? To be sure, a theatre needs to be 'here to question', to create places of shared interrogation with audiences about our artistic pursuits and our collective political and social lives, but it also, as we have clearly seen, needs to understand what it does well and stay the course through inevitable upheavals in a larger political landscape.

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Within the Girdle of These Walls

Joe Winston and Mon Partovi

Abstract Over a period of 10 years from 2006 to 2016, the education department of the Royal Shakespeare Company, through its learning and performance network (LPN), established a network of schools throughout the UK with which it worked in close partnership (Winston J, *Transforming the Teaching of Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company*. Bloomsbury, London, 2015). This chapter describes findings of a funded research project which set out to build upon existing research by investigating specifically why, in certain schools, working with the RSC had had a more profound effect on children's learning than in others. The research consisted of four case studies, two in primary and two in secondary schools. Here we concentrate on findings from the primary schools, which present contrasting models of how change was brought about. Despite differences, certain common factors can, however, be pointed to and these are theorised in the second half of the chapter, with particular reference to the work of Pat Thompson (Thomson P, *Whole school change: a review of the literature*. Creative Partnership Series, Arts Council England, London, 2007) and her survey of factors leading to successful whole school change. These include establishing a framework for change that conforms to what she describes as an 'equity model'; the provision of high quality INSET with sufficient time and space being devoted to embedding it within the school culture; and, in particular, the support and commitment of head teachers.

Keywords RSC · Learning and Performance Network · Partnership · Whole school change · Professional development · School leadership

The Royal Shakespeare Company's Learning and Performance Network (LPN) ran for 10 years, from 2006 to 2016, working with schools in economically deprived or isolated areas, seeking to transform the teaching of Shakespeare by introducing teachers to active, rehearsal room approaches, many of which derive from the Company's own rehearsal room practices. Descriptions and evaluations of this work

J. Winston (✉) · M. Partovi
Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
e-mail: J.A.Winston@warwick.ac.uk; Mon.Partovi@warwick.ac.uk

already exist,[1] which this chapter does not intend to repeat; instead it seeks to examine further the achievements of the LPN drawing evidence from new research funded by the Impact Acceleration Account of the UK's Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC). This research, carried out in 2015, focused on four schools chosen by the RSC, where involvement in the LPN was identified as having had significant impact on teacher pedagogy, children's engagement with Shakespeare and broader social and academic outcomes. At the time of writing, data from just two of these sites, both of them primary schools, have been processed and analysed, so it is to these that we will attend in this chapter.

A key intention of this research project has been to find empirical data to suggest why the RSC's intervention has been highly successful in particular schools. For the RSC, this will inform their plans for future partnership projects; for the purposes of this chapter, we hope to illuminate the reasons why involvement in the LPN impacted significantly on teaching and learning in these two schools. Although some attention will be paid to the RSC's practices, most will be levelled at the schools themselves. In doing this, we will draw heavily upon Pat Thomson's review of the literature on whole school change published by Arts Council England in 2007.[2] This review is particularly relevant, presented as it was to an agency which had the promotion of arts and creative pedagogies at the heart of its mission.

Networks are seen by Thomson as a key means by which schools can work both with each other and with outside agencies to bring about change. Their basis is the sharing of information but they depend upon something deeper than this to hold them together for long periods of time, among which she suggests are 'an elaborated moral and intellectual purpose' and 'integrated practice-theory partnerships' which can include the participation of universities (2007, p.49). These features characterised the Learning and Performance Network. For most of the duration of the LPN, the RSC worked in collaboration with the University of Warwick in teaching an accredited action research programme carried out by lead teachers in key partnership schools; and the intensely ethical dimension of its purpose was strongly articulated in early publications that identified the promotion of active citizenship, cultural democracy and the spirit of the ensemble as key drivers to its pedagogies and practices.[3] But it is in the interactions that take place in classrooms and staffrooms, in different forms of leadership, actual strategies and real human relationships that the work of an outside, cultural agency, however strong its practices and well-articulated its principles, will either take root and grow or flourish for a short time only (Fullan 2001; Hargreaves 1996). It is to uncovering and understanding some of the specifics that can lead the RSC to have long-term impact in partnership schools that this research has been directed.

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[1] See Neelands et al. (2009) and Thomson et al. (2010). For the most recent and complete study, see Winston (2015).

[2] Creative Partnerships was the UK government's flagship creative learning programme, established in 2002, to develop young people's creativity through artists' engagement with schools in nominated areas across England. Its funding was cut in 2011 by the then Coalition government.

[3] See Neelands (2009) and Neelands and O'Hanlon (2011).

Our methodology, therefore, was qualitative. A series of questions were drawn up between ourselves and the RSC, with Mon then spending an intensive period of 3 days in each of the schools. The schools were more than willing to participate in the research, making every effort to accommodate the fieldwork, in each case organising a lesson observation schedule and arranging interviews with the head and deputy, lead teachers, classroom teachers, teaching assistants, groups of children, parents, school governors and with representatives from the 'cluster' schools for whom each of these schools acted as a hub.[4] Access was also provided to relevant school data, assessment results and children's written work. All interviews, amounting to several thousand words, were later transcribed and processed through NVIVO to help collate key evidence under specific headings. Joe was therefore able to scrutinise and analyse all of the data from something of a distance while drafting this chapter. Names of schools and participants, through common agreement, have not been anonymised.

The chapter will now proceed with a brief summary, derived from the data, of key factors behind the success of the LPN in the two different schools, followed by a discussion that frames these findings within the literature of whole school change as well as within the contributions made by the RSC itself. The fact that we concentrate here on schools in which the effects of the LPN have been very positive should not imply that this article is in any sense uncritical. The clear implication is that, in some schools, it has been less successful; and the theoretical section will cast light on why this might have been the case.

1   School (1): Springhead Primary

Springhead Primary School is situated in Stoke-on-Trent, an old industrial town in the north Midlands, with an intake of largely white, working class children, numbers eligible for the pupil premium being broadly in line with the national average.[5] The head described the area as socially and economically deprived. The most recent report from the national inspectorate, OFSTED, in 2012, identified the school as being good in all categories, including leadership.

The school joined the LPN in the 2013 cohort, so were completing their 2nd year at the time of the research. Visible signs of the impact of their work with Shakespeare are immediately visible to any visitor, with well-presented, colourful displays of children's art work and writing in the school hall and in classrooms, including the Reception area. All interviewees spoke enthusiastically about the LPN, with children referring to their enjoyment of the stories and the active approaches, valuing in

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[4] The LPN is organised so that lead teachers in hub schools receive intensive training from the RSC and have a remit to cascade their work across a group of cluster schools, which includes in-service training and organising performance projects.

[5] This is funding made available by the government intended to help eligible pupils reach the same academic levels as others.

particular their chance to act and perform in the classroom. Older children also spoke of their enjoyment of Shakespeare's language and were able to quote a range of favourite lines drawn from *Hamlet, Much Ado about Nothing, Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tempest*.

The head teacher, Brian Anderson, was evidently the driving force behind the school's involvement in the LPN. Enthusiastic about the arts in general and Shakespeare in particular, he had previously involved the school in projects with Creative Partnerships; in one, for example, the school worked with four artists, specialists in different disciplines, in ways intended to increase children's capacity to empathise. His vision as to what this new partnership had to offer was as an enhancement of the active, creative pedagogies they had already begun to explore but needed to develop further if they were to have a marked impact on children's learning. Having tried various booster programmes,[6] he was clear that these acted only as short term, technical fixes and he was looking for something deeper and more lasting. This vision and purpose for joining the LPN had been expressly communicated to the school community – teaching staff, pupils, governors and parents – as had the progress of the school's continuing involvement in the network. Regular reports were made to governors and the school newsletter often carried news about current Shakespeare projects within the school and visits from the RSC, including two *First Encounter* productions that the school had hosted.[7] These were extremely well received by parents and also grandparents, one of whom was overheard talking in the local hairdressers of how she had since written to Gregory Doran, the artistic director of the RSC, in praise of the production.

A key contextual factor in the swift and noticeable success of the initiative was the already existing positive ethos of trust and togetherness within the school community. To quote the OFSTED report of 2012: 'The school motto is 'working together to achieve our best' and, as one pupil said – 'That's true.' This ethos not only ensured that the whole school community was apt to perceive change in a positive light, but it also chimed readily with the philosophy of the LPN, its emphasis on establishing trust, on co-operative learning and on encouraging teachers to experiment, take risks and share resources and ideas.[8] Staff spoke enthusiastically of how the staffroom and school corridors had become a forum for such informal sharing but they also spoke of being taken beyond their comfort zones, of having to accept the fact that sometimes their lessons did not work or fell flat, giving specific examples as they spoke. In this era of enhanced accountability and external enforcement of national standards, Brian believes that such a tolerance of short term failure can only exist if the school leadership endorses it. Although one of the three lead teachers had taken drama as a specialism in her undergraduate education degree, the others lacked such a knowledge background, and some teachers, particularly in the

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[6] These took the form of programmes devised by teachers for small groups, or for one to one teaching, to plug identified gaps in children's learning.

[7] First Encounter is the title that the RSC gives to the specially adapted plays that tour selected schools annually.

[8] See Winston (2015) pp.9–13.

nursery, had initially been openly sceptical and nervous. But this had not stopped them participating willingly. As one lead teacher said, 'we are a creative school anyway and always looking for new ideas.' In fact, teachers often spoke of 'learning with the children', in ways that echoed Ranciere's positive concept of the 'ignorant schoolmaster'[9] who is forced to learn alongside his students. In the head's words, 'there has got to be room for the teacher to experiment and fail – and that's fine.'

This philosophy was backed up by strategy and commitment. The head saw the research project that the three lead teachers were asked to complete as 'a very important aspect' of the training, something the whole school could benefit from; his decision to encourage the teachers from Reception, Year 5 and Year 6 to take the lead and attend the training in Stratford was a conscious way of encouraging the whole school to become involved; and he was willing to devote quality time to the process, to prioritise the work with Shakespeare, despite external pressures. Half of the INSET days in the first year were devoted to the project, as was time in staff meetings and governors' meetings. All staff, including teaching assistants, attended RSC in service training at the school. He himself attended some of the 5 days of training that took place in Stratford in the 1st year of the school's involvement. And the fact that commitment to the LPN was long term, over 3 years, he saw as strategically pivotal. 'If you do it as a one-off project, forget about it,' he said, because the pedagogy would not be explored, adapted and internalised by staff and the school would not be taken 'to a deeper level of learning.'

This deeper level of learning from the head's perspective was always generic, 'about developing the children's intellect and general learning and not just Shakespeare'. Language was core to this. 'We've identified these issues: limited vocabulary, limited range of reading, limited reading heritage and mechanics of reading and writing, difficulties in the craft of writing.' The school, therefore, had a clear idea of what it hoped to derive from the LPN and did not expect miracles to happen overnight. There was a notable air of excitement, however, in all members of the school community when they spoke about what they had gained from the project. Marked improvements in writing and reading were, indeed, remarked upon by teachers across the school and many pupils spoke of this, too. But more general comments, particularly by the children, about how much their confidence had improved, the sheer enjoyment of their work and – very importantly – their pride in it were notable. Children were also appreciative of the social aspects of the work – 'It's brought us as a class more together', as one child simply put it.

In sum, the school had an established ethos based on trust and collaboration that led to the staff being willing to follow the leadership of the head, that allowed for creative experimentation, with a clearly articulated vision as to the strategic purpose of the intervention in terms of teaching and learning. Time and commitment were devoted to the project and strategies were put in place to make sure it could flourish across the school, through staff co-operation and a sharing of resources and ideas. That the work was approached positively, even by more hesitant or sceptical staff, was largely because of this trust and support in what was already generally perceived

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[9] See Ranciere (1991).

as a creative school culture. Thus all staff were ready to welcome, share and cele-
brate children's achievements, both social and academic, and there was an evident
sense of pride expressed from all quarters – staff, children, head and governors – as
to what they had achieved together. In this way, the project was able to build up
momentum and generate its own impetus to continue. As the head put it, 'It makes
everyone feel good in the school, really proud, and by having that sort of praise it
makes you want to do more.'

2   School (2): Crook Primary

Crook Primary school is located in a market town in County Durham in the north
east of England. The school has an intake of largely white, working class children,
with a higher than average number on free school meals[10] and a much higher than
average number of students with special needs. The OFSTED report of 2012 judged
the school as good overall, with leadership judged as good and pupil behaviour as
outstanding. Standards of writing were identified as a key area in need of improve-
ment and some of the teaching was deemed to be satisfactory rather than good. The
school was commended for its excellent family atmosphere.

The school, then, shared with Springhead two important features: both had good
leadership and an excellent, co-operative school atmosphere, in which children
were judged to be happy. These we saw as significant base line qualities for the LPN
intervention to flourish in Springhead. Here, however, the leadership of the project
was very different. Rather than being instigated and led by the head in a collegial
manner, one lead teacher was responsible for the inspiration, drive and much of the
teaching of Shakespeare, both in this hub school, its cluster schools and beyond.

Barbara Gentles has been teaching at the school for 22 years. Her first degree was
in English and drama and she had always taught Shakespeare through active drama
approaches to her class. She had proactively sought some association with the RSC,
found out about the LPN in 2009 and persuaded the head to apply for membership,
focussing on the ways in which it could help the children develop their language. In
this and in all subsequent involvement with the RSC, the head, Antonella Lupton,
has been an enthusiastic supporter, defining the school as 'always trying to be inno-
vative and creative'. She is 'a fan of Shakespeare' herself and in her words she has
'wholeheartedly backed' Barbara in all aspects of the process, regarding her as an
'excellent practitioner'.

All members of the school – children, teachers, head, deputy and governors –
spoke of Barbara in glowing terms, remarking on her 'enthusiasm and vibrancy',

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[10] Children who are entitled to free school meals in England come from families who have been
identified as suffering specific levels of deprivation. Statistically, such children perform nationally
less well in academic assessments than other children. There is currently a national move to reduce
this gap by targeting funds directly to schools according to their identified number of students on
free school meals.

her 'dedication and passion', seeing her as 'the driving force', 'the fulcrum', 'the ringleader, 'the expert', the 'pivotal person' who has 'something magical in her delivery'. She has always taken responsibility for all aspects of the project – its organization, its leadership and the professional development of staff. Nevertheless, the head's quiet but active encouragement and support has been crucial. In her words, 'I am always here for her to run ideas past, because it is really interesting for me to suggest "have you thought about this?" and she translates this into action.' Barbara is most appreciative of this, describing her as 'a head teacher who is pre-pared to say yes when you ask for things.'

Barbara originally worked with other teachers in an advisory capacity, leading professional in-service development days, something she still does, described by the deputy as very popular with the staff. The head, however, was well aware of the progress her children were making in reading and writing. 'I had 100% of children making more than two levels of progress in their writing', explains Barbara, 'and the head said "it's got to be the Shakespeare, it can't be anything else."' Two years ago, a number of staff retired and the head was able to find the money to release Barbara to teach Shakespeare across the school, which she now does. She sees this as an advantage as it allows her to spend more time planning in depth, which she does in co-operation with class teachers. In this way it is 'our project, not mine' she says. Teaching during lessons when class teachers are released for assessment and planning, they nonetheless sometimes choose to watch and learn from her teaching. Sometimes the head will send staff from other classes to watch her teach for specific purposes and this is something that has spread to other schools, whose heads have been allowed to use her to support young and newly qualified teachers, in particular, describing this as 'fantastic professional development and a great start to their career.'

Barbara has also been responsible for organizing very active participation in cluster schools, having developed a particularly close professional relationship with one other teacher, whose practice and ideas she describes as 'fantastic.' In the expressed spirit of the LPN, she has organized performance projects that give equal space for all schools in her cluster to contribute and teachers from the clusters saw her as pivotal to the continuing vibrancy of the project. As one said, 'if Barbara wasn't in the role she is, I don't think we would have got as far as we have.' The purpose of the LPN has always been to provide a long-term, 3-year kick start to a process intended to continue and develop beyond this period. Barbara has been able to manage this but recognizes that it has been made easier by the co-operative local framework between schools that pre-existed the LPN, remarking on how local heads have always worked closely together.

Children evidently love her lessons and could be seen to punch the air, crying 'yes!' as they lined up in the playground, realising the next lesson was Shakespeare with Barbara. They spoke in very similar terms to the children interviewed in Springhead, talking about Shakespeare being 'difficult but exciting', enjoying the acting, feeling that their writing had improved and their confidence, too, and feeling proud of their performance work. They also respected her evident expertise; 'She knows loads,' as one pupil put it. Barbara introduces them to literary terms such as

oxymorons and antithesis, which they enjoy spotting in textual study. And, as in Springhead, children were able to speak about different plays and offered favourite Shakespeare lines drawn from *Romeo and Juliet, As You Like It, A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*. They will come and speak about Shakespeare to Barbara when they see her in the corridor or the playground and they often draw her pictures and give them to her to hang on her wall. One that she is particularly fond of has the caption, 'Keep Calm and Love Shakespeare'.

None of Barbara's own expertise should detract from the input of the RSC, however. As both schools had remarkably similar things to say about this, and also of the more striking effects they had seen rehearsal room pedagogy have on children, we will discuss these next before examining how these two stories align with more general issues of whole school change.

3   Working with the RSC: Kudos, Quality and Impact

Both schools saw their association with the RSC as something very special, as raising their status as a learning community, as a source of pride. Having the RSC visit was seen by the head of Springhead as 'making everyone feel good in the school… really proud.' 'It has given a real buzz to the school,' he added. The deputy head of Crook referred to this partnership as being 'one of the unique selling points of the school.' Having *First Encounter* or, as it was formerly called, *Young People's Shakespeare* productions perform in their schools was seen as bringing both excitement and 'kudos' – this being a word used by both head teachers. But the high quality of these performances had more impact than a simple association with the RSC brand; in other words, the success of the partnership depended upon more than the evident 'cultural capital' it brought with it (Bourdieu 1986). In Crook, Barbara saw the impact of the critically acclaimed 2010 YPS production of *Hamlet* as being particularly significant. 'Suddenly the staff knew why I was doing it. They could see the power of it, and parents came in saying the same thing.'

This issue of quality was consistently referred to in relation to the INSET training, both in the schools and in Stratford. The head of Crook referred to the 'high quality', 'top drawer quality' and 'consistency of the training' that always left the staff of the school feeling that they had had 'a really good deal'. She saw this training as far better than that normally provided by other outside agencies. Similarly the head of Springhead remarked, 'the training is from top quality people and that really inspires staff, being taught by people from the RSC.' Barbara described the Company as 'highly, highly supportive,' seeing them as a 'different kind of company, because they realise teachers are professionals, they value the work of teachers.' This sense by teachers that they were being respected and given a good deal was re-enforced when lead teachers visited Stratford. Here, the whole experience was seen as very special, not just the training, but having the chance to meet some of the actors, being addressed by the artistic director and seeing an evening performance in the main theatre. That the pedagogical approaches were enjoyable was important to teachers

but also the fact that they could relate them to excellent primary practice and adapt them to be used in other curriculum areas, with other literary texts, or in subjects such as history, geography and R.E.

When asked about the impact of the work on children's learning, once again the schools had remarkably similar things to say. Speaking and listening and levels of reading were seen to have improved and the heads, too, noticed improvements in 'critical thinking' and in children's 'ability to analyse'. But the biggest impact was noted in standards of writing and in the motivation and attainment of boys, particularly the lower achieving boys. 'Boys love to talk about it, they love to write about it,' remarked the deputy at Crook. The head at Springhead shared assessment data which demonstrated how boys, as well as girls, had in the previous year made well above average progress in writing. He explained:

> Prior to the RSC LPN project the average yearly progress across the school in writing was 3.5, making the progress good. For the two years that we have been involved in the project average progress has risen to 3.9 (2014) and 4.0 (2015) – this is outstanding progress. Greatest progress also occurred in the classes that spent the most time exploring Shakespeare's plays and using this to impact on their writing.[11]

A number of teachers offered different anecdotes about specific boys with particular problems whom they felt had made remarkable progress: one who was dyslexic and had previously been reluctant to write anything had made 'an amazing leap forward'; one little boy in the nursery who had previously been reclusive, now willingly joined in with drama activities ('we wanted impact and for me that was awesome'); one boy whose father had told the teacher 'Whatever you are doing, keep it up, because my son has never wanted to come to school so much'; a Year 6 boy 'who wouldn't put pen to paper' but who suddenly realised "People are listening to my ideas and my ideas are really good". These and other anecdotal stories add to an increasing amount of evidence indicating that a combination of Shakespeare and active, rehearsal room approaches in the classroom often have marked effects on standards of writing and attitudes to school, particularly among boys.[12]

4 The LPN and Whole School Change

4.1 An Agenda for Change

Thomson insists that 'purposes, as well as processes of change, are highly significant to outcomes'. She adds, 'it is thus critical that the ethical dimensions of change are connected with the interwoven processes being undertaken at any one time' (2007, p.11). This she exemplifies in two key models for change: the equity model,

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[11] The average point scores to measure the progress of students' writing are standardised in the National Curriculum for England and Wales. The head is referring to these here.

[12] See Winston (2015) Chapter 8.

which aims to do more to help all children learn; and the futures model, which concentrates on educating for the twenty-first century. Evidently, the LPN has focused its agenda for change on the former of these two models and, as we have seen above, teachers were clear about its impact on the learning of all children, particularly on underachieving boys. Its approach clearly differs from the dominant model being currently promoted, which Thomson describes as an improvement strategy that requires 'the development of common standards for teaching, learning and school performance which can be monitored and measured.' (2007, p.22). She offers (on p.24) a contrasting agenda to achieve equity through school change, based on a wealth of research, which suggests that change must focus on:

- 'pedagogies, resources and tasks that assist students, or a greater range of students, to meet requirements;
- activities that promote social learning, motivation, and improve school ethos;
- support for teachers to invent, use and sustain a wider range of pedagogical strategies;
- activities that support respectful and reciprocal relations with pupils, families and the wider community.'

It is evident that such a process not only cuts across the standards approach but that it is also very much in line with the vision and practice of the LPN. Schools choosing to work with the network were thus, consciously or otherwise, opting into something at odds with agendas for change being imposed from above. The head of Springhead, in particular, articulated an explicit awareness of this, whereas the practices embraced and celebrated in Crook demonstrate an implicit appreciation of this agenda. Teachers and heads in cluster schools, on the other hand, often spoke of the pressures on time, of the need to achieve standards as reasons why Shakespeare and rehearsal room approaches could only have a limited place in their schools. This can be seen as part of what, in their 2010 evaluation of the LPN, Thomson et al. termed a 'diluted effect', noticeable 'as the circles get more distanced from the RSC centre'. (p. 23); but it is also likely that the distance is not solely determined by contact and immersion but also by belief and commitment to an agenda that will necessarily demand a willingness to work against the grain and to devote time to something not being imposed at national level. This appears to be somewhat borne out in the case of Crook's cluster schools, where Barbara's ability to devote time and energy to working with partners from these schools appears to have produced a more positive understanding, appreciation and commitment to RSC pedagogy than is sometimes noticeable. Indeed, Barbara's key partner in her Shakespeare work, with whom she meets and plans regularly, is from one of these cluster schools.[13]

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[13] See also Winston (2015) p. 126–131.

4.2   A Framework for Change

Thomson refers to how the constant push for reform that the profession is currently undergoing leads to what has been termed 'reform fatigue' which can lead to disillusionment and resistance on the part of teachers. No such attitudes were noticeable among staff in either of the two schools; they were, on the contrary, invariably enthusiastic. That the schools had opted themselves to join the LPN is insufficient to explain the ubiquity and persistence of such positive attitudes, which largely depended upon the supportive frameworks established in both schools, nurturing teacher commitment by treating them as professionals rather than mere 'implementers' and putting time aside for reflection. As Thomson concludes from a range of research studies:

> Commitment is necessary but hardly sufficient. Teachers can do little if they do not have time to explore options, plan, trial and reflect…nor if they are not positioned as reflective. (2007, p. 39)

She explains how research evidence points to four key factors that aid successful school change, two of which are particularly relevant here: the presence of external support for school sites, self-evidently the case with the LPN, whose support was fully embraced and appreciated by both schools; and the need for a realistic time frame, one that gives teachers the time to internalise change, thus avoiding 'a brief burst of activity followed by a relapse into long established ways of being and doing things' (2007, p. 41).

The accounts above illustrate how both schools made time and space for the change to embed itself but once again it is the head teacher of Springhead who most clearly articulated his understanding of this necessity. He established a strategy to enable a whole school approach that included all teaching staff in the process of change, giving them time to experiment, encouraging them to take risks and providing opportunities to collaborate and learn from one another. In Crook, the head established similar opportunities in the way she deployed one teacher with considerable expertise but this arguably decreased the need for individual teachers to become autonomous in their use of the new pedagogy. Effective as it has been, there is consequently a danger that, should Barbara leave the school or retire, the expertise will leave with her. Thomson cites Fink (2000) who has pointed to this problem and therefore the need to move beyond 'islands of innovation' if change is truly to endure. It is notable that the head of Crook has already spoken to Barbara about the possibility of 'buying her back in' to continue with her work if and when she retires; and it points towards the model used in Springhead, in which teachers are encouraged to share communal responsibility, as being more sustainable.

4.3   Leadership and Change

Thomson discusses how in recent years the concept of 'distributed' or 'dispersed leadership' has taken hold in schools, shifting the ownership of change to those intended to carry it out (2007, p. 50). She does, however, point to extensive research that indicates that 'while teacher leadership can contribute to overall school change, unless it is very focused on changes in actual classrooms the impact may not appear as improved learning' (2007, p. 51). Shifting the focus back on to school leaders, she points to the proven effectiveness of 'softer and more indirect measures', among which she includes the modelling of new approaches, team teaching and leading conversations about change. How heads organize professional development she sees as critical to the process and she proposes that this should take place both in and out of school and include visits, mentoring schemes, action research projects and participation in wider networks (2007, p. 52). She also signals the need for heads 'to ensure that the wider school community is well-informed prior to any innovation being begun, and then is kept fully informed' through a range of means including staff meetings, displays, newsletters, websites and public presentations (2007, p. 53).

Once again, the model of the LPN presents a good fit with what research has shown to be best practice in school change, but this self-evidently cannot take hold in individual schools unless heads show leadership in ways that are congruent with these values. In Springhead we saw that the head described a process of change entirely in line with the processes outlined above, devoting staff meetings and INSET days to discussions and sharing of practice, using a range of means to keep governors and parents fully informed of the progress of the initiative, enthusiastically endorsing the action research project and encouraging lead teachers to model the new pedagogy and advise staff as they trialled the work for themselves. Crook of course provides a different model of change, with much of the initiative being dispersed into the person of one lead teacher. Nonetheless, Barbara herself demonstrates best practice while working alongside staff, providing school-based inservice and mentoring programmes that focus the change squarely on improved learning.

5   Conclusion

In concluding her report, Thomson points to some key factors shared by schools which manage whole school change successfully. These include having a stable staff, a well worked out philosophy to justify the change, a culture which encourages discussion and debate and also guarantees teachers sufficient autonomy and flexibility to experiment and innovate. Such schools are not isolated, she insists, but have strong connections with like-minded partners and are supported by specific resources and external agencies. If such a description is readily applicable to the

LPN, it is also understandable that there will be a lack of conformity in the manner that individual schools respond to their specific agendas for change and in the various means through which those schools that make best use of them manage to do so, as these two cases demonstrate But it is nonetheless clear from this research that the two schools did, in fact, share some crucial features that preceded their involvement in the LPN, features which enabled the partnership to flourish. Specifically, these include good leadership, a strong ethos of co-operation between staff, excellent staff-pupil and school-community relations, and demonstrable interest in creative pedagogies. We need also signal that both schools had heads and lead teachers who were already highly enthusiastic about Shakespeare.

The quote in the title of this chapter is, of course, taken from the opening speech made by the Chorus in *Henry V*, in which the audience is urged to re-imagine the confined space within the theatre as much greater and full of possibilities. This is the paradox of theatre, of course; the space is confined but the imaginative potential limitless. The two schools presented in this chapter are similarly illustrative of how, within their own girdled walls, they have been engaged in processes whereby the RSC has helped them re-imagine the limits of their teaching practices, experience the thrill of Shakespeare and, in particular, demonstrate the impact of his work, when taught through active, theatre approaches, on the imaginations and enthusiasm of their pupils.

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Creative Leadership in Learning at the Sydney Opera House

Michael Anderson and Peter O'Connor

Abstract The creative leadership in learning program was a partnership between a major performing arts venue and creative learning researchers. This program developed an approach to creative learning that moved beyond the 'bums on seats' approach to performing arts venues and reconceptualised young people as creative makers of art rather than just a convenient audience. This chapter reflects on the process, providing some of the key underpinnings and some of the theoretical orientations that drove the development of the creative leadership in learning program. It describes the approaches undertaken to offer school leaders an opportunity to reflect on their school's approach to creativity and to implementment an approach to creative learning in their schools. The chapter describes the relative roles of the partners in the transformation for a major performing arts venue: from a collection of stages to a making place for young people. The program was developed in the hope that this collection of venues could become a creative resource for young people in Sydney and beyond. The chapter concludes with some reflections on partnerships with large performing arts organisations and academic researchers and reflects on the potential of these kinds of programs to reach new and harder to access young people.

Keywords Partnership · Creative learning · School leadership · Performing arts venue

M. Anderson (✉)
Sydney School of Education and Social Work, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
e-mail: michael.anderson@sydney.edu.au

P. O'Connor
Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand
e-mail: p.oconnor@auckland.ac.nz

1 Introduction

One of the enduring frustrations in our careers as educators has been the way the education sector and the arts sector have often bifurcated, considering their missions as different or unrelated. In Australia this has been particularly pronounced with periods of deep and strong engagement (Hunter 2015) and other times where the sectors would not engage with each other in any way (Anderson 2016). Typically in Australia, partnerships between the arts and education sectors have featured arts in residence approaches as the primary strategy (Hunter 2015). These programs often situate artists (often visual artists) in places of learning, sometimes with specific roles and objectives and at other times as a kind of 'artistic presence' in schools.

2 Sydney Opera House

For centuries before colonisation, a small promontory into the magnificent Sydney harbour had been the focal point for storytelling for the local Aboriginal people, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Whether by accident or by design, the Sydney Opera House (SOH) continues that tradition on the same land into the twenty-first century. Its extraordinary iconic architecture stands as an international symbol not only of Sydney but of Australia itself. The cultural capital of the building in the imaginary of Australia is richly significant. In this context the invitation by The Opera House to partner with schools as co-creators of an arts based program designed to assist in developing creative leaders, marked a significant shift in the Opera House's approach to schools.

For the Sydney Opera House this desire to engage with schools arose not only from a newly found community spirit. It drew from the hard commercial reality that to many young people the Sydney Opera House was not a place to go, it was a place to admire from afar. This created a mandate for the SOH to radically alter how it could develop relationships with schools that might generate ticket sales. The Opera House's expressed its ambition to re-connect with schools in this way:

> The program aims to shift the way the Sydney Opera House works with the education sector. We will add programs that reach beyond the transactional relationship – where schools purchase tickets, bus in, see the show and then leave again – to a relationship with creativity as the motivating principle. This is a deeper and more meaningful long-term relationship that begins in Primary school and evolves to meet the growing sophistication and complex capabilities of Secondary school students… This Creative Leadership In Learning program will leverage the full potential of what the Sydney Opera House has to offer, to engage with the education sector and encourage schools to see the House as their own dynamic learning environment. (SOH 2015, p. 4)

The Creative Leadership in Learning Program (CLIL) was designed by the Sydney Opera House in a partnership between The University of Sydney, The Catholic Education Office, Parramatta and the Sydney Opera House (SOH). This chapter

explores the design phase of this project within a wider context of Australian arts partnerships.

3 Partnerships in the Arts: The Australian Context

Notwithstanding the ebbs and flows of policy, Arts Education Partnerships have been a dominant feature of modern schooling (Galton 2008). More than a decade ago the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggested that partnerships were an essential feature of a sustainable and productive schooling sector. In the OECD's (2001) future schooling models, Scenario 2b, "Schools as Focused Learning Organisations", partnerships are nominated as one of the crucial features required for the survival of effective schooling. They argue that in these schools:

> Highly demanding curricula [are] the norm for all students. More specialisms catered for (arts, technology, languages, etc.) but a demanding mix of learning expected of all students, including specialists…Team approaches are the norm. Intense attention to new knowledge about the processes of teaching and learning, and the production, mediation and use of knowledge in general.

While there have been some changes to the ways schools operate, the change has been slow and far from paradigm shifting when it comes to partnerships beyond the education sector. They are far from the scenario imagined by the OECD of "a culture of high quality, experimentation, diversity, and innovation" (OECD 2001, p. 90). Creativity learning, while an aim of many of these programs, has also been implemented in an inconsistent manner.

4 Creativity Learning and Schools

Several key international initiatives in how students learn about, through and in a creative environment have brought the profile for creativity in primary, secondary and tertiary education to the fore in the last decade (Davis 2010, p. 31). While there has been a significant shift in the discussion of creativity internationally this has not effectively filtered into the classrooms, curriculum or schooling systems. As Robinson argues, schools often extol the virtues of creativity but are organised against any possibility of it actually emerging: "…if the government were to design an education system to inhibit creativity, it could hardly do better…Governments throughout the world emphasise the importance of creativity, but often what they do in education suppresses it" (1999, p. 41).

A further impetus for the renewed focus on creativity emerged from the Australian Curriculum's nomination of "Critical and Creative thinking" as one of the general capabilities across the curriculum. The Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority explain the inclusion of this capability:

> Responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century – with its complex environmental, social and economic pressures – requires young people to be creative, innovative, enterprising and adaptable, with the motivation, confidence and skills to use critical and creative thinking purposefully (ACARA 2014).

The inclusion of this capability, while encouraging to creativity proponents, still comes without substantial, specific or detailed support for schools to implement creative learning and teaching in their own contexts. One of the key motivations for the CLIL design was to support school leadership teams in the co-construction of creative learning that met the individual contexts of school and made tangible the sometimes vague directions that appear in curriculum and educational policy documents.

The growth in discussions and research around creativity is continuing unabated even in the face of indifference from governments and their education bureaucracies and the reduction in funding to schemes such as Creative Partnerships in the United Kingdom. It may be that this drive is emerging from the corporate sector, spurred on by the Creative Industries and Creative Class discussions (Florida 2002) who are beginning to demand creativity, or perhaps to use another term 'innovation', in the workforce. For educators, marketization and commodification of 'what industry demands' can be problematic (Harris 2014) as it makes the end point of education a job, at the expense of a broad liberal and developmental education. There is however, an opportunity for educators to make a case for creativity being the 'must have' attribute of the twenty-first century for future citizens as well as future workers. A recent research study from Oxford University: "The future of employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerisation?" predicted a major shift in workforce towards creativity and interpersonal skills. The authors concluded:

> Our findings thus imply that as technology races ahead, low-skill workers will reallocate to tasks that are non-susceptible to computerisation –i.e., tasks requiring creative and social intelligence. For workers to win the race, however, they will have to acquire creative and social skills (Frey and Osborne 2013, p. 44).

Recent research from The University of Sydney (Martin et al. 2013) provides further evidence that young people who engage in subjects where creativity is taught explicitly in schools have enhanced outcomes in academic and non-academic spheres. The 3-year Australian Research Council study examined their academic and personal wellbeing outcomes over 2 years. The research found that students who engaged with the arts in schools as active participants – in creative processes – were more likely to do better in academic and social spheres than those who passively consumed the arts. Creativity learning provides new ways of thinking and communicating that provoke ingenuity, imagination and possibility. Creative learning does this by allowing young people access to the tools of creation (Anderson 2012). These tools are central to the creativity learning – but are also vital in a rapidly changing world that will require citizens not just to be consumers of "their" world but also to be able to actively change the world in the face of complex and pressing problems, such as global warming and overpopulation. To make these changes happen in schools will require active, transformational creative leaders and

leadership teams. One framework, the Creative Leadership in Learning Program was developed by Miranda Jefferson and Michael Anderson and has been trialled in several schools. This framework is a foundation of the Creative Leadership in Learning Program used in the Sydney Opera House program.

5 The Creativity Cascade

The creativity cascade is a coherence maker to support the understanding of and scaffold creativity (Jefferson and Anderson 2017). It is not the only way to think about teaching creativity but in the CLIL program we found that it provided an effective way to organise learning and to scaffold creativity learning in schools. In this framework creativity learning is imagined as a metaphorical cascade with four stages that support high-quality learning. We employed the metaphor of the cascade as it suggests a process where one body of water (or understanding) falls (with gravitational force and disciplined but varied form) into the next and into the next. The cascade does not work unless the water flows from one part to the next. The first metaphorical pool of the cascade is "noticing". The cascade as a coherence maker (or learning scaffold) is a pattern of sequenced fundamentals that open up learning and creativity to both be tangible but allowing for playfulness, serendipity, surprise, ambiguity and emergence. The cascade was designed to support schools as they shaped pedagogy and learning experiences that develop skills, understandings and confidence in creative learning. The cascade does not enable creativity learning by itself; it requires from the teachers and students alike wisdom, time, collaboration, trust and a supportive environment.

6 Building Creative Leadership in Schools

If schools and schooling systems accept that creativity is critical to learning and there is ample evidence in curriculum documents that this is the case (Craft 2002, p. 129; Anderson 2013), a shift is required to build understanding amongst leaders and leadership teams about how this capacity can be supported in schools. There is strong evidence of a critical link between transformation and creativity in effective leadership across domains and sectors of the community (Puccio et al. 2011). As Gumsulogou and Ilsev (2009) argue: "Transformational leadership behaviours closely match the determinants of innovation and creativity at the workplace, some of which include vision, support for innovation, autonomy, recognition, and challenge".

The CLIL program for SOH was devised with the twin aims of moving beyond the old artists in schools models and moving to a place where the partnerships were central to the learning rather than peripheral. CLIL also aimed to align the Sydney Opera House with contemporary arts education practice where making art and appreciating the arts are interdependent (Anderson and Jefferson 2009, p. 14).
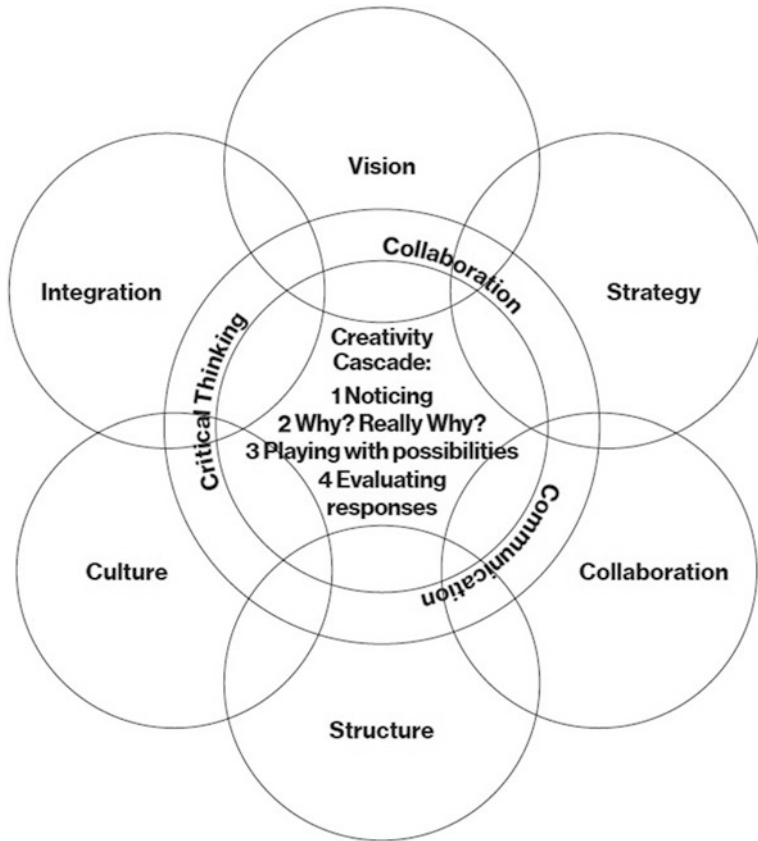
Fig. 1 Creative Leadership in Learning model

What does this mean? Given the multi-arts focus of the SOH's facilities and artistic programming (the SOH is a venue for all of the performing arts, visual arts, architecture etc.) an approach that featured a multi-arts or cross arts approach to the building of creative capacity was most appropriate and aligned with the SOHs Enterprise Strategy. The SOH nominates "Creativity" as one of its six core values (p. 7) and values its "…role as a leader and innovator in arts education, occupying a critical place in the education of NSW children" (p. 17) (Fig. 1).

7 Designing the Creative Leadership in Learning Program

The Creative Leadership in Learning Program was designed to make a distinctive offer to schools that was at its core dialogic. This attempt at poly-vocal interaction between the organising partners (SOH, CEO Parramatta and The University of

Table 1 Design features of the creative leadership in learning program

Design principles	Description and implications
Principal leadership	Schools were accepted to the program on the condition that the principal lead the process. This was a non-negotiable aspect of the programme. The principal then called for expressions of interest from the other members of the teaching staff to join the leadership team
Opt in	All of the participants in the program were volunteers. The design team decided to make the process and approach voluntary to avoid the difficulties associated with participant obstruction and indifference
Structured pedagogical modelling	The content of each creative learning action plan was negotiable. Leadership teams were, however, encouraged to employ structured pedagogical models developed by the project team to deliver the creative learning action plan such as the creativity cascade
Co-construction	All of the creative learning action plans were developed in consultation with the Sydney Opera House teaching artists and the school leadership teams. This was critical to these programs delivering relevant and context informed projects for each partner
Immersive embodied practice	The workshops and learning experiences were designed to use arts-based processes to engage the whole learner. School partners were encouraged to conceive creative learning action plans as immersive, embodied and practical experiences for their students
Triangulated experience	The program was conceived as a triangulated experience between the Sydney Opera House, the teaching artist and the partnership school. In practice this meant each creative learning action plan had to involve a resource from the Sydney Opera House (such as a visit to a show), the involvement of the teaching artist (as a leader of learning and/or professional learning for teachers) and the needs of the school (see co-construction)
Constant evaluation and touch points	Each partnership school 'checked in' digitally through a YouTube video diary and in real life through special 'leadership events'

Sydney) and the school partners did however have the principles outlined in Table 1. The intent was to design a program that provided capacity in creativity learning and leadership by delivering strategies that met the needs of the school directly. In other words this program did not offer a for instance "literacy" program or a "healthy relationships" program. It sought its content from each of the school partners and brought to that content creativity processes to explore the nominated content. Table 1 outlines the design principles that underpinned the Creative Leadership in Learning Program.

The project consisted of several distinct phases. Following initial discussions with the design team, schools opted into the project. The Ignition event held at the Sydney Opera House in September 2015 completed this phase. A ten-week project then occurred in each school and this was completed with a final evaluation afternoon again hosted at the SOH.

8   Ignition Event: Starting the Project

The CLIL project commenced by bringing three of the four schools involved to a full day workshop at the Opera House, in what was called the Ignition event. A further school did not attend the Ignition event but later engaged fully in the project.

On the day the schools sent small leadership teams that comprised teachers, principals and executive teachers (totalling no more than fifteen participants for the day). Four teaching-artists employed by the SOH, Michael Anderson and Miranda Jefferson joined them. The Principals of all schools were present.

Three of the schools were in the Western suburbs of Sydney. This is one of the poorer areas of the city, in which some schools have significant populations of refugee and migrant communities. Rich in their own art forms and cultural practices they however, had little access or engagement in the art forms generally associated with the SOH. One of the principals of the participating schools was an arts educator who had an extensive and lengthy personal relationship with the Opera House. His school is set in a leafy, wealthy monocultural (Anglo) suburb in Sydney's southern suburbs. There was a sense of awe for all the principals in the Opera House, excited by the possibility of partnering with Australia's leading cultural institution. One principal noted, "I was intimidated by that space."

The SOH routinely hosts major international arts events but this was the first time it had invited school principals into the SOH to discuss ways that partnerships could be established. The importance and uniqueness of this initial event was further enhanced for the schools with the Chief Executive of the House opening the day with a half hour presentation addressing how the Opera House considered its engagement with schools as a key part of its 'revitalisation' strategic direction. The event occurred in one of the performance spaces in the building. Access for all the participants to the CEO of one of the most iconic art houses in the world was a rare opportunity for engagement. It signalled to teaching artists and schools the significance of the program for the Opera House. The day's workshop process was videoed and photographed almost continuously for six hours by videographers. It felt to everyone involved that this was an important programme for all the partners involved. It signalled that it wasn't business as usual for the SOH.

Principals and lead teachers were there to learn more about the cascade and its possibilities for driving the relationship with the Opera House. More importantly on the day they were to use the cascade as a framework for making two critical decisions. Each school would decide on the central focus for their work, and spend time with each artist talking about how they might work together to structure a way forward to facilitate a ten week commitment for an engagement with their school.

A series of drama games were used to set up a space for the workshop participants to get to know each other, and to experience the kind of playfulness that would be central to much of the work the artists would engage children in, later in the programme. It also allowed the group the opportunity for risk taking, for noticing,

for asking the why, really why questions. Laughter signalled the beginnings of relationship between the various partners in the room. Then, sitting on the floor of the stage, full of the props and meanings from the previous night's performance, each school used coloured sheets of paper and markers to conceptualise the central idea they wanted an artist to help them use the creativity cascade with, to lead change in their school. Each school sat with their pieces of paper and interviewed each artist in turn about how they thought they might be able to assist them with their goals. Artists had to improvise answers, to think about how they might adapt, shape their artistry to the needs of each school. In the process the goals of each school sharpened in each retelling of what they intended.

It was a complex and multi layered task. Yet it spoke to the heart of the project. The relationship with the SOH was to be guided by the explicit and stated needs of each school. Unlike most theatre–school partnerships where schools opt into predetermined arts processes and products, this exercise signalled the potential for the project to be owned and driven by the school. Not surprisingly, each school identified different priorities, different ideas about how they might work with both an artist and also the creativity cascade.

The process established negotiation, flexibility, and a joint focus on process and product as the guiding principles for the partnership. Without a fully developed plan, the agreement to structure on the fly, to build and make sense of the work on an ongoing basis allowed for higher levels of ambiguity, in essence allowing things to arise from the work itself. High levels of trust would be vital to the success of a partnership founded in this manner. Trust that the artists could adapt and meet multiple needs in the school, trust that the Opera House could and would meet its multiple promises for different forms and levels of engagement and access.

The pedagogical focus meant that although the schools presented and developed projects based on their own identified needs, the common core of the program became how the artists might facilitate a shift in teaching in these schools, that had relied largely on highly functionalist models of transactional pedagogy.

Each school realised this in different ways with their separate plans reflecting how principals and teachers saw their own particular needs and strengths. The hope for each of the principals was that the teaching artists might model more creative and exciting forms of pedagogy rooted in the theoretical frames developed in the cascade. They also hoped that their schools might look towards the SOH for the professional development of teachers, to shift teachers practice into more responsive, dynamic and imaginative pedagogies that directly met the needs of their students. There was a shared belief that a programme with creativity at its heart might be able to bring about deep change. Principals were also attracted to the idea that the program was negotiated with the school and not imposed. For principals this responded directly to their desire to engage with a program that was sustainable beyond the ten weeks of this program.

Principals were also keen to build the program into existing long-term plans. Principals were attracted into the program because of an existing desire to bring about change and they saw the program as adding value to existing plans. This was, for them all; not about bringing artists in to add curricular value to the classrooms,

but about how they might use the program as part of their desire to bring about substantive transformation in their schools.

Because they saw this programme as part of a wider strategy, they had realistic expectations that the engagement with the SOH would even be central to these plans. In many ways this again freed up and created greater flexibility inside the project. Rather than a deficit model informing the project, i.e. what are we lacking, the principals were interested in how the programme might instead build on the existing strengths and interests of teachers.

At the end of the Ignition event each of the three schools had identified key areas/issues that they wanted the SOH to engage with through the creativity cascade in their schools. The school missing from the event engaged later in a somewhat truncated process to arrive at their own project.

9   What the Arts Teach: Connecting the Cascade

Elliot Eisner (2002) proposes a list of "ten lessons the Arts teach". He celebrates and advocates for the less tangible, more humanistic qualities of Arts learning. These qualities were present in the cascade framework and particularly in the noticing stage of the cascade.

1. The Arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships.
2. The Arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution.
3. The Arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
4. The Arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity.
5. The Arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know.
6. The Arts teach students that small differences can have large effects.
7. The Arts teach students to think through and within a material.
8. The Arts help children learn to say what cannot be said.
9. The Arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source.
10. The Arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important. (p. 72).

Each school developed its own Creative Learning Action Plan (CLAP). The CLAP outlined a plan for each school to develop opportunities for teachers to notice how these processes might operate in classrooms in ways that facilitated change to teacher student relationships and pedagogical approaches by teachers. Each school's CLAP was designed to meet the schools own identified needs, but in analysing the CLAPS it was clear that schools saw the project as providing teachers and managers with a different way of conceptualising learning and their pedagogical relationships with students. The desire to break away from an increasingly constricted and restricted curriculum that limits deep experiential learning was

palpable in all the schools. The CLAPS were designed by schools and artists to provide all schools with the chance to experiment, play, and to rethink what and how they do things.

With the focus on the cascade the intention was for the artists to model alternative ways of being in classrooms rather than simply demonstrating techniques or strategies for engaging with students. The hope that the principals had was that these alternative ways of being would contribute to the transformation they were seeking. For teaching artists the CLAP was a considerable challenge. It is one thing to bring expertise in to a classroom in order to provide the aesthetic knowledge to help build skills in arts making. And this perhaps is the most comfortable space for teaching artists to occupy in schools. Ironically however, the schools at the Ignition event were looking to non-trained teachers to provide professional development not only in arts making, but in dynamic pedagogies. Andy Hargreaves (2003) claims the artistry of teaching has been replaced by a dull technicist approach that is driven by testing and compliance. He argues: 'instead of fostering creativity and ingenuity, more and more school systems have become obsessed with imposing and micromanaging curriculum uniformity. In place of ambitious missions of compassion and community, schools and teachers have been squeezed into the tunnel vision of test scores, achievement targets and league tables of accountability' (Hargreaves 2003, p. 1). This approach is characterised by over planning, a focus on testing and dehumanised relationships. What was evident at the Ignition event was that what principals wanted was for the SOH model to facilitate alternative ways for teaching to happen in classrooms. Rather than anything new, the artists were reminding schools of what was still possible in the neo liberal twenty-first century classroom.

10   Creative Leadership and Learning: A Discussion

In many ways the CLIL program is a bold forging into the unknown for a place like the Sydney Opera House. It has several risks that are tied up with the difficulties in engaging and supporting multiple 'players'. On one view, however, large cultural providers such as the SOH no longer have a choice. Dwindling ticket sales have created a crisis of identity for many cultural centres and in doing so have prompted them to seek more relational engagements with their communities. The planning phase of the CLIL described in this chapter constitutes an authentic attempt to change that relationship. The program described here has been a learning experience for all of the partners. One of the key challenges we have discovered in this process is that of navigating between the needs of schools and the needs of a high status cultural organisation with scant experience in off-site programming. The newness of the relationship also means at times that neither partner has fully recognised the strengths which each brings to the partnership. The redesign of this program will need to attend to the tendency for the partners not to fully understand each other. This, of course is a common experience of partnership

relationships and the experience of this pilot program will provide many instances of misunderstanding that can be used to reshape and redesign the program. These are, however, common issues in the development and delivery of any pilot program and the reason why pilots exist. One early impression we have is that there is a strong need on behalf of cultural institutions and schools to have a more meaningful and a more 'modern' engagement where there is a deep perception of each other's needs and strengths. The SOH, The University of Sydney and the partner schools have begun changing the game so that they might be changed institutions as a result. While there is much further to travel on this particular journey there are signs that creativity is returning to be part of the discussion in schools where it may not have been in the past.

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From Access to Participation: An Historical Account of Queensland Theatre Company's Commitment to Theatre Education for Children and Young People

Sandra Gattenhof and Heidi Irvine

Abstract Queensland Theatre is the state's flagship theatre company. Under the leadership of Wesley Enoch (2010–2015) there was a rethinking and reshaping of the education program within the company to allow children and young people to be more active participants. The most significant example of this change is the reintroduction of the Youth Ensemble after an absence of 17 years. This change can be characterized as a move from a reception model to a participation model. Using historiography as the methodological approach the chapter charts the development of Queensland Theatre Company's education program not as a developmental history, as is commonly attributed to historical based research, but as a critical way of writing and reflecting on history to ascertain patterns that may contribute to future contexts. The narrative illuminates the change heralded by Wesley Enoch and education program staff that can be through three interrelated themes – (1) an account of theatre education activities throughout the life of the company and the innovation in terms of engagement of children and young people; (2) scoping of the factors that created change and innovation under the leadership of the current artistic director Wesley Enoch; and (3) the contemporary ecology of practice as it relates to children and young people viewed through a participatory model lens.

Keywords Historiography · Queensland theatre · Theatre education program · Theatre training models · Theatre for young people

S. Gattenhof (✉)
Creative Industries Faculty, School of Creative Practice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia
e-mail: s.gattenhof@qut.edu.au

H. Irvine
Queensland Theatre, South Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
e-mail: hirvine@queenslandtheatre.com.au

1   Introduction

Queensland Theatre (QT)[1] is Queensland's state theatre company and was established by statute on eighth April 1970. Established initially as both a training and a touring company, Queensland Theatre now stands as the major producing house in the state with a commitment to producing reinterpretations of timeless masterpieces, international contemporary drama and new Australian work (Queensland Theatre Company 2015, p. 5). From its establishment the company's activity included attention to the provision of theatre experiences for children and young people. This is explicitly stated in the *Queensland Theatre Company Act 1970* in three out of the eight guiding principles. These are outlined as: "(d) children and young people should be supported in their appreciation of and involvement in the arts of the theatre; (e) diverse audiences should be developed; and (f) capabilities for life-long learning about the arts of the theatre should be developed" (Queensland Government 1970, p. 6). To enact these three guiding principles in the provision of theatre events and experiences for Queensland children and young people a variety of strategies and programs have employed. These activities over the years have included attendance by young people at mainstage performances at part of their school curriculum program, dedicated matinee performances for schools of mainstage productions, touring Theatre-in-Education productions, Theatre Residency Week, post show education workshops, Artist-in-Schools workshops, teacher professional development workshops, production of educational resources and work experience opportunities for secondary students. Queensland Theatre is one of the few Queensland arts organisations to have a dedicated, full time education producer. This chapter focuses on how the Company has provided theatre-based experiences for children and young people throughout its history and will interrogate the reinstatement of a Youth Ensemble that was ignited under the artistic leadership of Wesley Enoch.

2   Methods Approach and Data Collection

The research undertaken to construct this chapter sits in the field of historiography, or historical research that is, "a method for discovering, from records and accounts, what happened during some past period" (Marshall and Rossman 1999 in Berg 2001, p. 210). However, this chapter is not a chronology of events related to the inclusion of young people within the Company. Rather, the narrative uses "a range

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[1] Throughout this chapter Queensland Theatre may be referred to as 'the Company'. Both Queensland Theatre and the Company are the same entity. Prior the change of name to Queensland Theatre in late 2016, the Company was known as Queensland Theatre Company. Therefore this nomenclature remains in this chapter for all references to documents and sources created under the pre-2016 company name.

of methods, often in combination, which includes the use of archived material and written historical accounts (including research, autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, and oral histories)" (Andrews 2008, p. 401) to study of the relationships "that have influenced the past, continue to influence the present, and will certainly affect the future" (Glass 1989 in Berg 2001, p. 211). Data was gathered from two main sources – archival analysis (including company annual reports, press clippings) and oral histories that took the form of semi-structured interviews with company staff (n = 6) and artists employed by the company to work with young people (n = 5) as well as two focus groups of Youth Ensemble members both past and present (n = 11). The data is refracted through Nicholson's idea of the "politics of participation" (2011, p. 201) that borrows Lefebvre's notion that "(social) space is a (social product)" (1991, p. 26). The idea of socialised space as outlined by Lefebvre articulates how an individual or group's conception of space, both physical and metaphorical, is shaped through lived experience. Space, in this context, is taken to mean both the architectural environment and agency or freedom to take action. The lens serves to interrogate theatre participation modes and how physical space contributes to the aesthetic experience and possible sites of learning.

The research had ethical clearance from Queensland University of Technology Research Ethics Unit and met the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Queensland Theatre staff and employed artists agreed to have their identities made known in the research. As the Youth Ensemble members were minors at the time of interview the focus groups were undertaken their names have been de-identified. Focus group members' names have been replaced with title (focus group member) and number to maintain the confidentiality of the participants as required by ethics.

3   Historic Development of Queensland Theatre's Education and Youth Program

In the year after the company's inception in 1970, the Education and Youth Program was established. Murray Foy was appointed as the company's youth officer under the direction of the late Alan Edwards, the founding director of Queensland Theatre to enable activation of the three guiding principles directed towards young people (see Queensland Government 1970, p. 6). In an article from the *Theatre Australia Journal*, Don Batchelor talks of the Youth Program and its success in "introducing theatre experiences to the community of young people, especially in schools" (Batchelor 1977, p. 37). He notes that the trend was "towards locally written or developed projects, closely derived from the experiences of school-age people." (ibid.). The first 5 years of the QTC Education and Youth Program the Company "inherited the jeans and the cloaks of The Young Elizabethan Players and the brief

to service 60,000 students with potted Shakespeare and some poetry" (Foy 1977, p. 37). Batchelor (1977) notes that the Company activities grew and changed, with some success and some failure, by 1975 activities had reached a challenging point where, according to Foy the company "were paying too much attention to authorities who insisted they knew what young people needed" (1977, p. 37) and "presenting plays that were too stylistically difficult for theatrically naïve audiences" (Foy 1977, p. 37). At this point the Company was missing a commitment to young peoples learning or as Nicholson (2011) states it was absent of "the artistic vision and influencing of the theatre's architecture" (Nicholson 2011, p. 209) as an enabler for young people to develop their own sites and modes of learning. The agency for young people was partially addressed with the commissioning of a young local playwright, Bille Brown,[2] who caught the imagination of its younger audiences with a play that connected and resonated with the youth of the time. From its success, the Company then grew in in its offering with projects such as *Project Spearhead* (supported by a $54,000 grant from the Schools Commission), the establishment of the QTC Darling Downs Youth Theatre in 1977 and from that, the emergence of Theatre Experience Week and Theatre Techniques Week. This program still standing in its 45th year, in 2015, as Theatre Residency Week, a week-long drama immersion camp, hosted at a Brisbane boarding school where approximately 100 students in from junior secondary school (years 9 and 10) to senior secondary school (years 11 and 12) engage with theatre professionals in masterclasses and theatre visits.

According to the *Queensland Theatre Company Annual Report* (1983), the first fully funded Education Liaison Officer was appointed to Queensland Theatre. Such an appointment within the Company was situated within the mileau of similar activities occurring during the 1980s and 1990s in Australia where,

> … agenda-setting state theatres and major adult companies began to develop education and youth arms … although these efforts were directed more towards building future audiences than driving innovation. (Bourke and Hunter 2011, pp. 24-25)

Whilst the position had existed in the Company from inception, being taken up by people such as Murray Foy and John O'Toole, it was the first time the state education system (currently known as Queensland Department of Education and Training) provided funds to support the position. This financial investment enabled the company to second a teacher from a (predominantly) Drama background to implemented a range of programs and activities. This activity continued until 2012, where with a change in Government, the funding was discontinued and the position terminated. The Company took the decision to maintain this activity by fully funding the employment of an education staff member and rebadged the title of the role to Producer (Education and Youth Programs). This position, at the time of writing, continues to be held by Heidi Irvine.

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[2] Bille Brown went on to be an acclaimed Australian stage, film and television actor and playwright.

4   Contemporary Youth Engagement Activities at Queensland Theatre Company

Using the archival materials and interview data to trace the historic narrative around the work of the QT Education and Youth Program the evidence points to the company returning to the initial roots of youth engagement as signaled in the *Queensland Theatre Company Act 1970* and championed by commentators Batchelor (1977) and Foy (1977) through participatory and longitudinal style engagement programs within the contemporary context. In the 1990s due to financial pressures attributed to the drop in ticket sales the company had to scale back its youth engagement activities and as a result young peoples' theatrical involvement with the company "became a purely transactional experience for young audiences" (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015). The re-engagement of young people within the creative life of the company was marked by the appointment its sixth artistic director, Wesley Enoch in 2011. Enoch came to the Company with a strong vision of expanding the diversity of the company's work, not only culturally but also from an audience development perspective. This focus was derived from a deeply personal position. Based on Enoch's longevity of engagement with the Company, that began as a young person who participated in Theatre Experience Week and the Queensland Youth Theatre (now the Youth Ensemble). Nicholson (2011) notes that "[l]earning never happens in the absence of bodies, emotions, memories, history and place" (Nicholson 2011, p. 212). Learning is "spatial and relational" (ibid.) Enoch's personal experience of the Company as young person was central in the redevelopment of the Company's activities for children and young people. As an emerging theatre-maker Enoch was a member of the Company's Queensland Youth Theatre and moved onto employment as a tutor when the youth theatre arm was renamed Brolgas. Katherine Hoepper,[3] QT programming manager and senior producer whose duties include oversight of the staff in the youth and education programs believes the greater inclusion of young people in the daily life of the company can be attributed to,

> Wesley and his deep passion for engaging with young people [as well as] his personal experience of having come through the QT Youth Ensemble model has reaped benefits for the company. (Katherine Hoepper, personal interview, April 7, 2015)

Enoch speaks eloquently of the role that his engagement in the Queensland Youth Theatre played in the development of him as an artist. He says,

> As a young Aboriginal boy from Woodridge,[4] the idea of joining a youth theatre was one of three things I was doing at the time. There was school drama, there was the amateur theatre group and there was youth theatre at Queensland Theatre Company. So I was already

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[3] Katherine Hoepper concluded her role at QT in August 2015. Katherine is currently the general manager of La Boite Theatre Company in Brisbane.

[4] Woodridge is a suburb of Logan City in the South East of Queensland, Australia. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) classified Woodridge as the fifth most disadvantaged area in Greater Brisbane.

creating a pathway through this stuff. So the Queensland Theatre Company stuff was all about accessing another level of skill another level of resourcing and a different tribe of people who could push me further on than I could do at school or at the amateur theatre group. That kind of sense of ambition was already being encouraged in me as a fifteen year old. (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015)

This enthusiasm for practice is echoed in the comments from past Youth Ensemble members who described their engagement with the company as being able to,

… do more of what you loved. It was just, it was something extra, and something that you could go and feel like you were kind of doing something a bit special and doing something that was doing to really help you, and just getting to do it more than just at school. (Past Youth Ensemble focus group member 1, June 10, 2015).

Enoch saw part of his remit in leading the Company was "… to get young people into the building" (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015). This seemingly simple intention speaks to how the,

… politics of place and aesthetics of space have a particular importance in theatre education, and whether young people become uncritical cultural consumers or develop their own cultural capital and abilities as theatre-makers. (Nicholson 2011, p. 200)

Hoepper notes the development of cultural capital was underpinned by the a "keenness under [Wesley's] leadership to look at ways of engaging with young people in a deeper way than 'come and see a show' or 'let's take a show to you'". (Katherine Hoepper, personal interview, April 7, 2015). By taking up this position, "young people become more than a tick-a-box priority … by creating multiple entry and diverse entry points for young people" (Bourke and Hunter 2011, p. 34) to move them beyond uncritical consumers. As a result of this sweep of new thought about the role young people might play in the life of the Company the last of schools specific programming concluded 2011 as an offering to schools, and all school-based audiences were encouraged into the mainstage performances, with general audiences. This move was undertaken to ensure that QT did not "ghettoise offerings for young people but rather it melded audiences" (Katherine Hoepper, personal interview, April 7, 2015). Such a move is supported in recent critique of theatre engagement programs directed towards young people. Nicholson (2011, p. 200) believes "participation in is being redefined in twenty-first century theatre education [and is] creating new opportunities for young people to learn alongside theatre-makers as fellow artists". The passion to embrace the artistic lives of young people was not only enabled through the appointment of Wesley Enoch but at the time that Wesley took on the artistic directorship of the company, "there was about a one third turnover of staff and so the cultural shift was doable" (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015). Historically the Education and Youth Program operated almost autonomously. As Enoch recalled,

… you got the sense that it was a program off to the side that the artistic director had not much to do with. It ran independent of the company, in an artistic sense, and it was vision and fascinations of that person running it that drove the program. It had lost the overarching conversation with the whole company. (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015).

In response to the need to construct a more obvious intersection between youth engagement and the broader artistic agenda of the Company Enoch and the staff of Queensland Theatre reworked its suite of Education and Youth programs that has resulted in a connection with approximately 100,000 young people in the past 5 years. These are delineated as activities that are curated by either the school or classroom teacher (education), or activities that are sought out by a young person (youth). Due to the nature of the activities on offer, Queensland Theatre defines youth as school aged students. Whilst the Company are aware that youth defies that age bracket, the suite of activities best served by the company, like Theatre Residency Week, Young Writers Group and Masterclasses are tailored to these age groups due to experience of staff and ability to deliver quality and engaged curriculum. The growth is particularly apparent in the participatory nature of its programs, such as *The Scene Project* that was developed in 2014. *The Scene Project* is a participatory project that allows schools to access a specially commissioned script to develop a performance piece for presentation in a live theatre environment. Its anticipated growth in 2016 will be to 32 schools, across Queensland as far north as Rockhampton.

5   QTC Youth Ensemble as the Flagship Youth Engagement Activity

With Wesley Enoch's appointment the reintroduction of a program akin to the early Youth Theatre program named the Queensland Theatre Youth Ensemble occurred. The Youth Ensemble demands a high level of commitment from participants and celebrates and strives for excellence, with many participants going on to study performance, acting or disciplines in the Creative Industries. The Youth Ensemble trains out of school hours, during the school year, with theatre professionals, who are also contracted to the company as directors or actors, to develop and advance their skills as actors. Each group works towards a performance showcase season at a Queensland Theatre home venue, usually the Bille Brown Studio. All Ensemble members receive a season ticket to a range of Queensland Theatre productions and are invited to participate in excursions to the theatre throughout the year.

Nicholson (2011) points out that,

> Making space for learning in theatres not only requires new ways of thinking about participation and new aesthetic forms, … it also depends on young people's ability to generate their own spatial meanings within the building. (Nicholson 2011, p. 209)

The overt attention to theatres as learning spaces for young people gave rise to the QT Youth Ensemble. The Ensemble model is very different to the dominant historic Australian youth theatre process and practice in that youth theatre staff and youth focused activity usually does not have connectivity to a state theatre company. Rather youth theatres in the Australian context are in the parlance of the Australia

Council for the Arts[5] are a small to medium business operating autonomously from state structures. The work of the Youth and Education Program in which the Youth Ensemble sits is part of the company ecology rather than being hived off elsewhere. Enoch states that, "having the 75 young people regularly coming into the company actually changes the way we operate" (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015). He expands on this notion by saying, "it affects the way we think about young audiences and also the needs of these young people" (ibid.). Such a positioning of the ensemble sits neatly within the framework articulated in Batchelor's (1977) overview of focused theatre education activity of the company that was flagged at the beginning of this chapter. As a secondary point of difference the artists who are employed as tutors with the Youth Ensemble are professional artists connected to the Company. This is as Enoch notes, "… something unique with the offering. [The young people] can see those artists on our stages and see their work" (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015).

The work of the Youth Ensemble can be characterized as "an industrial process rather than a kind of educational process" (Lucas Stibbard, personal interview, June 25, 2015) that has a strong focus on skill development over a year or more with two performance outcomes per year. This approach is dissimilar to a youth theatre or amateur theatre approach that where individuals learn to act through rehearsal and production. Taking such an approach supports Nicholson's (2011) call to embrace young people as co-artists thereby equalising the power dynamic in which a socially constructed experience of learning is foregrounded. It has also allowed for young people to make choices about the role theatre education has for them in future contexts. This learning is situated in skill development related to issues of professionalism and career pathways. One respondent noted, "… the opportunity to work with professionals was something that set this course apart. It is an opportunity you do not really find elsewhere" (Past Youth Ensemble focus group member 1, June 10, 2015). Another respondent built on this by saying, "it gave us skills we needed to work in the context of a professional theatre company" (Past Youth Ensemble focus group member 6, June 10, 2015). All respondents noted that the engagement through the Youth Ensemble "taught them how we should hold ourselves as artists when we are working in a professional space" (Past Youth Ensemble focus group member 6, June 10, 2015) if they are going to development successful careers in the performing arts industry. The need for training to develop career pathways for young people is deeply rooted into the life of the company. When asked about why a state theatre company needs to embed the creative lives of young people in their organisation a senior staff member responded by saying, "as the peak theatre organisation in Queensland we can provide an aspirational career path for young people who want to work in that sphere eventually" (Katherine Hoepper, personal interview, April 7, 2015). One artist employed as a tutor with the Youth Ensemble believes the company has a "responsibility to represent and help shape the artistic growth of the state, and part of that is being about to give access to people who might become artists in the future" (Lucas Stibbard, personal interview, June 25, 2015). A past

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[5] Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body.

member of the Youth Ensemble supported this view through the following response, "it is fundamental for a state theatre company to offer something for young people, because acting doesn't start when you are 25, you know? I think fostering creative talent at a young age is smart" (Past Youth Ensemble focus group member 6, June 10, 2015). Such an approach activates Nicholson's position "… that for any group of people to feel part of that space … they need to be recognized by others as integral to producing that space" (Nicholson 2011, p.209). The involvement of young people in the core business of the Company has recognition from the artistic director, the most influential and most senior worker within the Company. As such it develops the guiding principle of the Company that states, "capabilities for life-long learning about the arts of the theatre should be developed" (Queensland Government 1970, p. 6) become a tangible part of the Company's lived experience.

The democratizing of the theatre space undertaken through the Ensemble model has allowed "young people a chance to produce equitable spaces in which to work" (Nicholson 2011, p. 213) by embracing the working principle of co-artistry. However, in undertaking the research about the Youth Ensemble an identifiable issue around the cultural and linguistic diversity of the young people participating in the program emerged. Andrea Moor, one of the artists who has worked with the Youth Ensemble consistently since 2011 notes that she would like to see "broader socio-economic group of students [in the ensemble]" (Andrea Moor, personal interview, May 24, 2015) to actively encourage diversity in the group but Moor recognises to achieve this there would need to be greater access to financial assistance for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is not to say that the Company does not have a strategy around diversity. Led by Shari Irwin, producer for new work and development within the company, is the Logan Youth Theatre Ensemble that goes by the name of *Traction*. It is a QT initiative funded by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services through their Diversity and Social Cohesion program. This program is aligned to the Education and Youth Program but is not bannered under it. The Traction Ensemble was the brainchild of Wesley Enoch in response to racial unrest and negative news stories arising from the Logan area.

The Traction Ensemble operates on a similar model to the Youth Ensemble with its main point of difference being that young people do not have to audition to be included and the program is free to any young person in Logan who wishes to participate. Similarly, to the Youth Ensemble, the relationships developed and work created in the Traction Ensemble allows young people to see possible training and career pathways as part of their engagement with the ensemble. Shari Irwin (Personal interview, April 7, 2015) noted during the interview that many young people in Logan do not see themselves as artists and are unaware of professional pathways available to them in the performing arts sector. The points of intersection between the operational model of both ensembles is situated around longevity to create change or impact and development of career pathways in the arts. The model creates a relational and sometimes transitional space in which young people are able to gain a clear sense of possible career progression in theatre and the performance industries.

6 Comparative Youth Engagement in Australian State Theatre Companies

As the state theatre company, QT sits in comparison and partnership with the other state bodies. Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, The State Theatre Company of South Australia and Black Swan Theatre Company are the state bodies and are linked as Major Performing Arts Organisations, by the Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG). These companies receive both State and Federal funding from respective governments and have similar charters and acts to serve the members of their state and community, to varying levels.

In comparison to other theatre companies offer varying levels of Education and Youth activity, Enoch notes, "… as a company we have longevity in this area. And have it more well-developed than any other state theatre company because it is built into what we need to do" (Wesley Enoch, personal interview, April 1, 2015). In this statement Enoch refers to the guiding principles in the *Queensland Theatre Company Act 1970* on the provision of theatre experiences for children and young people as previously cited.

Whilst Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC), Sydney Theatre Company (STC), State Theatre Company of South Australia (STCSA) and Black Swan State Theatre Company (BSSTC) all offer ambassador-style programs, providing theatre access and involvement in forums and 'behind the scenes' style access, the Youth Ensemble at QT is unique in its approach and embedded nature in the company, in the nature of the relationship these students build with artistic staff. Wesley Enoch and QT Executive Director Sue Donnelly say that the contemporary Education and Youth Program,

> We have a greater outreach to young people than all the other state theatre companies combined and in recent years have seen our model being adopted or discussed by other companies. (Enoch and Donnelly 2015, p. 9)

From observation and engagement with other state theatre companies Moor believes, "the work is quite unique the thing, and in particular the value that it is given by the artistic director" (Andrea Moor, personal interview, May 24, 2015). Hoepper, who has previously been employed in Sydney Theatre Company Education Program, summed up the approach that STC and like companies in Australia as having a youth engagement that is "much more driven in a supporting the curriculum mode" (Katherine Hoepper, personal interview, April 7, 2015).

Correlations can be drawn between the diversity of the work offered by QT and the continued investment (initially from the state government, now from QT) in dedicated staffing, with backgrounds in education experience. However, varying artistic directors have had differing priorities around the importance on the Education and Youth programs. At this point in history the company's young people are benefiting from Wesley Enoch's impact through his distinct valuing of young people as creative agents.

7   Conclusion

In a number of state theatre and other large professional theatre companies in Australia "highly skilled education managers and staff who value education and young people … often struggle with their own standing and status in the arts organization of which they are part of" (Upton and Edwards 2014, p. 1). However, this is not the case at Queensland Theatre as the Education and Youth Program is core to the business of the company. As Moor states,

> … there is a very open route between artistic director and head of youth shows that it is a very valued part of the company. It is seen very much as part of the core business of the company. (Andrea Moor, personal interview, May 24, 2015).

Such a view is echoed by Hoepper when she says, "[the young peoples'] presence here is a constant reminder that they have status and that they are important to the work we do". (Katherine Hoepper, personal interview, April 7, 2015). In their monograph *Education and the Arts: Creativity in the promised new order* (2014), Upton and Edwards "argue for a paradigm shift, one that places education programs front and centre as *the* model for building vibrant theatre companies" (2014, p. 6 author's original emphasis). According to Bourke and Hunter (2011, p. 34) "QTC has been exemplary in this respect, providing a host of opportunities and incentives for young artists and audiences". Indeed one focus group member stated that it is not very often that a young person has the opportunity to feel really valued and the emphasis that QT has given to the Youth Ensemble signals to young people that they are worth it. This sentiment is echoed in Nicholson's (2011) research in which she makes the claim "… for any group of people to feel part of that space … they need to be recognized by others as integral to producing that space" (Nicholson 2011, p. 209). From the interviews with both past and present members of the Youth Ensemble that the embedding of programs targeted to young people is "contributing to attitudinal change whereby young artists and audiences are feeling valued and central to the QTC community" (ibid.). This sentiment is captured in comments from past Youth Ensemble members who state, "I certainly knew I was a student … but they treated us like professionals and I really liked that" (Past Youth Ensemble focus group member 1, June 10, 2015) and "there was equal respect" (Past Youth Ensemble focus group member 1, June 10, 2015).

Young people's participation inside the Queensland Theatre has embraced "methodologies and pedagogies of theatre education [that] depend on interactivity" (Nicholson 2011, p. 213). As such the authentic engagement with needs and interests of young people around theatre literacy and theatre skill development using the premise of co-artistry has developed an "an obvious correlation between their social experience of the theatre as a building [and] the aesthetic of the theatrical space" (Nicholson 2011, p. 209). With Wesley Enoch's departure from the Company in October 2015 there will undoubtedly be change. To date the historic narrative demonstrates that Queensland Theatre has had a continual investment in the Education and Youth sector since its inception. Over time the nature of participation by young people with the Company has responded to the twenty-first century imperative of

the "produser" (Bruns 2006), both a producer and consumer of cultural practice simultaneously, and as such has used social participation to define the nature of youth engagement activities.

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Part III
Moving Beyond the Main House

Outreach in the Deep North

John O'Toole

Abstract This chapter maps and informally compares two theatre companies of similar size and age, on opposite sides of the world: Northern Stage in the UK and the Queensland Theatre Company. These companies have similar or at least parallel 40 year histories of outreach and education work. The author was personally involved with both in their early days, and uses this personal knowledge and memories along with in-depth interviews with the contemporary artistic directors and education/engagement managers, and the local archives in both locations, to analyse and compare some of their aims, priorities and achievements, and how those have changed, converged and diverged in four decades.

Keywords Theatre-in-education · Queensland · Newcastle upon Tyne · Theatre in schools · Northern Stage · Participatory theatre · Community theatre

Two theatres in two cities are the origin of this case study: two provincial capitals a globe and a time span apart; England and Australia, 40 years ago and now; some arresting similarities and the author's personal involvement with all four settings. How have attitudes in the professional theatre towards young people changed in 30 years, and what can these two theatre companies tell us? The case study is based on archives of the two companies together with personal memories, and interviews with Wesley Enoch, at the time of writing (2014) Artistic Director, and Heidi Irvine, Producer (Education and Youth Programs) at the Queensland Theatre Company, Australia; and with Kylie Lloyd, then the current Director of Participation at Northern Stage, Newcastle upon Tyne, England.

J. O'Toole (✉)
Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: j.otoole@unimelb.edu.au

1 Origins

Northern Stage grew out of a University Theatre in the 1960s – specifically a dedicated theatre building, the Flora Robson Playhouse at the Newcastle upon Tyne University (then a college of Durham University), and the student and university community theatre that inhabited it. This was before the days of dedicated university drama courses, and the students were drama aficionados from generic degrees in Arts, Law and so on. During the 1970s it morphed into Newcastle upon Tyne's professional civic theatre company, the Newcastle Playhouse, with a new building (Flora Robson got demolished in a road redevelopment). The new theatre was right on the edge where the city meets the university. It was initially called out of courtesy The University Theatre, then later just The Playhouse, and more recently, after a major refurbishment in 2006, the Northern Stage. In the 1970s an arm of the Playhouse Company, called Stagecoach, ran touring shows for schools, commissioning local playwrights. In 1979 an Education Liaison Officer (ELO) was appointed, who came from the world of teaching rather than the world of theatre, and simultaneously a participatory Theatre in Education team, known as Tynewear TIE, was born. The ELO position quickly lapsed, but the TIE team lasted until the late 1980s. This author was the Education Liaison Officer through most of 1980.

The Queensland Theatre Company also emerged – not exclusively, but primarily – out of a 1960s University of Queensland groundswell of interested theatre groups from Arts, Law, Architecture and Engineering, performing in a couple of theatre spaces on the campus. Based on a core group led by a charismatic young director, Bryan Nason, this crystallised into the quasi-professional College Players. For them outreach was the name of the game from early days, and, with no theatre to call their own, they embarked on ambitious tours throughout Queensland's vast distances – including, famously, railway tours thousands of miles long where the company in its carriage got hooked on to a succession of long-distance, slow-travelling trains taking Shakespeare and musicals to far-flung regional centres. They led the charge to establish a fully professional state theatre company, and the Queensland Theatre Company (QTC) was formally established in 1969, housed in a remarkably well-designed theatre buried deep in an insurance office tower block. Nason was surprisingly overlooked as artistic director in favour of a 'safe' British director based in Sydney, Alan Edwards, who ran the company for the next 17 years. 'Cultural cringe', regional and national, was still a feature of Australian artistic life until the next decade when groups like the Australian Performing Group, Nimrod, La Mama and Nason's own Grin and Tonic established a confident and independent Australian theatre voice.

From the beginning, the company was directed by its charter to reach out to the whole vast state, not just Brisbane. They were also aware of the need to cater for young people, and their very first 'fully professional activity' (Hedge 1980) tidily put the two needs together in a program of three productions which would tour Queensland schools, provided by an ensemble company known slightly incongruously as the 'Young Elizabethan Players'. The final activity of that year (1970) was

a 4-week full-time Theatre Training School in Theatre Techniques, with members of the company joining and tutoring 25 students from round the state. At the time, there was no professional tertiary theatre training to be had in Queensland. That had to wait for another 5 years.

The company had an established education officer almost from its inception, and almost a decade earlier than the Newcastle Playhouse. This started from the end of 1970, though unlike at Newcastle, this person was appointed from within the theatre industry, rather than education (the first, Murray Foy, was a main company actor). This changed over the years towards more educationally experienced education liaison officers, and the position was maintained, usually with State Education Department funding, until 2012. As with the Playhouse, the QTC operated a touring company for schools, with locally commissioned playwrights, including this author in 1978. For economic, cultural and geographical reasons dealt with elsewhere (O'Toole and Bundy 1993) the British TIE movement featuring integral audience participation did not prosper in Australia. My own single effort in this genre for the company was ill-conceived; it was directed without comprehension and mercifully sank almost without trace, though the company report kindly noted that the 'theatre in education company broke new ground' (an experiment they were never to repeat, in this kind anyway).

2   1980s

A search through the Newcastle Playhouse records in the local and regional archives showed very thin pickings for the education and young people's offerings, either of the ELO or, initially, the TIE team, though production records after 1982 have been preserved. These few records – and their scantiness – triggered my own 1980 memories. As the second appointed ELO, I do remember that in the 9 months I worked for the company, I met the artistic director, John Blackmore, just once, at my request, and the interview terminated with my conclusion that further meetings would accomplish little. I wrote, developed and directed one practical schools' workshop to accompany a main house production of The Merchant of Venice. All the main house productions were directed squarely at adults, except for the Christmas family show (for which an education officer or young persons' specialist was not required, and I had by then left, anyway). For all the rest of the time, I worked with the TIE team, which had effectively a totally separate establishment and program, in a building right across the city from the theatre. This was mainly funded by the local education authority (LEA), and provided participatory, highly socially conscious small-group theatre work in and for schools… in the Local Education Authority (LEA)'s zealously guarded territory. We got into trouble when we performed for a neighbouring LEA, the only time apart from my sole interview that I remember the artistic director intervening or indicating concern about the TIE team's work. He never saw a TIE program. I was puzzled, and remain so, why a director who had established the role of ELO, as well as a TIE team, seemed so detached.

In the 1970s and 1980s in the Queensland Theatre Company, the education and young people's work was almost equally detached from the main house, and the Director took little more personal interest than Newcastle's. However, it was almost certainly more highly valued, getting numerous mentions in the company's first 10-year report (Hedges 1980); indeed 1977 was declared its 'Year of Youth', with increased funds and a special initiative in the form of a regional Youth Theatre. As late as 1996, an in-house report (QTC 1996, pp. 2–5) clearly delineated the separate visions, partially separate funding and also considerable tensions between the main house and the education program. Main house programming was overwhelmingly but not entirely devoted to catering for adult audiences, and children's audiences were seen as something else. The idea of a Christmas show or pantomime was not practicable in Brisbane, owing to a large proportion of local families leaving the city for extended summer holidays; however the company's first children's play was presented near the end of 1971, in tandem with its second tentative excursion into Australian theatre. This was repeated annually. From the late 1970s there was an almost annual production of a popular Shakespeare play, with an eager eye to the box office opportunities that schools provided. The company from its inception, however, had been given and had faithfully fulfilled its responsibility to the whole state, not just Brisbane. Outreach was not just a pious idea, but a political necessity, in a state where over half the population lived in regions up to 2000 km and even more away from the capital (and where political power lay in the country votes). Some adult shows toured, and also a lot of this responsibility devolved to the education program, which dutifully toured from end to end of the State, reaching one and a half million children in its first 13 years (Frame 1984). From that first 1970 Theatre Techniques workshop the company ran annual acting and directing workshops more and more targeted towards regional and remote school students.

This broader regional and touring responsibility was not imposed on the Newcastle company, and only emerged gradually during the latter years of the century. Nevertheless, striking convergences emerge from these histories between the two companies in the 1970s and 1980s: the clear separation of audiences from participants, and indeed the separation of work for young people, particularly those in formal educational settings, from the work for adults, that in both theatres was seen as the core business of the company. Plenty of anecdotal evidence suggests that artists' attitudes mirrored the theatres' policies. Some adult playwrights explicitly despised the quality and aesthetics of young people's theatre: 'The TIE people do a great job educating children, but it's not art, and it's not entertainment' (Buzo 1988, p. 44). In the main, acting for theatre in education (in the UK) and young people's theatre (in both countries) were less career paths than something to do until a proper – i.e. adult – job came along. This author can testify to that from many conversations with creative staff, including some colleagues. Similarly, schools' matinees tended to be dreaded or mocked rather than eagerly anticipated. This may have been partly because the 'theatre literacy' of many school students and therefore their understanding of theatre protocols was far inferior to that of contemporary school parties, and their behaviour often reflected that (Burton et al. 2013; Stinson 2013).

3   Reaching Out in England

Towards the turn of the century the picture in Newcastle changed, first with the appointment in 1992 of Alan Lyddiard, a Scot with an outward-looking perspective, who was determined to make the company the theatre not just for Newcastle but the region and to make work which was locally, nationally and internationally significant. His artistic vision was summarised:

> We recognise that the arts are an integral part of our society. They enable all people to think and behave creatively in their daily lives and are a means by which people's imaginations can be expanded. Northern Stage aspires to the creation and promotion of great art. The company is committed to communicating with people on an intellectual, emotional and spiritual level in order to encourage debate, feelings and desires that reflect who we are, the place where we live and our relationships with the rest of the world. (Lyddiard 1995, p. unnumbered)

In 1998 Lyddiard founded the Northern Stage Ensemble as the resident company at Newcastle Playhouse. This brought two major shifts relevant to this chapter – firstly the perspectival move towards a broader regional awareness, and secondly the establishment of a resident ensemble company. This was, as Kylie Lloyd explained, to give people a period of time to be a fulltime artist. She added, significantly for this essay, that Lyddiard's vision was 'fully inclusive of any participation and education work as well as work they were doing for the main stage'. Lyddiard identified the three key equal areas of work for the company as being 'produced, presented and projects'. With a Projects team, including Education & Events, headed up by Tony Harrington (1992–2001) the work was conceived as a part of the 'total theatre' experience, where education was not 'separated off'. In 2002 Lloyd joined Northern Stage as Projects Manager, promoted to Director of Participation in 2006, a nomenclature she still held in 2015.

The Northern Stage Ensemble model ran for 8 years, with large scale participatory projects taking place across the region and internationally, and forming part of the programme. This included The Blaze! Funded by Creative Partnerships, Northern Stage devised a new street opera, working with over a hundred students from five schools across the Tees Valley (part of a separate major conurbation 50 miles South). In contrast to those early days when the LEA-funded Tynewear TiE got into trouble for straying into the next-door borough, Northern Stage now defines its touring area as from the Scottish border to Teesside and further South into North Yorkshire, as well as West into Cumbria, to cater for those young people for whom Manchester (over a hundred miles South) would otherwise be the nearest option. While geographically this is a tiny fraction of Queensland's vast distances and emptiness, in England's much more compressed and socially variegated society it is quite comparable – with a population of more than half of Queensland's, for instance.

The company suffered something of a hiatus for more than 2 years, as the theatre building closed for a major redevelopment in 2004, not re-opening until 2006. Lyddiard resigned in 2005 and his successor as artistic director, Erica Whyman,

joined the company in 2006. Whyman had the same strong commitment to work for young people as her predecessor, and some of the team, including Lloyd, were still in place. Together they made a significant linguistic shift, replacing the word 'Projects' as the leading term for their young people's work with 'Participation'. This change came because they felt strongly that they did not want to be seen as:

> an education department, with the implication that we teach people what to do and how to do it: we want people to come and take part in drama for whatever that might mean at those points in their lives.

This change of language, and of the perspective and attitude that the shift means, is symbolic of perhaps the major shift in understanding, or reconceptualization, of young people that has occurred in the theatre industry internationally, and in attitudes of arts organisations generally. It is part of a broader societal shift, with many contributing factors, such as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the growing purchasing power and decision-making agency of young people, and the availability to young people of communication and information through IT and social media. Young people are now, more and more, considered as active citizens, rather than citizens-of-tomorrow, or citizens-in-waiting. Their artistic interests and concerns are now more and more being taken into account as serious opinions (e.g. Martin et al. 2013; Reason 2010; Barrett and Smigiel 2003; Brown 2000). And not only in the literature; these opinions are increasingly affecting company programming in Australia (Fleming et al. 2013, pp. 110–111). And correspondingly in the UK, in a significant linguistic shift, all of the 'Education' departments from the Big 12 UK Producing Theatres have shifted to Participation and/or Learning departments.)

The company's commitment not only to working with young people (as emerging artists not just as audience) but also actively engaging with 'people who think that theatre is not for them' was strongly pursued, even while the theatre was closed. This took the form of projects, most notably an ambitious international project with Noord Nederlands Toneel from Holland, called On Top of the Town, funded by the British Council. These two companies had a number of things in common, including an established ensemble, a theatrical vision embracing social cohesion, and a commitment to working with young people. The roles were peer matched in each company, so there were two directors, two project producers, two co-ordinators and eight young artists. They worked on a devised performance for a year, over a number of weekends, and a 3-week production period, that culminated initially in a performance in a car park in Groningen, and then was re-staged as the showcase performance to re-open the rebuilt Northern Stage theatre. This was a remarkable affirmation of trust in young people's artistry and participation, from an established civic theatre company.

And, moreover, it affirmed Northern Stage's trust in group-devised work, which has remained the mainstay of the company's work for young people. This underlines the theatre's artistic approach, which is to 'empower young people to believe that what they want to say is inclusive and valid'. Devised projects, increasingly funded by philanthropic foundations, became and remain important. Following Top

of the Town came a project Happiness, devised – and group-devised – as a counter both to the current main-house season laden with tragedies, and the general air of despondency that accompanied the 2008 global financial recession.

Much of the energy of Lloyd's Participation team goes into securing funding for these kinds of projects, of which there have been at least six major ones, besides regular programmes of activities such as workshops for babies, 5–12 year olds, Young Company and ongoing collaborations with local acting courses at Gateshead College and Northumbria University. Touring to schools is now a much smaller part of the company's work, as is the schools' matinee, which has almost disappeared, along with funding from Education Authorities and even the capacity of schools to organise school visits to theatre. This is mainly because of the English National Curriculum's continued and increasing neglect of the Humanities in favour of a literacy-, numeracy- and science-based curriculum bolstered by frequent testing – as vividly analysed in the Cambridge Review of Primary Education (Alexander et al. 2009). Drama has suffered particularly from not having full subject status - as noted critically by inter alia Jonothan Neelands (1992) – since the 1980s but mainly treated either as a component of English or, in primary education, as a pedagogical approach. Neither of these are especially conducive to visiting theatres, and the testing regime, increased teacher loads and reduced arts funding in schools all further limit the capacity of teachers to arrange extramural expeditions to the theatre. However, many school groups do still come to the main house shows; performances are scheduled for early evening (6.00 or 6.30), so that students can come after school and their teachers can get them back home. The theatre is also pro-active in running workshops for teachers, connecting them to the shows and the shows to the curriculum, where relevant. Besides those opportunities, there is an annual Teachers' Forum.

Within the last 4 years, the company has been exploring and investing in the process of young people becoming professional artists – looking at the steps and journeys that young people can make, at what point their developing expertise can meet the company's professionalism, and how they can maintain that contact. The pioneering work with Newcastle College has broadened into a commitment to working with recent graduates and other young professionals, providing them with actual employment experience. They have started up the NORTH programme, an intensive training residency funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, that enables up to eight young artists to work with Northern Stage, to create and tour work. Another of these initiatives takes people as young as 14, and invites them to contribute their work to a couple of the company's 'Scratch Nights' for local artists trying out new work. These are not only devised and performed by young people, but also curated and partly produced by them (mentored by company members), offering them an unusual level of engagement in theatre's mysteries. The events have been sell-outs.

A new artistic director, Lorne Campbell, arrived in 2014, and mainly ensured continuity of these policies, and particularly the vision of the theatre as a community centre and resource, focusing more on the theatre building itself, again reaching out to those who might not think that theatre is for them, as well as for unfunded,

experimental, amateur and profit-share groups. The location is actually a big disadvantage, now tucked away as it is and hidden from the city behind a large and forbidding university building (the old Playhouse was visible across the road from the Civic Centre and the bus station). However, they do what they can. The theatre has three spaces: the smallish main house, seating 450, a black box studio seating 180 and the original Front of House, now rebranded Stage 3, that they have turned into a community workshop space holding about 70. Stage 3 is made available for free to community groups, when not used for company activities. The main house has five major productions a year, again strongly focussed on young people and community: two of these are at Christmas, one for under-sixes, written and directed by Lloyd's team, and one for families. One of the others during the year she describes as 'participatory' by which she means that community members and non-professionals take part – rather than the more commonly used definition of the term meaning audience participation. This would have been much more difficult for Blackmore's company back in the 1970s, had it been considered, because the actors' union, Equity, barred the use of non-professional performers in a professional theatre; the many 'Fringe' groups experimenting with any kind of participatory theatre had to find other spaces like pubs to perform. And in addition to all of this, the company provides one of the major offerings at an annual Children's Festival, 'Juice' in October.

Although there is a congenial and very modern bar and café in the foyer, the company feels it is underused (again, partly the theatre's hidden position). Newcastle playgoers old and young tend not to stay after the event, nor to use it for the kind of socialising – turning the visit to see a play into a whole-evening social event – that is so much a growing part of young people's valuing of theatre visits in Australia (Stinson 2013).

4   Reaching Out in Queensland

In Queensland, the QTC's initial commitment to children and young people has been maintained almost unbroken, though the language has changed very significantly. In the 1970s and 1980s, a major purpose of catering for young people, quite explicitly (Foy 1978), was to create the next generation of adult theatre audiences of the future - bums on seats - and the next generation of specialist actors. This could be done by attractive in-house plays for children and families, around Christmas time, or by taking theatre into schools, and by annual skills workshops for a selected few. The current director, Wesley Enoch, uses statistics to shape a different vision:

> We use the education system… as a way of talking to a very broad base, and then we have more and more specialist activities that have deeper and deeper kind of engagement. So we would have about 10,000 young people who come and see our shows – our main house shows – and then we have another 10,000 that engage with workshop activities, and then roughly about, say 10,000 when we do schools touring that we connect up with them in their schools, so we are not often talking to people in a deep way unless they want to engage and opt in.

As with the current Newcastle management, in my QTC discussions I often found it difficult to distinguish whether we were talking about young people as audiences or as young artists, and what ages we were actually talking about. Enoch's picture is also full of subtexts that vividly illustrate the changes that have occurred in the perception within the company of young people and their relationship to the art of theatre.

The position of Education Officer, or some similar title, remained unbroken in the company until 2012. Through almost the whole period some funding – sometimes the entire funding of the position – was provided by the State Department of Education, (a scenario Northern Stage could only have dreamed of). In addition, the State Arts Department provided solid infrastructure and promotion for the education touring program throughout the whole period, through the Queensland Arts Council (QAC), a body set up and dedicated to ensure that regional and remote areas were properly looked after (a political necessity as well as an equitable vision, as the country vote has always been massively influential, and until 1991 reinforced by a spectacular electoral gerrymander). The QAC support did have one major drawback, as it came with conditions: a production assessment panel that vetted every performance program officially entering schools, and at times operated – or was at least seen to – more as a censorship body than quality control, and had the power to prevent programs it did not approve of being seen. Though never particularly draconian or repressive, this assessment program tended to err on the side of caution, particularly as some Queensland schools and parent groups had a tradition of highly vocal conservatism, especially in matters of political and other contentious material (see O'Toole and Bundy 1993, pp. 144–146). This had a twin impact, financial and aesthetic. It led to a very safe, cautious, curriculum-centred approach to touring theatre, and largely prevented experimental or possibly contentious or risky theatre for schools from happening in Queensland: no professional company looking for the Arts Council sponsorship (as the QTC was bound to) could risk employing for several weeks a creative team of director, production staff and actors, and maybe playwright, with the real possibility of the show being canned by the QAC's assessment panel. A few brave independent companies like the Albert-Hunt[1]-inspired but short-lived Popular Theatre Troupe and Bryan Nason's much longer-surviving Grin and Tonic ignored this whole system and toured to the schools anyway, but that independence was not available to the state-incorporated QTC.

Safe and conservative it may have been, but the QTC's touring provision to schools remained prolific until well into the new millennium, under a number of names: The Young Elizabethans morphed into the Brolgas (named after a large stork native to country Queensland and noted for its spectacular dancing displays), then in the 1980s into Roadworks, then back to the Brolgas, and from the early 1990s the

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[1] Albert Hunt was a radical British theatre director whose visit to Queensland in the mid 1970s, and his book *Hopes for Great Happenings* (1976), inspired the foundation by Richard Fotheringham of the *Popular Theatre Troupe*. This company took its politically activist productions into schools, independently of the QAC, until it was actually banned in 1983 by the highly conservative government of the day. See also O'Neill 1995, pp. 37–60

severely functional title Education Unit. Every year there was always a primary and a secondary touring program at least, and from the 1990s the increasing use of accompanying educational resource materials, something that has survived and grown into an integral part of the education provision today.

However, with the coming of the millennium, a new awareness was dawning of the limitation of single-visit, fly-in, fly-out theatre for young people. Certainly it gave students a pleasurable experience of theatre, usually new to them. However, it was impossible to identify from market research whether there was any evidence of those bums on school hall floors transferring themselves to adult theatre seats. On the contrary, there was a startling new study which suggested that the reverse might equally be true. As with PE and sport – but not music, significantly – new evidence (Brown 2000) suggested that a significant proportion of students associated theatre with schooling, even where they had enjoyed it, and when they left, they left theatre behind with the other experiences of school, turning to other sources of entertainment. Moreover, the company's 1984 vision:

> To present programs which do not set out to teach directly, but are designed to develop and foster an interest and motivation which, if followed up by teachers, can continue and extend to a learning experience long after the performance is over. (Frame 1984, p2.)

was honoured more in the breach than the observance. As in the UK, there had been limited evidence of teachers, especially of primary and non-drama specialist teachers, integrating the company's visits into their pedagogy or curriculum. In many schools, the supervising teachers could (and can) still be observed using the performance time to get on with their marking. Although the company still provides some touring theatre for schools, this dawning realisation prompted the search for new and different models of delivery.

The situation of drama in schools was another major factor that impacted on this company in quite a different way than on the Northern Stage (at least until recent years). As we have seen, the negating and whittling away of drama from within the curriculum in England had a highly deleterious effect on NS's educational provision. Almost the opposite happened in Queensland. From the founding in 1976 of a very active association of drama teachers, QADIE[2], drama, which had been very peripheral and mainly extra-curricular in schools, took off exponentially, especially in senior schooling. Between 1979 and 1991 the numbers of students taking drama subjects at senior examination level leapt from under 1000 to over 13,000, a number that has been roughly maintained ever since, so that drama is one of the ten most popular subjects chosen by senior students (BSSS 1993; BSSSS 2003).

In the same period tertiary drama courses were founded. These included acting courses and courses for drama teachers, and more recently applied theatre workers, which within a generation had established a solid cohort of trained and experienced drama teachers to cater for this exponential growth. They were beginning to train a different kind of actor and director, too, who did not necessarily see young people as a sideshow. Together with the continued prominence and energy of QADIE, there

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[2] Queensland Association for Drama in Education, now Drama Queensland.

was beginning a shift in the theatre-going culture of Queensland. It manifested itself in the growing number of profit-share companies of performers, and a growth in alternative venues with a different audience age profile and theatre-going habits from the largely middle-aged and elderly Queensland Theatre Company's Brisbane subscribers.

Over the early decades, the QTC's theatre for schools programs had aimed to cater for a broad range of school contexts – including history and English classes (poetry-based performances have been a staple). For primary education, it was plays with generally moral or social content, either for discussion, or with an uplifting message. The growth of secondary drama gave another focus of support – to help the drama teachers, especially in the regions, to provide a rich experience of live theatre for their specialist groups. The QTC responded in terms of its touring commitment in the early 2000s by developing for secondary students a regional workshop program, rather than another run of one-off performances. This was essentially like an artist in residence program where the company would offer regional schools an artist in residence for a whole day. They would pay a subsidised fee, and an artist would be in their region for a number of days and would work among however many schools in that region wanted that engagement. As Education and Youth Programs Producer Heidi Irvine explained, the schools would essentially get an artist for a day, to use however they wanted them to, as a classroom resource, or running workshops. Alternatively teachers might say 'Oh we want to work with all the kids in the school musical doing some skills work, direction and that sort of thing…'.

This kind of flexible short-term residency shifted the company's provision firmly towards the drama teachers and classrooms, and began the process of trying to establish with their audiences a deeper and less transitory engagement with theatre. The program ran successfully, accessed by 'thousands and thousands of students and teachers', for over 6 years.

However, in that time, significant changes were happening in schools; not so much to drama classes as to the dynamics and imperatives of the schools themselves. Curricula are becoming more tightly organised, partly in pursuit of a more highly test-driven curriculum (shades of the UK). In the last 6 or 7 years, as noted by Irvine, herself an ex-drama teacher, it has become much more difficult either to make a whole day free for large numbers of students for a program such as the residencies described above, or even to negotiate the school's limited capacity to take students out of school on visits, particularly if they involve travel. This is similar to what had happened much earlier in England, and had such a deleterious effect on Northern Stage's relationship with schools. In Queensland too, special schools' matinees became rarer. With some regret, the QTC started looking around for another model.

Another youth initiative developed in this same period, also wound up by the current director Wesley Enoch, who took over the QTC in 2011, was a program of plays specially for young people and schools, including classics such as Waiting for Godot, hosted down in the company's base theatre. There would be maybe three or four shows a year, identified from current curricular texts in Drama or English curriculum and speaking directly to curriculum needs. Irvine spoke regretfully about

their demise too, in terms of the quality of work and the challenge to the students presented by the productions.

However, by this time, another vision was forming, a radical departure for the education provision of the QTC. Enoch was questioning the whole concept of a 'special' program for children and young people. This was not that he puts little value on them – on the contrary, like Irvine he has been a drama teacher himself, and is passionate about engaging young people in theatre.

> With Wesley's appointment here at QTC: we went from having a suite of work that was specifically for an education audience. He decided to get rid of that programming: 'Should we be encouraging those audiences into our mainstage?'

Enoch's vision also incorporates a commitment that is not necessarily common among elite companies. There is another professional theatre company in the city, La Boîte, and a number of successful independent and profit-share companies catering largely to young 'alternative' audiences – mainly performing in La Boîte and touring the schools. Enoch was careful not to duplicate what other theatre professionals do. For instance, La Boîte runs successful masterclasses for young adults, so QTC tailors its own masterclasses to school students only – conveniently continuing its long tradition of periodic (at one time annual) acting and directing classes for schools. They also run three Youth Ensembles – senior, intermediate and junior – as a specialised non-tertiary actor training program that is described elsewhere in this book (chapter "From Access to Participation: An Historical Account of Queensland Theatre Company's Commitment to Theatre Education for Children and Young People").

A lot of the education program's time and effort is spent in producing useful educational resources for all the company's productions, and in fostering and maintaining a very close relationship with Queensland's well-trained and close-knit drama teachers. The company recently hosted two of Drama Queensland's annual conferences, and Irvine prides herself on the many teachers who regularly ring or contact her to discuss in detail the suitability of plays for particular classes. For her and Enoch, it is a crucial responsibility of the theatre towards young people, to create a deep engagement with theatre, and a sense of the theatre belonging to them, rather than just to give a lot of young people ephemeral experiences.

The profile of Brisbane theatre audiences in general has noticeably changed, with a much larger proportion of attenders in their teens and twenties than might have been seen in earlier decades. This change, very noticeable in alternative theatre providers like La Boîte and the more experimental Powerhouse, can be seen in the QTC, both in the main house and its experimental ('Greenhouse') offerings – though this is not yet provable with statistics. This process had started well before Enoch arrived, driven by the school drama teachers and their own changing school environments, with the growing attendance of drama classes at evening productions at least as often as at matinees. All the programming, and particularly the Greenhouse season, is done with an awareness of the whole age demographic, not just older adults. Financially, in Brisbane as in Newcastle, there are swings and roundabouts: the large numbers of school and tertiary students swell the overall attendance figures,

but they pay correspondingly less for their tickets, through the theatre's youth and incentive schemes.

Beyond Brisbane, to replace the disbanded Regional Workshops program, is another initiative that is designed specifically for students. QTC's ambitious 'Scene' project clearly aims to provide a deeper engagement than 1 day to remember. It is a participatory project where schools have access to a script commissioned for them. For a term they work on that script, either as a curriculum-based project or as an extracurricular drama group project. The following term, all the groups in each region come together to perform a 10-min segment of their work for each other – so they get the opportunity to watch what the other schools have done. Then they have the opportunity to see the team of professional actors from the QTC perform the entire script. This is followed by an intensive debriefing discussion.

This initiative was 'borrowed' from a scheme started at a major Melbourne theatre, the Malthouse, that is similarly focussed on changing the profile of theatre by initiatives designed to attract youth and young adults. Like the schemes in Newcastle, they are all part of a world-wide recognition of young people, in arts as in other spheres of life, not just as citizens-in-waiting, but as discriminating consumers and more than that, participants. This is different from how it was: even in 1998, at a seminar hosted by the QTC, the eminent American doyenne of arts education Maxine Greene expressed astonished scepticism when faced with the proposition that (in Australia at least) school drama and arts curricula were designed primarily to give all children the experience of becoming emerging artists rather than just educated audiences. 'How can you ever find employment if everybody is an artist?' she queried incredulously (O'Toole 1998). By 2014, our participatory perspective had been enshrined in the Australian national curriculum, for all children, as:

> Students learn as artists and audience through the intellectual, emotional and sensory experiences of the Arts… [they] communicate ideas in current, traditional and emerging forms and use arts knowledge and understanding to make sense of their world. (ACARA 2014)

5   Summary

This word participation is the keyword for the major change from the dedicated but specialised educational service provided by these theatre companies in past ages. In both the Northern Stage and QTC the word features in the job specification of the officer formerly principally responsible for the education provision of the theatre. In both cases, particularly the Northern Stage, it signals a broader brief that addresses young people as an integral part of the theatre's core community. In both cases it still involves addressing school and curricular issues and demands, as well as a greatly increased commitment to practical training and hands-on experience for young actors and other theatre artists. Those educational needs have changed too in the period, in quite radically different ways. Northern Stage has had to cut its cloth according to the constantly shrinking flexibility and funding of a previously generous education system, with administrators, teachers and students all under great

pressure from education policies consistently unfavourable to drama in schools. QTC, though originally part of a much more 'user-pays' environment and an education system that in 1980 did not see drama at all as a core part of its business, has enjoyed unbroken educational funding and support, in a climate of increasing recognition and support for drama. That is, until the sudden and unexpected complete cut-off of this funding in 2012, which to the enormous credit of its director and board, the company managed to surmount from other resources. Both theatres have been fortunate for the last two decades at least to have directors with a genuine interest in young people, who with their staff were able not just to react to the changing tides in the affairs of young people, but to anticipate them and shape appropriate provision that has made youth and children's programs an integral and substantial part of the theatre's core business.

> It's about a relationship with the Company, not so much a 'Oh that's just the whatever Theatre Company'… they've developed a relationship with us. (Irvine, QTC)

> ...and just believing that if we invest these kinds of resources in young people, in five or ten years it's going to look like a very different city. (Lloyd, Northern Stage)

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From Human Anatomy to the Global Banking Crisis: Exploring Warwick Arts Centre's Commitment to Artist-Academic Collaboration

Rachel Turner-King and Baz Kershaw

Abstract This chapter examines the emergence of transdisciplinary learning out of two distinct but interrelated collaborative education projects commissioned by Warwick Arts Centre (WAC), UK. WAC invited eminent University of Warwick academics from the fields of biomedicine and economics into partnership with regional and national artists and theatre-makers to engage with young people living in socio-economically deprived and ethnically diverse areas of the city of Coventry. We argue that these projects could be indicative of radical challenges to conventional partnership-working in the Arts and Sciences and they could also signify the democratic, convivial potential of transdisciplinary approaches to research dissemination and public engagement strategies in the context of higher education.

Keywords Artist-academic collaboration · Regional theatre · Internationalism · Transdisciplinarity · Knowledge exchange · Public engagement · Audience development · Conviviality

1   Establishing Collaborative Partnerships Across Disciplines

> New epistemologies are developing as a result of collaborations between theatre-makers and scientists that redefine the relationship between theatre, performance, public engagement and experiential learning. (Nicholson 2011, p. 177)

Warwick Arts Centre (WAC) is embedded in the University of Warwick's campus, which is located on the borders of the city of Coventry and the county of Warwickshire, in the region of the West Midlands, UK. This chapter examines the 'new epistemologies' that have emerged out of two distinct but interrelated examples of educational collaborative practice commissioned

R. Turner-King (✉)
Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
e-mail: Rachel.Turner-King@warwick.ac.uk; baz.kershaw@warwick.ac.uk

B. Kershaw
Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
e-mail: baz.kershaw@warwick.ac.uk

by WAC: *Skin, Blood and Bones* (SBB) in 2008–2009 and *Bank On it* (BOI) in 2013. WAC invited eminent University of Warwick academics from the fields of biomedicine (for SBB) and economics (for BOI) into partnership with regional and national artists and theatre-makers to engage with young people living in socio-economically deprived and ethnically diverse areas of Coventry. We explore the knowledges that emerged through these subject disciplines, shared professional expertise and pedagogic practices. We contextualise the methods and purposes of these collaborations by focussing on the complexities of WAC's relationship with the University of Warwick, its geographical disconnect from Coventry and its attempts to foster long-term interactions with under-represented communities. We analyse why these particular collaborations might signify a productive shift in the ways WAC engages with its network of professional artists and audiences of young people.

By exploring the ways such collaborations are mutually beneficial to both WAC and the University, we hope to address wider, concurrent debates in educational research and cultural policy about the potential value of 'transdisciplinarity' in teaching, learning and research. Kershaw proposes that performance and theatre especially can access transdisciplinarity because they routinely occupy 'the yet-to-be defined intersections between disciplinary fields' (Kershaw 2011, p. 66). In light of this, we suggest that both WAC projects offer insights into the ways the 'Arts' could be included as a component of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education to become 'STEAM' (Arts Council England 2014; The Warwick Commission 2015). We also suggest that both projects could be indicative of radical challenges to conventional partnership-working, research dissemination and public engagement strategies in the context of higher education.[1] But first we describe the dynamics and particularities of WAC's location in its regional, national and international environments.

2 Context of WAC: Between the 'International' University and Its Local City

Celebrations of the 'cosmopolitan' can suggest an unpleasant posture of superiority toward the putative provincial. (Appiah 2006, p. xiii)

Since opening in 1974, WAC has established itself as the largest multi-arts hub outside of London, presenting to audiences of 'over 300,000, a range of 2300 events a year' (Warwick Arts Centre 2015a) and describing its offer as 'a curated, *international*, *inter-disciplinary* and multi-art form programme of *high quality* work from orchestral music to contemporary theatre and visual arts' (Culture, Media and Sport 2014; emphasis ours). Given that WAC is owned and partly financed by the University, its programming, commissioning and education activities understandably reflect the ethos of this research-intensive institution.

As part of the 'Collaborative Doctoral Award' (CDA) scheme of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council, from 2007 to 2010 Rachel King was funded to investigate the ways in which WAC engaged 'positive multiculturalism' in its pro-

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[1] For example, King's Cultural Institute (2015) in London has set up a diverse network of collaborations that connects industry professionals with academics to enhance 'public engagement' with research. Please see Reference list for webpage.

gramming, commissioning and education activities.[2] At the time of the study, the University made explicit its aspirations to be recognised as a leading *international* research centre within an increasingly competitive globalised market of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In 2009, for example, the University launched its new strategy, 'Vision 2015', pledging its commitment to 'embedding internationalism into every area of the University's mission' in order to ensure its 'global presence' (The University of Warwick 2011). As Michael Shattock reports, 'in the last decade the University has comprehensively grasped the global agenda and has moved from being opportunistic to strategic in its approach' (Shattock 2015, p. 72). Thus in its public documents and marketing materials, WAC reflected the intrinsic worth of 'internationalism' and 'cosmopolitanism', arguing that:

> Presenting the work of artists from other countries and cultures … brings us many benefits; new understandings of contemporary culture, knowledge of other cultures, new perspectives on our own culture and an exploration of life in a global world (Warwick Arts Centre 2007).

Whilst WAC's positive characterisations of 'cosmopolitanism' were appropriately congruous with the University's mission, King's research discovered that these orientations were in tension with its relationship to *local* and sub-regional audiences (King 2013). WAC's location on the outskirts of Coventry and in the centre of University of Warwick's campus meant that it was sometimes perceived by city-dwelling audience members as geographically disconnected from the city. So though WAC may justifiably adopt the positive rhetoric of 'cosmopolitanism' and celebrate its reputation as a 'world-class venue', its location has produced perceptions that it is 'distant/removed' and 'elitist/posh' by infrequent and non-attenders living in some local districts of Coventry. This accords with alternative conceptions of 'cosmopolitanism', which frame it as an exclusive proclivity that can only be afforded by those who have access to "knowledge, cultural capital and education" (Vertovec and Cohen 2002; Binnie et al. 2006, p. 8). Hence, as Chris Haylett (2006, p. 187) suggests, in some respects "the language of cosmopolitanism does not readily conjure images of the black or white working class, or of poor immigrants or refugees".

WAC has had to navigate such class tensions throughout its history. For example, its 1998 application to the Arts Council of England's 'Arts for Everyone' scheme demonstrated its awareness of such issues:

> WAC recognises that, despite the facts of good transport links, friendly and welcoming staff and a wide-ranging programme, it is still perceived as being inaccessible and even perhaps *elitist*. Research indicates that there are still lingering perceptions of the Centre as somewhere just for the University, or a 'certain type of attender.' (Warwick Arts Centre 1998)

In order to encourage a greater diversity of engagement, WAC has to balance the University's emphasis on an "ambitious intellectual strategy" (Warwick Arts Centre 2008) with its commitment to "widening participation and enabling the more disadvantaged members of society to share in the best of artistic production" (ibid.). As a

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[2] Baz Kershaw and Alan Rivett (Director of WAC) were co-supervisors of this CDA project.

result, audience development strategies have partly been the responsibility of WAC's Education department. Their work aims to counter negative perceptions by working in its localities and fostering more inclusive relationships through its projects with local schools. Thus this very active department has evolved "a vigorous strand of education activities participated in by over 87,000 young people annually" (Warwick Arts Centre 2015a). To achieve this it has worked with a network of regional and national artists from across art forms to design a series of short and long-term bespoke educational projects that serve WAC's local schools and communities.[3] Director of Education, Brian Bishop, explains that their mission is "to stimulate young people's creativity, spark their imaginations and broaden their horizons" through "ambitious" and "challenging projects" (Warwick Arts Centre 2015b). Hence, as well-tried traditional models of outreach and partnership-working mostly had characterised much of its output, the SBB project signalled an especially significant innovation for WAC as, according to Bishop, it was one of the first long-term engagements between a University researcher, an artist and local schools.

In 2008–2009, Bishop brought together Peter Abrahams, Professor of Clinical Anatomy at Warwick Medical School and Jo Buffery, a local artist-practitioner to work with two Coventry primary schools. Funded mainly by the bio-medical research organisation, the Wellcome Trust, this science-based project explored the human body through visual art, dance and performance.[4] SBB was also funded by The Higgs Charity, a Coventry-based foundation that aims to help disadvantaged children and young people. Bishop targeted two contrasting primary schools located in different areas of Coventry: Leigh Primary school, a small, predominantly white, Church of England school on the outskirts of Coventry, and Frederick Bird, a large multi-ethnic, multi-faith inner-city school. Although contrasting in their ethnic and cultural diversity, both schools are located in areas identified as "deprived" and "disadvantaged" due to their socio-economic conditions (Ofsted 2006, 2008). As will be detailed below, one of the key aspirations of SBB was to provide these schools with a well-resourced, intricately planned year-long project in which pupils would gain regular access to the knowledge and expertise of an eminent University scientist and an experienced artist.

In 2011, WAC received 3 years of Arts Council England (ACE) funding to commission further artist-academic collaborations in a pioneering initiative titled *This_Is_Tomorrow*.[5] In its inaugural year, WAC invited three artists from across art forms into a weeklong residency with University academics from the departments of Physics, Law, Economics, Business and Mathematics. Sue Buckmaster, Artistic

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[3] WAC work across eight local authorities in the West Midlands – Coventry, Warwickshire, Solihull, Worcestershire, Sandwell, Dudley, Shropshire and Staffordshire.

[4] The Wellcome Trust is an international charity funding a range of projects in biomedical research and medical humanities and allocates £10 million annually to 'support projects that encourage people of all ages and from all walks of life to be informed, inspired and involved' by issues relating to biomedicine and bioethics (Wellcome Trust 2010).

[5] This funding from ACE supported WAC's new commissioning initiative called 'Transform'. This was headed by Alan Rivett, Director of WAC, but led by Matt Burman, Head of Programming and Audiences and Paul Warwick and Ed Collier (China Plate).

Director of Theatre Rites, was one of the invited artists and was inspired by researchers from the Economics department to create *Bank On It*, a site-specific and interactive performance that gave children as young as 5 years old the opportunity to make sense of the 2008 global banking crisis and the subsequent economic recession. Alan Rivett, former Director of WAC, articulates this move towards artist-academic collaboration as an indication of WAC's growing desire to be recognised as a cutting-edge, dynamic creative organisation:

> It's about an encounter between today's artists – the most exciting artists we can find – and academics at the University of Warwick who are investigating what tomorrow is. (Warwick Arts Centre 2013)

Though fostering this reputation is fundamental in attracting funders and praise in national press, we explore how WAC could further reinforce the ways this work has the potential to radically challenge perceived notions of intellectual elitism by creating collaborative, convivial spaces for the emergence of transdisciplinary learning. Informed partly by interviews with key participants as well as participant-observations, our analysis of SBB and BOI focuses on the ways knowledge was generated, transferred, exchanged and – crucially – challenged during these projects. Hence we highlight the emergence of 'transdisciplinary un-learning' and we indicate the possible implications of this for WAC as a broker of collaborative learning and public engagement between the University's 'world-class' academics, WAC's artists *and* its local communities.

3 Skin, Blood and Bone: Creating Collaborative, Convivial Spaces for the Emergence of Transdisciplinary Learning

> Transdisciplinary thinking helps people deal with the complex, wicked societal problems that require knowledge across all aspects of society: academic research disciplines, communities, civil society, industry and governments. (McGregor 2015, p. 102)

In its early planning stages, SBB was designed as an *inter*disciplinary project: knowledge about 'skin', 'blood' and 'bones' was explored within and between the disciplines of human physiology, visual art and dance. In the autumn term of 2009–2010, Peter Abrahams introduced pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2, their teachers and Jo Buffery to relevant scientific terminology and explanations about the multiple features of skin. Buffery responded by working with the teachers to create a series of related visual art and dance activities. During the 'skin' phase, for example, the pupils explored and embodied the elasticity and flexibility of skin by choreographing movement using stretchy materials. They also investigated skin pigmentation and found their own skin colour by experimenting with colour-mixing techniques. As Fig. 1 illustrates, by the end of this phase, the children had created a tapestry of enlarged 'skin patches', a transportable installation that toured Coventry primary schools:

SBB was also designed to inspire learning across other subjects in the curriculum. For example, as a result of the colour-mixing activities described above, notions of racial difference were discussed in Personal, Social and Health Education.[6]

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[6] Over the course of each phase, the teaching staff produced a series of learning materials that

Fig. 1 Installation of the children's skin types. Photograph released with permission of WAC

As an experienced teacher-artist, Buffery was aware that integrated arts projects are often criticised for lacking specificity and rigour, so it was paramount to her that neither scientific content nor artistic activities were compromised:

> The science needed to be accurate, well communicated and reiterated and revisited over and over again but the art also had to be all of those things too – it was about the integrity of both. (Buffery, personal interview, February 2009)

Buffery continually elucidated and reinforced the intricacies of scientific concepts, whilst simultaneously finding appropriate parallel art and dance forms through which to communicate and explore them.

Whilst these interdisciplinary and cross-curricula features were integral to SBB, we argue that this artist-academic collaboration was also a catalyst for 'transdisciplinary' teaching and learning. Basarab Nicolescu (1997, paragraph 1) defines transdisciplinarity as that "which is at once between the disciplines, across the different disciplines, and beyond all disciplines". As we detail below, Abraham's performative and provocative style of engaging the participants plus Buffery's non-linear and inclusive ways of working with the teachers contributed to an unexpected and critical incident towards the end of the 'skin' phase in Leigh Primary

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detailed other possible curriculum innovations. These were made into a SBB booklet that was sent to Primary schools in the surrounding areas.

School, in which the boundaries between subject disciplines were transgressed to produce "a new social and cognitive space" (Marshall 2014, p. 105) for learning.

In order to understand how transdisciplinarity emerged within SBB, it is worth attending to the pedagogical conditions that characterized this project. In the SBB evaluation, Peter Abrahams' contribution was consistently described as "an inspiration" by the teachers and children (Warwick Arts Centre 2009). Bishop emphasized that they were particularly lucky to have found Abrahams in the University, as he was able to communicate his vast wealth of complex scientific knowledge to this younger age group. Furthermore, his hands-on, charismatic and idiosyncratic style of teaching seemed to delight the pupils. For example, following one of his interventions on 'skin', a group of Y6 children relished telling us about Abrahams's vivid and "disgusting" descriptions of skin wounds (Fig. 2).

This playful, performative and active approach to teaching is increasingly rare in formal education. As Joe Winston argues, the considerable pressures and demands of assessment in formal education often results in predictable modes of instruction:

> Focused objectives must be written on the board at the beginning, effectively condemning children to the same genre of narrative ... no mystery, no suspense, no surprises. (Winston 2010, p.136)

Nevertheless, whilst Abraham's role in SBB was integral to its success, Bishop was keen to avoid the hierarchical implications of positioning him as the 'academic *expert'*. Another key feature of SBB was the system of knowledge exchange established between Abrahams, Buffery and the teachers. Bishop did not want to frame Buffery as the mere conduit of Abraham's scientific knowledge and the teachers as passive recipients of Buffery's creative activities. SBB was designed to include the teachers "early on in the planning of the project structure" (Bishop, personal interview, February 2009) to ensure they "had a stake in the project and its success". The teachers also stated that Buffery's rigorous yet experimental pedagogic approach inspired them to synthesise new connections between subject areas. Bishop explained that Buffery was "thoroughly prepared and did have a plan but there were huge gaps to trust the children on where to go ... it's an organic and non-linear form" (Bishop, personal interview, February 2009). She continually emphasized the importance of 'experimentation' and encouraged the teachers to explore unknown aspects of the curriculum.

When discussing other cognate integrated arts and science projects, Ralph Levinson and colleagues explain that a "lack of linearity and certainty … has not always been recognised in forms of education that have favoured rather more measurable and predictable outcomes" (2008, p.4). The WAC team was acutely aware that the project had to meet the demands of the curriculum otherwise they would risk losing the support of the teachers and possibly the pupils' parents. Therefore, they worked with the teachers to ensure that there would be sufficient time and space to move beyond "measurable and predictable outcomes" of the curriculum. The following radical intervention by one of the teachers is indicative of the rigorous yet flexible structure of SBB.

Fig. 2 Professor Abrahams working with primary school pupils. Photographs released with permission of WAC

During Abrahams' introduction on 'skin' to the Leigh pupils he made reference to humankind evolution, which was at odds with some of the teachings in this Church of England school. Abrahams' talk left some of the Y6 pupils with a series of philosophical questions about the origins of life. Such questions could not be readily answered within the notional interdisciplinary space between 'arts' and 'science'. As Nicolescu (1997, paragraph 2) suggests, "transdisciplinary education can open the way towards the integral education of the human being which necessarily transmits the quest for meaning". Unable to provide them within a definitive 'textbook' answer and inspired by their curiosity, the Deputy Head teacher at Leigh responded by deciding to host a public forum. Along with the school community, he invited a range of other notable figures from their local community, each with varying perspectives on evolution. Professor Abrahams attended, along with a priest from Coventry Cathedral and a bio scientist from Coventry University, who explained that he was also a practising Christian. The Y6 pupils were put in charge

of the debate, which began with them asking, 'How was the world created?' As observers of this event, it was interesting to note that, earlier that morning, the school hall had been used for communal prayer, and in the afternoon, it had become the site of a controversial, vibrant public debate in which this diverse, intergenerational group of people explored cultural and religious differences. In light of this, perhaps the apparent transdisciplinary ethos of the event could have been extended and enriched further by inviting the multi-cultural multi-faith Frederick Bird Primary to participate in the debate. Nevertheless, Bishop cited this unexpected event as a highlight of SBB, explaining that staging a debate on the origins of life was not a 'learning objective' that could have been pre-planned.

This event raises questions about the potential of WAC's artist-academic collaborations to bring about radical civic engagement opportunities within its communities. Levison and colleagues (2008, p.5) argue that collaborations amongst artists, scientists and educators have "encouraged young people to become informed citizens" because they gain access to a range of critical perspectives and unfamiliar ideas that challenge, inform and shape their understandings. So perhaps this encounter is particularly significant, given that the school is located in a socio-economically deprived area of the city. In James Beane's investigations into the relationship between creative learning and curriculum integration, he suggests that learner should be "engaged in seeking, acquiring and using knowledge in an organic – not an artificial – way" (2011, 193, p. 196). Beane argues that this learner-centred approach is better suited to "those from non-privileged homes" (ibid) because the knowledge they encounter is more directly connected to their lived experiences. Critically, as this particular intervention demonstrates, the desire to learn more about evolution came directly from the pupils. Furthermore, the teachers *and* pupils mobilized this public event and this could be indicative of a growing sense of agency. Therefore, if WAC is to counter perceptions of 'intellectual elitism' by bringing its academic-artists collaborations into its local communities, it needs to remain open to innovative modes of knowledge exchange *and* the un-knowing of transdisciplinarity to continually create spaces for contributions from *all* of its participants.

4   Bank on It: Reaching Beyond the Campus to Create Convivial Interactions in the City

Bank On It was a 90-min site-specific interactive theatre production by the critically acclaimed company Theatre-Rites. It premiered in July 2013 at the Barbican's Rose Lipman Building in London and transferred to Coventry city centre in October 2013.[7] Targeted mainly at primary school groups, it was a resounding box office triumph with over 4480 audience members in London and Coventry. According to

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[7] *Bank On It* was co-produced by the Barbican, London.

Bishop, feedback from children, teachers and families was "fantastically positive".
It also received consistently high praise from the national press. *The Guardian* the-
atre critic Lyn Gardner described it as "a show that has its heart, conscience and
imagination in the right place" (Gardner 2013) and Rachel Halliburton from *Time
Out* praised it as 'a delightful, stunningly visually inventive show (Halliburton
2013). This positive reception was notable for the unlikely partnership between
Theatre-Rites and the University's Economics department. As former Head of
Department, Professor Abinhay Muthoo, noted, "children's performance art and
academic economics occupy two distinct worlds that seldom converge" (University
of Warwick's Economics Department 2013). Most likely it could be the first col-
laboration of its kind.

As noted in our introduction, WAC's *This_Is_Tomorrow* commissioning pro-
gramme gave an opportunity for new collaborative and ambitious initiatives, in par-
ticular to bring artists and academics together to "explore and illuminate
contemporary thinking and research about the human condition and key issues that
face humanity and society" (Warwick Arts Centre 2013). WAC's former Head of
Programming Matt Burman was insistent that invited artists were not to be posi-
tioned as translators of academic research. He was keen to resist the often limiting
format of output-driven commissioning models and gave the artists freedom to
determine the focus and direction of their creative process. They had time mull,
gestate and play around with their emergent ideas in a non-linear way. As a mid-
career artist, Buckmaster praised these experimental and nurturing features of the
scheme, explaining that it was particularly rare to be given the time, space and
resources to learn from new disciplines and take risks in one's practice.

WAC's emphasis on discovering the synergies and disconnects between disci-
plines was embraced by Buckmaster. She was drawn to working with the Economics
department precisely because it was 'unknown' and 'uncomfortable' territory:

> Arts and economics … they're almost enemies to each other … economists want us to vali-
> date the arts as a commodity and artists do not want to base their work on outcomes and
> value in monetary terms. (University of Warwick's Economics Department 2013)

Buckmaster felt compelled to grapple with these tensions, "that's what I'm paid to
be an artist for – to tackle the things you wouldn't necessarily think children even
want to hear about" (Buckmaster, personal interview, November 2013). She was
intrigued by the unexpected ways Muthoo and his colleagues reframed the disci-
pline of economics:

> It is not necessarily about money … it is about the allocation of scarce resources ... it is
> about how to put to best use the most valuable and finite resource of all: our time. (University
> of Warwick's Economics Department 2013)

Following conversations with Andrew Oswald, a pioneer in the field of economics,
happiness and well-being, Buckmaster became interested in the complex, slippery
notion of 'value'. Buckmaster felt instinctively that this concept would also resonate
with young people. She interviewed groups of school children to explore these ideas
from their perspective. What struck her most was that, for them, 'value' was directly
connected to notions of "sharing and charitable thinking" (Buckmaster, personal

interview, November 2013). She responded to this expanse of ideas by creating a theatrical experience that aimed to inspire children (and adults) to *reevaluate* what really matters and what makes them happy. As with SBB, this acute openness to disparate and surprising events may be a pre-requisite for transdisciplinary explorations.

Bank On It took place inside an old, disused gym in the city centre of Coventry. As the audience gathered around outside a mock cash point, a group of customers arrived to discover that they were unable to withdraw any money as there was none left in the bank. When the befuddled and embarrassed bank manager eventually appeared, he invited the audience on a journey into the depths of bank's hidden vaults (Figs. 3 and 4):

A significant section of the performance was dedicated to a series of practical group activities in which the actors interacted with the children. The audience were led into the bank's safe to discover a series of intricately designed installations that each represented an environmental issue. For example, there was a large cupboard stacked with jars with coral-like organisms inside, illuminated to dazzling effect (see Fig. 5). It soon became evident that the coral was made out of discarded plastic bags. Audience members, now reconfigured as fellow 'problem-solvers', were asked why the reckless disposal of plastic bags had a detrimental effect on ocean life.

When discussing this aspect of the production, Buckmaster explained that she felt a responsibility to communicate a clear message to the audience, "if we keep spending like this, it *will* cost the earth" (Buckmaster, personal interview, November

Fig. 3 'Mr Regulator' informs the bank manager that there's no money left. Photograph released with permission of Patrick Baldwin

Fig. 4 The bank manager invites the customers and audience into the safe. Photograph released with permission of Patrick Baldwin

Fig. 5 A coral reef collection made of plastic bags highlights human pollution in the oceans. Photograph released with permission of Patrick Baldwin

2013). However, despite these clear and worthy intentions, this innovative attempt to engage the young people in heuristic learning was somewhat compromised by the 15 min timeframe, resulting in a reductive form of instruction. As Lyn Gardner suggested, there was a sense that it was designed to 'tick the boxes of the national curriculum' (Gardner 2013). A bold and beautiful scenography seemingly well set

to open up 'space' for transdisciplinarity became fragile and inaccessible for want of a just a little more time, perhaps.

Theatre-Rites has a long history of tackling unusual and challenging cross-disciplinary subject matter with young people. In Joe Winston's analysis of *The Thought That Counts* – a production exploring the interconnectedness between the solar system, mathematics and social learning – he notes the company avoids trying "to teach children how to add up or explain how gravity works" (Winston 2008, p. 43) by creating lively, immersive and "striking aesthetic experiences" that "inspire wonder and leave the children with plenty for their imaginations to dwell upon after the show" (Ibid.). Alongside Winston (2010), James Thompson (2009) argues that the affective dimeson of arts education is often misunderstood and neglected due to an over emphasis on the "impacts and outputs" of learning (p. 118). As a result, "the terrain of sensation, the aesthetic concerns for beauty, joy, pleasure and astonishment have been overlooked" (ibid). Following the spirit of these critiques, we briefly explore the potential of *Bank On It*'s final sequence to realise Buckmaster's aim to provoke reflection about irresponsible spending, not by teaching or preaching about notions of 'value' and 'well-being', but rather through creating a joyful participatory experience with esoteric, sensory and affecting qualities.

The audience was invited to enter a large chamber at the centre of the bank where a wishing well was revealed (see Fig. 5). In a ritualistic sequence, each audience member was given a penny to drop into the well to make a wish for something they valued. As each wish got made the space became filled with operatic refrains from a live singer while shimmering lights and luminescent bubbles appeared and a series of jewel-like objects were lowered mysteriously above the well. These "dizzying" and "giddy" (Trueman 2013) effects produced a strong atmospheric aesthetic which Buckmaster hoped would create "an original way of gazing at the economic crisis" (Buckmaster, personal interview, November 2013). Amidst various gasps from the audience, we heard a young girl call out "I could stay here forever". In these fleeting moments, Theatre-Rites had transformed this old, disused gym in an abandoned part of the city of Coventry into an enchanting, convivial and hopeful space. One that in some ways might even reach beyond the theatrical affects that theatre scholar Jill Dolan names as an "intense experience of utopian performatives" (2005, p. 10). So perhaps the time which was lost to 'tick boxes' was much more than recouped through an entry into performing the wholly reletavistic and relational time-spaces of transdisciplinarity (Fig. 6).

Tellingly, Abinhay Muthoo was surprised and impressed by Buckmaster's creative interpretation of their initial conversations, explaining that the production "far exceeded the reach of the data, graphs and mathematical equations that are the standard lexicon of economics" (University of Warwick's Economics Department 2013). Perhaps this vouches for the potential of collaborative partnerships to engage a transdisciplinarity that can generate new epistemological discoveries and ontological experiences that, as Sue McGregor suggests, "could not have emerged if everything remained separate and disconnected" (2015, p. 103).

In a fresh attempt to bridge the perceived distances between WAC and Coventry communities, it has recently started programming and commissioning more work

Fig. 6 The wishing well invites participants to drop a penny in and make a wish. Photograph released with permission of Patrick Baldwin

beyond the campus building. So *Bank On It* played an unexpected yet welcome role in developing a positive 'presence' for WAC in the city, including its centre. As an experienced practitioner of site-specific theatre, Buckmaster held a strong creative vision in her responses to that particular environment:

> I really like bringing a bit of beauty of Coventry, it feels quite grey. I'm looking out of the window at graffiti and an area that should be a playground. (Buckmaster, personal interview, November 2013)

This observation regarding Coventry's neglected urban landscape directly relates to a wider narrative about the city's economy. Since the 1960s, "the economy of Coventry has declined steeply" and this has resulted in an "estimated total economic output per head of population 8.5% lower than the national average" (Shattock 2015, p. 40). Whilst we can only speculate about the possible effects of *Bank On It* on the central part of the city, it is worth highlighting that the production was made possible partly through generous financial support from the Economics department. Perhaps this unexpected investment by an academic department in a children's theatre production could be indicative of the unpredictable ways collaborative theatre-making can influence and affect positive change in its surrounding localities.

5 Reflections and Possibilities

The development in WAC's relationship with University departments is representative of a wider movement to create mutually beneficial, sustainable intra-, inter- and cross-institutional partnerships between HEIs and cultural organizations (Gilmore and Comunian 2015). The *Enriching Britain* report recommends that cultural organisations such as WAC "share resources, devise partnerships that will unlock financial savings and generate income benefits" (The Warwick Commission 2015, p.16). In times of financial uncertainty and significant cuts to arts funding, WAC has turned to the University's academic departments as potential sources of investment. This has coincided with national changes to HEI policy that emphasize "new or stronger partnerships underpinned by HEIs' adoption of public engagement strategies" (Arts Council England 2012, p.4). STEM-related disciplines, in particular, have been encouraged to embed public such strategies into their teaching, learning and research activities (ibid. p.3). In this context, WAC has found a receptive academic audience who seem to recognize its potential as an intermediary between their research and non-academic publics. Muthoo explained that being involved in *This_Is_Tomorrow* gave his department distinctiveness in a saturated international market of HEIs. Moreover, he was intrigued by the intrinsic social values of the project, explaining that working with artists allowed the department to dispel 'the ivory towers' image of higher education and enable them to "engage with different sections of society to answer the big questions of the world" (Muthoo, personal interview, January 2014).

Holding a debate about humankind's evolution and finding beauty in an imaginary bank in Coventry city centre were notably unusual outcomes of WAC's innovative academic-artist collaborations. This chapter has argued that these "extra-disciplinary effects" (Kershaw and Nicholson 2011, p.7) manifested as a result of the processes of knowledge exchange established by WAC (Monk et al. 2011; McGregor 2015). Moreover, WAC's new models of collaboration have enabled Burman to create what he called an "invisible umbilical cord" between WAC and the publically under-represented areas of Coventry. WAC may programme work that resonates with the University's international agenda, but these local commissioning projects can play a crucial role in developing its positive presence in and around Coventry city and altering perceptions of 'distance' and elitism.

When discussing the possible sites for transdisciplinary collaboration, Nicolescu (1997, paragraph 4) recommends that HEIs should attempt to "organize regional ateliers for transdisciplinary research". This resonates with McGregor (2015, p. 103) who suggests that transdisciplinarity requires "hosts … that cluster at the edges of borders, with the potential to connect ideas across people". Following this, WAC could be configured as an 'atelier' or 'host' for transdisciplinarity. Its unique location between a research-intensive institution and at the borders of Coventry means it has the capacity to act as a potentially progressive, open and hospitable site for convivial interactions between academic departments, regional and national artists and its multiple and diverse communities.

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'The Biggest Youth Theatre Festival on the Planet': National Theatre Youth Connections

Selina Busby

Abstract In this chapter Busby explores Youth Connections which forms part of the UK's National Theatre's provision for young people. Connections was first launched in 1993 and since then each year the production team has commissioned ten professional and widely respected playwrights to write a play for 13–19 year-olds. To date it has published over 160 plays and over 50,000 young actors have taken part in the project. This chapter considers this key component of the National Theatre community work in four ways. First, Busby discusses the value of youth theatre. Second she focuses on the logistics of Connections itself. Third is a consideration of the position of Connections both within the National Theatre and the wider cultural agenda in the UK. Fourth the potential of the scheme to contribute to personal and social transformation for the participants is explored.

Keywords Youth theatre · Connections · National theatre · Utopia · Transformation · Access · Cush Jumbo

1   A Year with National Theatre Connections

On the 7th July 2014, as I sat in the auditorium of the National Theatre in London, awaiting the start of a play I tweeted: 'Amazing to be in a packed Olivier Theatre for youth theatre. Imagine that, youth theatre on the main stage at the National.' Thinking back to that night now it still amazes me. The auditorium of the Olivier stage at the UK's National Theatre (NT) seats 890 people. It wasn't quite a full house, but it was close to it and on stage was a youth theatre production of *Pronoun*, a play written by Evan Placey, commissioned for the National Youth Connections

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In 2016 The National Theatre launched a revamped Youth Connections Scheme under the title of 'The biggest youth Theatre Festival on the Planet'.

S. Busby (✉)
The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, The University of London, London, UK
e-mail: Selina.Busby@cssd.ac.uk

Scheme. The play is about a young female-to-male transgender person and their relationships with friends and family as they begin to transition. It was being performed by a youth theatre from St Austell College in Cornwall, to probably the most diverse audience I have seen in the National Theatre. A lively but respectful audience, it was diverse in age, ethnic backgrounds and class and, looking more like the cross-section of people you would see on the London underground tube trains than you would usually see in the National.

The audience that night made me curious about Connections and how it is placed within the theatre's portfolio and I was also interested in finding out about the journey that the youth theatres undertake when taking part in the scheme. I have relationship with NT Connections as its directors are invited to complete a Post-Graduate Certificate in Applied Theatre with Young People at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, using their work on the scheme as the basis of an assignment. Each year I attend a number of the regional performances and work with some of the directors at Central for couple of days, but now I wanted to know more. During 2015, I sporadically followed the Connections team and a participating school. In total that year 255 youth theatre companies took part, that is: 5,000 young people, in 684 performances, in 27 partner theatres, in front of 25,000 audience members. It's no wonder that the NT market the event as, 'The biggest youth theatre festival on the planet' and that it remains a 'key component of [the NT's] outreach work' (Deeney 2007 p. 331).

In this chapter I will explore this 'key component' of the NT's outreach work in four ways. First, I will discuss the value of youth theatre. Second, I will focus on the logistics of Connections itself. Third, I will consider the position of Connections both within the National Theatre and the wider cultural agenda in the UK. Fourth, I will explore the potential of the scheme to contribute to personal and social transformation for the participants.

The Connections Scheme was launched in 1993 by Jenny Harris, the former head of the NT Education department, and Suzi Graham-Adriani who was at the time the producer of the youth theatre projects there. Since then, each year[1] the Connections production team has commissioned ten professional writers to write a play for 13–19 year olds. Over the years NT has commissioned and published over 160 plays from established and widely respected writers, including some of Britain's best known playwrights such as Winsome Pinnock, Bryony Lavery, Roy Williams, Mark Ravenhill, Denis Kelly, and, some from overseas such as, David Mamet and Dario Fo. The scheme gives young people, youth theatres and schools the opportunity to produce one of these plays and experience theatre-making in a professional environment. Each of the productions that result from the scheme are staged first in their own venues and, now, transfer to one of the professional partner theatres in their region. One version of each play is then invited to perform at the NT itself. This is youth theatre on a grand scale. There has been little research specifically into NT Connections with the exception of John Deeney's article in 2007 in which he

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[1] In 2011 the Connections did not run while the NT production team reviewed and revised the Scheme.

considered the efficacy and ethics of the 'NT's decision in 2006 to stage three professional productions of Connections' plays in repertory at the Cottesloe, the company's studio theatre' and focuses on two plays written by Mark Ravenhill for the scheme, *Totally Over You* (2003) and *Citizenship* (2005) (2007 332). More recently in 2012 Maggie Inchley also considered the professional productions of Connections plays in her article 'Hearing Young Voices on the London Stage: 'Shit Bein' Seventeen Int it? Never Take Us Serious'. Inchely focuses on Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* (2005) as well as *Citizenship* and several other UK plays that have young characters as protagonists. To date, there has been no published evaluation of NT Connection's impact on its participants, despite its self-proclaimed planetary scale.[2]

2   The Value of Youth Theatre

Many of the participating youth theatre companies are attached to schools. Sometimes the Connections production becomes the annual school play. This makes the work produced a hybrid of the school play and youth theatre, both under-researched and neglected entities. Writing in 2012, Sally Mackey comments on the lack of research material on the school play. She suggests this is because of its position both outside the school drama education curriculum, and the professional theatre. This results in the perception of it being, 'theatrically second-rate'. Mackey argues that the NT connection scheme has, 'helped elevate the status of school production work' (Mackey 2012, p. 35). In the US, the status of some school plays, according to theatre critic Jesse Green, seems to have been elevated by the trend 'toward the supersizing of school-based theatre' (Green 2005). Supersizing refers to the neo-professionalising of the event where, 'Beauty and the Beast last fall featured flying teenagers and motorized vehicles and cost $165,000' (Green 2005). Green questions the value of this for the young people involved and laments the lack of control they have in the process. More recently, J Kelly Nestruck, theatre critic for *The Globe* in Toronto, published an eight-part series on the Lakeshore Collegiate Institute's school play in 2015, *Les Miserables* (Nestruck 2015). These specific examples aside, Mackey is correct: the school play is largely absent from both public and academic interest and youth theatre appears to fare little better.

In 2004, Jenny Hughes and Karen Wilson undertook the most extensive research into youth theatre in the UK to date. In their report they comment on the lack of recognition of youth theatre and note that it has, 'attracted little interest from the research world and there is a scarcity of publicly available literature' (Hughes and Wilson 2004, p. 61). In their study Hughes and Wilson describe youth theatre as:

> A broad term used to describe a whole variety of organisations that engage young people in theatre-related activities. It takes place outside of formal education and is founded on the voluntary participation of young people. (Hughes and Wilson 2004, p. 58)

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[2] In 2009 The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama commissioned Morrigan Mullen to write an evaluation of the scheme and their partnership with it.

Whilst NT Connections is often school-based it most usually happens both, 'outside of formal education,' and is, 'founded on the voluntary participation,' of the youth. Hughes and Wilson go on to describe a range of activities that fall under this umbrella heading and name four models for youth theatre. The first of these models most accurately describes NT Connections:

> Theatre/arts – the 'reason for being' of this model is to provide access to professional quality drama and theatre processes. Personal and social development outcomes may be a by-product of this work, but the driving force is to create theatre and performance. (Hughes and Wilson 2004, pp. 62)

With Connections, the model is to provide access to high quality theatrical writing, and directing (via the Director's weekend) and professional theatre spaces. In the field of drama education, theatre academic, Anthony Jackson, points out, there has been a, 'tension between the intrinsic value of the arts and the instrumentalist argument that the arts play a socially useful role' (Jackson and Vine 2013, p. 35). Connections is 'theatre as art' but as Hughes and Wilson imply, 'personal and social development outcomes may be a by-product'. Acknowledging that youth theatre is often described as having both personal and social impacts for its participants, they report that many of the young people interviewed:

> …clearly show that they feel the skills and capacities developed within youth theatre transfer to an increased sense of competence in other areas of their lives, in particular, in their ability to successfully interact with peers, teachers, and other adults and the ability to perform comfortably and effectively in a range of unfamiliar and familiar environments. (Hughes and Wilson 2004, p. 63)

NT Connections' participants from a North London School, a week after their regional theatre performance could also articulate the benefits of participation in youth theatre. One said it had given her the opportunity to be 'creative and experience new things', while another said:

> I think it's important because, like in life you're not just going to need maths and English, you need to know how to talk to people and if you have drama you'll be able to practice that, so drama helps people to have the confidence to practice speaking.

A third explained that:

> I think it can lift you up as a person and it makes you stronger, it brings out a different you. If like you are shy person when you are on stage you can release yourself, it brings you out.

Whilst these testimonies, and the study by Hughes and Wilson are testaments to the potential value of participating in youth theatre, I am mindful of applied theatre researchers who counsel us to be careful when making grand claims about the instrumental value participating in theatre can have (Balfour 2009; Thompson 2009; Gallagher et al. 2010; Snyder-Young 2013; Gallagher 2014). Kathleen Gallagher and her research team observe that drama performance gives some cause for celebration, but also notes that for some, specifically the teachers/directors there is also a, 'powerful melancholia' (Gallagher et al. 2010, p. 6). I, too, encountered

'melancholia' from the North London students who were disappointed at the size of their professional theatre space and the low audience numbers present for their final performance, they too felt it 'could have been so much better' (2010, p. 5). Here too there was cause for celebration and the young people talked about the positive effects of youth theatre, but this was also tinged with a sadness. In her 2014 book *Why Theatre Matters*, Gallagher cautions that:

> There are many such stories of transformation in the arts and education literature. They do happen. But it is often far more complicated than such neorealist narratives would have us believe. (Gallagher 2014, p. 132)

In 2015 the NT Connections scheme involved 50,000 young people, in a variety of different ways, but it is unlikely that all, or even most, of these participants were changed by this process. Before considering the possible effects of participating in NT Connections I will examine the logistics of the scheme and the aims of its producers.

3   The Logistics of Connections: The Biggest Youth Theatre Festival on the Planet

For the NT, the aims of the scheme are simple and have changed very little since 1993:

- Inspire 13–19 year olds with high-quality new playwriting;
- Give companies the knowledge, skills and confidence to bring the plays to life;
- Involve a wide range of young companies, giving additional support where needed;
- Encourage young people to get involved in all aspects of theatre making.

In an interview for the NT magazine, Rob Watt, the Connections producer from 2009 to 2015 explains that:

> Beginning in 1995, Connections was born out of the idea that theatre for young people is rarely about their own world or experiences… The focus of Connections, then and now, is to give young people across the UK and the globe access to new and innovative writing that is solely for them and about them; giving their view of the world a voice. (National Theatre 2011, p. 11)

As the producer of the scheme, Watt's role is to oversee the logistics of what he describes as, 'our learning department's biggest project.' (Khan 2014). Commissioning writers each year is just the start of a process that then leads to youth theatre directors and drama teachers applying to the scheme in the early summer and discovering if they have been approved to take part by mid-July. By early September, each selects their first, second and third choice of script and the NT team

then assign plays to each director ensuring an even spread of plays for each of the regional partner theatres' own festivals.[3]

In the autumn, all the directors attend a weekend hosted by the NT where each works with the writer of their play and the other directors doing the same script and an NT director. They workshop the play and take part in skills sessions. This weekend is, according to Watt, 'a pivotal moment in the cycle of Connections.' He goes on to say that, 'although it's a huge young person's project, I've got to make sure those directors go away inspired and skilled, as they're creating those shows' (Aloess 2012). His fear is that if this weekend isn't right, 'young people across the country aren't necessarily going to get the full impact of what we aspire for Connections to be' (Aloess 2012).

After the weekend the directors and their cast and crew go into a rehearsal process that spans October–February with performances in their home venue between February and March. The NT sends out a director of their own to watch the performance, meet with the cast and compile a show report, before the partner theatre transfer. The transfer happens between March and May as part of a festival of Connections plays at the partner venue. For Watt this is the 'exciting' part of the process because the young people, 'watch other young people's work – they're all treated as professionals and there is a real festival atmosphere' (Khan 2014).

After this, ten companies are invited to perform at the NT festival in what the NT website describes as, 'an exciting celebration of all the hard work which has taken place throughout the year' (NT 2015). Deeney describes the Connections Scheme as a, 'sustainable venture of some considerable magnitude' (Deeney 2007, p. 331). In his 50-year history of the NT, Daniel Rosenthall discusses this magnitude in both terms of participant numbers and economics when he states that:

> By 2013, more than 50,000 young actors had taken part in Connections in the UK; more than ten times that number had watched the home performances and region showcases, giving the project an immense educational and community impact, which explains why it regularly attracted six-figure support from a title or lead sponsor: British Telecom from 1996 until 1999, Shell from 2003 to 2006; Bank of America from 2007–2009. Hytner and Nick Starr's commitment to Connections is evident in their allocating requisite funds from the central NT budget whenever there has been a shortfall in Connections sponsorship. (Rosenthall 2013, p. 757)

He goes on to state that in 2013, Connections was funded by the NT core budget and a portfolio of individual donors, trusts and foundations. This clearly implies a strong commitment to the scheme even when the NT has to use its core funding, with no additional corporate sponsorship, to ensure that the work continues.

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[3] Connections productions have happened outside the UK, in the past youth theatres from Norway, Sweden, Italy, Portugal, the USA and Brazil have directed plays from the Connections season, but they have done so without participating in the scheme fully, sometimes attending the directors weekend, and sometime not, often working to a different time scale and without the regional and national transfers.

4   Connections and the Wider Cultural Agenda in the UK

In her review of the Connections Festival at the NT in 2004, Lyn Gardner asked: 'who does the National Theatre belong to?' Her response to the somewhat rhetorical question is:

> Us, of course. But it doesn't always feel like that. Even with Nick Hytner in charge, the National often feels as if it is for them. But for one week of the year it feels genuinely national and truly ours when young people from schools and youth groups from all over the country take over the Cottesloe.[4] (Gardner 2004)

As director of the NT, Nick Hytner the same year declared that Connections is a, 'model of what theatre should be, and of what I hope the NT will be in years to come' (Rosenthall 2013, p. 754). This celebration of youth theatre in the NT is certainly extraordinary in terms of the more usual NT programming and audiences and although the scheme is to be commended there may be a more pragmatic position for its scheduling.

> As the name suggests, Connections links the National to thousands of young people and their families, who might never have visited the South Bank, and, in the process, generates considerable positive coverage on local radio and television, and especially, in small-circulation newspapers that would seldom, if ever, cover NT productions in London. (Rosenthall 2013, p. 756)

The scheme also gives the NT a presence in 27 partner theatres across the UK endorsing its 'national' position more legitimately perhaps than its regional tours. At the same time Connections is developing the youth who participate as potential audiences for the future. Drawing on Kershaw (1999) Deeney raises questions, 'about how young people are s/cited and utilised within the context and concomitant ideology of a major institution', and observes that Connections, 'judiciously attends to the demands of arts policy-making, particularly around issues of 'access'' (Deeney 2007, p, 333).

Issues of 'access' to cultural events and the value of the arts to both individuals and society are currently under scrutiny in the UK, with several large scale research projects investigating who is taking part in cultural activities and what benefits this might bring. The *Taking Part Survey*, commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has been under way since 2005 collecting data on participation in both sport and culture in England. The Cultural Value Project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council has supported over 70 academic projects investigating cultural value, and the Warwick Commission conducted a 12-month inquiry into how Britain can secure greater value from its cultural assets.

The Warwick report (2015) maintains that in Britain in 2014, 'high socio-economic background, university level education attainment and professional occupation are still the most reliable predictors of high levels of participation in a wide range of cultural activities. The wealthiest, better educated and least ethnically diverse 8% of the population forms the most culturally active segment' (2015, p. 32).

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[4] Renamed the Dorfman Theatre in 2014.

The *Taking Part Survey* suggests that, 'those with disabilities or from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and those from lower socio-economic groups on lower incomes or with lower education levels are significantly less likely to engage with the arts' (Martin et al. 2010). It also suggests that people who define their ethnic group as white are, 'significantly more likely' to engage with the arts than people from black or minority ethnic groups. The survey claims that 61% defining their ethnic background as white have attended arts events at least three times in the last year, while only 49% of those describing their ethnic background as black or ethnic minority have attended arts events.

The Warwick report also concludes that, 'access to opportunities for creative self-expression is currently socially stratified and restricted for many women, ethnic minorities and disabled people' (2015, p. 7). The panel notes that they are:

> Particularly concerned that publicly funded arts, culture and heritage, supported by tax and lottery revenues, are predominantly accessed by an unnecessarily narrow social, economic, ethnic and educated demographic that is not fully representative of the UK's population. (2014, p. 32)

The NT Connections scheme, albeit in a tiny way, does attempt to address this troubling situation in two ways. First, diversity is a consideration in the selection of writers who are commissioned. Watt states that:

> The diversity of our Connections writers is a huge consideration; we also have a combination of male and female voices… because we are working with young people, we're inspiring and creating role models; we show them videos of our writers to break down that it's not all older white men. (Khan 2014)

Second, by giving 270 schools from across the UK the opportunity to participate in theatre making and then to perform in professional venues, NT Connections is encouraging access to publicly funded culture, reaching a wider demographic of the UK's population than is the norm. It could be argued that these schools could achieve the same results through an annual school play. I would suggest that with especially commissioned plays, access to the writers and professional directors as well as the transfers to regional theatres NT Connections is encouraging access to professionals and professional venues that are beyond the scope of most State school drama departments in the UK. One of the schools participating in 2015, based in the London Borough of Hackney, took part perceisly as a means of addressing these twin concerns. When The Hackney School[5] was inspected by the UK Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills department (Ofsted) in February 2015 it was deemed to be, 'a larger than average sized secondary school with 1,190 students between the ages of 11–18.' (Ofsted 2015). It was awarded a Grade 2, which means it was considered to be a 'good' school. The report highlighted that, 'the well-being of students, including provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is paramount to their learning' and that:

> A combination of good quality teaching, a broad and innovative curriculum and enhanced activities to accelerate learning leads to students achieving well. Cultural development is

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[5] I have changed the name of the school to The Hackney School at their request.

extensive; students relish opportunities offered to showcase their artistic talents in drama, fashion and design. (Ofsted 2015)

For the drama staff at the school, part of this 'enhanced' curriculum was their participation in the 2015 cycle of the NT Connections scheme.

5   The Local Dynamic

Hackney is currently the second most deprived local authority in England on the Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation with, 'approximately 36.8% of children affected by poverty' (London Borough of Hackney 2014). Ofsted noted in its school inspection report, that 'a high proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium' (Ofsted 2015). This is additional government funding provided for students known to be at risk of poverty. The report records that 64.8% of the school body are eligible for free school meals and that the national average for this is 28%.

Ofsted also observes that, 'the vast majority of students are from minority ethnic groups, and the proportion is much higher than the national average', that the 'proportion of students who speak a first language other than English is high' and, that 'the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above the national average' (Ofsted 2015). The community at the school are therefore marked by socio-economic disadvantage, a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and a higher than average percentage of disabilities and learning difficulties and therefore, according to both the Warwick Commission and the *Taking Part Survey* less likely to take part in cultural activity. The cast and crew of their Connections performance was a statistically average cross-section of the school population.

The play the school picked as their first choice was *The Accordion Shop* by Cush Jumbo. The play's action focuses on a riot that has been orchestrated via social media, with an anonymous text arriving on hundreds of mobile phones during the course of the night. It simply says 'RIOT – THE ROAD – 7 PM TONIGHT' (Jumbo 2015, p. 307). *The Accordion Shop* is written for an ensemble cast of any size. With seven named parts, two of which, Boy and Girl, are played by multiple actors. There is no characterisation marked in the script itself for Boy and Girl, and the director and cast must interpret how many people are present, or who these people are and what their context is. This gives the play an 'open' structure that requires the director and/or cast to be active meaning-makers, breaking down the sense of the lines and distributing them to specific actors. This gives the play a porous or fluid structure. There is a clear, although non-linear, narrative that involves the death of an old lady during the riot, a news reporter, policeman and teacher as well as a Mr. Elody the owner of the accordion shop in the centre of the riot. This school had 12 students playing the parts of Boy and Girl.

Like the other youth theatres in NT Connections, they first performed the play on their home territory and then transferred it to a professional venue, Artsdepot, on the

15th April 2015. My tweet for that night said, 'Congrats to the yrs 7 & 8s [11 and 12 year olds] from Hackney for an excellent performance of their NT Connections play. It was a well-paced, funny, poignant performance'. The programme informed the audience that, 'the students have shown commitment and dedication beyond their years and have been a joy to work with. Their enthusiasm and drive to succeed has been evident throughout and every one of them should be proud of their achievements.' It also stated that, 'Our performers are all from Year 7 and Year 8. Some of them have never performed on stage before, which makes this journey all the more exciting!' (2015, Programme). It is evident that Connections in this case is contributing to the widening of participation and access to the arts, albeit in this case only 17 pupils, and that in this respect it could be classified as successful in its aims.

The school discussed here was not chosen to perform on the stage of the Olivier. After the performance of *The Accordion Shop* that was chosen to showcase this play, the then new director of the NT, Rufus Norris, took to the stage to tell the audience that:

> Connections is the most important work we do, he said, 'It is what we are most proud of.' Having started at the Swan Youth Theatre [Worcester], he went on to say, his experiences there have been the bedrock of his career, teaching him empathy, cooperation, creativity and courage. (Godwin 2015)

Norris is making the claim that youth theatre has the power to positively effect its participants and so is an important strand of the work of the NT. In this statement he is echoing the sentiment of the 2000 Arts Council's Boyden Report that claimed engaging with youth theatre develops both 'creativity and self-confience' (2000, p. 38). Inchely is skeptical about the engagement of the young people taking part in Connections, making the observation that their 'decision to participate was made for them in conjunction with teachers in the schools that joined the project', she also obverses that 'the project allow[s] a very small group of companies' access to the National Theatre's space' (2012, p. 337–8).

In his seminal text of 1999, *The Radical in Performance,* Baz Kershaw outlines his unease with building-based contemporary theatre arguing that:

> …increasingly theatre has become a social institution from which equality and mutual exchange – the practice of citizenship through common critique, say – is all but banished. Far from showing us the shape of new freedoms, the theatre estate in Britain and elsewhere has transformed itself into disciplinary marketplace devoted to the systematic evacuation or diffusion of disruptive agencies, oppositional voices and radical programmes for progressive social change. (Kershaw 1999, p. 32)

Is Connections therefore a form of theatre as a 'disciplinary market-place' working against social change for its participants? With its widening participation agenda is it a, 'process of audience training' that 'embeds normative social values in the behaviour of its participants?' (Kershaw 1999, p. 31–2). Inchely would seem to agree with Kershaw when she makes that claim that despite Connections 'inclusiveness at the lower levels, the scheme's pyramid structure of selection and privileged encourage an assimilation to an industry which functions at its own most prestigious end according to principles of selection and competitive individualism rather than

equality' (2012, p. 338). Perhaps this is the case, but this may depend on the individual youth theatre's ethos and directorial style; if they operate as an auteur, dictating decisions, Kershaw and Inchley's comments are pertinent. It may, however, be possible for the participants to work as an inclusive ensemble and to feel some ownership over the work, if the rehearsal process is one of collaboration between the director and cast that retains the scope for the mutual exchange and common critique. If this is the case it may, therefore, have more positive value for the young performers and offer them the potential for personal development. For me one of the most remarkable things about Connections is this opportunity for the ten youth theatres from across the UK to perform on the main stage at the National Theatre. Standing on the stage of the Oiliver theatre, surrounded by theatre professionals, in front of an audience of up to 890 people as a young person, from Hackney, or anywhere else in the UK, has, I believe the potential to create personal development. Working on a challenging playtext that focuses on contemporary issues facing young people as part of a democratic ensemble in a dialogical rehersal process may also contribute to the personal development of the cast.

6   Personal and Social Transformation

Joe Kelleher argues in *Theatre & Politics* that, 'theatre remains unpredictable in its effects, given that its effects reside largely not in the theatrical spectacle itself, but in the spectators and what they are capable of making of it' (Kelleher 2009, p. 24). The potential for social and personal change is then unpredictable. What is more dependable is the notion that, 'theatre may be capable of stopping us in our tracks' (Kelleher 2009, p. 42). The moment in *The Accordion Shop* where it is revealed that the Old Lady has been killed by the mob of young people, is one that has the potential to stop both audiences and participants in their tracks. Once 'stopped' participants and audiences are invited to reflect and in these reflective moments the potential for change may be glimpsed. In her book, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* (2005) Jill Dolan is more optimistic, drawing on the idea of active spectators in order to make the claim that live theatre allows audiences to engage collectively in social discourse and imagine the possible (Dolan 2005, p. 2).

Whilst this seems extremely optimistic, theatre performances can stimulate audience members and actors into questioning their own experiences of the world in which they live. One of the Hackney School students decided to take drama as an examination subject after her Connections experience explaining that, 'after the performances we used to get feedback – like individual feedback and when they give you good feedback that kinda gives you a new confidence and you think maybe I am good at this.' Another has enrolled in a drama club outside of school, and both were thinking about future careers in the arts as a result of their participation in this production. Direct participation in an engaging rehearsal process with directors who facilitate the discovery of a play, rather than directing in the style of an auteur are, I would suggest, more likely to stimulate a questioning of experiences and the world.

This questioning may lead to the imagining of a different way to live, and this in turn makes theatre potentially hopeful or even utopic. In fact, I might even suggest that working on an NT Connections production could form part of a 'pedagogy of utopia' (Busby 2015). I would suggest that this was the case in the Hackney School's rehearsal and performance of *The Accordion Shop.* A pedagogy of utopia uses the drama classroom or rehearsal process to allow participants to see their current situation clearly and realistically and at the same time start to imagine a different future, or at the very least begin to recognise that change is possible.

Paul Ricoeur's definition of utopia is useful here in, he suggests 'the utopia is not only a dream, though, for it is a dream that wants to be realised. The intention of the utopia is to change – to shatter – the present order' (Ricoeur 1986, xxi). The intention of the NT Connections scheme is not to make change happen, but for the director at the Hackney School it is part of a process that invites the young people to think about their world and what their future might be, while at the same time experiencing performing in a professional theatre and think about the arts as a possible career. For this director, and maybe others, NT Connections is a vehicle through which their young people can see the potential to create personal or even social change. For the director of the Hackney school this is possible specifically through the play she chooses, in this case *The Accordian Shop.*

The Accordion Shop is a porous text that leaves much of the directing and decision-making process and the interpretation of events to the director and their cast. I would suggest that working on a text that is open to interpretation can open up the dialogue and mutual exchange that Kershaw believes is missing from the theatre, and that in this process the participants may contemplate the possibility of personal and social change.

The Accordion Shop is rooted in the challenges of actual events, it represents a situation the participants recognised, a riot in their home town. During the rehearsal process, the cast and director played with the various possibilities for staging the play and discussed the issues that it focuses on. During her Skyped interview with all the directors of her text at the NT Director's weekend, Jumbo identified the play's central themes as being about the, 'clash between the old and the new', 'rationalising the recent outbreaks of youth violence', and suggested, 'that we must change the way we think before these things will improve'. She talked a great deal about the, 'hope for young people and the future' at the centre of the play. This 'hope' is not immediately apparent in a play about violence, young people out of control, and the death of a bystander. The hope for the writer is contained in the dead woman's final monologue:

> Becoming invisible is something you get used to as you get older. You begin to watch others instead. Families moving in, families moving out, the area changes, but other things never do. The world we live in might be different but the kids don't change, not really. (Jumbo 2015, p. 328)

Together, the form and content of the play create opportunities for discussion. The structure of the play, by providing interstices and referential frame, allowed the space for the cast to imagine themselves in the same situation as the characters of

the play, to discuss and consider what they would do in a similar situation and think about creating alternatives. This was an aspect of the work that particularly appealed to some of the Hackney young people. One said that, 'I enjoyed that it was realistic because it was something around something that had already happened in Hackney. And it kinda fit into our characters,' while another noted, 'There was a riot in Hackney and this play remade that and we talked about that and what it meant in rehearsals'. In this dialogue the young people considered how events lead to a riot and what could have been done to avert its disastrous consequences. The events of the play seem to be unavoidable as the characters are swept along in a series of actions, in rehearsal the young people discussed how the characters were caught up in the moment and considered how the events could have been avoided. They also discussed moments in their own lives when they had felt powerless to change events.

Ricoeur uses the term 'social imagination', in his *Lectures in Ideology and Utopia* (1986) as he discusses how it is possible to imagine a utopia from within the dominant ideology. He argues that it is the 'social imagination' that makes this possible – this capacity, he states, allows the exploration of what it is to be human to take place while one is caught within an ideology. He expands on this theory by claiming that moments of 'distanciation' can be created from within an ideology that opens a space for critique. Jumbo's play and the rehearsal process at the school went some of the way to creating the circumstances in which a social imagination could be engaged. I suggest that this example of youth theatre provided the conditions in which the participants reflected on the fictional circumstances presented and juxtaposed these with the real circumstances at play beyond the rehearsal room. In this example, theatre invited these young people to think 'beyond' the familiar and begin to imagine alternatives. Peter O'Connor and Michael Anderson have commented on the:

> …growing cynicism and a sense of helplessness invad[ing] youth who see in post-normal times little sense or reason for hope, little belief in personal agency and understanding as the ways ahead appeared to be pre-determined. (O'Connor and Anderson 2015, p.18)

These students were starting to see the potential for different lives by engaging with the themes of the play and performing they could imagine alternatives, both for the characters they played and potential new futures for themselves because of the newly-found confidence the process engendered for them.

7   Conclusion: Making a Difference

NT Connections does not overtly set out to encourage personal or social change; its aims are to develop theatre skills and opportunities for young people. In her study of drama in schools, Gallagher notes that:

> …in ways both overt and subtle, theatre was evoked in the classroom as more than an instrumental set of skills – it was understood (by tacit agreement) as a vehicle for social change. (Gallagher 2014, p. 171)

NT Connections can also be more than 'an instrumental set of skills' and may lead to changes within the participants that go beyond the performances in the festival itself. The young people who performed in *The Accordion Shop* at Artsdepot explored the world and their place in it through the play. Hughes and Wilson acknowledge that this is an important aspect of youth theatre by suggesting that:

> Playing a part in a play can bring young people face to face with personal, moral, political and social issues and dilemmas – helping them refine personal opinions, develop empathy for other people and explore new issues and experiences from a variety of perspectives. (Hughes and Wilson 2004, p. 65)

The Hackney youth also talked about working through issues and problems as a group and referred to an incident when, 'sometimes in the rehearsals you felt like some people were putting in more than others and that was very annoying! So we had a group discussion and that person was confronted'. The resulting discussion allowed them to understand the 'stress' of a production makes people react differently. 'I think people put less effort in because they was nervous… I worry when we get close to the show I am going to forget my lines.' They began to work as a team who supported each other through the difficult patches and both acknowledged and celebrated that they had, 'to put everything in and saw the progress that was being made.' Drama Education researcher Jonothan Neelands observed of his own students that, 'learning how to act together in the drama classroom was also shaping their social actions as a community beyond the drama class and also, possibly, beyond school' (Neelands 2009, p. 181). There is some evidence to suggest that these young people from the Hackney School were doing just that, although a lengthier research process would be needed to see if this group dynamic has the potential for the next school year or in their lives 'beyond school'.

Annually Connections directly engages 5000 young people across the UK in making theatre and performing it in professional venues. Each year it commissions ten new plays from international award winning playwrights. It allows drama teachers and youth theatre directors access to those writers and to professional directors. At the end of the National Theatre's performance of *The Accordion Shop*, Cush Jumbo was invited onto the stage. She proclaimed that, 'Connections is an example that young people love theatre, and the future is in good hands' (Godwin 2015). Connections allows thousands of young people to access quality writing and experience performing. In doing so it contributes to widening participation in theatre in the UK. In addition to this it may have other less tangible benefits to the young people who take part, it may build their confidence and self-esteem. It may invite them to question the world in which they live and it definitely allows them to be part of a process that creates art.

In 2016, the scheme has doubled in size and aims to have 500 youth organisations taking part, and that's exciting for one of the young people at the Hackney School because:

> Drama is important because it doesn't just teach you about acting, drama teaches you about everyday life, it teaches you about emotions and how to deal with them and like how to deal with certain types of people. It teaches you about real things that happen in life.

With 'the even bigger youth theatre festival' planned for 2016, that's potentially 10,000 young people participating in Connections, all 'learning about real things that happen in life' through theatre. And that is something to be celebrated.

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"People Who Do Theatre Are a Bit Posh": Examining the Impact of Class and Ethnicity on Engagement with the Birmingham Repertory Theatre's Youth Theatre (The Young REP)

Natalie Hart and Joe Winston

Abstract This chapter will explore the role that class and ethnicity have on young people's engagement with the Birmingham Repertory theatre, UK and it's youth theatre, The Young REP. Through an examination of spatial dynamics it will investigate the relationships that the groups had within the theatre building and the effect that insider access has on the participants' sense of belonging (or not) in the theatre building. This chapter focuses on Arts and Humanities Research (AHRC) funded Collaborative Doctoral research carried out in 2010 with three of nine youth theatre groups organised by The Birmingham Repertory Theatre (The REP). The REP is a major producing theatre in the centre of a large multicultural city. Forty-two percent of residents are from an ethnic group other than White and 22% of residents were born outside the UK, compared with 14% in England and 11% in the West Midlands region. Alongside geographical, cultural and financial barriers, there are perceptual barriers to accessing the theatre building. In order to explore the youth theatre members' relationships to the theatre, the study took the form of a mixed methods exploratory case study. This chapter will share the findings of some of the more innovative practical research methods which were utilised which included photography, art and drama.

Keywords Youth theatre · Theatre · Space · Place · Ethnicity · Class · Birmingham repertory theatre · Belonging · Multiculturalism · Diversity

N. Hart (✉) · J. Winston
Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
e-mail: nataliehartdrama@outlook.com; J.A.Winston@warwick.ac.uk

1   Introduction

This chapter is based upon research undertaken between 2007 and 2012 in pursuit of a collaborative doctoral award, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in partnership between the University of Warwick, UK, and The Birmingham Repertory Theatre (The REP), UK. The research examined the relationship that the theatre had with its nine youth theatre groups, known as The Young REP. This chapter will focus on three of the groups and explore their relationship with the theatre through an examination of spatial dynamics, ethnicity and social class. The three groups had differing access to the theatre building – occasional audience members (case study one *Small Heath Young REP*), occasional performers (case study two, *Shenley Academy Young REP*), and regularly rehearsing/performing at the theatre (case study three, *14–18 Company 2 Young REP*). The study discovered that the more insider access a young person had to the theatre the deeper the levels of meaning they ascribed to it and that this access was notably affected by ethnicity and social class. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by the theatre in response to the findings.

1.1   Context

Located in the centre of Birmingham, The Birmingham Repertory Theatre was founded in 1913 and relocated to a newly built theatre in the centre of the city's civic region in 1971. In September 2013 the theatre re-opened following a temporary closure for refurbishment and now shares a foyer and an additional performance space with the new Library of Birmingham. The first purpose-built British Repertory theatre, and the longest surviving of the English repertory companies established at the start of the twentieth century, it is now the city's only major producing theatre (Cochrane 2003, p.1, p. 5 and p. 6).

Birmingham as a city grew out of the industrial revolution. Positioned in the centre of England, it is the second largest city in the UK with a population of over one million. According to the 2010 census, 42% of this population classified itself as Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and 22% of the population were aged between 0 and 15 which makes it the 'youngest' city in Europe.[1]

One of the ways that The REP offers quality engagement activities to its local community is through a youth theatre. The first youth theatre was established in 1967 and in 1993 The Young REP was launched, offering weekly sessions within the theatre building to encourage the feeling that it was part of the organisation (Cochrane 2003, p. 161). *As* part of a policy to engage young people from communities where

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[1] http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/cs/Satellite?c=Page&childpagename=Planning-and-Regeneration%2FPageLayout&cid=1223096353755&pagename=BCC%2FCommon%2FWrapper%2FWrapper

going to the theatre was not a common activity, in 2003 'satellite' youth theatre groups were established at two secondary schools, Small Heath School and Shenley Academy. Facilitators ran weekly sessions after school in the school buildings and other groups were set up at different schools over the next few years. By 2010 there were 200–250 youth theatre members under the banner Young REP.

As a large proportion of the participants of the research were young people aged between 11 and 25, this prompted some methodological considerations. Mainstream research methods can make it hard for young people to express complex views and exclude young people with less verbal and written ability (Bragg 2010, p. 47). However, the use of visual data can offer greater insights and understandings than the written or spoken word. Therefore creative tools such as drama and photography were used alongside questionnaires, participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

2   Cultural Capital

Bourdieu claimed that a lack of social mobility was due to the perpetuation of class boundaries, which in turn was largely due to *cultural capital,* which he describes as "forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions" (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993, p. 7). He states that although cultural tastes are not the initial reason behind social and economic inequalities, they function as social signifiers that justify and uphold social differences (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993, p. 2). The Young REP groups that were based at the theatre itself in the centre of Birmingham were not representative of Birmingham in terms of ethnicity or social class and this was something that The REP staff and many of the young people themselves were aware of and keen to change. Associate Director Steve Ball explained, "Now the majority of Birmingham school pupils are from BAME backgrounds, that's not the case with the Young REP as a whole." This disparity was in part due to the previous use of a waiting list which inadvertently privileged white, middle class children whose parents were theatre goers and had the confidence to enquire about provision and then put their children's names down, in some cases years before they were old enough to attend. The waiting list can be seen as an example of cultural capital being handed down from parent to child, influencing whether theatre would become part of their cultural inheritance or not (Bourdieu 1974; Jackson 2010, p. 25–26; Chan and Goldthorpe 2010; Miles and Sullivan 2012).

Numerous studies have shown how ethnicity can affect cultural preferences (and capital) and how people who are Asian or British Asian predominantly attend performances specific to their own culture, often not returning to the site of these productions to see other performances perceived as not directly relating to them (Harland et al. 1995, p. 37; Belfiore and Bennett 2007, p. 252; Sierz 2011, p. 239). Therefore the dominant culture, of which theatre is a part, can exclude young people from minority ethnicities by simply not interrogating programming choices and unconsciously retaining an exclusive and excluding identity (Said 1993, p. 392;

Berry 2000, p. 9–10). It has been argued that such programming, which comes from a white, European model, fails to address existing cultural imperialism, thus inadequately responding to a post-colonial, globalised, multicultural society (Pannayiotou in Appignanesi 2010; Bharucha 2000, p. 159). The research found that these issues were just as relevant when considering how young people from minority ethnic backgrounds engaged with the youth theatre provision of the REP.

The diverse relationships that the different groups had with the theatre building constituted the most pertinent example of the affect of cultural capital to emerge from the research and this was most clearly demonstrated through a drama workshop that was run with the groups as part of Natalie's fieldwork. The images that the young people created highlighted the different levels of belonging that the young people had in the space and supported the other data emerging from the case study. The group based in a majority Muslim Pakistani area of the city, *Small Heath Young REP*, positioned themselves considerably further away from the theatre than *14–18 Company 2*. The group based in a majority white working class area, *Shenley Academy Young REP*, positioned themselves closer, but still at a significant distance compared to the centrally based group.

3   Case Study One

Small Heath Young REP is based in a community with a majority Muslim Pakistani population. During the field work it emerged that, although establishing this group in a school had removed some significant barriers to the young people attending the Young REP, barriers to a deeper, more meaningful relationship to the theatre itself were still firmly in place. The drama research workshop that was undertaken with them was especially illuminating. Some of their responses to the exercises were very surprising and demonstrated that, although they enjoyed the Young REP group, their experience of and sense of belonging in the Birmingham Repertory Theatre was very limited.

The number of participants in *Small Heath Young REP* ranged from about 15 to 22 at the time of the research, and of the 17 who completed questionnaires, 7 were boys and 10 were girls. There was a general consistency of attendance, with nine participants having attended for more than 2 years, two having attended for over 4 years and only three for less than 6 months. Their ages ranged from 11 to 17. When asked to choose an ethnicity from a selection of tick boxes, 11 selected Pakistani, 1 Indian, 2 Black African and 2 any other mixed background, with one response missing.

The school resides in the area of Small Heath, located in the Eastern Corridor of Birmingham which is home to the majority of Birmingham's Pakistani population (Cole and Ferrari 2008, p. 65 and p. 68). In many ways Small Heath is the quintessential diasporic community (Hesse 2000, p. 11). The demographic make-up of the area is the embodiment of multiculturalism, both as an outcome of political accommodation of migrants from outside the West and as the lived experience of

diversity (Modood 2007, p. 2, Livingstone 2011, p. 29). Small Heath is fairly typical of the way in which the ethnic composition of Birmingham has organised itself: although Birmingham is overall a diverse city, many areas are relatively ethnically mono-cultural, though no more segregated than similar groups in cities (Cole and Ferrari 2008, p. 65). In the case of areas such as Small Heath, this is, some would claim, due to a lack of desire by Asian residents to mix with non-Asian residents. Research suggests, however, that it is most often because 'traditional' white areas have a reputation for organised racist activities and are felt by residents to be hostile (Bains 2006, p. 35 in Cole and Ferrari 2008, p. 70).

The majority of the children who attend the school class themselves as Muslim. In a post 9/11 and 7/7 Britain,[2] Muslims in general, and specifically Muslim youth, are increasingly positioned as troublesome and dangerous and under pressure to respond to accusations of terrorism (Bayat and Herrera 2010, p. 22; Moss and O'Loughlin 2008 in Gillespie and O'Loughlin 2009, p. 97). A general 'Muslimification' of anyone of Asian appearance, a stereotyping of Muslim youth as radical, violent extremists and an increasing prevalence and acceptance of Muslimaphobic positions, complicates the lives of young people growing up Asian and/or Muslim in Britain today (Gillespie and O'Loughlin 2009, p. 97; Bayat and Herrera 2010, p. 4–5; Swedenburg 2010, p. 299). In the context of this research, the young people's identity as Muslim youth had an impact on the ethical and aesthetic decisions made by their youth theatre directors.

After some initial hesitation, Small Heath School embraced the Young REP as staff, students and parents observed the positive impact it was having on the students who were involved. They developed an annual tradition of a pantomime which became an integral part of the school calendar and a social occasion involving food after the performance. However, in the 10 years that the school had participated in the Young REP, they had only had one chance to perform at the theatre. Their youth theatre director, Rhys McClelland, regarded this choice as a safe option, which meant that the youth theatre directors and the staff at the school could avoid asking questions around appropriateness of content, form, costume or dialogue. He also felt that the decision by The REP for the young people to always perform in their own school was based in part on cultural assumptions from The REP that there would be resistance from parents to taking the young people out of the familiar school environment and into the centre of Birmingham. Fear of incidents like *Bezhti*[3] and a desire to be respectful of people's beliefs, meant that Rhys felt he was perhaps over cautious and made some unproven assumptions. He was able to reflect on this through the research process and came to the conclusion that there needed to

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[2] 9/11 refers to September 11th 2001 where a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the United States. 7/7 refers to a series of coordinated terrorist suicide bomb attacks by Islamic extremists in central London which targeted civilians using the public transport system during the morning rush hour.

[3] On 18 December 2004 hundreds of Sikh protestors attacked the theatre during its performance of *Bezhti* by Kaur Bhatti. Controversially the whole run of the studio theatre's production was cancelled for fear of the safety of audiences both of this play and the Main House Christmas production.

be more dialogue where these queries and concerns could be aired with the young people, parents and members of the community (Hooks 1994, p. 130). The research discovered that some of these assumptions and fears were well founded but others, although well meaning, were not. Samantha Hughes, the Creative Arts teacher at the school, explained that there was a mixture of attitudes to theatre from parents, ranging from a Mosque leader in full support of his son's participation to parents who would not support after school activities, mixed gender events or public emotional expression of any kind. Although going to the theatre wasn't a regular activity for them, several of the students that Natalie spoke to had in fact attended the Birmingham REP with family. However she also experienced a student's mother who had very little English granting permission for her daughter to be involved 'because it was at the school, so it was OK'. Therefore the idea that the school was trustworthy and a 'known factor' had influenced her decision to let her daughters participate in the youth theatre.

Young people in urban contexts are highly likely to have very localised identities. This is heightened by fear of racist assault and can lead to an anxiety about moving beyond their familiar spaces and of having to meet new people (Gidley 2007, p. 150; Hooks 2009, p. 70). As one 15 year old participant, Zahid, stated about the neighbouring area in which he lives, "I do talk to white people and a few Asian people in Bordesley Green and they are friendly and stuff but when you see, like, the odd people in the street, then you see the tension when they walk past each other sometimes". The fear of racism, which is part of the lived experience of diversity and complexities of spatial relationships in a city, in part explains why those from BAME backgrounds in the Eastern Corridor are more likely to stay in the area in which they are born or first reside (Cole and Ferrari 2008, p. 72). This has direct implications for how the young people of Small Heath relate to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, as to attend it requires them to leave their 'safe' and familiar neighbourhood and venture into the City Centre of Birmingham. This is coupled with practical issues such as lack of independent mobility. Two of the participants, Aisha (14) and Naveed (15), both identified that a barrier to attending a group that met at the theatre was the distance to The REP, as they would need parents to accompany them into the city centre. This lack of independent mobility is in part affected by culture: Samantha Hughes noted that many of the students were not permitted to go very far out of the area, even socially with their friends at weekends.

The young people's ethnicity also impacted on their perceptions of what other young people who participated in youth theatre would be like, and this could make them reluctant to attend groups based at the theatre. Samantha Hughes told Natalie that the students at Small Heath thought other children 'who did theatre' were white, grammar school[4] children, and Aisha was worried that, if she attended the Young REP based at the theatre, she would feel out of place. They are not alone in this view, as there is a general conception that theatre is a white, middle class pursuit

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[4] Grammar schools have a selective admission process which is granted to students based on their performance in the Eleven plus exam – pupils are admitted on the basis of a combined score in two tests.

(Harland et al. 1995, p. 38; Sierz 2011, p. 239; Cochrane 2010, p. 131–2; Bennett 1997, p. 89). Unfortunately, for Zahid, this perception became a reality when he attended a Young REP steering group and felt out of place as everyone else was white and middle class. Another factor is a lack of knowledge about the existence of the Young REP, demonstrated by Salima's (14) assertion that she wouldn't have joined Young REP if it wasn't based at her school, "Just because I wouldn't know enough about it to go".

As stated above, the drama research workshop that was undertaken with this group was particularly enlightening. One exercise in particular showed the stark disparity between the Small Heath group's sense of belonging in the theatre space with those of the members of *14–18 Company 2*. A chair was placed in the centre of the room with the phrase 'I am the Birmingham Repertory Theatre'. The participants were then asked to position themselves in the space in relation to the chair and, with the statement "I am", contribute to creating the picture. They demonstrated good knowledge of theatre professions, probably partly due to their experiences of performing with the Young REP at their school. However, they additionally made some offers that would be more applicable for a West End theatre, for example 'I'm Billy Elliot' and 'I'm a comedian'. Three responses were particularly intriguing:

"I'm Beyonce singing at The REP"
"I'm Eminem singing, rapping at The REP"
"I'm the Queen watching the play"

These additions to the picture would be more appropriate for the Royal Variety Show[5] than the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and present a picture very different from the reality.

The reluctance to interrogate the assumptions and realities of the ethnicity and religion of the young people through fear of giving offence and of creating more barriers to participation in the youth theatre had, then, unintentionally resulted in a Young REP group with virtually no understanding of, or relationship with, The REP itself.

4   Case Study Two

Shenley Academy Young REP was established in 2002 when the school was awarded Specialist Arts Status and approached several arts organisations in the city to build partnerships, one of which was the Birmingham REP. There have been several youth theatre directors working with the groups during the 13 year relationship. Natalie was the youth theatre director for *Shenley Academy Junior Young REP* from

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[5] The Royal Variety Performance is a gala evening held annually in the United Kingdom, which is attended by senior members of the British Royal Family, usually the reigning monarch. The evening's performance is a variety show consisting of family entertainment, including comedy, singing, dancing, magic and other speciality acts, and many of the performers and hosts are celebrities.

January 2005 to July 2007, and therefore already knew several of the older participants. Although they were based at their school, the group had performed in the studio theatre at The REP several times. As audience members the school took them on trips to the theatre, and several of the older members were beginning to access the theatre more independently.

The experience of performing there had given them the opportunity to create memories and this experience had affected their relationship with the theatre. The meanings held by space are in constant flux and negotiation and affected by the experiences that are had in them (Pandya 1990 in Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, p. 5; Lefebvre 1991; Tuan 1977). McAuley (1999) notes that, "The frame constituted by a particular building or venue is not something fixed and immutable but a dynamic and continually evolving social entity" (p. 41); and that the perception of a building is dependent on how it is experienced. At the steering group *Shenley Young REP* participant Elisa (13) described her feelings about the theatre as being based on her past and future experiences of performing there, "I like it and like coming up to a performance that you're performing actually at The REP, you look and you think, I'm gonna be there soon." Massey (2005) notes that we should imagine space as "a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (p. 9) and this definition of space was clearly presented by the young people in the research workshop. For example, one group chose a picture of the dressing rooms and themselves lying around being bored and the other group members recognised the scene from their own experiences. Another group had a very practical interpretation of what was 'missing' from The REP pictures, "Something for us to do when we weren't performing and no drinks 'cos we got a bit thirsty". Whereas *Small Heath Young REP* felt very little connection to the theatre, the younger members of *Shenley Academy Young REP* demonstrated that after just one performance in the building they had begun to develop a sense of connection to it and all parties were keen to nurture and enhance this.

Shenley Academy serves an area that experiences significant social and economic disadvantage. The large majority of students are from a White British heritage but with a range of other minority ethnic groups represented. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals[6] is exceptionally high, the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national figure, and the numbers with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.[7] Although when The REP first began its relationship with the school it was in Special Measures,[8] by 2011 Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's

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[6] Free School Meals are available to children whose family receive a qualifying benefit such as Job Seekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance. Thus it is widely seen as an indicator of low socio-economic status or poverty.

[7] http://www.tes.co.uk/Upload/Attachments/TES/0321410001/Shenley%20Academy%20OFSTED%20Report.pdf

[8] "Schools are made subject to special measures under section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, where the Chief Inspector is of the opinion that: '….the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.'" (Ofsted.gov.uk).

Services and Skills) designated the school as outstanding due to students' academic achievement and their wider personal development (Ofsted 135911, 2–3 November 2011).

Head of Drama, Stephen Lane, stated that the local area suffers from 'stigmatization', and the young people offered a similar picture. Some of this stigmatisation stems from very real issues of socioeconomic deprivation. The MG Rover factory at nearby Longbridge was a major employer until its closure in 2005 made 6300 workers redundant. Those who were re-employed elsewhere earned a fifth less in their new jobs. Discussing the area in his book, *Chavs: The demonization of the working class* (2011), Owen Jones notes, "[…] there is a lack of good, secure jobs and plenty of people out of work through no fault of their own" (p. 193). He describes the community as being plunged into despair and prey to a plethora of social issues associated with deprivation, including anti-social behaviour, drug use and relationship breakdown (Jones 2011, p. 193).

The links between class, participation and social equality are deeply embedded. The reality of social inequality is that the class and ethnicity a child is born into will have a marked impact on their life chances (Barry 2005, p. 41). Class, especially in terms of economic income, has a pronounced effect on civic and cultural participation, and participation in turn affects social equality (Morrow 2011, p. 66; Leverett 2011, p. 16; Bennett 2009, p. 201; Bourdieu 1974). Cultural capital has a two way relationship with social class and social mobility, by on the one hand being more accessible to people of privileged classes, and on the other hand helping them to demonstrate their class status and gain access to positions of power (Belfiore and Bennet 2007, p. 253). Research has shown that amongst many young people there is an attitude that the arts are for 'snobs' and 'not for my class' (Harland et al. 1995, p. 29).

The perception of the arts and theatre as being for people from backgrounds different from their own means that entering cultural buildings can be daunting for young working class people (Gidley 2007, p. 151). This is heightened by external attitudes to working class people in general that have been critiqued by Owen Jones. Although the etymology of the word 'chav' is debated, it is widely seen to be a derogatory term for the working classes and in recent years there has been an explosion of 'chav' stereotypes in the media which has coincided with access to the arts becoming increasingly narrow, thus reducing understanding and empathy for the working classes within the sector and limiting opportunities for them to challenge these stereotypes (Jones 2013, p. 20; Sutton trust 2014).

This has a particular resonance for *Shenley Academy Young REP,* as the derogatory website *Chavtowns* describes Weoley Castle as "[…]the city's chavviest district".[9] It includes references to teachers at Shenley carrying out, "[…]crowd control of the horrendous Chavs of the next generation"[10] and refers to many 'chav' stereotypes such as Burberry clothes, crime, fast food, truancy and illiteracy (Jones 2011, p. 190). Significantly, the Young REP participants regarded their own neigh-

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[9] http://www.chavtowns.co.uk/2004/07/birmingham-weoley-castle

[10] http://www.chavtowns.co.uk/2004/07/birmingham-weoley-castle

bourhood as 'chavvy'. One 12 year old participant, Davina, remarked that "Weoley Castle is the sort of place where you don't want to live". They used the word 'chav' as a derogatory term, and despite living in these so called 'chav' areas, they did not regard themselves as being 'chavs' themselves and only one young person used the term 'working class' as a personal descriptor. However the participants clearly resented the attitude of people to their area and saw themselves as being different from the young people whom they perceived would attend the centrally based Young REP groups.

Accessing the theatre for the young people was difficult in part because of their geographical location. The school is seven miles – a 40 min bus journey – from the theatre as one participant, Morgan (13), explained, "I probably wouldn't have gone if it wasn't here...It's too far away,". The younger students also explained that they would not be allowed to travel alone, and would have needed parental accompaniment. Jamie (17) noted that it would have taken much more effort and commitment to have gone to The REP: "There would need to be something else that would, like, wow me for me to go on a bus all the way to town". The extra motivation, especially initially, to have gone into the centre of Birmingham, into a different environment, would probably have required a prior understanding and knowledge of theatre, the kind of cultural capital that most of the young people at Shenley Academy had not acquired (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993, p. 7). They also demonstrated preconceived ideas about what the young people who attended the centrally based groups would be like, alongside a lack of confidence in their own abilities in comparison:

Jamie: It's kind of like the stereotype kind of thing of people who do theatre are a bit posh
Peter (17):   And they're really good. To go to the actual REP you have to be really good whereas…
Rory (17):   They might look down on you and think oh yeah, you're just a wannabe or something

Although the centrally based Young REP groups require no audition, the *Shenley Academy Senior Young REP* members imagined them to be more talented and afforded them a higher status to themselves. The fear of what other people at the central groups would think of them was demonstrated by several of the young people:

Trent (18):   I think if people attend The REP they actually want to be actors, however if you're just doing it for fun, like, it would be a bit awkward, like, because they would have higher intentions.
Peter: And probably think I'm not doing my part for the group, you'd probably think that they hate you or something, or dislike you.

The drama research workshop also showed that the young people had a mixed relationship with the theatre building. When a chair was placed in the centre of the room with the statement 'I am the Birmingham Repertory Theatre', Khendal (15) was quick to step forward and place himself as an actor into the picture,

Khendal: I am an actor at the Birmingham REP theatre. Can I sit on the chair?

Natalie: If you want to sit on the chair

He lounges on the chair. There is a pause

Khendal: I'm acting by the way

The other young people joined in to contribute: "I'm the director of the play, I'm in the audience, I'm the lighting, Bing!, I'm the audience, I'm selling tickets, I'm the microphone, I'm selling food, I'm buying the food, I'm the receptionist, I'm buying tickets, I'm the lighting supervisor, I'm a prop.". They presented some general theatrical roles, and those who were not as sure (newer members) took the lead from those who were more confident by offering, 'I'm also in the audience' or 'I'm the person -buying -ticket's friend'.

Before the theatre went dark for 2 years to be refurbished, five of the participants were taken to the building to take photographs of areas they felt were important to them. Then, during the drama workshop, the photographs were placed around the room, the young people asked to go to one they felt was most important to them and create a freeze frame that epitomised it. During this exercise they demonstrated a connection to the building that correlated directly with their recent performance at The REP as part of a Young REP festival called *Secrets and Gardens* which was designed to complement a production of *The Secret Garden* then playing on the main stage. Several Young REP groups devised performances with the theme of secrets and gardens and performed them over two evenings in the studio space, the Door, at the Birmingham REP. This had a clear effect on their response to the Photograph exercise as they were able to draw on their experiences and memories of this performance. For example, one group created a particularly interesting image in response to a photograph of the Stage Door and even added some movement spontaneously. When asked to explain it they said:

John: William was holding a balloon with confetti in it, the confetti is obviously excitement and when the door opened it all burst out because all the excitement is let out, we've been excited for so long.

Natalie: What is he excited for?

John: The show. And the door is like you know out of Narnia, do you know the wardrobe? It's like that because you open it and its all adventures.

They were able to vividly show and describe the feelings that they had before their performance, and the exciting potential that it offered them.

However, Trent explained that, although he had enjoyed the performances, he felt that they were not frequent enough, and the relationship with the theatre was still distant: "I think it was good, but like two performances in five years, considering it's based to do with The REP, I think that was pretty bad, but it was a good experience but it felt more uncomfortable because we weren't used to going to The REP". Jamie thought that it didn't feel as official as Birmingham Young REP and Peter (17), who had attended for 5 years, summed up the existing relationship and how he wanted it to be.

Peter: It could have been a lot closer, I mean the way it is, Young REP was as you say a stepping stone into going to acting, so there had to be another stepping stone where you got into The REP, do you know what I mean? Like in football you have your Sunday league team and then you have professional teams that come and watch you and you get asked to come over, so if we had, like, people from The REP spotting and stuff, and realising talent and bringing them over.

Although the relationship that *Shenley Young REP* had with the theatre was much closer than the one *Small Heath Young REP* had it was far from being as intimate as the relationship that the centrally based groups had with the theatre and this we turn to next.

5   Case Study 3

The relationship that the centrally based group *14–18 Company 2* had with the theatre was striking in its' familiarity and sense of belonging in the space. The drama research workshop highlighted this with most clarity and it is especially arresting when compared to the responses from the Shenley and Small Heath groups.

14–18 Company 2 was made up of 14 girls and 4 boys. Seven participants were aged 14 and 11 were aged 15–17. Head of Young People's Theatre, Hannah Phillips, explained that, as many of them had been attending since they were eight, they had grown up in the Young REP, and it was intrinsic to their lives. She felt that this gave them a strong connection with the youth theatre. *14–18 Company 2* had traditionally met to rehearse on Saturdays in the theatre's rehearsal rooms. The young people all paid £45 a term to attend and usually performed in The REP's s studio space, The Door, (when the theatre was open) or at the Old Rep Theatre.

As discussed, 1*4–18 Company 2* was not representative of city dynamics; of the 18 young people who completed a questionnaire 15 identified as being white British, 1 as being White and Asian and 2 as having any other white background. Rhys McClelland noted, "Birmingham might become the first black majority city in Britain, and actually we're far, far from becoming the first black majority youth theatre in Britain". The narrow representation of class was noted by Rhys also. As someone from outside of Birmingham, he had noticed the lack of 'Brummie' accents in the youth theatre: "I know it's strange to go by accents because there are a lot of native Birmingham people in the Young REP, but it's not a Brummie Youth theatre is it?". Steve Ball explained that they had begun to address these discrepancies as a priority.

There were a complex variety of reasons why this was the case, as explored in the previous two case studies. Some of the members of *14–18 Company 2* were aware of the issue. Eighteen year-old Eve saw that the lack of publicity was a problem which kept the Young REP middle class:

> The majority of people who go and see theatre at The REP are white, middle class people and that is how they find out about The REP and that's how they go on the website and find out about youth theatre […]If it looks like we're not inclusive then they're not going to want to go there.

The group had a very close relationship to the building due to having rehearsed there for many years. To demonstrate the intensity of the attachment, Rhys spoke about the reaction of those young people to the temporary closure of the building:

> There are some young people that actually, when the theatre closed, were distraught, very upset that this building that they grew up in was going to be inaccessible for two years. They're very much a part of the building and they own it in a particular way.

It is logical that more sustained access to a space will build more memories, which will increase the sense of belonging; (Relph 1976, p. 49, in Cresswell 2004, p. 44). However, when the chair was placed in the centre of the room with the statement 'I am The REP theatre', and they were asked to step in to build the picture, the responses were exceptionally specific and detailed. Many of them elicited responses from the rest of the group including recognition, laughter and affection:

> I am Rehearsal Room 1, I am Bob in Stage Door, I am Bob and Babs (*some ahh's from others*), I'm the doors where we got locked in (*laughter*), I am the trap door in the stage, I am the stage, I'm the bar where we said goodbye to Tim, I'm the Green Room, I'm the stairs where we had to wait when we were locked in, I'm the costume department, I'm the old *Musicals* practice room, I'm the warm chairs in stage door (*A few low level, 'ahhs' and 'so warm'*), I'm Robin the Stage Manager, I'm the piano in the rehearsal room, I am the plant at Stage Door, I am the leaflets at Stage Door, I am Emma's Mum (who worked in the costume department), I'm department X where they keep all the animal hats, I'm the water dispenser, I'm someone Front of House doing a flash mob.

In response to the photographs, a group of them had taken of the theatre before it went dark, the freeze frames that the young people created were incredibly detailed, including "the clock that didn't work", "the corridor that always smelt of paint" and "the good feeling that they got inside" when at the theatre. A plethora of stories emerged from the tableaux, including being accidentally locked in a staircase, a Christmas party on the Mezzanine and being soaking wet in a past performance. All members responded with recognition to each other's memories and evocative descriptions.

6   Conclusion

This research chimes with Edward Relph's assertion that, "to be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place" (Relph 1976, p. 49, in Cresswell 2004, p. 44) The issue for The REP was that the young people who were profoundly identifying with the theatre were far from being representative of city demographics. Although the groups in Small Heath and Shenley had widened participation with the youth

theatre, they had not equalised the relationship that the groups had with the actual theatre building.

Hannah Phillips explained during her interview and over the course of the field work the strategies for diversifying the Young REP. This included turning the waiting list into a database, doubling the provision, outreach work, changing the style and content of the work produced to make it more exciting and accessible, looking at the branding of the Young REP and encouraging more opportunities for the young people to have their voices heard. Coinciding with the end of Natalie's field work, in August 2011, Hannah Phillips left The REP to take up a full time post at Birmingham School of Acting, to be replaced by Jessica Farmer. Following the trajectory of Hannah Phillips' work to diversify the Young REP, and responding to these research findings, Jessica and her team have achieved the transformation from two majority white, middle class city centre based groups that did not represent Birmingham, to four groups of young people from a range of ethnicities that are much more representative of the city. The first action that she had taken was to double the provision of the groups based in the centre and fill most of the places from the database with those young people who had patiently been waiting years for the opportunity to be involved. She worked with the host school, Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA) (where rehearsals now take place) to fast track some of their students. The intake at BOA is from across the city and the region, and thus fairly representative of Birmingham. Secondly, the youth theatre directors ran workshops in schools in targeted, unrepresented areas and offered the first five people to sign up for the Young REP a voucher for a free term. Thirdly, the youth theatre directors identified young people that were interested in joining the central Young REP groups from *Shenley* and *Small Heath*. Fourthly, Jessica formed a new Young REP group at Harborne Academy, and, due to the demographic of the school, all of these members are from BAME backgrounds. Lastly, as a part of a strategy to unify the work of the Young REP, Jessica took an idea from Natalie's interim report and organised a Young REP festival for July, 2013.

Raynsford (2010) notes in *Inclusive Youth Theatre*, that although most youth theatres consider themselves welcome and open to everyone, in order to actually be so in practice, they need to put appropriate support structures in place. She comments that " […] ensuring your doors are metaphorically open is not enough" (p. 9). Youth theatres that are attached to theatre buildings have the additional barrier of the theatre architecture itself (Nicholson 2011, p. 209). This chapter has shown that young people can feel a very deep sense of belonging and ownership inside a theatre building once granted access, but it has also demonstrated that young people who are from BAME and/or working class backgrounds can find this access harder to achieve than those from white, middle class backgrounds. The REP has implemented a wide range of strategies to address this inequality of access, and continues to do so. The young people from *Small Heath Young REP* and *Shenley Academy Young REP* explained that the practice of establishing Young REP groups in chosen communities was paramount to them accessing youth theatre provision and establishing a relationship with The REP. Both groups stated that they would not have known about the Young REP groups based at the theatre, and that its school base had

given them the sense that they had a 'right' to be there. As Zahid noted, "[…] because it's our school you feel some ownership over it. That you do belong there". *Shenley Young REP's* community base allowed the youth theatre directors to tailor the provision to the needs of the young people in an area with high levels of disenfranchisement, as the style of youth theatre delivery will probably need to differ from work with young people with higher levels of self-esteem (Raynsford 2010, p. 34). In Small Heath it provided a safety zone to explore theatre in a community where, for many residents, it was not culturally the norm. However, there is still more work to be done to strengthen the relationship between these satellite groups and the theatre building, and to diversify access to the groups that are based in the city centre so ensuring that the Young REP is accessible to a wide variety of young people is an ongoing project for the theatre.

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Part IV
Artists in Education, and Beyond

The School Drama Partnership: Beyond an Artist-in-Residence Program

Robyn Ann Ewing and John Nicholas Saunders

Abstract   Research documenting the effectiveness of educational or process drama as critical, quality pedagogy particularly in enhancing English and literacy (e.g., Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013; Saunders, 2015; Ewing 2010b; Ewing, Simons with Campbell & Hertzberg, 2004; Miller Saxton, 2004, 2016; Baldwin & Fleming, 2003) has not impacted in many Australian primary classrooms. Further, Australian teachers report feeling pressured to concentrate on the more technical aspects of the teaching of literacy (and numeracy) as measured in increasingly high stakes tests. It is within this educational context that the *School Drama*™ program was conceived initially in 2008 and developed over the last decade. This chapter first focuses on the relationship developed between a leading Australian theatre company, Sydney Theatre Company (STC) and the University of Sydney's Faculty of Education and Social Work (FESW) in order to use one artform, drama, as a lens to interrogate another, contemporary literary texts for children, to enhance literacy learning in its deepest sense. It pays particular attention to the role of the teaching artists in the program and their work with participating primary teachers. The outcomes of the project, from their perspectives and the development of what we have described as a collaborative zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978; Ewing, 2015; Moll, Whitmore, 1993) are then discussed. The final act explores some of the outcomes and implications for the ongoing sustainability of the program.

Keywords   Drama as critical, quality pedagogy · Drama, literature and literacy · Co-mentoring teacher professional learning · Role of teaching artists · Collaborative zone of proximal development

R. A. Ewing (✉)
Sydney School of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
e-mail: robyn.ewing@sydney.edu.au

J. N. Saunders
Sydney Theatre Company, Dawes Point, Australia
e-mail: jsaunders@sydneytheatre.com.au

1   Background: The Australian Education Context, Drama and Literacy in the Primary Classroom

Despite unequivocal evidence that arts rich pedagogy has the potential to enhance student social and emotional wellbeing and academic learning outcomes across the curriculum (e.g., Martin et al. 2013; Ewing 2010a; Catterall 2009, 2013; Bamford 2006: Deasy 2002; Fiske 1999) many Australian primary teachers do not feel well equipped to embed the Arts in what they see as an already overcrowded curriculum and overwhelming pressure from all education providers to concentrate on what can be described as a narrow intended curriculum.

More specifically, research documenting the effectiveness of educational or process drama as critical, quality pedagogy particularly in enhancing English and literacy (e.g., Winner et al. 2013; Ewing and Saunders 2016; Saunders 2015; Ewing 2010b; Ewing et al. 2016; Miller and Saxton 2004, 2016; Baldwin and Fleming 2003) has not impacted in many Australian primary classrooms. Australian teachers report feeling pressured to concentrate on the more technical aspects of the teaching of literacy (and numeracy) as measured in increasingly hight stakes tests. This is not only the case in Australia: other western education systems are also working within an increasing regulatory, high stakes testing national context.

It is within this educational context that the *School Drama*™ program was conceived and developed Fig. 1. This chapter first focuses on the relationship developed between a leading Australian theatre company, Sydney Theatre Company (STC)

Fig. 1 The school drama teacher professional learning program began in 2009. (Photo courtesy of Sydney Theatre Company)

and the University of Sydney's Faculty of Education and Social Work (FESW) in order to use one artform, drama, as a lens to interrogate another, contemporary literary texts for children in order to enhance literacy learning in its deepest sense. Subsequent acts pay particular attention to the role of the teaching artists in the program and their work with participating primary teachers. The outcomes of the project, from their perspectives and the development of what we have described as a collaborative zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978; Ewing 2015; Moll and Whitmore 1993) are then discussed. The final act explores some of the outcomes and implications for the ongoing sustainability of the program.

The prologue, initially sets the scene for this discussion by describing how the program was conceptualised.

2   Prologue: The Birth of the *School Drama*™ Program

We play a part in making a creative, forward-thinking and sociable future by engaging with young people, students and teachers. (https://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about/artistic-vision)

This quote is drawn from Sydney Theatre Company's artistic vision. It goes some way to describe why a leading Australian theatre company might partner with an education faculty to engage teachers and their students in creating a more positive and creative school curriculum: one in which drama has its rightful place as both an artform and as pedagogy. The heart of the program is its co-mentoring professional learning approach (Le Cornu 2005; Ewing 2002). Professional actors or teaching artists work with primary teachers' to develop their professional knowledge of and expertise about the impact of drama on children's English and literacy outcomes using contemporary literary texts. This relates to STC's Education mission that specifically aims to:

provide young people in NSW with possibilities to play, imagine and learn through the provision of theatre and theatre-based education programs of the highest standard. (https://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/community/education)

In late 2007 Helen Hristofski (Sydney Theatre Company Education Manager 2006–2012) and Robyn Ewing (University of Sydney) began discussing a potential collaboration. They met with STC's Co-Artistic Directors Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton to discuss the role artists might play in primary schools and then hosted a meeting with teachers to further discuss possibilities. In April 2008 the newly appointed Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, held a summit in Canberra to establish a direction for Australia's future. The *2020 Summit* brought together leaders from a range of sectors to address key policy areas. One of the 10 strands was *Towards a Creative Australia*. It was co-chaired by Cate Blanchett, Professor Julianne Schultz (Griffith University) and Minister Peter Garrett (then Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts). Ewing participated in the Creative Australia strand and discussion about the potential collaboration between STC and the

University of Sydney continued. Following the summit, Blanchett, Upton, Ewing and Hristofski continued developing the concept and the *School Drama™* program emerged. It was decided given the emphasis on English and literacy in the first phase of the incoming *Australian Curriculum* that the program would focus on using the art form of drama in this Key Learning Area. Piloted in five schools across Sydney the following year, the methodology of the program is based on Ewing's (2002, 2006) use of drama as critical quality pedagogy with literary texts. Her co-mentoring model was developed with teachers from Harbord, Curl Curl North and Crown St Public Schools over 25 years.

3   Act 1: The *School Drama™* Program

In brief, the *School Drama™* program focuses on building teacher confidence and expertise in the use of educational or process drama conventions to explore quality children's literature and enhance student engagement and English and literacy learning outcomes. The model has always used the art form of drama to deepen the understanding of another art from, literature, aimed at enhancing literacy outcomes, although, the literary arts often go unacknowledged in references to arts disciplines (Ewing 2010a, b).

Participating teachers are first introduced to the range of process drama devices or strategies using contemporary literary texts through workshops facilitated by Ewing and Saunders. The Actors or teaching artists selected to work in the program also undergo a professional development program although some also have educational qualifications. The teaching artists work alongside participant classroom teachers to plan a 7 week program focused on a particular English or literacy area that has been identified by the teachers. These may include inferential comprehension, imaginative/creative writing, oracy or descriptive language. The program is then team taught with the teaching artist initially modelling the drama devices or strategies (for example, hotseating, sculpting, depiction, conscience alley, readers' theatre) as lenses to explore different aspects of the chosen literary text(s). Saunders, a former Head of Arts in a secondary school, and now Director of Education and Community Partnerships at STC, oversees the teaching artists' planning and is always available to provide advice and ongoing mentoring to the teaching artists. In addition, he works as a teaching artist in one school each term.

In best case scenarios the class teacher then consolidates this learning between the artist's visits, often modelling the strategies for other teachers in their school. Over the timeframe it is expected that the class teacher will gain confidence and expertise in using drama devices and strategies and choosing quality literature to meet the needs of his or her students. This increased confidence will be reflected in the teacher assuming greater responsibility for the planning and implementation of the program particularly in the final weeks of the workshops. At the same time the teaching artist develops an understanding of using drama as their artform in a classroom context for the specific needs of students. Building on Vygotsky's (1978)

work as extended by Moll and Whitmore (1993) we propose that these experiences of both the teacher and the teaching artist can constitute a collective Zone of Proximal Development and expand this further in Act 3 below. In essence, the classroom teacher is sharing their knowledge of their students, and literacy teaching and learning with the teaching artist. At the same time, the teaching artist is sharing their knowledge and expertise of using process drama devices in an applied context (ie an English unit). Only through combining their professional knowledge of the two can the exploration of drama as critical quality pedagogy to improve student literacy learning be achieved. In turn the students benefit through improved self confidence, engagement and empathy as well as in English/literacy outcomes in the identified area (Saunders 2015).

As mentioned above, the *School Drama™* professional learning model is conceptualised as a co-mentoring approach. Instead of using the traditional conception of a mentor as **the** expert knower, the mentoring process is reframed as one of co-learning that positions the participants in a non-hierarchical or reciprocal relationship (Le Cornu 2005). The different participants have different knowledges and understandings to share and each respects the expertise of the other. The teachers learn about the use of drama as critical quality pedagogy (Ewing 2002, 2006) while the teaching artists learn about adapting their professional theatre skills to a particular literacy focus in specific classroom and school contexts. The children benefit from the teacher's learning and ongoing use of drama devices with literary texts to deepen understandings and improve identified literacy outcomes. The program is thus dependent on the development of an authentic partnership between each educator and teaching artist: both must work to ensure a respectful relationship that values the expertise of the other and one that can weather rigorous discussion about differences. The partnership is thus a significant departure from many more conventional artists-in-residence programs in that its first priority is the professional learning of the teacher. In addition, while the discipline's skills are learned and developed by both participant children and teachers, drama is used as transformative pedagogy for the interrogation of literature.

Since its inception in 2009, the *School Drama™* program has continued to be refined and grow. In 2013, John Nicholas Saunders was appointed as Education Manager at STC to lead the growth of the program. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, from humble beginnings in the 2009 pilot, *School Drama™* has grown (an average annual growth of 140% over 10 years). In 2018 the program had reached over 27,000 teachers and their students through *School Drama™*. *School Drama™* is now a cornerstone of Sydney Theatre Company's Education program.

As part of the partnership between STC and the University of Sydney's Faculty of Education and Social Work (FESW), STC commissioned annual evaluations of the program by independent researchers at the University of Sydney, Gibson and Smith. Along with annual evaluations (Campbell et al. 2010; Gibson 2011, 2012, 2013) a meta-analysis was completed (Gibson and Smith 2013) and several case studies have been undertaken (eg, Saunders 2015; Smith 2014; Sze 2013; and Robertson 2010), with several more in progress. The research to date has mostly aimed to investigate the impact of the program on teacher learning and school

sustainability rather than solely on student learning outcomes. Saunders' (2015) case study, however, investigated the student academic and non-academic outcomes. His findings are discussed in Act 3.

Earlier writing (eg, Ewing et al. 2011) has focused particularly on the impact of the professional learning from the perspectives of the participant teachers. The following section provides a fine grained discussion from the perspective of the teaching artists. One of the STC's aims for *School Drama™* was to provide different kinds of work opportunities for professional actors. The program has fulfilled this with 27 teaching artists in Sydney, Wollongong, Darwin, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne and Albury/Wodonga (regional).

4 Act 2 Scene i: Through the Eyes of the Teaching Artist

As discussed above, a critical feature of the program is the role of the actors or teaching artists who work alongside classroom teachers once a week for 7 weeks in term two, three or four of the school year. They model the use of educational or process drama devices, with authentic literary texts to address specific English or literacy outcomes identified by the class teacher. This section explores why this program is more than an artist-in-residence program and particularly explores how it benefits the actors/teaching artists.

Eric Booth argues that the term 'Teaching Artist' originated in the United States of America during the turn of the twentieth century and spread more widely during the 1970s and 1980s. Booth defines a Teaching Artist as "an artist who chooses to include artfully educating others, beyond teaching the technique of the artform, as an active part of a career (Booth 2009, p. 3)." The *School Drama™* program subscribes to elements of Booth's definition. Our Teaching Artists are professional artists (whether that be an artist as an actor, artist in applied/community theatre or an artist of Drama). All come from a similar theatre or drama tertiary background and have specialised in different areas of the field. Each artist brings their own unique understandings and expertise to the program. For example one of *School Drama™*'s longest serving teaching artists is a professional storyteller as well as an actor and academic. Many others alternate their *School Drama™* teaching with regular work in theatre, television and/or film. Others have found the experience so rich and productive, they have since completed teaching qualifications.

There is a range of challenges for the teaching artists. Like the teachers, they all complete a questionnaire about their expectations before they begin the program, and then another following the term's experience. Saunders also engages in a debriefing focus group discussion with the teaching artists at the end of every term. The challenges raised by the teaching artists include: the initial consultation and planning session with the class teacher and negotiation of quality literary texts; the uniqueness of every teacher and every classroom context – a factor that cannot be overstated; and, the importance of developing a trusting relationship with the teacher based on mutual respect in a very short time frame so that the co-teaching and

co-learning will be optimal. Gibson,'s ongoing evaluation of the program (2012, 2010) also highlights several other variables that may affect the success of the program:

- The classroom teacher's experience, personal desire to participate in the program and prior experience with the Creative Arts[1] especially drama;
- The students' prior learning in the Arts, the number of students within the class, and the number of students with learning/special needs;
- Potential classroom management issues; and
- Support from the principal and leadership team.

The two pre-program planning sessions are thus vital in developing the relationship with the class teacher and ensuring they will oversee any classroom management issues. An important issue here is whether the class teacher initially wants to be involved in *School Drama™* themselves or whether they were 'asked' to do it by their Principal or supervisor. Interestingly some teaching artists also highlight the quality of the chosen text(s). In addition the teaching artist must find a way to facilitate the transition from taking major responsibility in modelling the drama devices/strategies to encouraging the teacher participant to assume more in the final weeks of their time in the classroom. The following interview excerpts from teaching artists illustrate these challenges:

> *The relationship is collaborative and focussed on both the teachers' needs and their understanding of their students…that the teacher has a skill set that I don't have as an actor really helps to level out our interactions and I am able to check my ideas against what the teacher wants to achieve with the students.* (Teaching Artist 2009–2014)

> *The challenge is making sure that neither person (particularly the teaching artist) oversteps the other person's boundaries. As far as the classroom teacher is concerned, you are entering their space, environment and it is (I believe), up to the teaching artist to respect the already established standards whilst not ignoring their own.* (Teaching Artist 2013–2015)

In debriefing and focus group discussions as well as during individual interviews the teaching artists frequently comment on the personal and professional benefits they see they have gained from their involvement in the program. For example they highlight their own learning:

> *I learned just as much as the class teacher did.* (Teaching Artist, 2010–2011)

Some focus on learning about their teaching of drama and its potential for transforming classroom literacy:

> *I am refining the way that I teach strategies and have expanded my repertoire of strategies this year. The program has given me …a sense of satisfaction in my working life that I was not expecting to find outside of performance.* (Teaching Artist 2009–2015)

> *As always, the experience has been extremely positive, both professionally and personally. I am passionate about, and believe that the Creative Arts are central to learning. Being involved in School Drama provides inspiring and concrete examples of such learning while*

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[1] In New South Wales, the Creative Arts are a term used in primary schools and include four Arts subjects (Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Art).

deepening my understanding and appreciation of drama as a powerful medium for developing literacy. (Teaching Artist 2009–2015)

These comments indicate that Sydney Theatre Company has been able to create meaningful professional learning for the Teaching Artists as well as the teachers.

In Act 2 Scene ii, we examine how teachers perceive the learning gained by the teaching artist from working alongside them over the 7 weeks.

5   Act 2 Scene ii: The Teaching Artist Through the Teachers' Eyes

Consistently over the 10 years of the program the participating teachers have acknowledged the expertise of the professional actors working with their classes. In their post program questionnaires the teachers rank the one to one co- mentoring as the highest benefit with accolades such as:

> *The most valuable professional learning in my thirty year career; Brilliant mentors who are passionate about the program.*

Others focus on the collaborative aspect and the benefits of working together to achieve identified learning outcomes for the students:

> *The team teaching aspect … the support … getting to put ideas into practice;*
> *Two 'experts' working together for the benefit of students' learning outcomes.*
>
> *The actor from STC was exceptional. She quickly built a good rapport with the students and was able to handle difficult children if the need arose.*

When responding to what teachers feel the teaching artist gains from the experience, many teachers noted the deeper understanding and appreciation of what it is like to teach and the challenges of working with a range of students with diverse needs as illustrated by this comment:

> *A sense of the challenges faced by teachers: the diverse range of learning needs among students; behavioural issues and timetabling constraints; and the desire to develop strategies that address the literacy objective more specifically.* (Classroom Teacher 2015)

In the following section we extend our notion of collaborative learning to theorise that the co-mentoring model can facilitate a collaborative Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotskys 1978; Moll and Whitmore 1993; Ewing 2015).

6 Act 3: Teacher and Teaching Artist: A Collaborative Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotskly defined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as: a distance between the actual developmental level determined by individual problem solving and the level of development as determined through **problem solving under guidance or in collaboration** with more capable peers. (1978, p. 86, our emphasis).

The ZPD has most often been used to describe the scaffolding that a teacher engages in to enable a student to move to a new level of learning. Vygotsky theorised that dialogic and collaborative practices empowered learners to reframe a problem to formulate a potential solution in their own words. He emphasised the quality of the interaction and suggested that what begins collectively in discussion is then internalised by individual learners to be reframed for other learning contexts. Collaborative learning and development and individual learning and development are therefore integrally entwined with each other. Building on Vygotsky's (1978) notion of a Zone of Proximal Development and its elaboration over the last four decades (Moll and Whitmore 1993) Fernandez et al. (2001) theorised that the ZPD concept could also be extended to include symmetrical as well as asymmetrical relationships (e.g., Fernandez et al. 2001). Earlier we discussed the critical nature of the co-mentoring model of professional learning embodied in *School Drama™*. Where the program works best for both the teacher and the teaching artist, there is genuine co-planning, team teaching and ongoing dialogic learning from each other. It is our contention that where the relationship works best, a collaborative Zone of Proximal Development develops between the teaching artist and the teacher (Ewing 2015). Teachers and teaching artists challenge each other to extend their own learning and expertise. The artist shares their knowledge and expertise in creative learning through process drama devices while the teacher shares their knowledge of literacy, understanding of the students' learning needs and the particular school and classroom learning context. For this to be a truly dialogic relationship professionally extending both the teacher and teaching artist they must each provide sufficient time for reflection after each session and ongoing planning.

This collaborative ZPD is reflected in the comment of one teaching artist who argues:

> School Drama is a much more collaborative environment for everyone involved compared to other programs I've been involved in. It is not about the Teaching Artist showing the students and teacher how they can do something that they could mimic. It is about discovering things together and for the Teaching Artist to offer ways of making those discoveries.

A participant teacher discusses the dramatic extension of her learning:

> Well, who'd have thought that drama could actually be so engaging to teach? It has been an inspirational journey for me. Although my learning curve has been a steep one, I can see a whole range of ways that drama can be incorporated into the curriculum. (letter to artist, in Ewing 2010a)

In Saunders' (2015) case study, he worked as a teaching artist and researcher alongside classroom teacher, Linda O'Connor (pseudonym) with a Year 6 class. The pre-text selected for this *School Drama*™ experiences was *The Burnt Stick* (Hill 1994). Over the 7 weeks, Saunders recorded the short debrief conversations between O'Connor and Saunders. Some of these reflective interviews help illustrate the co-mentoring and co-learning model between the artist and teacher. The extract below followed a lesson where O'Connor and Saunders asked the students to lie down on the floor, close their eyes and listen to and visualise the story as they were reading the first section of the book. This was followed by a visualisation activity asking the students to imagine themselves in the two places the story is set and sharing what they can see, hear or feel.

> **O'Connor:** *You know, I think that letting them lie down and just listen, I think is excellent.*
> **Saunders:** *Oh you think it's helpful? I always wonder with it, because I feel like I like to just block it all out and just picture it. They weren't as silly as I thought they might have been.*
> **O'Connor**: *No. I think they would've been sillier if they were allowed to sit together and have their eyes open. I think that making them lay down and close their eyes, then that stopped that behaviour.*
> **Saunders:** *And I think even in that last part of the lesson after we had introduced the text and done the first round of the visualisation, it was during the second visualisation they started to deal with it in a more sensitive way and almost more respectful to the story and the place, I thought. There was less, you know, they were a bit chatty and not silly but you know, less focused at the beginning of the lesson but at the end of the lesson I thought there was a real ... they were really concentrating on what they were doing.*
> **O'Connor:** *Yeah, I think because they had read part of the story they've got a focus ... so they have got John Jagamarra now to focus on and think about. And Eamon[2] saying like exactly what the author wanted, that Pearl Bay Mission sounded fantastic at the beginning but then when you heard more that you realised that it wasn't such a nice place. Yeah, they were really listening. I thought it was great.* (12/08/2014)

Saunders made the following comments when reflecting on the conversation:

> *This reflective conversation with Linda made me realise what an impact the visualisation strategy can have on student learning and student engagement. Students were focused on the text and the learning and were starting to become more engaged in the work. I could see that the students knew I had a positive working relationship with Linda* [O'Connor] *and that our team-teaching approach was working well. It was obvious that Linda and I had worked together and had an understanding of how we would co-teach. I felt like the class were starting to trust me.*

At the end of the 7 weeks, Saunders noted that he felt he had learnt as much from working with Linda O'Connor as she had learnt from working with him. Even as a trained secondary teacher, Saunders noted that he learnt about teaching literacy from his experience working with O'Connor.

> *Funny, I had never heard of the 'Super Six Comprehension Strategies' that the NSW Department of Education developed. Linda introduced these to me during a conversation about metaxis. She told me about how 'connection' was a key comprehension strategy and we both talked a lot about how drama work is so strongly linked to making connections and*

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[2] Pseudonym.

> other literacy strategies….I think Linda's use of teacher-in-role was particularly interest-
> ing. She took on the role of one of the characters and was hot-seated by the students. It
> opened my eyes to see how she added extra detail, particularly about the historical context
> of the story into the learning through this drama device… to be honest, I think I just really
> enjoyed teaching with someone else. Our skill sets complemented each others and we had
> such different experiences in our teaching careers, that we both had things we could learn
> from the other. It was fantastic. It was collaborative and it was really engaging to co-plan
> and co-teach with Linda.

During the final debrief with Linda, Saunders asked her what she felt she had learnt
from the experience. Linda said:

> I always learn a lot. I do. And I love being involved in it. It is just amazing to see the kids
> engaged and learning. So they are not only engaged by they are learning as well and then
> I'm learning and getting new ideas and thinking how I can, you know, implement those new
> drama strategies somewhere else. So yeah, I just think its fantastic professional learning
> and that it doesn't matter how experienced a teacher you are, there is always something you
> can learn and use and make your own. So, you know, you can take it on board and think
> about it and do it in your way.

There is also an emerging case for a collaborative ZPD with the students. For exam-
ple, during the final interview with Linda, she mentioned how she learnt about the
text from her students.

> I was surprised by just the depth of their thinking and again their thoughts and things that
> I hadn't even considered when I analysed the text….And sometimes the connections that
> they make are surprising as well. So I just think that also means that as a teacher, you can
> learn from your students as well. I suppose …I am a learner as well and I'm quite happy to
> learn from them and I think that contributes to creating a supportive environment.

In this extract, the class teacher is starting to describe the asymmetrical collabora-
tive ZPD relationship occurring between teacher, students and artist.

7 Finale: Implications and Longterm Sustainability of *School Drama*

Given the challenges facing theatre companies and their educational programs in
the current Australian context including increasing cuts to Arts programs, this sec-
tion considers the longterm sustainability of *School Drama*™. We draw on the pro-
gram evaluations, the 5 year meta-analysis of the evaluation (Gibson and Smith
2013); the pilot of the program in South Australia and Albury Wodonga; interviews
with the STC artistic director and management as well as several case studies of
teachers and teaching artists involved over the life of the program.

Overall, participant teachers report a range of positive outcomes enabled by the
implementation of drama strategies in their classroom English program. Participant
teaching artists and teachers also report that the in-classroom professional learning
that occurs during *School Drama*™ develops teacher confidence to use drama strate-
gies as effective tools for learning and teaching particularly in English and literacy

but in addition more generally across the curriculum. Despite the short 7 week in-class time frame, which has often been suggested by teachers at the beginning of the program as not long enough, teachers report that student literacy outcomes are enhanced and this is evidenced by the pre-and post-benchmarking they undertake with students they have chosen to profile. Other drawbacks to the longterm sustainability of the program in a school can relate to the transfer of a supportive principal or significant staff changes. In some cases, however, the transferred teacher has initiated *School Drama™* in another school context. In a recent debriefing with teaching artists it was also felt that term 4 proved to be more rushed than the other terms with end of year celebrations sometimes intruding. In addition there was some discussion of whether the class teacher was in the 'right' space in their teaching journey to participate in the professional learning program. Some teachers were asked by school leadership to do the program and this has, from time to time led to a prickly start to the co-planning and co-teaching. Some teachers are struggling with aspects of their role and additional activities (like this program) can be seen as a burden, rather than an opportunity.

Gibson and Smith's (2013) meta-analysis of the annual evaluations from 2009 to 2012 marked the end of the pilot phase and proved the efficacy of the teacher professional learning program. Their report *The School Drama Project Meta-Evaluation 2009–2012* analysed information gathered over 4 years from participants including teacher pre- and post-program surveys, teacher and teaching artist post-engagement interviews, student pre- and post-program benchmarked work samples, and some student evaluations and observations. Gibson and Smith concluded that there was very strong evidence that teachers involved in the program increased their knowledge and confidence in using Drama-based pedagogy with quality literature; unequivocal evidence about the efficacy of the co-mentoring model between the teaching artist and class teacher; and evidence of improved student literacy through the benchmarking tasks and improvements in student confidence (Gibson and Smith 2013). Robertson (2010) and Sze's (2013) case studies explored particular classes who participated in the *School Drama™* program. Robertson (2010) documented the teacher professional learning involved in the co-mentoring model and Sze (2013) analysed the sustainability of the program through interviews with both the principal and a participant teacher. Smith (2014) extended this case study to look at the impact of the program on teachers who had not participated directly in the work with the teaching artist.

Gibson and Smith's (2013) meta-analysis identified an issue with benchmarking in the data evaluated from 2009 to 2013. As a result of individual teachers designing their own student benchmarking tasks and rubrics during this period, comparison of data collected from school to school proved difficult, They recommended that:

> *If information on changes in students' learning during the implementation of the SDP* [School Drama program] *is to be continued then the literacy area and outcomes to be achieved should be specified and targeted benchmark strategies and a proforma for teachers' detailed analysis and report be developed and provided.* (Gibson and Smith 2013, p. 5)

In response from 2014 Saunders and Ewing limited the benchmarking to the four most frequently cited English focus areas (descriptive writing, narrative writing, inferential comprehension and oracy) and developed protocols as guides for both the pre and post benchmarking.

Saunders' (2015) research found that over the 7 weeks of the program, the class he worked with demonstrated positive shifts in literacy achievement in inferential comprehension and descriptive language (through the student pre-program and post-program testing) (Fig. 2).

In addition, the students who were achieving at a mid to low level in the pre-program literacy tests had the strongest increases in literacy.

In addition, Saunders also noted positive shifts in empathy, motivation and engagement in the Year 6 students he worked with. These shifts were noted by the teacher and students. The students articulated how they observed the drama work contributed to their own learning and engagement. Some students made comments about enjoying embodying the characters, or 'acting' parts of the story out, while other students discussed links between drama and how they felt it helped them develop their comprehension and descriptive language. Surprisingly, even the students who only had minimal movement in their academic achievement in the pre- to post-program benchmarking tests explained that they felt the drama work had helped them deepen their understanding of both the text and the context. This growth in non-academic outcomes especially increased empathy and engagement identified by all participants in Saunders' case study merits further investigation.
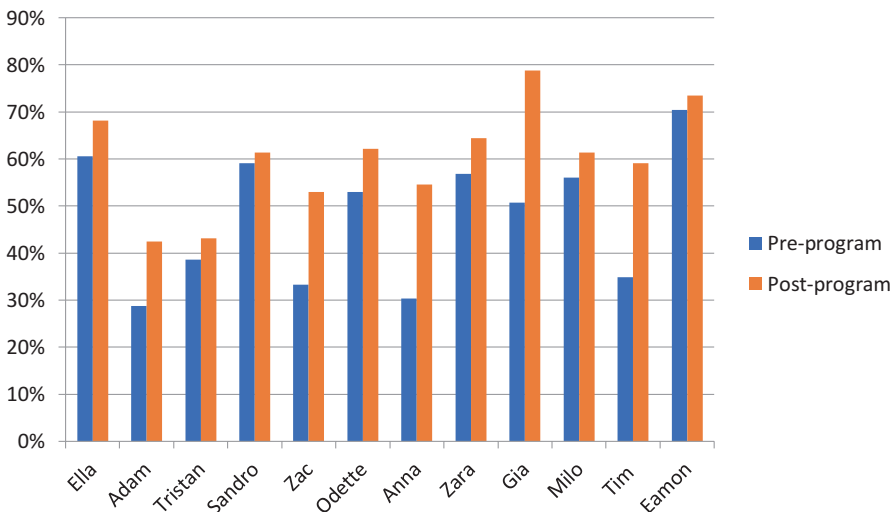

Fig. 2 Student pre- and post-program benchmarking results comparing literacy achievement before and after the program

8 Coda

The *School Drama™* journey continues. Upton and Blanchett originally hoped that the co-mentoring teacher professional learning model of a State Theatre Company – University partnership would be adopted in every Australian state. After 10 years this possibility is becoming a reality. In 2018 several other state theatre companies and education authorities have indicated their interest in exploring the program. Long term sustainability both in terms of teachers' ongoing use of drama as critical, quality pedagogy in their enacted curriculum can only be substantially measured over time. Similarly, investigating whether student understanding, empathy and engagement in learning continues to be deepened through their use of drama conventions to interrogate text is a long term proposition and may be difficult and expensive to action. Nevertheless we are reminded that because these kind of outcomes are difficult to assess does not mean they are any less important.

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Education at Roundabout: It's About Turning Classrooms into Theatres, and the Theatre into a Classroom

Jennifer DiBella, Mitch Mattson, and Jonathan P. Jones

Abstract The intersection of a professional theatre company and a country's largest public school system is rich for reflection and development. This article explores that space in relation to Roundabout Theatre Company, a not-for-profit Broadway theatre company with in-school and after-school residency models, and more than a dozen New York City public school partnerships. The article describes Roundabout's lesson planning and facilitation methodology, the Theatrical Teaching Framework, and the program's 20-year history. That history includes situating arts education within the NYC Department of Education over those years. The evaluation demonstrates that although there are positive outcomes for young people and teachers (classroom and pre-service), the challenges of school leadership turnover and mainstage representation remain independent of the arts integration goals and skill building achievements. The reasons for these outcomes are explored and examples of classroom impact are shared in this chapter.

Keywords Roundabout Theatre Company · New York City Department of Education · Arts education · Theatrical Teaching Framework · Aristotle's Poetics · Thematic question · Co-teaching · Classroom residency · World AIDS Day · Common Core learning standards · International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) · City College of New York · School of Education

J. DiBella (✉) · M. Mattson
Roundabout Theatre Company, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: Jenniferd@roundabouttheatre.org; mitchm@roundabouttheatre.org

J. P. Jones
Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions-Educational Theatre Faculty,
New York University, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: jonathan.jones@nyu.edu

1 Introduction

Turning theatres into classrooms and the classrooms of New York City into theatres — that is what Education at Roundabout prides itself on achieving each year for over 18,000 students and educators across 265 schools. For over 20 years, Roundabout has developed education programs that aim to provide participants with access to the arts, encourage them to be active participants in their education, cultivate skills they will need to succeed in college and careers, and give their teachers the tools to help students flourish. Education at Roundabout strives to use theatre to enhance teacher practice and deepen student learning by engaging participants in active learning and collaboration, empowering participants to become agents in their own learning and lives, connecting their work and participants to Roundabout Theatre Company, engaging participants in exploration of the universal themes found in Roundabout's shows, and customizing their work to accommodate the needs and interests of their participants. Roundabout is dedicated to using its resources as a professional theatre to accomplish the following objectives: transform the classrooms of New York City public schools by creating learning opportunities across all disciplines through the exploration of theatre and by collaborating with teachers and teaching artists to infuse theatrical teaching strategies into their curriculum; engage students in theatre experiences that explore the universal themes of the human condition and develop their ability to think critically about the theatre they attend; build a community of confident, expressive young people who, in producing classic and original plays, are committed to and responsible for their own learning; foster a new generation of artists and arts administrators by providing career development opportunities through apprenticeships and internships in Roundabout's administrative and production departments; and expand the impact of Roundabout's productions by providing historical, literary and social contexts in the classroom and the theatre.

Roundabout employs over 50 highly trained teaching artists with diverse artistic backgrounds. The teaching artists' practice is grounded in a unique instructional model which melds a backwards design approach with a structure that is loosely based on Aristotle's *Poetics*. Developed by Roundabout staff members, the Theatrical Teaching Framework posits that every great lesson has the elements of a great play (Roundabout 2015b). When employing the Framework, Roundabout teaching artists first identify the aim for a given residency or workshop which is posed as a thematic question and align their lessons with the theatrical plot structure which is meant to provide a sequence of activities that builds towards learners' understanding of the thematic question. Elements of plot that comprise the Framework include: inciting incident, exposition, rising action, moment of truth, falling action, and denouement. Further, the teaching artists and partner teachers consider ways to incorporate artistry, character, language, musicality, and spectacle to better engage participants. The goal is to craft a lesson that is highly engaging, well-scaffolded, academically rigorous, and connects theatre skills with the core curriculum.

This Teaching Framework is an important engagement tool, especially when working with underserved populations. Working in all five boroughs of New York

City, 76% of the students that Roundabout engages with come from economically disadvantaged communities who are living below the poverty line. In comparison, "by the time they reach 6th grade, middle class kids have likely spent 6,000 more hours learning than kids born into poverty" (The After School Corporation 2015). Roundabout teaching artists and partner teachers utilize the Framework to increase the learning opportunities for these underserved student populations.

This chapter explores how Education at Roundabout navigates challenges that have emerged from their school partnership programs utilizing the categories and definitions from Roundabout's unique pedagogy, the Theatrical Teaching Framework, as a lens of inquiry.

2   Thematic Question: The Line of Inquiry or Challenge that the Learners Investigate

How does a Broadway Theatre Company respond to the challenges that emerge when they partner with the nation's largest public school system in an effort to provide innovative education programs for underserved young people?

3   Inciting Incident: Learners *Engage* in the Investigation of the Thematic Question Through an Action or Event

> One of the classes was oppositional and defiant. I felt they were not open to me or to theatre in general, and as I started the story whoosh, I realized that nobody was going to participate. After Ms. X interceded and I explained the rationale for the activity, I made an adjustment and had everyone make a tableau for each character I described. In this way, no one had to be in the spotlight, and we asked for full participation from everyone. It wasn't ideal, but it felt like the right adjustment for this group. (Roundabout 2016)

While there is nothing particularly unique about the circumstance this teaching artist described following the conclusion of a residency at an Education at Roundabout partner school in 2016, it does point to the body of challenges that have been documented during recent academic years at Roundabout's partner schools. A 2014 evaluation report by Philliber Research Associates (PRA) which was commissioned by Education at Roundabout identified challenges and program recommendations from Project Coordinators (Roundabout staff), school principals, partner teachers, and teaching artists alike. Though all stakeholders were widely positive about their experiences participating in these school-wide partnerships, the challenges serve as the 'events' that Education at Roundabout needs to address in order to answer the thematic question.

The Project Coordinators identified the following: a lack of understanding of partnership goals on the part of administrators and teachers, teachers who were only somewhat interested in taking students to the theatre and find it difficult to take

students on field trips, a lack of sequential arts programming in some partner schools which would support students who are interested in pursuing a career in the arts, and a lack in the availability of information on colleges and careers in the arts. Additionally, the Project Coordinators seldom observed their partner teachers enlisting the expertise of colleagues, using theatre in the classroom as part of their teaching, or initiating theatrical projects though the principals and administrators claimed these activities were happening with more frequency.

The partner teachers identified a lack of co-planning time and scheduling difficulties with the teaching artist, and an overall lack of time with the teaching artist. Contrasting this, the principals did not identify any challenges regarding the partnerships, though they did indicate a number of ways that the partnerships could be built upon which included focusing on student 'buy-in' and commitment from day 1, building partnerships with non-theatre teachers, building capacity in the ESL classroom, creating plays that have to do with world history, curriculum mapping, teaching strategies utilizing the arts, and expanding the partnerships to reach more students.

The teaching artists identified student behavior as a considerable challenge, whether the students were rambunctious or subdued. Time management was also a challenge, as were student punctuality and attendance, interpersonal concerns with the partner teachers, inadequate space, and lack of access to materials.

The PRA report provided additional anecdotes from the teaching artists which included, "One of my 'cool kid' students was not pleased about seeing *Harvey*. She said, 'I am really NOT excited about this play.' I encouraged her to give it a try. Well, when the show was over, her entire body language had changed. She could hardly sit still and was smiling from ear-to-ear." Another teaching artist shared, "A student said on the first day of the unit, 'I hate this class. I hate Shakespeare. This is stupid. I don't want to do it.' The last week of the unit, the same girl stormed into class and said, 'You didn't pick me to act for everyone. Why not? You don't like me? I'm acting. That's it.' All of this was said in a loving, non-threatening way, and it actually testified to the success of the unit." Like the anecdote that began this inciting incident, these quotes demonstrate the temporal nature of some of these aforementioned challenges as interest and behavior on the part of all stakeholders changes over time. However, whereas the teaching artist or partner teacher can alter their lesson plans in the moment or over the course of a unit of study, some of the challenges mentioned above point to more systemic concerns that Education at Roundabout will need to navigate in order to achieve success in their school partnerships.

4   Exposition: The Vocabulary, Concepts, and Tools That Will *Introduce* Learners to and Allow Them to Investigate the Thematic Question

In order to investigate the thematic question and situate the challenges identified above, this section provides a brief overview of Education at Roundabout, an introduction to the small schools movement in New York City (which constitute many of

the schools that participate in the school-wide partnerships), an overview of the school partnership curriculum models, and the evaluation and data collection processes which produced the challenges identified in the inciting incident.

According to their mission statement, Roundabout Theatre Company is committed to producing the highest quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure, and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company, Roundabout fulfils its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences. Founded in 1965, Roundabout Theatre Company has grown from a small 150-seat theatre in a converted supermarket basement to become the nation's most influential not-for-profit theatre company, as well as one of New York City's leading cultural institutions. With five stages on and off Broadway, Roundabout now reaches over 700,000 theatergoers, students, educators and artists across the country and around the world every year.

Roundabout's education programs are designed to engage students in non-traditional ways of learning in order to help them acquire the skills needed to be productive, engaged citizens. The aims of Roundabout's education programs are to: (1) provide access to theatre for students with limited or no exposure to the arts; (2) provide enriching in-school programs for students and schools most in need; (3) motivate students to stay in school and graduate; (4) better prepare young people for success in college and careers; and (5) help teachers and school leaders engage their students and connect their work to the Common Core Standards. Roundabout endeavors to achieve these goals through education programs that range from school-wide partnerships and afterschool programs, to professional development workshops for teachers, and a comprehensive apprenticeship program. Roundabout also provides a wide variety of adult learning programs for subscribers and other patrons through the Theatre Plus programs.

The most recognizable and one of the oldest formal drama programs in the New York City public school system is at LaGuardia Arts High School. Founded as the School of Performing Arts in 1948, a theatrical training program is offered in addition to the standard academic curriculum prescribed by the New York City Department of Education (Grubin 1983; LaGuardia High School 2015). LaGuardia was followed by Talent Unlimited in 1973. Talent Unlimited began as an arts program that required students to attend their home schools for academic work, and then they attended Talent Unlimited for arts instruction each afternoon. Subsequently, their programming was expanded into a stand-alone school for the performing arts (Talent Unlimited High School 2016). In addition to LaGuardia Arts and Talent Unlimited, the Professional Performing Arts School opened in 1990 as a combined middle and high school offering similar programming to that of LaGuardia albeit with a significantly smaller enrollment (Professional Performing Arts School 2015). These schools are highly selective, leaving students with an interest in theatre arts who could not gain admission at one of these schools with few options for a sequenced education in theatre unless schools without a theatre focus happened to offer such a program which were considerably limited.

New York City's small public high schools of choice (SSCs) have helped to address this limitation, particularly those with specialization in the performing arts. SSCs are small schools that exist within larger comprehensive schools. Starting in 2002, the SSCs were meant to promote "academic rigor, real-world relevance, and personalized relationships" (Unterman 2014, p. 2). Education at Roundabout partners with five of these SSCs including Bronx Theatre High School, Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre, Brooklyn Theatre Arts High School, Fordham High School for the Arts, and Repertory Company High School for Theatre Arts. In fact, Education at Roundabout developed Bronx Theatre High School and Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre as part of New York City's New Century High Schools initiative. In the case of Bronx Theatre High School, Roundabout developed the school in 2003, not necessarily to address the lack of access to arts-specialized high schools, but to create a neighborhood school where theatre is used throughout the school curriculum to theatricalize and enliven teacher practice and in turn keep students engaged in school. Over a decade later, Bronx Theatre High School and the four other partner schools are thriving with an average 4 year graduation rate in 2013–2014 of 77.4% (New York City Department of Education 2016a) compared to the New York City average of 68.4% (New York City Department of Education 2016b).

The school-wide partnerships provide custom created residencies designed to meet the needs of each school across all subject areas, from language arts and history to math and science, and provide students with opportunities to attend Roundabout productions. These residencies follow four different curriculum models: perspectives, curriculum connections, script analysis, and producing partners. The perspectives residency explores a central literary, historical, or sociological theme through the study of theatrical discipline. Students then explore that theme through the lens of another theatrical discipline to deepen their understanding of that theme through different perspectives with twelve visits from a lead teaching artist and four visits with a design teaching artist. The curriculum connections residency is structured around the content, skills, and learning that students need in core subject areas with ten visits from a Roundabout teaching artist. The script analysis residency is aimed at improving literacy and comprehension. Using script analysis techniques, students examine a theatrical text to explore the given circumstances and make inferences based on evidence found in the text during ten visits from a Roundabout teaching artist. Finally, the producing partners residency provides the resources of a professional company to engage students in the practice of theatrical skills. Working on their own production with teaching artists in all areas of theatre (design, directing, stage management), partners replicate the functions of a professional theatre during ten theatrical mentoring sessions with a Roundabout teaching artist.

The role of the partner teacher is integral in each of these residency models. Rather than having the teaching artist show up and work with the students, the partner teacher attends an initial orientation meeting with the teaching artist to plan the scope of the residency, they participate in one co-planning meeting for each workshop, they develop lesson plans with the teaching artist, they team-teach each work-

shop with the teaching artist, they support the residency goals in between the teaching artist visits, assist school administrators with the logistics of the field trip to the Roundabout performance, insure students follow proper theatre etiquette while at the performance, and complete an impact report at the conclusion of the residency. The teaching artist participates in the partnership in collaboration with the partner teacher as outlined above, in addition to aligning with the partner teacher's curriculum goals and Common Core Standards, connecting the residency to a current Roundabout production through skills, content, or themes, serving as a theatre guide during the performance field trip, and sharing a residency plan, mid-residency report, and reflection packet (teaching artist impact report, teacher impact report, and student surveys) for the residency.

The reports indicated above form the basis of Education at Roundabout's evaluation processes. The evaluations collected include the residency plan, the mid-residency report, the teaching artist impact report, the teacher impact report, and student surveys which are conducted both at the start and conclusion of the residency. These reports provided the bulk of data for the 2014 Evaluation Report by PRA, though they also utilized additional evaluation forms completed by the Project Coordinator (Roundabout staff) and the school principals. Most of the questions relate to similar themes across participant pools in order to gather diverse perceptions of similar prompts (such as: participants are engaged in active learning, participants engage in theatrical processes, and other items relating to artistic choices, self-expression, and critical thinking skills). These prompts are rated using a Likert-scale, with ranges including never, seldom, sometimes, and often or not well at all, not very well, somewhat well, and very well. Additionally, there are short constructed response prompts which allow the participants to provide narrative responses. The anecdotes provided in the inciting incident were obtained from these short constructed response prompts.

The volume of evaluation data that Education at Roundabout has amassed demonstrates their dedication to understanding the effectiveness of their programming. They can (and do) utilize this data in order to identify the challenges that are emerging within individuals programs, take steps to address these challenges, and improve the overall efficacy of the work that they do.

5   Rising Action: Learners *Apply* Vocabulary, Concepts, and Tools to Respond to the Thematic Question Through a Sequence of Activities

In light of the overall goals and implementation of Education at Roundabout's school-wide partnerships and the ongoing evaluative activities, we return to our thematic question: how does Roundabout respond to the challenges that emerge when they partner with the nation's largest public school system in an effort to provide innovative theatre education programs for underserved young people?

Though the myriad challenges referenced in the inciting incident are considerable, analysis of the collected data shows that the Roundabout show-going experience is the first professional theatre experience for 35% of the students, 40% of participating students speak English as a second language, 100% of the partner teachers reported the Roundabout residency/lesson curriculum was clearly connected to the Common Core Learning Standards, and 96% of students have their artistic choices realized on stage or in a theatrical class project.

In the pre-residency survey of eighth graders at one partner middle school, the majority of student surveyed (217 students) reported that they wanted to come to class *sometimes*, but after the Roundabout residency the great majority reported that they wanted to come to this class *often*. The significance of this increase is supported by a rise in student and teacher reported participation in discussion/activities and working with other classmates. This is important because the element that Roundabout teaching artists are bringing to the classroom is not curriculum – it is theatre. Theatre and artistry are used to teach the classroom curriculum and it is working in so far as it enables students to work collaboratively more often, and with a greater desire to learn.

One recent example of this growth took place in the fall of 2014 at a high school in Manhattan. In a mixed grade classroom a project was set up to explore issues of identity and perception around HIV and World AIDS Day. A Roundabout teaching artist playwright asked students to consider: how do actors use photographs to inspire and create character and story? It is important to note that in the fall of 2014 much of the media was consumed with stories about the Ebola virus. The teaching artist reflected on the experience with this story:

> The student is from Ghana. She has experienced a lot of abuse and prejudice from other students in the school about being African. We encouraged her to write a monologue about her feelings about Africa and HIV. She had previously told us that what her peers often say to her makes her ashamed to be African. She wrote the speech. […] When she presented, she brought all her passion and anger to the piece. When she started, the audience was not with her – they were heckling – yes, HIV does come from Africa; yes, Ebola does come from Africa. But, she continued, impassioned. The audience started to agree with her, and join her in unity – she turned the audience around and got an enormous, enormous round of applause. When she finished with "We all come from Mother Africa," Mrs. D and I were crying.

Four months later, the student was asked to share her monologue and represent her school on Roundabout's Broadway stage at the 2015 Student Theatre Arts Festival, where she faced a similarly enthusiastic audience response.

Education at Roundabout benefits greatly from the privileges of working with the main stage productions. The staff and teaching artists have access to incredible resources, including a comprehensive archive, which is housed in Roundabout's main administrative offices. Students and teachers have access to award winning Roundabout artists, post-show talks, artist visits to classrooms, and speakers for graduation events. The programs are funded through government grants, foundations, individual donors, and small contributions from each partner school. Roundabout's Executive Staff and Board of Directors are extremely supportive of the education programs, which fosters an environment of innovation and rigor.

Having access to Roundabout's resources allows the Education staff and teaching artists to be responsive to trends in education. For example, when the Common Core Standards were first introduced in 2009, Roundabout was able to dedicate time to look for natural alignments within existing programming and train the staff to help teachers and students as they adopted the new standards. To prepare their teaching artists and partner teachers, Roundabout slowly started integrating the Common Core language and instructional shifts into the bi-annual teaching artist training seminars and professional development workshops for classroom teachers before the standards were officially rolled out.

In order to better prepare students for college and careers, the Common Core initiative asks educators to shift from content-based instruction towards skill-based learning. This shift aims to give students the tools to access the content information they need to excel in whatever subject area they choose to explore. This "skills-based" shift aligned with the arts integration work that Roundabout was already facilitating in classrooms. Theatre artists are required to carefully analyze a script and make choices based on evidence found in the text. Skills like close reading and identifying the author's purpose are important to helping students make strong artistic choices. Another big push found in the English Language Arts Common Core is an emphasis on using non-fiction and informational texts. In order to support this initiative, Roundabout encourages partner teachers and teaching artists to use historical primary sources and scholarly articles to help build a social, political and cultural context for plays they are exploring with students. Furthermore, they are reminded to use Roundabout's Upstage Playgoers Guides, which include interviews with artists working on the main stage productions, which are strong examples of non-fiction resources (Roundabout 2015a).

The Common Core also aligns with Roundabout Theatrical Teaching Framework. One of the most important elements of the Framework is "Language." The Common Core requires "regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary." By asking educators to be intentional about their language and vocabulary choices, Roundabout is supporting the language acquisition skills that students' need in order to be successful in college and careers – introducing students to professional language and concepts during classroom and after-school residencies.

6   Moment of Truth: Learners *Demonstrate* Their Understanding of the Thematic Question

Although working with small schools has proved successful in many ways, Roundabout still faces many challenges navigating these distinctive environments. From leadership changes, to sharing performance spaces, to high teacher turnover, working in these small specialized high schools can be difficult and risky. A report by the Center for New York City Affairs states that "teacher turnover is higher in the small schools than in the system overall. Several new schools lost nearly half their teachers in a one-year period. Principal turnover has also been high: fifty-six of 124

principals—nearly half—hired to open new schools between 2002 and 2004 have departed" (Hemphill et al. 2009). Since 2003, Roundabout's Bronx Theatre High School has had three principals. Additionally, Roundabout teaching artists and staff will often invest a great deal of time and resources into a new teacher only to have them leave the following year.

This inconsistency challenges both Project Coordinators and teaching artists alike as relationship development and maintenance is so important to the residency model. However, the requirement that the teaching artist and partner teacher first meet to identify curricular goals for the residency helps to counteract this. This way, even if the stakeholders change, the model remains the same: these two professionals come together to establish goals for the partnership, the teaching artist introduces the Framework, and the two collaborate on planning and team teaching throughout the duration of residency. Additionally, Roundabout offers an annual Theatrical Teaching Institute each summer which is a 6-day professional development program for teachers, other professional development programs for theatre teachers through the New York City Department of Education's Office of Arts and Special Programs, and the bi-annual Teaching Artist Lab which offers professional development for the Roundabout teaching artists. These programs support the teachers and teaching artists, introducing new concepts to some (the Framework and residency models) and offering a review of the policies and procedures for the residency models for the veteran teachers and teaching artists.

Providing education and outreach programs as part of a large non-profit theatre company comes with its privileges and challenges. It is a main tenant of Roundabout's education programs to connect residency work to the main stage productions. Teaching artists make connections to the theme, content, and/or the form of the theatrical piece the students are working on by using the skills and form of a theatrical discipline to activate content from a core subject area. In general, the lack of diversity in artistic and professional staff as well as in characters and stories presented on stage is a major challenge on Broadway. A 2013 study by The Asian American Performers Action Coalition showed that in the 2011–2012 season, only 6.1% of performers in Roundabout shows were from minority groups compared to an average of 19% minority performers for sixteen non-profit theatres in New York City. As such, it is sometimes hard for Roundabout's students (most of whom are people of color) to make personal connections to the artists working on the main stage. The focus on thematic and content connections in the residency models helps to bridge this divide, but in order for the Education program to make real headway in this area, the play selection and casting choices at the Company at large (and indeed, across all professional theatre) need to be re-examined. To that end, Roundabout is committed to producing work by playwrights from traditionally under represented communities, a good example of this is the 2015 production of *Little Children Dream of God* by Jeff Augustin which tells the contemporary story of a Haitian immigrant. Moving forward the organization is also committed to casting more people of color on all stages, though the statistics from the 2011–2012 season demonstrate that the Company has work to do in this area.

And of course, Education at Roundabout is still left with the challenges identified in the inciting incident. How can Education at Roundabout respond to the growing list of challenges and continue to deliver high quality educational experiences? The answer is simple: address the challenges that they can control, and develop new programing to meet the growing needs of their participants. The following anecdotes provide a window into how Education at Roundabout is working towards addressing their participants' needs through the implementation of new programming.

> The classroom teacher turns off the lights. The students look around. With the curtain pulled shut, the only light in the room comes from a clip light with a red gel. It sits on the floor in the center of the room. The teaching artist warms his hands over the "fire" and gestures for the students to join him. They leave their seats and circle up: some warm their hands; a few make invisible s'mores. The lighting design teaching artist asks, "How did this one light transform this classroom?"

> A class at a high school on Staten Island is exploring advertising art. In a 12-week residency with a theatre business teaching artist and partner teacher the students explore the Thematic Question: "How does a theatre company's marketing, archives, and audience services departments support the theatre's artistic mission?" During the visits, through the lens of Roundabout shows and business practices, the students learn about audience services, immersive design, archivist, branding, graphic design, digital marketing, email marketing, ad buys, networking, and constituent management databases. They come to understand how Roundabout's marketing department works with outside vendors; how key art is adapted in house for a variety of applications; how email marketing works on a basic level; how a marketing manager thinks about leadership and strategy; how to access an archive and what is held there. The post residency application of these skills is providing the marketing and design themes for the school's holiday concert. The students are empowered as the designers, the marketers, the decision makers, and use industry language and standards whereever possible.

These two examples identify Education at Roundabout's unique focus on technical theatre residencies and making concrete curriculum connections to business, math, and science. The PRA report (2014) indicated that up to that point, most of Roundabout's partner teachers were from English language arts or theatre faculty, and if Roundabout wanted to meet their goal of broadening their involvement in the partner schools, they would need to engage with more partner teachers from other subject areas. These two residencies are emblematic of how these new connections can function and still utilize the Framework.

The Common Core asks that, whenever possible, educators provide a connection to "industry" so that students can be exposed to varied possible career options. Over the past three years, Roundabout has worked to capitalize on the rich resources the theatre has to offer students in their partner schools and after school programs. Not only do students regularly attend Broadway and Off-Broadway productions, and have the opportunity to meet with professional actors, but Roundabout also looks for less traditional connections to professionals in the field. For example, a partnership was created with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) to create the "Hidden Career Path" program, where students meet IATSE members working at Broadway theatres to learn in detail about their roles and

responsibilities and to receive all access tours of the professional spaces. Additionally, they have developed and implemented the College and Career Readiness Day (CCRD), an annual event that provides the juniors and seniors at schoolwide-partner schools an opportunity to learn more about arts-focused colleges and careers. In 2016, the CCRD was attended by 77 students from six schools. Workshops were provided to prepare students for college applications; theatre professionals sat on panels to engage with the participants about how to obtain requisite training for their positions; mock interviews were held; and participants had the opportunity to establish networks with students from other partner schools.

7 Falling Action: Learners *Reflect* on the Moment of Truth, Articulate Their Choices, and Justify Their Responses to the Thematic Question

In the fall of 2015, Education at Roundabout formed partnerships with two institutions: City College of New York and Columbia University. Roundabout partnered with City College of New York's School of Education to create a new course for pre-service teachers and teaching artists. The "Fundamentals of Teaching Technical Theatre" develops students' content area knowledge and pedagogical philosophy of design and technical theatre disciplines including scenic, lighting, costume, sound, and stage management. Candidates experience, examine, and experiment with the teaching of technical theatre disciplines for classes K-12. The latter half of the course provides hands on experience mentoring middle school students through a production process. The class takes place at Roundabout's Education Studio and a public school in Harlem.

With Columbia, Roundabout's education staff worked with faculty to establish a specialized training course for 30 MFA students. The curriculum was adapted from Roundabout's Theatrical Teaching Institute, a week-long professional development intensive for classroom teachers and teaching artists. This opportunity provided Columbia students with practical experience that may help them in securing teaching positions when they graduate.

These two partnerships with higher education institutions as well as the existing education programs align with Roundabout's desire to support students and future educators. Roundabout is also creating a new Theatrical Workforce Development Program to connect recent high school graduates to the industry. The program reflects Roundabout's efforts to take a leadership role in the creation of a training program for New York City public school students that results in tangible pathways to careers in technical theatre. This three-year program will train and help to place 20 high school graduates each year into paying professional production positions. The program's goals include providing tangible pathways to careers for New York public school students who may not have the resources for a four-year degree training program or to work without pay as they gain experience, educating and encour-

aging a new generation of theatre professionals, and diversifying the field of professional theatre as the larger entertainment industry seeks to connect to new and diverse audiences that better reflect the make-up of the community at large.

8   Denouement: Learners *Anticipate* How Their Responses to the Thematic Question Might Be Applicable in the Future

As Education at Roundabout moves forward with their recent initiatives, it will continue to refine existing programs which will enable them to both address the challenges that have emerged in their existing programming, while also expanding the scope of their offerings to meet the wider needs of their participants. Education at Roundabout seeks to transform, build, foster, and expand the role of the arts in the lives of young people, whether that involves making cross-curricular connections to theatre, providing a direct pathway to professions in technical theatre, or developing future audiences for the theatre company which will in turn help to create a community of engaged and empathic citizens.

The recent initiatives at Roundabout will do little to impact the teacher and principal turnover rate, but rather, maintaining relationships and expanding their reach within these schools enables their partnerships to become a fixture of the curriculum at these sites, regardless of the staffing changes. Further, the new initiatives remain untested, but Roundabout's commitment to data collection, analyzing the results of program evaluations, and willingness to revise existing programs and implement new ones when warranted demonstrates an ethic of reflective practice which the field as a whole would do well to establish at all levels of arts partnerships.

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Arena Theatre's Big Fish: The *Marlin* Project: Finding New Meanings in the Spaces Between Audience and Participation in Theatre for Young People

Christine Sinclair, Richard Sallis, Christian Leavesley, and Jolyon James

Abstract This chapter examines an exploration of the intersection between theatrical performance and theatrical experience by Arena Theatre Company, one of Australia's longest-running producers of theatre for young people. A case study sits at the centre of this chapter. It focuses on *Marlin,* a project where young people (ages 8–12) were invited to be both audience and active participants in two thematically linked experiences – a mainstage theatre production and an interactive theatrical event.

The chapter interrogates the ways in which Arena theatre seeks to forge new relationships with audience by the crafting of new forms, built upon the foundations of core drama-in-education/theatre-in-education principles made new in the hands of innovative, deeply reflective and reflexive young artists. The artistic aspirations of the company are contextualized by a discussion of questions which are compelling for contemporary theatre for young people companies – what is success and how is it measured; what is renewal and how is it crafted ethically and aesthetically?

Keywords Immersive theatre · Play · Performance · Young audiences · Theatrical form · Drama-in-education · Twilight role · Metaxis

Learning, the educational process, has long been associated only with the glum. Marshall McLuhan

C. Sinclair (✉) · R. Sallis
Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: cesi@unimelb.edu.au; sallis@unimelb.edu.au

C. Leavesley · J. James
Arena Theatre Company, Bendigo, VIC, Australia
e-mail: christian@arenatheatre.com.au; jolyon@arenatheatre.com.au

Arena Theatre Company (Arena) is one of Australia's leading producers of performance for young audiences (ages 5–25). Formed in 1966, its work is based around the central question of 'What is the role of performance for young people in today's world?' Its vision is founded on the belief that:

> Theatre creates a space that is surprising, alive, fertile, explosive, dangerous and inspiring … where contemporary human experience can be uniquely expressed, felt, celebrated and reinvented. It is a space to which everyone is entitled, on equal terms (Arena Theatre Company 2015a).

Arena has generated a body of cutting edge theatrical work, forging relationships with young people through a progression of innovative outreach programs in the nexus between performance and audience.

Recently the company has embarked on an artistic interrogation of contemporary intersections between theatrical *performance* and theatrical *experience*. In the *Marlin* project, young people (aged 8–12) had the opportunity to be both audience and active participants in two thematically linked experiences – a mainstage theatre production, *Marlin*, and a participatory and immersive narrative-driven theatrical experience, the *Expedition*, in which a small group of young people are taken out on a river boat in a theatrical simulation of a sea going adventure. With the two events scheduled in the same school holiday period, young people could choose to attend one or both of these theatre experiences; the performance and expedition could be taken in any order or independently of the other.

The immersive theatre event is by no means a new form within the theatre for young people artistic lexicon, and the work explored here resonates powerfully with its forebears from earlier eras, for example TIE (Jackson 1993; Jackson and Vine 2013), while also echoing the practices of Heathcote, Bolton, O'Neill and many others in evoking a visceral and tactile rendering of DIE (Drama in Education) or 'process drama'. However here the boat and the river in the expedition are real, the water is actually wet, the life jackets are mandatory. Yet the world created by Leavesley, James and their team is an act of collective and individual imaginations.

This chapter interrogates the ways in which this theatre for young people is forging new relationships with audience by the crafting of new forms, built upon the foundations of core drama-in-education/theatre-in-education principles made new in the hands of innovative, deeply reflective and reflexive young artists. The voices of Leavesley and James are woven through this account of their artistic work. Their reflections and insights were gathered through a sustained, reflective interview process and are included verbatim here, thus balancing the critical distance of the academic authors with the immediacy and visceral, embodied knowing of the artists who experienced the *Expedition* as creative practitioners.

1   About the Case Study

In a collaboration with the Graduate School of Education (MGSE) at the University of Melbourne, this mainstage and immersive theatre project, *Marlin,*[1] was the subject of an evaluation process, which now informs the writing of the case study at the heart of this chapter. The purpose of the evaluation was to explore the boundaries of performance and the experience for the young people in the audience. The company was particularly interested to learn more about how experiencing a story, as participant and story maker, could enhance and extend the audience encounter with a play in performance and vice versa.

Drawing on conventional evaluation methods such as survey and interview combined with arts-based responses including writing, drawing and video diaries, the evaluation team (Sinclair and Sallis from the University of Melbourne; Leavesley and James from Arena) built a three-dimensional picture of the range and qualities of meaning-making in which young people engaged with the *Marlin* project. In this chapter, the authors respond to the aesthetic richness of the *Marlin* project, while exploring in depth the development and 'production' of the immersive event, known as the *Expedition*. As authors, we take ourselves on an expedition which considers this work in the light of Arena Theatre's relationship with its audience, with its educative project, its commitment to artistic excellence and in recognition of its long heritage at the cutting edge of theatre for young people in Australia.

2   Context

Damien Millar's play, drawn from classic seafaring literature such as Ernest Hemmingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1954) is described in company publicity as: 'A life and death fishing adventure played in a sea of foam, for ages 8+ and their grandparents' (Arena Theatre Company 2015b). Set in a game fishing[2] region in Northern Queensland, Australia, the play is both an adventure set at sea and a coming of age story. Its protagonist is Billy, a young girl whose father went fishing to catch a marlin 2 years earlier and never returned. Grieving over the loss of her father, Billy forms a special bond with her grandfather when they attempt to return to the open ocean a marlin that has been caught by a local fisherman. This pivotal incident in Millar's play, returning a marlin to the sea, becomes the central premise of the immersive event, the *Expedition*.

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[1] That is, the play, written by Damien Millar, a co-production with the Melbourne Theatre Company and the expedition run in conjunction with the Arts Centre Melbourne on the Yarra River, in the city of Melbourne.

[2] 'Game fishing': when large fish such as marlin are pursued for sport by recreational anglers. Whilst the caught fish may be eaten, it is now common practice for anglers to return the fish to the water. The Queensland coastal towns of Townsville and Cairns are centres for game fishing.

The *Expedition*, scheduled in the same school holiday period as the play, took place on and around a (real) river, with the participants boarding a boat with an actor as ship's captain and engaging with the narrative whilst travelling down the river. According to Arena, by creating the two complementary experiences for young theatre goers, one as audience and the other as architects of their own version of a thematically connected story, the *Marlin* project sets out to extend the range of possible relationships the company generates with young people whilst continuing its 'own artistic and conceptual quest to further understand the dimensions and boundaries of the theatrical work it makes' (Arena Theatre Company 2015b). This case study looks specifically at the *Expedition* component of *Marlin* and its contribution to Arena's evolving body of work in, around and beyond conventional theatre forms. It should be noted that while the original intention of the evaluation was to examine the relationship between the mainstage and the immersive theatre events,[3] by far the richest data to emerge from this process related to the *Expedition* as an example of both outreach and artistic inquiry. And, as an example of contemporary theatre practice targeted at young audiences, the *Expedition* also serves as an illustration of the way that Arena theatre understands and implements an 'educational project' as fundamental to its remit as a company making work for young people.

3   The Educational Project: As Humans We Don't Eat Our Own Brains

> An essential first step in being creative is to question your own way of looking at things. (Robinson 2013)

The Arena Theatre Company does not claim an overt educational agenda. Their educational 'project' recognises the centrality of artistic connoisseurship in the creation of work that is rich, complex, challenging and executed with superior expertise and aesthetic finesse. Through this engagement with artworks that implicate the audience in the participatory act of 'responsible spectatorship', the artists at Arena theatre invite their young audience to consider the large questions of what it means to be human. It is on this scale that Leavesley drives the educational project of the company. The company's vision statement highlights this emphasis:

> We believe that deep, authentic and ongoing dialogue with our audience is essential in maintaining a program that is authentic and engaged. For this reason we include a wide range of direct engagement processes through all stages of development, presentation and evaluation. (Arena Theatre Company 2015a)

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[3] That is the two Expedition events – one in the Melbourne city centre and one in Footscray.

4   Case Study: Setting Free the Big Fish: The *Expedition*

4.1   The Genesis

On Play

Christian Leavesley, Artistic Director, Arena Theatre[4]:

The really simple answers come … from the idea of a playground … it's really the intent that the audience sees the playground and wants to play. Originally I was thinking this would be a three-layer thing… so you'd see the show, where you wouldn't have a role except to witness, then you would go on the expedition where we'd give you a role … [then] we would put you in [essentially] the set, and have the bubbles going. Then you could play whatever you wanted to play inside it … the idea is that there are these different forms and you understand different things by taking a different physical action within them, and by acting within these things differently, you understand them in a different way, and I felt like that's what we were getting from communications theory and convergence (McLuhan) … we understand something different from the novel compared to the movie, compared to the radio play, so I didn't see any reason why theatre shouldn't do that …

The conception of the *Marlin* Project began with serious contemplation of the playful experience. The concept evolved from 'bubbles' and the possibilities offered by the aesthetic and kinaesthetic dimensions of bubbles as landscape, set, and material object, to the construction of narrative, drawn both from the epic – the *Old Man and the Sea*, and the personal – the relationship between a grandfather and a daughter. Drawing on these inspirations, the creators of the *Marlin Project* wanted to explore form, and different ways of experiencing of narrative.

The juxtapositions of playful opportunity with epic narrative alongside Marshall McLuhan's Communications Theory (McLuhan and Fiore 1967) provide a powerful demonstration of a recurrent motif of Leavesley and James' work: Quest. In this instance, it was an intellectual quest which prompted new iterations of performer, audience and form: how could *the medium be the message*, they asked, as McLuhan did before them?

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[4] The quoted text from Leavesley and James is derived from a post-production, reflective discussion held between the four authors in August 2015.

Audience Expectations
Jolyon James, Artistic Associate, Arena Theatre:

They [*Expedition* audience] *didn't really know what it was, even as they were fronting up to it, they didn't know what form it would take, either, so it was difficult for them to have any strong understanding about that experience, whereas going to see a play, they knew what it was, it was on in a particular venue that they understood.*

4.2   The Expedition

Last night an extraordinary fish was accidently hauled up. Its life can only be saved by returning it to the deep – but our fisherman needs your help!
   Join the fisherman's crew on his mission to save the marlin's life. (Arena Theatre Company 2015c)

4.2.1   Gathering[5]

The *Expedition* begins at the Victorian Arts Centre on Melbourne's Southbank, not far from the banks of the Yarra River. For each 'sailing', there is room for just three crew members (and up to three accompanying adults). The 'crew' is met by the 'Marine Controller' (Jolyon James), appropriately dressed in white polo shirt and jeans. He delivers a safety briefing and distributes bright orange life vests for the crew to wear. Following the safety briefing the crew is asked to help – the stakes are high; the marlin will die if it can't get back out to sea. The Marine Controller says 'do you think this is something that you can help us with, this is what we have to achieve, it's really serious?'

   The Marine Controller leads the crew through the Southbank crowds down to the river. He explains that they have to walk the long way round due to the size of the boat, which can't be moored any closer because it can't travel under a particular bridge. As they walk, the Marine Controller radios the boat's captain. A big storm is brewing, but it's okay, he assures the Captain, the crew is experienced and can manage the storm. The crew are less certain (some are 'freaking out') and tell him that they actually don't know anything about boats. 'I can't call him back now', he tells them, so could you just play along with him? It'll be all right. 'Are we being asked to lie?' some of them ask: a little shocked and more than a little intrigued.

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[5] 'Gathering' – Richard Schechner's term to describe the preparatory phase of a theatre event, when the audience is drawn from disparate places and is propelled or guided onto the threshold of the play's beginning. (Schechner 1985).

The crew board the fishing boat, in reality a small blue dinghy, and are greeted by the captain, a mysterious and moody man. The crew members are assigned roles: one is given the two-way radio to communicate with shore; one is given the 'depthometer' to check when the ocean is deep enough to free the marlin; the third is tasked with the weather monitor, to keep an eye on any impending changes in the weather. The expedition is under way.

Dwelling in the Grey Zone
Jolyon:

They recognised that the safety briefing was a real thing, and there was no differentiation between that and pulling out a fictitious map, showing them the marlin scales, which weren't real, and then going from there, talking to the person on the boat. So that gave us our doorway into it being in that grey zone, and we never kind of flipped out of it from that point.

In this 'grey zone', artfully navigated by Jolyon in his 'twilight role'[6] of Marine Controller, the audience was invited to commit, to agree not only to the fiction of the Yarra River as ocean and the tiny boat as enormous fishing trawler, but to themselves as crew, taking on the responsibility of returning the marlin to deep waters. Traversing the grey zone heightened the drama of the experience, raised the stakes and unified the disparate audience as crew members on a 'real' expedition.

For drama educators, the 'gathering' phase of this event has direct parallels with process drama. According to Cecily O'Neill, one of the early proponents of this form of educational drama:

Process drama is a complex dramatic encounter. Like other theatre events, it evokes an immediate dramatic world bounded in space and time, a world that depends on the consensus of all those present for its existence. (O'Neill 1995, p. xiii)

In the crafting of the *Marlin* expedition, as with process drama, there is:

- A pretext (the marlin in distress);
- A process of enrolling in the fiction (from safety briefing to boarding the boat and being assigned specific tasks);
- A Teacher in Role (Jolyon's Marine Controller – both functional facilitator and in role in the fiction);
- A moment of commitment leading to the 'consensus of all those present'– *will you help return the marlin to the ocean*?

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[6] Drama educator Tiina Moore has extensively researched Dorothy Heathcote's use of 'twilight role.' She writes: Although twilight role had been subsumed by Teacher in Role over time, Heathcote spontaneously listed six functions for its specific use in the course of a short conversation. She included: hypothetical voice, seeking information or an interest, delaying or suspending action, conveying an attitude, the fiction forward into the 'we' stage, storytelling within action (private conversation, 8 April 2008). (Moore 2013, p. 18–19).

- And there is a problem (*there is something strange about this fisherman …*); and, finally;
- The creation of an 'immediate dramatic world, bounded in space and time'.

The complexity of the enrolling process is amplified when the audience/co-players are led through the public concourse down to the river. From Christian and Jolyon's perspective, this strengthened the audience's commitment to the drama, perhaps in the same way that young children, rather than being disrupted, commit more intensely to their dramatic play when in the midst of adults (Toye and Prendiville 2000).

Being the 'Other' in the Public Space
Christian:

   walking parallel to the river with a big crowd … I think the thing of walking past the people and the necessity of all that … it's the gaze of all the people at you that bolsters this idea that you are different today.

Jolyon:

   It's about being in a non-traditional theatrical space; you had to build the theatre with you in that live space.

Once in that hybrid space, between committing to being in an audience and consenting to being *in* the experience, the dramatic stakes are raised even higher. Not only is there a storm coming, but the young people, no longer in an audience, but crewing a fishing boat, are inexperienced, unprepared, and asked to 'just go along with it'; to withhold their lack of expertise from the Captain. In a moment that may be potentially shocking to drama educators, trained in the ethics of 'transparency' and 'duty of care', the children are asked to 'lie'. But what is this lie?: an invitation to enter further into the world of the play in which they are not spectators, but 'spectactors' (Boal 1995).

For Christian and Jolyon and the other 'creatives' involved in the artistic fashioning of the event, there was a keen awareness that they were setting up a contract with their audience to believe in the expedition. By asking them to 'take sides', to knowingly concur firstly with the Marine Controller, and later with the Expedition's captain in a 'lie' about the weather, the stakes were further raised. This occurred in the fictional world and in the theatrical world of the 'play'. Leavesley uses words like 'game' to describe this transaction, rather than deception, or complicity. At each step of the 'enroling' process, the young audience are challenged to fuse real world actions (the safety briefing, the life jackets) with fictional world devices (a 'map' of the territory they are to venture into, a dinghy standing in for a seagoing vessel). What would be considered duplicitous in a real world setting, is delicious 'com-

plicité'[7] in the world of the *Expedition*. In the careful and artful crafting of these worlds, ethical (or unethical) manipulation is side-stepped through the experience of metaxis.

O'Toole identifies the need in drama education practice to generate an artistic space in which participants can experience a deep immersion in the dramatic fiction whilst maintaining a consciousness of the dual nature of the experience, the phenomenon that Boal describes as 'metaxis'. O'Toole observes that when the

> sensuous internalisation of meaning is … externalised and made cognitively explicit, knowledge is generated. The knowledge that emerges as dramatic meaning is neither just propositional comprehension nor sensuous apprehension, it is a fusion of both. (O'Toole 1992 p.98)

In Boal's own words, metaxis is 'the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image' (1995, p. 43). In this sustained experience of metaxis, the young people step into their 'sea going' fishing vessel, collude with the Marine Controller and the Captain, see the 'flapping tail' of the marlin as it goes under the water (represented by some fish netting hung over the side of the boat), undertake the business of learning to use the 'instruments' they are given (lifelike props made by Jolyon). While this is taking place, they also choose to ignore the professionally employed helmsman who is actually driving the boat, but is not 'in' the play.

During the development of the immersive event, and as it was being performed, Jolyon began to draw explicitly on his actor training and background as a qualified teacher. The functional, front-of-house role he was asked to play as Marine Controller morphed into a nuanced and performative version of Teacher in Role. He drew on his introductory script and used it to negotiate the contract of agreement with the audience/spectactors to actively contribute to the building of the imaginative world of the expedition. Both Leavesley and James acknowledge that this role may have evolved differently, if it had been in the hands of one of Arena's or the Arts Centre's front of house staff rather than one of the artistic associates involved with the production. For Leavesley, the evolution of this 'twilight' character captures something of the demands of this immersive and exploratory theatre form. According to Leavesley, James' role became an 'integral part of that, that we hadn't expected … [he] invents this sort-of-character, sort-of-not, in between thing, and I think, for me, that's what the contemporary performer is'. Clearly there are implications here for future applications of this approach – the pedagogically inclined or trained actor could be critical to the success of an immersive interactive model.

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[7] Complicité as used in French, and by the legendary theatre company Complicite, known for its playful and disruptive devised work. Defn(trans) feeling of understanding and each of communication between two or more people.

4.3   Setting Free the Marlin

> As you venture out into the river, marlin in tow, help him navigate with a compass and
> radio. When a wild storm threatens to approach, it is up to you to guide him through rough
> seas and high winds. As you work together to save the marlin, the fisherman reveals more
> of his own stories about life at sea (Arena Theatre Company 2015c).

The boat sets out on its journey to the sea. Crew members communicate with
Marine Control on the two-way radio, check the depth of the water to locate the
place when the marlin can be released, and monitor the deteriorating weather. The
fisherman is taciturn and continues to be mysterious. The warnings over the radio of
the impending storm escalate. The crew is told to return to shore, but the fisherman
ignores the instruction until the marlin is freed. Once the marlin is returned, the
journey becomes dangerous – the storm is imminent. The fisherman instructs the
crew to shelter under a tarp. The sounds of the storm (as provided by pre-recorded
sound effects) overwhelm the boat, and it is buffeted in the waves now slapping at
the bow. Eventually the storm subsides and as the boat nears shore, it glides under a
bridge. In the surreal milky darkness under the bridge, the fisherman tells the crew
of another expedition. He was out at sea with some businessmen on a game fishing
trip. The storm came suddenly and their boat capsized, drowning all on board. His
story is captured in a ballad, which he sings. The haunting melody echoes as the
crew learns the tragic fate of the mysterious fisherman. The expedition is concluded.
In total, they have been 'at sea' for 15 min. By the time they return their vests and
gather their belongings, the 30-min round trip will be complete, in time for three
more new crew members to be led down to the Yarra for their own, unique
expedition.

5   Immersion: Narrative and Sensory

The *Expedition* is a dramatically intense and theatrically compressed 15-min jour-
ney on the Yarra River. Each of the three young people in the audience has a specific
role to fulfill on the expedition. Not only do these roles further draw the audience
into 'spectactor' or percipient mode, but they continue to provide a safety function –
while they are holding on to their 'prop', the children are compelled to stay in their
seats – sitting down, no hands in water.

Jolyon as Marine Controller, in 'twilight role' hands over to Phil, the actor who
is in role as the fisherman and captain of the boat. In bright spring sunshine, the
audience experiences the terrible storm. With the 'danger' all around, the children
take cover under a tarp, and the 'storm' is conveyed through an evocative soundscape,
initiated when Phil turns on the sound equipment in the boat. Waves are generated
by the wake of other boats, as the putative storm rages. When the boat moves under
the bridge, the storm subsides, and the children are safe to emerge from under the
tarp. This artful manipulation of real world elements and theatrical elements in a

non-theatrical site achieve a compression of time and emotion. The audience is safe but feels danger. When the emotional journey is at its height, there is a shift in tempo and performative mode. The fisherman sings the deeply evocative ballad which retells the story of his demise. This final 'reveal' of the narrative, that the fisherman is a ghost who was lost at sea serves two critical functions in the immersive experience. It moves the event into a heightened and stylised theatrical playing, which magnifies the experience while also creating an emotional distancing; and it provides the link to the mainstage production of *Marlin*. The fisherman in the boat is the lost father in the play, never seen, but mourned by the central character Billy as she too takes her own expedition to the sea, to set free a distressed marlin.

6   Dispersal[8]

When the boat docks, the children are met by Ali, from Arena, but also enrolled as Marine Control staff member, dressed in white polo shirt and jeans. She leads the crew, as one, unified by their experience, back up through the (now irrelevant) crowds on the riverbank to the 'Base'. On the way, she asks them about the expedition and whether they succeeded in setting free the big fish. The crew report on their many adventures. The young people are invited to fill out evaluations, to draw some aspect of their own expedition on a marlin 'scale' for exhibition in the foyer of the Base, and then they disperse. And, with a new group, the expedition begins again.

7   The Meaning of Success

The *Marlin* project – theatre production and *Expedition* – was a critical and box office 'success'. The *Expedition* season was fully booked and the responses to it by children and their accompanying adults was overwhelmingly positive. The theatre production had an interstate tour and was awarded 'Best Play' by Drama Victoria, representing the drama education community in Victoria. Through the lens of the *Marlin* project, the authors addressed the notion of success, considering how it is measured, evaluated, and benchmarked for works in development at Arena. Both Leavesley and James had strong reactions to the question of success.

> Jolyon:
> *… we don't really talk about the success of it, we just make it amazing.*

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[8] Dispersal is also drawn from Schechner's categories of audience experience. At the conclusion of the theatrical experience there is a dispersal, important in audience meaning-making, just as the Gathering is. (Schechner 1995).

Leavesley deliberates on the concept of success as a mechanism for evaluating Arena's work and finds it too limited as a measure of effort and endeavour. He prefers to concentrate on notions of effort, and challenge and discipline. The discussion inevitably comes back to the quest for deeper and further investigations of art, art making and of the artist's role to provoke and disrupt – to reflect back, and to invite audiences into their own opportunities for cultural and social meaning making.

On Success
Christian:

… we're consistently talking about artwork that we love, and it's not necessarily theatre, and it's that conversation at that level, all the time, going, oh, wow, that is brilliant … that's our bar. We just presume that we have to do something … that we haven't done before but also as far as we know hasn't been done quite like that before, not in every way or in every moment, but as a broad ethos, so then when we talk about things, and say, next time, we can change that, how did that go for you? Yeah, that was good, but we thought that we could do a little bit better inside that moment, how would we do that? Oh, that structure… and so we're constantly also thinking about the better version of everything …

I think there's another thing that goes with that, and it's a discipline that the young people provide us … when we see the way the young people respond to it, then we know that it's worked, at least for that child, or that person at that time … we've got a target, and so we've got this expansive set of possibilities, but we've also got a really clear audience that we want to work with, and I think that is an important part of us knowing 'success'.

In developing the immersive experience as a critical and ongoing component of Arena's program, Leavesley moves away from a discussion of metrics and argues for the efficacy of the 'small target' audience. He considers how the intimate, hands-on engagement between the young person and performative event can contribute to a powerful and meaningful theatre experience. For Leavesley, the opportunity for the child to be able to take an active part in *living through* the immersive performance returns him to his deep interest in the role of play in the development of imagination and learning for the child.

Arena Theatre has a longstanding interest in better understanding its audiences and the impact of its work and has featured in previous research projects and reports investigating audience reception (Cahill and Smith 2002; Jordan 2001; Myers 2003; TheatreSpace 2012). Historically and in present times, Arena Theatre has found a balance between vigorous reflection and review of the efficacy of its work on terms such as those currently espoused by Artistic Director Leavesley, and the expectations of funding bodies, managing boards and the wider public for accountable,

evidence-based measures of success. For example, in recent savage government funding cuts to the youth theatre sector, Arena Theatre was one of only three companies Australia wide to retain its funding. Over time, the creative and operational managers of Arena Theatre have become highly skilled at articulating their vision for complex and quality-driven programming while also demonstrating their effectiveness at delivering such programs. In the Arena model, metrics relating to box office, critical acclaim and fiscal responsibility support a more sophisticated narrative of aspiration, imagination, artistic excellence and engagement.

8 Conclusion

Early exposure to positive arts experiences correlates to later interest in and engagement with the arts (Positive Solutions 2003 p. 5). A key focus of the evaluation referred to in this chapter was Leavesley's (and thus, Arena Theatre Company's) desire to understand the ways in which young audience members (aged 8–12) perceived and made sense of the two components of the *Marlin* theatre experience. There was an implicit interest in ways in which this theatre/immersion model could be developed and adapted for future productions.

The *Marlin* project resonated across the two allied practices of drama education and theatre for young people. For the authors of this chapter and for the theatre company involved, there was much to be learned by teasing out the underlying principles of dramatic play and process drama, and the ways in which they informed and were adapted for this explicitly theatrical enterprise. Even though the Arena personnel involved in the *Marlin* project did not explicitly link the conventions they employed in their active collaboration with audiences to the traditions of process drama and dramatic play it was evident that they were adept at, and had expertise in, applying those conventions. The theatre makers and the performers worked intuitively and with great skill in realising the two complementary theatre events. The evaluation suggests that the artful fusion of theatre performance skills with the process oriented skills of drama pedagogy has taken Arena to the cusp of an exciting evolution in their theatrical repertoire. While initially Leavesley was focused in the MGSE evaluation on how the two complementary theatre forms 'spoke' to each other for their audiences, this interest broadened over time to a consideration of how the interactive theatre form of the *Expedition* could now be further elaborated and incorporated into the programming of the company. Notably, since the *Marlin* project was staged in 2014, work has progressed on a number of new interactive projects: some of them stand alone events, and some, like the *Expedition*, companions to formal theatre productions.[9]

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[9] *The Sleepover*- stay overnight in the theatre, explore the parts of the theatre that nobody sees – premiered in 2015; *Trapper*: a hybrid artwork that is part performance and part machine – to premier in 2016.

The aligning of theatre for young people and drama education processes in their work is an aspect of Arena's repertoire which warrants further, close analysis. While the evaluation commissioned by Arena signalled some elements of these parallel processes, a more sustained and more deeply embedded research project would yield greater and more specific insights regarding the mirroring of these two traditions within Arena theatre's contemporary practice. Such research will not only be of benefit to Arena but to other theatre for young people companies that wish to produce immersive theatrical experiences, which draw on drama education traditions.

According to theatre scholar Matthew Reason, young people are 'enthralled' by the sense that the action of a live performance event is taking place in front of them in real time (2005, p. 9). Further, the theatre event is transient and is a phenomenon whose meanings and outcomes are negotiated in the live theatre space by performers and spectators in collaboration (Martin and Sauter 1995; Sauter 1997, 2000; Bennett 1990; Prendergast 2004; Schechner 1985). When the Arena Theatre Company invites young audiences to board the little blue boat, three at a time, they are offered a singular opportunity to experience the live telling of a story, in visceral 3D, while simultaneously *living through* their own imaginative enactment of a grand adventure, in which they survive a great storm and set the big fish free. This is the present success and tantalizing potential of the *Marlin Expedition* for Arena and other companies making work with and for young people.

> *Anyone who tries to make a distinction between education and entertainment doesn't know the first thing about either* (Marshall McLuhan).

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Theaters for Learning: The NEW VICTORY THEATER SPARK Program

Lindsey Buller Maliekel, Courtney J. Boddie, Dennie Palmer Wolf, and Steven Holochwost

Abstract In this chapter a team of artists from The New Victory Theater and their research colleagues share early insights from NEW VICTORY SPARK (Schools with Performing Arts Reach Kids), a theater program that operates in schools where the arts have not been a regular part of learning. Together we discuss what we are discovering in three different 'theaters of learning': classrooms, research, and professional development. With respect to classrooms, the authors discuss how this kind of work calls for the intentional use of resource—repertoire, curriculum, artist training and teacher collaboration—to achieve a kind of theatrical learning that is challenging, exuberant and active, as well as mutual, respectful and community-building in the deepest sense (Seidel et al,. The qualities of quality. Harvard School of Education, Cambridge, MA, 2013). Second, we discuss how SPARK has pushed us to think differently about how we capture and report the impact of the program by combining theatrical tools (improvisation, perspective taking, talk-backs, etc.) with measures drawn from basic research to capture the intrinsic impact of the arts on human lives. Finally, we turn to the theater of professional development, sharing what we are learning about the vital role of challenge and inquiry for the adult participants in the project: artists, teachers, and researchers alike.

Keywords Theater · Education · Curriculum · Teaching artistry · Socio-emotional · Inequality · Impact · Elementary school · Middle school · Research

> *Children need to go to the theatre as much as they need to run about in the fresh air.* Philip Pullman

L. B. Maliekel (✉) · C. J. Boddie
The New Victory Theater, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: lbuller@new42.org; cboddie@new42.org

D. P. Wolf · S. Holochwost
WolfBrown, Cambridge, MA, USA
e-mail: dennie@wolfbrown.com; steven@wolfbrown.com

1 Introduction: Three Theaters for Learning

As the UN Rights of the Child states, access to the arts is a key component to the overall health of all children:

> Participation in cultural and artistic activities are necessary for building children's understanding, not only of their own culture, but other cultures, as it provides opportunities to broaden their horizons and learn from other cultural and artistic traditions, thus contributing towards mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity.

But in poor schools and communities in the United States, arts education is less frequent and more fragmented than necessary to build such enduring understandings. When it occurs, arts education often takes the form of isolated performances, field trips, or short-term residencies rather than longer-term sequences of arts learning in which young people acquire the habits and knowledge of artists working in specific disciplines. These schools have fewer arts specialists; they lack specific facilities (e.g., rehearsal spaces, dance floors, art studios); and cultural partners are fewer (Parsad and Spiegelman 2012). Thus, the young people who might benefit the most are the least likely to have arts learning opportunities.

There is a second troubling inequality in U. S. arts education; it is comprised almost wholly of visual arts and music. Theater and dance—perhaps because of their embodied, physical, on-your-feet or speak-your-mind qualities—occur in only 4 and 3% of schools, respectively. Not surprisingly, these forms are most absent in the poorest schools—where often there are the most concerns about young children's energies and behaviors. This means that young people who need a variety of ways to explore, express, and represent their experience (e.g., English Language Learners, students whose family migrations have kept them out of formal schooling, children who are behind in reading and writing, physically active boys, etc.) are cut off from a major source of multi-modal, expressive, and potentially culturally relevant stream of learning (Wolf et al. 2014).

In this chapter we describe a new program, NEW VICTORY Schools with Performing Arts Reach Kids (hereafter, SPARK), designed to bring sustained theater education to elementary and middle schools where it has never been a part of the curriculum. In sharing this work, we have three purposes. The first is a discussion of a broader, global movement in which major cultural institutions like museums, libraries, orchestras, and theaters are committing major resources over sustained amounts of time to addressing the needs of under-resourced communities, and what it takes to do such work successfully (Heath 2015). Towards this end we describe how our work in NEW VICTORY SPARK schools and classrooms calls on us to harness all the resources of theater education—repertoire, curriculum, teaching artistry—to achieve a level of theatrical learning that is challenging, exuberant, and active as well as mutual, respectful and community-building in the deepest sense (Seidel et al. 2013). Second, we discuss how SPARK artists, staff, and researchers are part of a broader conversation about diversifying the ways in which we evaluate such programs. Specifically, NEW VICTORY SPARK has pushed us to think differently about how we capture and report the impact of the program by

combining theatrical tools (improvisation, perspective taking, talk-backs, etc.) with measures drawn from basic research to capture the intrinsic impact of the arts on human lives. Third and finally, we want to address the role of challenge and inquiry in the ongoing development of teachers and theater professionals by examining a number of unanswered questions SPARK is showing us we must consider. In short, the chapter is an opportunity to examine our work in three different *theaters of learning*—the world of schools and classrooms, the field of arts education research, and finally, the cultivation of adults who see the arts, and theater specifically, as every child's right.

2 In the Theater of the Classroom: Harnessing Every Resource

NEW VICTORY SPARK is part of a wider effort to revitalize arts education in New York City public elementary and middle schools with high Title I[1] funding where there is little to no arts education (i.e., a lack of certified arts teachers, sequential arts instruction, partnerships with arts and cultural organizations). These are schools where trauma and poverty is prevalent throughout the community and these stresses are ever-present in the classrooms, hallways, and within peer-to-peer interaction. In 2015–2016 there are six NEW VICTORY SPARK schools located in low-income neighborhoods: East New York, Bedford Stuyvesant and Crown Heights in Brooklyn; and the South Bronx. Over the course of 5 years, the program will reach 10 schools and over 1800 students. What we are learning is that each and every aspect of the program—from grade selection to partnership and repertoire—is an opportunity for intentional design that can be lost or seized.

2.1 Making Curricular Choices

NEW VICTORY SPARK school students engage in a year-long performing arts-infused curriculum with teaching artists to build their creative skills and make personal and academic connections. In order to create a program with enough intensity to have an impact, SPARK begins in a single grade within each school, building a strong foundation on which to gradually implement deeper work in successive grades. This allows the NEW VICTORY Education team to focus on getting acquainted with a school and its culture and ultimately customize the arts-infused curriculum to fit each class' needs. In a single year, the program introduces each participating class to theater in its many forms. For example, in 2015–2016, third grade classes saw three shows tuned to their ages and interests over the course of the

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[1] Title 1 is a federal program that provides funds to schools and school districts serving high numbers of economically disadvantaged children.

year: *Cuba Vibra* (a cultural dance show celebrating a Latin culture), *Pedal Punk* (a circus production showcasing human feats, like the biking and cheerleading stunts 8 year-olds attempt) and an adaptation of *The Velveteen Rabbit* (a dramatized narrative addressing children's emerging understandings of reality and make-believe, love and loss). A team of two teaching artists enriched these theatrical experiences in workshop sessions using production-specific curricula. For each performance, students learn the skills key to a particular performance, building anticipation for how performers will execute these same feats on stage (e.g. juggling in Pedal Punk, showing emotion through gesture and posture in the Velveteen Rabbit). They attend the show, often with a post-show talk with performers. Then, back in their classrooms, they hone their theatrical skills in a new light, discuss, reflect, and remember. At the heart of this work is the belief that a performance is not a single event, but a much longer and more intense process of anticipation, captivation and world expansion, followed by sharing and recollecting, which could last for years to come (Gilbride and Orzechowicz 2004).

2.2 Making Partnership Choices

NEW VICTORY SPARK also engages adult learners. We provide professional development sessions at the school site that bring together teaching artist advisors, teaching artists and teachers and staff across the school. The education team designs these sessions for each school and its particular needs, rather than using a one-size-fits-all model. For instance, at one school in Brooklyn where teachers and staff were grappling with effective discipline, we invited teachers to model what "dream" and "nightmare" classrooms look like. The classroom teachers created these different scenarios, laughing and enjoying themselves as they acted out both extremes based on their experiences. In reflecting on this activity, several teachers remarked that before this session, they thought they were alone in these situations. Through this creative exercise, they learned that their peers had experienced these circumstances too. The principal voiced how this activity laid the foundation for the work they would be doing around trust building. By being active participants in theater-making, teachers also learned to think of theater not just as entertainment or a reward for good behavior, but as a right and as a route to such behavior.

Over the years of the project, the aim is for teachers and administrators to begin to infuse their curriculum with the arts and to identify ways for the school to gain more arts resources. The goal is that by the fourth year of the relationship with The New Victory Theater, each school will become a long-term partner school, where the administration and teachers can sustain involvement with the theater and other arts partners. Table 1 sketches this trajectory.

Throughout this process, we are explicit about the mutual expectations for a successful partnership. The NEW VICTORY Education team provides performances, workshops, and professional development, as well as supports to help schools identify additional arts education opportunities. The school staff accepts the responsibility

Table 1 School progression in SPARK

Year 1: focus on ensemble building, art-making and reflecting on student responses to the work. Advisors also support the residency cohorts by giving feedback,	Year 2: focus on deepening relationships and unpacking the roles of the classroom teachers in an arts-infused curriculum. Introduce more concrete activities to help teachers build their own tools and strategies	Year 3: empower the school cohort to become more autonomous. Hopefully, the schools will have brought on arts teachers and/or the classroom teachers will lead the arts infused curriculum with the teaching artists	Year 4: become a NEW VICTORY partner school with the capacity to sustain an ongoing, multi-discipline arts program with certified staff as well as cultural partners

of coordinating the complex logistics of field trips, on-site professional development sessions, residency classroom workshops, research sessions and family events.

While maintaining clear and consistent communication can be challenging in schools who are new to arts education partnerships, we work through ongoing check-ins, meetings, email communications, phone calls, etc. to achieve the mutual accountability the project requires. As we enter our fourth year of this program, we are also identifying the key role that the teacher professional development plays in the successful implementation of the SPARK program. When teachers feel disconnected from the creative work, they continue to see the arts as a way to administer punishment or reward. Instead, by identifying school staff and teachers as a key constituency, and working with them as collaborators, we're better able to infuse the arts in school culture.

2.3 Making Repertoire Choices

Within the framework of NEW VICTORY SPARK partnerships, we select shows created by companies whose work honors the intelligence, imagination, and curiosity of children, and which engages young people as active, thoughtful, and emotionally alive individuals. As a result, our repertoire can be daring, raucous, ambiguous, and even sad—like life. If the shows on the stage offer only platitudes and educational or moral lessons to young audiences, children will see the performing arts as another lecture or assignment instead of being swept up, challenged, and awed. As laid out in *Gifts of the Muse*, "What draws people to the arts is not the hope that the experience will make them smarter or more self-disciplined. Instead, it is the expectation that encountering a work of art can be a rewarding experience, one that offers them pleasure and emotional stimulation and meaning" (McCarthy et al. 2004). Thus, none of our shows are scrubbed of their complexity and challenging content—each wrestles with themes and challenging art forms that ask for real attention and inquiry from audiences. For example, in *Urban*, a circus from Circolombia, the audience watched a former street kid from Colombia rap in Spanish about his childhood in a soulful, artistic statement of life and loss that was not sanitized for young

ears. In their version of *The Magic Flute*, the Isango Ensemble re-imagined this Western classic through the township traditions of South African song, drums, and marimbas. The production called on middle school students to follow a very complex opera plot, sung and spoken in English and multiple African languages, introducing them to the ways that myths migrate and morph across time and cultures. Sometimes repertoire as novel or complex as Isango's *The Magic Flute* is bewildering or off-putting (As one student said, "The people (were) singing a lot and it started to get annoying.") but complex repertoire also raises questions for students ("What interested me the most was that he went to go save her, even though he didn't know her.") and disrupts expectations ("What surprised me is that the show was very long and it was different because it was very good.")

2.4   Making New Choices About Teaching Artistry

Teaching artists are the bridge between such challenging repertoire and students' appetite for attending and exploring what The New Victory offers. Only if they can expand and deepen the experience of the performance do students and teachers get to enter, not just witness, the art form and the practices of theater. With this in mind, The New Victory hires teaching artists for: (1) their own artistic skills and sensibilities, (2) their capacity to collaborate on developing curricula that enhances the performance, and (3) their ability to teach without watering down the experience. To build these skills, we keep teams of teaching artists constant across schools and years. Beyond their classroom work, we also employ them as writers and researchers who speak out about their learning and work (http://wolfbrown.com/on-our-minds/2017/05/).

To achieve the level of artistry we want in classrooms, The New Victory requires that teaching artists train in puppetry, dance, circus, clowning, music, and devised theater so that the entire ensemble is well versed in the *artistic* underpinnings of the works performed on our stage. For instance, for *Brazil! Brazil!,*[2] the training for the teaching artist encompassed a master class with professional capoeira dancers to ensure that the entire teaching artist ensemble could learn the fundamentals of this martial art. Our view: If the theaters of the world don't value the complexity and diversity of the performing arts, then who will?

It is equally important that our teaching artists bring this same level of insight to their classroom residencies. Toward this end, New Vic forms teams of teaching artists who develop show-specific curricula designed to take young people into the artistic choices that animate each production. For example, the Belgian company Ontroerend Goed performed a raw and gritty play devised by adolescents entitled "*Once and For All We Are Going to Tell You Who We Are So Shut Up and Listen.*" This production is all about the explosive power and rebellion its teenage artists felt. (As *The New York Times* critic Charles Isherwood described it, "The joyous and

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[2] Produced by World Stage Productions and Broadway Asia International

miserable chaos of adolescence is distilled into a remarkable hour of theater"
(Isherwood 2010). In response, New Victory teaching artists asked New York City
teens to explore their own lives in similarly direct, messy, and creative ways, com-
paring what they *wanted* to do with what they *had* to do in a series of writing
prompts. The Teaching artists then guided the students in distilling their writings
down to sharp poems that the teens paired with a movement vocabulary they cre-
ated. The result was an equally raw and authentic exploration of desire and con-
straint, rules and rebellion. While some teachers felt trepidation about exploring
their students' lives so openly in a school setting, they also expressed amazement at
the intensity and complexity of the student work. Teaching artists leveraged the
energy and choices in the show to help students speak and write honestly, using their
full life experiences to fuel the creative process.

Consider what having such engaged teaching artists can bring to the work: at one
SPARK middle school, students began the year with resistance. The teaching artists
noted: "the students seemed hesitant to engage…it appeared they were trying to
avoid the negative social stigma of seeming too enthusiastic.[3]" However, at mid-
year, when those same students came to *Cirque Ziva* (a Chinese circus featuring
very precise acrobatics), the teaching artists were able to observe how students'
body language changed, noting how students leaned forward in their seats and
gasped at the spectacle of fan dances, spinning plates, and chair stacking. Artists
knew it was the right time to bring pieces of circus equipment to the classroom as a
way of deepening engagement. Their observations and intuitions were on point:
students stepped up and volunteered to try out the diablo (a piece of circus equip-
ment), plate spinning, and scarf juggling. They actively sought feedback from the
teaching artists on how to improve their techniques or learn new tricks. They addi-
tionally gave one another their attention and shared tips. Students asked more ques-
tions about the creative process after they saw the show: "How did that performer
learn to balance so many plates? What do they do if they miss? How do they
recover?" The overall result was that the students were empowered as young artists
to make their own creative choices based on inspiration from the productions.

At the same time, teaching artists are trained to steer classroom and young adult
cultures toward ensemble cultures. As students risked, failed, and tried again, earlier
teasing and name-calling gave way to encouragement and peer-to-peer efforts to
stop teasing and mocking. As one teaching artist wrote of a mid-year workshop:
"There was high excitement about the diabolos. In the second class we made some
great connections about practice theory, and meeting difficult challenges. There was
some rich reflection from kids that don't usually speak. There was a moment of
magic in each class when we were exploring different ways of passing the scarf. The
whole class seemed engaged in the activity and supportive of one another in choice
making. We suspect that there is an element of repetition that helps this group to be
comfortable.[4]" And from a later workshop, "…We used that opportunity to show a
thigh stand with a student. The student didn't hesitate to grab wrists. Nobody even

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[3] Teaching Artist Observation, November 24th, 2014

[4] Teaching Artist Observation, January 6th, 2015

commented. There was a magic moment of acrobatic appreciation and the kids expressed wanting to learn more. When we were [at the school] last time, they expressed that it was disgusting that persons of the same gender touched each other to do acrobatics. This seems like progress.[5]" It is not that circus training transcended middle school awkwardness permanently; in fact, at the beginning of the next school year, the teaching artists noted that they felt they were starting with the same dynamic that they had noted the previous year. Instead, the circus work offered young people a vehicle to escape their traditional roles and postures—an opportunity for them to experiment with new behaviors and attitudes.

Finally, New Victory teaching artists are observers and researchers. We expect them to be able to code switch between the world of theatrical practice, in which subjectivity, improvisation, and unique experiences are highly prized, and the world of research, with its focus on objectivity, uniformity and replicability. Thus, in SPARK, a single individual might write the curriculum, enact it in the classroom, and conduct classroom observations of colleagues to examine how effective the residency was for both highly engaged and reluctant students, of for English Language Learners, or students with cognitive and emotional disabilities.

2.5   Making Curriculum Choices: Learn, Feel, Relate, and Create

NEW VICTORY SPARK performances and workshops are designed with four related goals in mind: learn, feel, relate and create. The first is learning about specific art forms students will see on stage (e.g., opera or puppetry) in ways that build young people's willingness to engage with the process of rehearsal, feedback, and performance. (At a fifth grade in East New York, the students learned to identify the strong, theatrical choices their peers made during at-school performances and how to share their observations.) The second is to establish an emotionally safe environment where students can express their feelings, ask questions, discuss different interpretations, and tolerate others' points of view. (For example, students had lively debates about whether a contortionist in *Cirque Ziva* was "amazing" or "disgusting" for his reptilian costume, animal-like postures, and androgyny.) Third, we want to build a classroom culture where ensemble habits and interactions thrive. (Students side-coach their peers through learning how to juggle or how to show their reactions to the audience by sharing their own skill sets and offering to help.) Finally, we want our work to provide a setting where young people experience themselves as creators, authors, acrobats, and performers. (At each of the SPARK schools, there is a final sharing in which students perform and lead a talkback for the audience to ask them questions about their artistic process.)

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[5] Teaching Artist Observation, January 12th, 2015

The hallmark of our curricula is the insistence that all four of these elements are present. For example, in teaching students the South African miners' gumboot dance from *Mother Africa* (a pan-African circus), a teaching artist began with demonstrating the basic steps (learn). But she went on to discuss how songs and dances can have multiple meanings, seeming to be just entertainment while they are also acts of resistance and independence (feel) and how important that is for continuing a struggle (relate). Once students had the dance phrase, she urged them to perform it, adding their own signature moves that signaled their free spirits that would not be broken (feel, create).

These elements thread throughout the curriculum, even outside workshop sessions. In the NEW VICTORY SCHOOL TOOL™ Resource Guides, teachers discover strategies for keeping this kind of activity alive both in their classrooms and during "off" moments like on the bus ride to the theater. For example, in the *Mother Africa* School Tool the students were given the following en route prompt: "You and your classmates are going to get a taste of African culture by watching the performance of circus professionals, musicians, and dancers! On your way to the theater, become an observer of the culture of your neighborhood and New York City. Write your observations below."

Taken individually, this network of interconnected choices may be familiar practices in high quality theater education from around the world. But we are making a larger argument: If a theater company (or museum, orchestra, or library) seeks to make substantial contributions to the lives of young people growing up in marginalized and under-resourced communities, then every single decision—program design, repertoire, teaching artistry, curriculum—has to be harnessed. Each and every choice is an opportunity to insist on young people's capacity to imagine, think, and act.

3 In the Theater of Research: Expanding How We Examine Impact

In response to increasing pressure from public and private funders to demonstrate return on investment and evidence of effectiveness, much research and evaluation in arts education focus on instrumental outcomes: increased school attendance, reading scores, or rates of high school graduation. In the case of theater education, researchers have documented outcomes such as gains in verbal ability (DICE 2010), the remediation of reading comprehension (Dupont 2002), and improved academic achievement (Vaughn and Winner 2000). More recently, as we have come to understand more about the vital role socio-emotional skills like persistence, self-control, and collaboration are in development (Education Week 2015; Zins et al. 2004), investigators have documented the links between theater programs and those skills. Thus, Greene (2015) found that attending even single theatrical performances improved students' empathy for people living in different times and cultures, as

well as their tolerance for people with views different from their own. In a qualitative study, Larson and Brown (2007) observed that adolescents participating in a high-school drama program gained knowledge about emotions, their causes and effects, and an increased capacity to regulate their own emotions. Goldstein and her colleagues (2013) also found that the experience of theater education fostered emotion regulation, reporting that children studying theater exhibited significantly greater improvement than a sample of peers matched for age and socioeconomic status who were enrolled in a visual arts class. Schellenberg (2004) found that young children randomly assigned to a year of theater education exhibited significantly greater improvement in their social skills (as rated by their parents) than comparable students enrolled in a music class.

As in these theater studies, we are using detailed observations to help us understand whether the SPARK experience is linked to changing behaviors in the back and forth of classrooms. Teams of observers watch New Vic workshops, tabulating the occurrence of pro-social and conflictual events (Catterall 2007; DICE Consortium 2010; Gross 1998). But against this background, the SPARK team is also trying to probe *how* theatrical experiences translate into greater socio-emotional skills. To do this, we are using a set of standard research measures to determine the specific skills that students may be developing. For example, we are looking at changes in children's ability to identify emotions in others using photos of just the eye region of faces (Baron-Cohen et al. 2001). We are also looking at children's emotional self-awareness via a structured questionnaire where the items include established measures of belonging, growth mindset, and efficacy (Dweck 2000; Epstein and Sharma 1998; Marsh 1992).

But, as researchers, we are also using what we have learned from our theater colleagues to investigate how students' socio-emotional skills develop. In a performance task, individual children watch a short silent video of an animated figure trying to escape from a walled garden. Students are asked to step into the character's shoes and perform the way the story ends, then tell what happened in the style of a radio announcer. We are investigating how willingly and how thoroughly students will take on the role (gesture, posture, facial expression, predicament, etc.). In a complementary task, we look at what students can infer about human events using theater-derived techniques to examine students' ability to imagine a range of characters' actions, states, and motivations (Goldstein and Winner 2012). To be specific, we show a student a photo from a performance she has seen (e.g., the tricks from bicycle-themed circus, *Pedal Punk*). Then we share a photo of a real life "trick" (e.g., child their age doing a wheelie on her bike). We ask the child to speak from several perspectives: the performing child, her sibling, best friend, and her mother who is watching from a nearby apartment window. Table 2 provides a sample of one third grader's increasingly robust response. Her early accounts stuck closely to literal actions ("he's doing a trick, she's watching, etc.). But by the end of her year with the New Vic, we see that she grasps each speaker's current state (unshaded text) as well as his or her possible past or future (shaded text).

By working in this more theatrical way, we hope to multiply the avenues through which we investigate the impact of theater education. Working side by side with

Table 2 Sample perspective-taking task response – third grade girl

Role	Language from perspective of the role	Gesture, Facial
	Response to Photo of Child Doing Wheelie	
Child on bike	Wow, look at me. I can do this. Hope I don't fall.	Hands grasping handlebars, turning gesture, leaning back
Older brother	Hey, she's cool. I didn't know she could do that.	Smiling
Best friend	She's being dangerous. She might fall off backwards and crack her head.	Concerned
Mother	That's cool. I never had a bike. Maybe I could try and learn that now that I'm a grown up.	Waving as if to girl below on bike.

teaching artists we realized our need for research tools that engage children's imaginations to understand fully how that imagination develops and potentially influences behavior.

In their final report, the StarCatchers Theater Company calls out what they see as a dangerous bifurcation in theater experiences for privileged and poor children:

> There is...a danger in arriving at two-tier theatre experiences. One tier is provided in the cultural centre for the middle class children whose parents have the money, time, energy, cars, confidence to get them there, and can be about entertainment, pleasure and having fun (about 'being' in other words). The other tier takes place in the children's own settings, for children living in less advantaged circumstances for whom the work is intended to be about 'improving them', about developing communication and language skills and so on (about 'becoming'). This contributes to the tension that exists between children's theatre as art form searching for innovative, aesthetic, quality work and theatre as instrument of intervention and educational change. (Young and Powers 2008)

A similar danger exists in research: in the context of programs like NEW VICTORY SPARK, we have to look at more than whether theater improves students' reading scores or behavior; we also have to investigate whether their imaginations expand.

4 In the Theater of Uncertainty: Harvesting Hard Questions

Up until this point, we have concentrated chiefly on the program and its research as they address outcomes for young people. But, as NEW VICTORY SPARK has evolved from idea to implementation, we have been harvesting hard questions. These questions are framing the work we still have to do as adult learners—staff,

teaching artists, researchers, and school partners. Three of these questions sample how much inquiry lies in front of us and the responsibility to design programs in ways that give practitioners time to wrestle with such issues.

What is the long game? Prior to SPARK, The New Victory hosted performances and residencies that were, at most, a season-long engagement. Even though some schools signed up for extended partnerships year in and year out, never before have we committed to 3 years following the *same* cohort of students. The longitudinal design demands that we develop "a long game." Program designers and teaching artists now have to ask, "How should students' knowing, relating, feeling and creating be different in June than it was in May? How should 8th graders be different audiences than 6th graders? After three years in NEW VICTORY SPARK, how should a young person's understanding of human interactions be different? Curriculum writers and teaching artists now have to infuse their work with a constant question, "Toward what?"

What lasts? NEW VICTORY SPARK was designed to change the arts profile of local schools. The goal is that post-SPARK, the schools continue to make a sustained investment in arts learning as an integral part of basic education. But what are the incremental steps toward that goal? What should a teacher be open to and willing to try based on partnering with SPARK? How should a school and its principal use discretionary resources differently? Or, closer to home, how does the training for teaching artists have to change in order to build the capacity of teachers and principals? In other words, do we need to re-think the fundamental model of the residency to create larger, systemic change in SPARK schools?

What counts as making a difference? As mentioned above, we inherit a long tradition that values instrumental outcomes, like improved reading scores, especially when programs serve children from under-resourced communities. The underlying framework is that theater (or arts education more generally) improves, heals, or fills in gaps in these young people's development. But what if we thought about arts education as opportunity, rather than intervention, not as repairing but as facilitating. This might lead us to tracking positive capacities such as the ability to be captivated by a performance, the growth of imagination, or acts of peer-to-peer empathy.

All of these questions challenge us to think about SPARK's work in different ways. We have to make time for wrestling with these issues. They are the growing edge of our work.

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Part V
Agentive Partnership

Shadows of History, Echoes of War: Performing Alongside Veteran Soldiers and Prison Inmates in Two Canadian Applied Theatre Projects

George Belliveau and Monica Prendergast

Abstract This article explores two distinct and unique groups of men not usually associated with theatre performance: veterans and prisoners. Each author was closely involved as an artist-researcher in one of the respective applied theatre projects that took place in two separate cities within British Columbia, Canada. Belliveau worked on developing and directing *Contact!Unload* in Vancouver where he worked with military veterans who experienced psychological related trauma injuries while serving overseas. In Victoria, Prendergast participated as an actor and co-deviser with a group of federal inmates in a collective theatre production called *Here: A Captive Odyssey*, which traced the history of the William Head prison. These two case study projects represent examples of what might be called "inreach" theatre education programs. This articles explores the process and implications of collaborating with veterans and inmates in devising the two separate theatre productions.

Keywords Artist-researchers · Applied theatre · Veterans · Prisoners · Theatre education · Devising · Case study

1 Introduction

What does it mean to tell one's personal story or the story of a place? What does it then mean to perform these stories for an audience? These questions lie at the heart of the two case studies we share in this article. Two distinct and unique groups of men not usually associated with theatre performance become our focal point and participant groups: veteran soldiers and federal prisoners. Both applied theatre

G. Belliveau (✉)
Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
e-mail: george.belliveau@ubc.ca

M. Prendergast
Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada
e-mail: mprender@uvic.ca

projects took place in British Columbia, Canada and each of us as authors was closely involved as an artist-researcher in one of the respective theatre productions. We consider these two projects examples of what might be called "inreach" theatre education programs. In each case, we worked as trained and experienced theatre artists/educators/facilitators in a co-devising and co-performing relationship with our male participant groups. We will consider the implications and possibilities of this notion of inreach in our conclusion. To begin, we outline the two case study projects.

Contact!Unload was first produced in April 2015 in a professional theatre venue in Vancouver, British Columbia and featured the stories of four soldiers. The 50-min play was an initiative where researchers in group counseling and theatre education collaborated with military veterans to dramatize and perform what it means to return from combat. *Here: A Captive Odyssey* was a devised theatre piece tracing the story of William Head Peninsula, 30 km outside of Victoria, British Columbia. This land has been home to a federal medium and now a minimum-security penitentiary over the past 50 years, often nicknamed "Club Fed" for its reputation as a site of great natural beauty. But prior to being a prison, William Head was an infectious diseases quarantine station, an immigration entry point to Canada, a Scottish pioneer's farmland and traditional fishing grounds for local First Nations communities.

2   Methodology

We use a case study model (Yin 2014) to examine the complex and creative interactions within the two contexts, as this allows us to share insights in a focused yet flexible manner. Both case studies are *intrinsic* in nature (Creswell 2013), as they are based on insights discovered within each performance-based research project. To explore the intricacies and insights discovered within each site, we consider three key phases of our projects: script development, rehearsing, and performing.

Specifically, we pose the following research questions: what devising and play-building approaches were used to generate the stories that led to the script? And, in what ways did the art-making process within the scripting honor the voices of the veterans and inmates? Once a structure and working script was developed, what approaches were used in rehearsals to work with these unique community groups to make the process inclusive, artistic and authentic? Finally, what insights emerged for the participants when performing these stories for different audiences?

Due to our unique insider perspectives in these projects—working as co-creators and co-performers whilst also taking on roles as co-facilitators, acting mentors and vocal coaches—we use a reflective practitioner voice to consider the responses to each of the questions addressed (Dawson and Kelin 2014; Duffy 2015; Schön 1983; Thompson and Thompson 2008).

3   Literature Review

There is a rich and growing literature on *devised theatre* (Graham and Hoggett 2014; Heddon and Milling 2006; Mermikides and Smart 2010; Oddey 1994), *ensemble theatre* (Bonczek and Storck 2013; Britton 2013; Leonard and Kilkelly 2006), *collective creation* (Barton 2008; Syssoyeva and Proudfit 2013; van Erven 2001), *playbuilding* (Bray 1991; Hatton and Lovesy 2009; Norris 2009; Tarlington and Michaels 1995; Weigler 2001), *applied theatre* (Prendergast and Saxton 2016, 2013; Prentki and Preston 2009; Taylor 2003; Thompson 2005) and *research-based theatre* (Beck et al. 2011; Belliveau and Lea 2016; Belliveau 2014; Prendergast 2010a, b). As scholars, practitioners and teaching artists in the fields of drama/theatre education and applied drama/theatre, we are familiar with and have drawn on a range of play creation models from these key sources and others to guide our work within these projects.

4   Case Study 1: Contact!Unload

Community members, artist-researchers, along with four veterans participated in a series of drama-based workshops for a period of 3 months in Vancouver in order to devise *Contact!Unload*. The theatre initiative was part of the Man/Art/Action project[1] where the arts were used to engage veterans to share stories of trauma and pathways towards recovery. In April 2015, the development process culminated with a production at a professional venue on Granville Island near downtown Vancouver. Four veterans along with six civilians performed the 50-min theatre piece to sell out audiences for three evenings. This drama project was an expressive vehicle for military men to publicly reinterpret their experiences of transitioning from active service to civilian life in ways that build resilience. The creative process provided a forum for veterans to model men's engagement with the emotional, physical, and cognitive effects of participating in war. A foundational piece of the theatre project stems from work that Westwood and Wilensky (2005) have developed over the last few decades called *Therapeutic Enactment*, a group counseling strategy. Therapeutic Enactments (TE) asks people to "enact critical events from their own life—enacting the narrative, going beyond language to express the self through action, movement, emotion, and reflection" (Westwood 2009, p.1). In this approach participants revisit past injuries in hopes of correcting neural pathways, mending parts of themself that have become broken or separated from the person. Westwood, co-PI on the Man/Art/Action project, also contributed to the development of the Veterans Transition Network (VTN) (vtncanada.org) which offers group counseling support to veterans who suffer from stress related injuries

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[1] Man/Art/Action was a 2-year project funded by Movember Canada under the umbrella of the Men's Depression and Suicide Network (http://menshealthresearch.ubc.ca).

post-deployment. The theatre piece worked hand in hand with Westwood's initiatives and approaches, with trained counselors and counseling psychologists as part of the creation and performance.

To unpack some of the learning that took place in this project George will focus on how using a community, collective playbuilding approach (Belliveau 2015; Norris 2009; Rohd 1998) shaped and informed the script development, rehearsal, and production.

5 Script Development

This phase of the process used key aspects of Norris' (2009) playbuilding approach where information, primarily stories, were gathered and generated in the exploration space with the veterans as key informants. The exploration space was an art studio where we worked alongside visual artist Foster Eastman (fostereastman.com) who was developing a brother project with veterans carving a tribute pole that depicts what it means to serve one's country and return home afterwards. This synergy between the visual art and theatre was critical later in the project as the tribute pole became a centerpiece for the play.

Graham Lea was lead writer for *Contact!Unload*. We generated data from various sources including previously published work about the veterans, interviews, audio and video recordings, along with Graham's own notetaking during the playbuilding phase. As the artistic lead and director of the theatre piece, I worked closely with Graham to develop a frame for the play. From the outset, we wanted the story to emerge out of the veterans' experiences and voices, rather than Graham attempting to write his interpretation of what it might be like for soldiers to serve and return with injuries. In this sense he became a creative scribe (Lea 2012), gathering, editing, and shaping the stories they shared during rehearsal. Shakespeare's St-Crispin's Day speech from *Henry V* (where King Henry, outnumbered by the French armies, rallies his soldiers for a final battle) became an important thread within the structure of the play, allowing the veterans to respond to the Shakespeare speech with their memories and lived experiences of battle. Two of the veterans also shared poems where they wrote creatively about their personal experiences after returning home – versions of these poems were integrated within the play. Finally, scenes from Linda Hassell's play about veterans *The Difficult Return* (2014) resonated deeply with our troupe, and with her permission we adapted a few of her scenes for *Contact!Unload* during our playbuilding phase.

In the first weeks of the project we spent time in a circle to share stories, which generated a sense of trust and community amongst our group of veterans, researchers, and artists. We slowly introduced non-verbal drama-based activities during these early sessions to stimulate the veterans to express their stories through the body. Our aim with the Man/Art/Action project was to do, and within the doing to discover, unpack, and process moments that might have been locked up or paralyzed. Once we had the soldiers on their feet creating visual tableaux the embodied

experience brought out new understandings and emotional responses to these fictive moments. After each drama activity, we would process what happened and debrief in a group circle. The embodied drama work often triggered one or two of the soldiers, consequently, the drama process would pause as the counselors intervened to make sure these moments were voiced and processed appropriately.

Initially, it was the four soldiers who could become emotionally activated from time to time (i.e., triggered), who became emotionally connected (or disconnected) to the various tableaux and short scenes. However, as we progressed with the work we recognized the emotional activation not only touched the veterans, but the 'triggers' began to include the entire group, with the civilians equally affected. It was during this phase that we became a 'company'. In sharing and disclosing stress injuries and vulnerabilities, the soldiers had opened themselves by sharing their experiences with the group. For our part as civilians, we were no longer only hearing but instead listening, understanding, and feeling the impact of the veterans' lived narratives. Or, as Mike says in the play: "What it truly means to come back" (Lea et al. 2015, p. 16).

In Therapeutic Enactment, when group cohesion is developed and a high level of perceived safety present, an individual is invited to share a significant part of their story, usually a moment of distress that is unresolved psychologically. Trained facilitators carefully guide the individual to re-enact the traumatic moment "in order to discharge or release the trauma" (Westwood 2009, p. 2). The rest of the group in a TE acts as a support network, where they listen closely, witness and enact various roles within the individual's story. The group serves as a support for members helping members, taking on part of the weight, or trauma of the individual through their active witnessing (Westwood 2009). All the veterans and most of the civilians in our group had already participated in a TE and were familiar with the process involved. Therefore, this therapeutic approach became instrumental during the playbuilding phase, so when a veteran shared his story the group this helped lessen the intensity of what was being carried and a felt sense of relief would follow as a result of being 'witnessed' by others. This sharing of the weight within the company became key to moving forward and central to shaping the actual script.

After 2 months of playbuilding, drafts of the script were generated by Graham with continued consultation from the group. Graham's careful listening of the veterans and the group discoveries in the playbuilding resulted in an authentic script that honored the group's collective stories. The veterans saw the emerging script as representative of their stories and experiences, and gave it their 'stamp of approval'. It became clear to the artist-researchers that this script could not have been created to the same degree of authenticity by merely examining interview transcripts, videos and/or journal notes. We needed to be in the space with the veterans, co-creating the work to ensure immediate validation of their stories by them directly. The community experience that took place within the script development phase was critical, as it generated ownership but also elicited the unspoken kinship soldiers have with one another. This kinship amongst the soldiers fed into the rest of the company and led to a smooth transition for rehearsals.

6   Rehearsing

Because the content of the play is deeply personal, processing and debriefing the stories became central during each rehearsal. Therefore, at the beginning and end of each session, time was dedicated to talking in a circle to unpack some of the triggered emotional responses. Initially, there was a slight sense of frustration from the artists involved, because valuable rehearsal time was being taken up by extensive talking rather than being on our feet. However, in time we discovered that this debriefing time was not lost, but instead part of the soldiers releasing their psychological injuries – which is an essential a part of the therapeutic process in work within trauma. The veterans were rehearsing their way into accepting, subconsciously seeking consent/trust from the group, before they publically shared their stories of injuries to a wider audience. The unpacking discussions were vital in solidifying trust, building safety, and most importantly providing permission to reinterpret and theatricalize the personal moments shared by the veterans. The debriefing allowed us as a company to feel more comfortable performing the work to an outside public audience.

At times in rehearsal we moved one step forward, before moving two steps back. For instance, an artistic intention within the staging would trigger something in a veteran that would require rethinking, restaging, and further discussion. Either the staging of the scene was not authentic to a military experience, or it felt too close (personally) for them to depict within the play. The semiotics of theatre are often guided by showing rather than telling, where metaphors are used to suggest something, foreshadowed earlier or later for a reveal. These theatrical layers which Graham and I placed within the script and staging are based on years of experience of working in the theatre. These layers were appreciated and recognized by the veterans when the directors took charge in this manner, as veterans respect leadership being taken when needed, even though they often questioned as to their authenticity. The veterans were sharing some of the rawest moments of their lives, and they did not necessarily want us to couch or distort them. Once they accepted to share these experiences, they wanted them to be represented as accurately and truthfully as possible on stage. For example, our final scene depicts a TE where Tim shares his experience of being a radio operator in Afghanistan during a combat mission. Within the TE experience Tim needed time to process this event, and the counsellors guided him carefully and slowly through the re-enactment of what happened on that night of the attack in Afghanistan. For theatre purposes, we were condensing a 3-h TE experience into about 5 min of stage time. Therefore, moments overlapped, and the pacing increased with sound and lighting effects. A negotiation took place with the company to honor Tim's experience and at the same time provide a theatrical experience for a theatre audience.

Compromises and negotiations of working with personal stories and theatre became a constant conversation, and it is within those moments that growth occurred. Upon reflection it was those moments of debate, initial difference that led to mutual understanding, and this propelled the most important discoveries we

made in rehearsal. This was exemplified within the scenes where Mike Waterman who played the ACTOR portraying Henry V, and I playing the DIRECTOR role within the play.[2] Mike begins by playing the Shakespearean role Olivier-like with grandeur and pomp. Within the script the veterans keep interrupting Mike and I to share their experiences of what it really means to go to war and then return to civilian life. As the play progresses, Mike gradually shifts his Shakespearean delivery towards a more authentic tone. By the end of the play his St-Crispin's speech loses the grandeur, heroism, and it becomes more honest and truthful. His journey is the one the company experienced throughout the rehearsal phase, where the script was no longer an artifact or representation of their stories, but instead an honest, authentic depiction of what it truly means to come back from war and what many men carry with them post-deployment.

7   Performance

Many of us in the company felt that were we to have ended the project after the playbuilding and rehearsal phase we would have accomplished our mission, due to the deep impact the veterans had on the civilians, and vice versa. The veterans furthered their journey towards recovery in the sharing and accepting of their narratives.[3] However, as the veterans said on numerous occasions during our development, they're "showing their shit" so others might not have to suffer with continuous psychological injuries. They wanted other veterans (and their families and friends) to see this work to make them aware of pathways towards recovery, to understand this difficult journey. At the core it is about men helping men, and the veterans wanted others to know there are ways to deal with stress injuries that are much more productive than the end of a gun -suicide. They wanted policy makers to see this work, so programs such as the VTN be in place for all returning soldiers. The production was part of their mission to share this work with a wider audience.

The artist-researchers involved in the project saw the project as a workshop production, where feedback and responses from the audience would help further the possibilities of introducing applied theatre with returning veterans. In conjunction with professional technical staff at Studio 1398 on Granville Island, lighting and sound were incorporated in the play amplifying some of the dramatic moments, but more importantly creating an aesthetic space for the soldiers to have others witness their stories. With all the accouterments of a professional venue, including a dressing room, raked seating, lights, sound, box office, the company of soldiers and civilians rose to the moment to face the welcoming audience. The pre and post performance periods brought out child-like excitement within the group. This

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[2] The meta-drama frame of the Director and Actor is influenced by Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

[3] Pre and post interviews with the veterans clearly indicate the psychological benefits the four men experienced during the 3 month process.

nervous energy and euphoria helped release some of the tensions depicted within the context of the play. The whole became much greater than the sum of our parts.

In my dual role as a director and actor, production time became more about persuading the soldiers that they were ready to perform, to tell their stories. My French-Acadian grand-father spoke of being an *arrangeux* (a cheerleader, confidence-builder) in his senior years, which in essence is someone that convinces others that they can accomplish a task no matter how challenging. I became an *arrangeux* for our company, fostering belief in this company of non-actors that they could be true to themselves on stage but still authentically *perform* a version of self. As raw emotions were revealed the soldiers needed to find ways to be performing a character, even though that character was based largely on themselves or close experiences. This ever so slight distance between themselves and the character allowed them to step on stage and courageously reveal very personal moments within their lives to an outside audience. Standing beside them on stage, inside the work, continued the journey I travelled with them, beginning with devising, directing and culminating in co-performing. (Monica, in the second case study, fleshes out a number of the intricacies of what it means to perform inside the work that speak also to my experience as actor).

The power of the community that was built during the play development and rehearsals allowed the soldiers to perform with confidence and panache. The soldiers had a distinct unspoken look between one another that suggested – *you have my back and I have yours, so let's get through this*. This unspoken bond among the four veterans was one that the company recognized from the beginning of the play-building process. We could not fully understand this bond, but we all knew that the nods allowed them to feel solidified.

> From this day to the ending of the world,
> But we in it shall be remember'd;
> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers… – *Henry V*, Act iv, Scene iii

8   Case Study 2: Here: A Captive Odyssey

William Head on Stage (WHoS) is the longest running prison theatre company in Canada, now in its 34th year. The company began as a course delivered by the University of Victoria Department of Theatre and for many years theatre students and instructors were involved. However, over the past decade or so, community theatre artists from Victoria have been the outside collaborators with whom the inmate-run company chooses to work on their annual fall productions. Public audiences are allowed onto the prison grounds, following security clearance, and shuttled in vans to the gymnasium that houses the theatre company where its performances occur. Upward of 1500–2000 audience members attend WHoS shows each year.

In the more recent past, the company has been encouraged by their theatre community collaborators to move into devising their own plays rather than mounting pre-existing plays. In 2014, WHoS approached local director, actor and teacher

Kate Rubin (who had appeared in two previous WHoS shows and also directed *The Hobbit*) with the popular book by Mitch Albom, *Five People You Meet in Heaven.* This source material about how one's actions can resonate through many people's lives over time was adapted into *Time Waits for No One* and proved to a be a popular and critical success. Early in 2015, the WHoS Board Members approached Rubin to facilitate and direct another new play, this time based on a book the men had encountered about the history of William Head, *Quarantined: Life and Death at William Head Station, 1872–1959* by Vancouver historian Peter Johnson. The Prison Arts Collective of Ten women theatre artists in collaboration with William Head on Stage prison theatre company, devised and performed a play about the past history and present reality of the William Head Peninsula in October and November of 2015.[4]

My (Monica's) involvement with WHoS began with playing Thorin in *The Hobbit* in 2012, as Rubin and I have worked on other theatre projects since 2004. I had also volunteered in the summer of 2014 to support the company's development of *Time Waits…* and was eager to have the chance to work again on a WHoS production. The fascinating history of William Head was a strong lure and so I joined the Prison Arts Collective in early 2015 and participated in many aspects of the play's creation as co-deviser, workshop leader, co-dramaturg, vocal coach and performer in *Here: A Captive Odyssey*.

9   Script Development

The playbuilding process was based on improvisation, both physical and dialogical. Each weekly workshop session involved sharing historical research, discussing the inmates' responses to the stories we were discovering and improvising scenes and movement sequences based on these responses. WHoS runs their workshop series with an open door policy so we never knew week-to-week how many men would appear; but as word got around the institution, the number of inmates showing up regularly increased. By the time the script moved into rehearsal mode we had 19 men who had signed on to perform in it, and a number more to do backstage work, design, lighting, publicity and front of house. Four women, including myself, were also performing to bring the cast number up to a total of 23.

The structure of the workshops was very much about creating an ensemble, so we always began with group building games and skill building activities. For the inmates, learning to play again, and to begin to trust we women as the 'street' artist collaborators and (more importantly) to trust each other were all necessary steps along the way. These things take time, and the whole creation process for *Here* unfolded over a period of 6 months, from May to October of 2015. Weekly sessions moved into twice a week, three times a week and by the time we were into full

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production rehearsals, every day for the final couple of weeks. The inmates regularly expressed their amazement at the amount of time and effort it takes to put on a show. Occasionally they would grumble about it a bit (as do most actors I know on the outside!) but their dedication and commitment to the process was deep. Many of them had never performed on stage before, so there was a tremendous leap of faith from these men that they were indeed going to succeed and not be made to look foolish in front of a paying audience. It was our job as the professional teaching artists working with them to ensure that was the case.

While we developed the ideas for the play, it became clear that we wanted to explore two timelines, the past and the present. The historic events we were finding out about were rich for all of us, but the inmates also wished to share some aspects of their daily life with the public audience. WHoS audiences are both loyal and quite diverse, consisting of young people as well as more middle aged and senior members. They may come at first for the 'thrill' of the experience, but they come back due to the unexpectedly high quality of the theatre. They also return—as they tell us in talkbacks and on audience comments cards—because their preconceptions about prisons and offenders have been shaken. This is an essential aspect of WHoS, to break down audience's preconceptions about who an 'offender' is and what he is capable of achieving. Although I am comfortable with the notion of WHoS offering rehabilitative experiences to participant inmates, I can also see that there is a rehabilitative process going on for audiences as well.

After we had selected the key topics and scenes for both the past and present sections of the play, the task became to find a dramatic and theatrical means to weave these time streams together. We agreed the play would be best as a non-linear experience, as a time travel spiral or vortex rather than a chronological and perhaps overly didactic progression in time. This agreement led us to explore how one of the play's two inmate protagonists (Bill and Ed) might be pulled from the present into a somewhat surreal journey through the past. At some point early on in the process we had thought about having a movement sequence involving a Chinese Dragon dance, as the previous year's show had a Bollywood dance number in it that had been a huge hit. This idea morphed as a local indigenous elder told us stories about a legendary sea serpent with transformative powers. The sea serpent, a giant illuminated puppet designed by our set designer Carole Klemm and operated by six actors, is hooked onto Bill's fishing rod and he is swallowed up by this creature that then drops him into various historical events at William Head. We had found our dramatic framework.

10   Rehearsal

The script for *Here* went through a number of drafts, seven in total by the time the show opened in early October. Kathleen Greenfield, co-artistic director of SNAFU Dance Theatre, who had performed also in last year's *Time Waits…,* took on the major task of gathering notes from each workshop and typing them up into scenes,

23 in total within an 80 min one-act play. We then worked in small groups on revising each scene's dialogue, structure and/or movement according to how the groups felt about the scene, collectively, and what changes were needed. We were also adding songs and musical soundscapes under the direction of musical director Katrina Kadoski. A member of the Prison Arts Collective would be the facilitator for these various group processes and we would share our work with the whole group at the end of the workshop. Some scenes required revising right up until we opened the show. Other scenes felt like they were working well almost right away.

In July the play was cast and to the best of our knowledge the inmates were pleased with the roles allotted to them, although some worried about how well they would do in them. A great deal of our energy was taken up with skill building and encouragement, or as George mentions earlier being des *arrangeux*. I began to work with the ensemble on their vocal articulation and projection. The theatre at William Head is a converted gymnasium and the acoustics are a challenge. I was determined that these men's voices would be heard by every one of the audience members who came, right to the back row of the house capacity of 175. Inmates are experts in self-criticism as the nature of imprisonment is to constantly remind them why they are there, that they have failed themselves, their victims, their loved ones and society as whole. Their burdens are heavy ones, and hard to bear. My job was to provide some lightness along the way, and to ensure their voices were loud and clear. The opportunity to perform in a WHoS show is often described by the men as a welcome 'escape' because the environment is one of acceptance, playfulness and creativity. But theatre makes its demands and learning the discipline and what it takes to make a performance succeed has always been a key focus for me when working at WHoS.

The show began to appear around us. Carole Klemm's set and projection designs—featuring a mooring dock thrust stage and two small side stages off the main proscenium stage—created the worlds we were entering. Kathleen Greenfield supported the development of Klemm's historical image projections and the shadow work that director Kate Rubin wished to evoke as ghostly presences. Three old-fashioned overhead projectors created beautiful shadow designs and silhouetted effects for our play on three large screens. Poe Limkul's lighting carved out emotional and physical spaces for us to occupy. Katrina Kadoski's music and sound creation with the ensemble was powerful underscoring for the play. We found simple but effective costumes for 23 performers playing multiple roles. Rubin guided us with expert and patient care through character creation, scene blocking and orchestrating this large ensemble through 23 scenes.

My role became even more to support their acting work as a co-performer. When I act alongside the men, I am trying to mentor for them what it is actors do; how they think, how they focus, how they make choices, and how they must forgive themselves immediately if they make a mistake in order to avoid making more and more of them. Being present, being in the moment, listening closely and reacting authentically, adapting to given circumstances and being responsive are all acting skills of great value to these inmates. I try to model silence and readiness backstage and in

the dressing room, and to illustrate the preparation necessary in order to feel confident stepping into a role, and out into the lights. The men find it very amusing when I stumble on my lines in rehearsal and occasionally swear, as they see me very much as a teacher, a sister or a mother figure. They know I teach drama and theatre and some of them know I work at the local university. But I do not speak to them about being a professor or a scholar. The class divisions between us are wide ones. I try to be sensitive to these differences and they fade into the background in the pressing necessity of getting our show up and running and ready for its first audience.

11   Performance

The men are nervous but excited for our first performance to an audience. This preview performance is for the other inmates at William Head, as well as staff and volunteers. In many ways this is the toughest house we face as these inmates are not an experienced audience and so let us know if they are getting restless or bored. We manage to hold their attention and some lines that refer to aspects of life in William Head get the biggest laughs we get all during the run. For example, at one point Bill is talking to a young girl in the 1930s whose father is a rumrunner, running illegal alcohol up the coast from California to British Columbia. She asks Bill if he has ever been on a boat. He replies sardonically, "Where I am from we are not allowed on boats." Inmates are allowed to fish at the prison, but only allowed in the water for occasional traditional indigenous ceremonies. A number of attempted and successful escapes here have taken place via water, so this shared knowledge gets a humorous response.

   We open to a warm and responsive public audience the next night. The men keep expressing their wonder that they are actually doing well, that the show is working and the audience is enjoying it. There are a few mistakes made along the way, lines dropped here or there, but for the most part the show is running smoothly. The men are not happy when they "screw up" so I have to keep reassuring them how the audience did not notice and how well they did overall. The constant need for encouragement at times affects my own focus and is one of the challenges working as an actor in this context. But I jolly them along, smiling at all times, high fiving, fist bumping and (when the guards are not looking) giving lots of supportive hugs.

   The show gets better and better throughout the five weekend run of 13 performances. Audiences keep growing, the reviews are very positive (the local paper's reviewer calls the experience "unforgettable"), and by the time we close the show is a sellout hit. We garner a number of standing ovations. It is always wonderful as an actor to receive these ovations. But it is joyful to be standing on stage with many neophyte inmate performers who have never experienced this kind of public approval.

   However, the most powerful aspects of the run for me are the talkbacks. These facilitated post-show conversations with the audience are the inmates' opportunity to answer questions, to hear the audience's responses and to share their thoughts on

what doing this project has meant to them. I take turns with two of the other women performers and the director in facilitating the question and answer periods of 20 min. Regular questions we receive include how the play was created, how it might have changed the men's sense of place on the peninsula, and what the experience had given them. The men's responses are truthful, often self-deprecating but always honest. They express over and over again how much more challenging the process of theatre creation was than they expected. But they also express how the experience has been invaluable to their rehabilitation, their self-confidence and their ability to face members of the public with pride rather than with fear. At times they express their sense of vulnerability as a strength in this context (Brown 2015) and a couple of the men are moved to tears during these conversations. These dialogues for me are the strongest measures of our success.

12   Conclusion

The objective of both projects involved men telling their stories through theatre, using a collective playbuilding approach. This reaching 'in' approach to gather the stories provided ownership for the men, and an opportunity to perform a part of themselves to an outside audience. The plays were about giving voice to soldiers and inmates – outlets for themselves, and as importantly for co-participants and audiences to glimpse inside the lives of these men. As teaching artists, we helped to facilitate these projects, but we were also 'inside' the work as co-facilitators and actors. Monica shares the multiple roles she played behind the scenes to motivate, assure, and nurture her fellow actors. The traditional understanding of an actor's role differs tremendously in such projects. George, like Monica, performed a role within *Contact! Unload* alongside his non-actor soldiers. Stepping 'in' the work provides another set of lens, an appreciation of what the group is experiencing during the production. The fear and joy of performing is shared. The lines need to be memorized, the blocking remembered, the focus, the camaraderie, the uncertainty, and the bond is shared 'in' the performing.

Within the two projects described in this article we modeled the kind of creativity and risk-taking we asked of our participants by tackling those tasks ourselves. This inreach model of theatre education and applied theatre requires teacher/facilitator/ directors willing to step inside the process and to work alongside participants. We may be somewhat uniquely qualified to take on this kind of inreach education due to our shared background as trained and experienced actors. It does feel risky to set aside the role of mastery that is more typical of a teacher, director or facilitator and to step inside the shared role of performer. However, our experiences in these two applied theatre projects have shown us that we can continue to learn as mentor actors as well as educators/facilitators. Walking alongside these veteran soldiers and prison inmates in support of their performance has given us as much as we hope it has given to these men and to the audiences who witnessed their courage. Stepping out of the shadows and into the light is a metaphor for theatre that holds deep

meaning. That metaphor has greater resonance for us now, as we have reflected upon here after working with these groups of men.

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Visiting Schools for Visiting Theatre. Researching a Drama Workshop and Young People's Response

Katrine Heggstad, Kari Mjaaland Heggstad, and Stig A. Eriksson

Abstract This chapter explores a theatre mediation research project in the city of Bergen, Norway. It is an outreach project for grade 10 students, aiming at opening the doors to theatre for young people, involving Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in a collaborative venture with the city theatre: Den Nationale Scene, and two other partner institutions. The students were invited during school hours to see a play, *Anne Pedersdotter* (1908), by the Norwegian dramatist Hans Wiers-Jenssen (1866–1925), based on a witch trial in Bergen in 1590. The authors devised teaching materials and preparatory practical workshops for students, and researched the facilitation of and the responses to the introductory workshops. Following a brief tuning in to the overall project, the chapter first applies a topological reading of parts of the material. Secondly, it takes a quantitative perspective, before the chapter is rounded off.

Keywords From-text-to-theatre · Anne Pedersdotter · Theatre mediation · Theatre accessing · Exposition · Topos · Applied drama/theatre

1   Tuning In

"Anne's Sorrow", by the Swedish composer Magnus Stinnerbom, is filling the room while a class of 15–16 year olds enters. The music relates to the destiny of the main character in the play *Anne Pedersdotter* (Anne Peder's Daughter), which the students will watch some weeks later. The students take a seat on the floor, in a circle, and the facilitators initiate a discussion about the view of the world in the sixteenth

K. Heggstad · K. M. Heggstad
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway
e-mail: katrine.heggstad@hvl.no; kari.mjaaland.heggstad@hvl.no

S. A. Eriksson (✉)
Drama Department, Centre of Arts Communications and Culture, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway
e-mail: stig.audun.eriksson@hvl.no

century; religious beliefs, latter-day concerns, everyday life and superstition (e.g. a black cat on the roof could be a sign of the devil in the house). During 1 h work, the students gradually enter the life in Bergen in the sixteenth century and the story of Anne Pedersdotter.[1] Through the workshop, the students get to work on the main characters and their relations, and the language of that time, for example the way to address each other both verbally and bodily. Stinnerbom's music from the play is central throughout the workshop.

1.1   The Project: Organisation and Materials

The project was a collaboration between four partners: Den Nationale Scene (The National Stage, Bergen), the Cultural Rucksack,[2] the Bergen City School Board, and the Drama Department at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences.

1.1.1   Education Package and Workshop

Teaching and learning materials were developed, based on research about Bergen and the life in the city during the period 1550–1600. The package comprised religious, vocational, educational and other cultural perspectives, with a selection of illustrative period drawings, and hands-on suggestions for student activities, like a smart-phone-based historical city walk for students, as well as historical anecdotes and facts relating to the subject matter. All pre-performance materials could be downloaded from the web page of Den Nationale Scene, so that teachers and students could navigate the tasks through digital equipment, in school and after school (Figs. 1, 2 and 3). A 60-min-workshop was created and toured to the schools. It was based on a number of rehearsal observations in the theatre of the *Anne Pedersdotter*-production.

1.1.2   From Text to Theatre Projects

The current project has its background in a series of theatre education endeavours named 'From Text to Theatre'.[3] Our work is always based on a specific production, usually by observing rehearsals and having conversations with the director, actors,

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[1] The dramaturge at Den Nationale Scene, Anders Hasmo Dahl, reworked Wiers-Jenssen's script, and Leif Stinnerbom directed the performance. It opened the 23rd of March 2015.

[2] The Cultural Rucksack is a government funded culture dissemination programme, administered through regional offices (counties and municipalities), to bring the arts into schools or the students into art buildings. All Norwegian students, from age 6 to 18, will experience at least one encounter with a professional art production each year throughout their schooling.

[3] The first project was in 1989. Kari Mjaaland Heggstad and Stig A. Eriksson created a number of workshops in cooperation with the DNS. Reports and articles of the work have been published in Norway and abroad (1994, 1999, 2007, 2011). Katrine Heggstad picked up on this approach from 1996. During the years 2014–2016 Heggstad, Heggstad and Eriksson have made four education

Figs. 1 and 2   Drawings by Olaus Magnus, ca. 1550. *Norges historie*, b. 4, pp. 179 and 110

Fig. 3   Printing house in the 1500s. Engravings from Gottfried's Historische Chronic, Frankfurt 1619. (https://boktrykkerkunst)

scenographer, musicians; yet devising the workshops by our own choices of dramatic conventions, structure and means of expression. A common denominator for the cooperation has been the focus on unlocking the doors to the theatre to new audiences (i.e. Eriksson and Heggstad 2007). How can we develop young students into critical and competent audience members for the theatre? This is the main question behind the approach 'From Text to Theatre'.

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packages together for these productions: *Medealand* by Sara Stridsberg, *Waffle Hearts* by Maria Parr, *Anne Pedersdotter* by Hans Wiers-Jenssen and *The Nether* by Jennifer Haley.

2   Research Approaches

The research uses a mixed methods approach. A qualitative part consists of analysis of the workshop, the facilitators' logs and the class teacher's observation forms. A quantitative part analyses results from a student's questionnaire and responses from teacher observations.

The qualitative part is studied from a topological perspective. The Norwegian researcher, Aslaug Nyrnes, describes topological analysis, as orientation in landscapes of knowledge that already exists (Nyrnes 2006, p. 18). In our context "the landscape" is places in the workshop where experiences are made; for instance a selected moment, the facilitator's body language, how questions are asked etc. We take a closer look at different topoi in our project through three dimensions: *copia, mimesis* and *temporality*.[4] Copia means: "stock, store, supply, inventories and archives" (Nyrnes 2013, p. 30). Through copia, we study knowledge and culture that appears in the work. Mimesis has to do with the words and the expressions of body, face and voice. How do the participants act? The concept of mimesis means more than 'imitation'; it incorporates 'pretending' and 'make-believe' and brings to mind the role of the imagination (Kaufmann 1992, p. 38). At the same time, mimesis is a form of active representation, and thus it implies more than merely reproducing. Temporality investigates "what is at hand and happening at the precise moment" (Nyrnes 2006, p. 18). It appears in the different understandings of time and time perspectives – historically and contemporarily – and becomes visible in waiting, moving, rhythm etc. and in concepts like birth and death, beliefs and superstition. Temporality exists "in the very performance of our tasks" (Ingold 1993, p. 159).

2.1   A Topological Analysis of the Workshop

The analysis is primarily seen from the facilitators' perspectives. The material consists of the facilitators' participatory observations of the workshops and log reflections, and experiences from doing the workshop many times. The workshop develops and changes through serial repetitions. According to Foucault, there are two concepts of series with two kinds of repetitions. One (the traditional) is based on *resemblance*, pointing back to the original. The other is *similitude.* Similitude is making use of the material in context. It is always dynamic and open for improvements. "Resemblance makes unique assertion, always the same: This thing, that thing, yet another thing is something else. Similitude multiplies different affirmations, which dance together, tilting and tumbling over one another" (Foucault 1983, p. 46).

Our series is a mixture of resemblance and similitude. The original workshop plan gives the premises for the workshop in practice. The progression is given and some parts of the plan are "scripts", intended ways of verbalisation. At the same

time, each workshop will in many aspects differ from the plan. The series also have another premise: change, adjustment and improvisation depending on the situation. In parts of the analysis, we generalise the experiences from the series, in other parts we look at a specific example. The workshop consists of seven parts: (1) Conversation with the class, (2) Exposition, (3) Walking to music, (4) Working on lines, (5) Working on selected scenes, (6) Sharing, and (7) Summing up. In the analysis, we look at part 2, 3 and 6.

2.1.1 First Topos: Exposition

The students sit on the floor in a wide semicircle. In the open space, the facilitator (F) creates "the stage" by placing two chairs side by side and one chair diagonally further back. F is going to include 11 students in a depiction while narrating:

> *We are in Bergen anno 1560. Absalon Pedersen Beyer* – (F moves towards a student, smiles invitingly, takes his hand and leads him to one of the two chairs) *is a clergyman at Bergenhus Castle. Absalon is 60 years old and is highly respected in Bergen. His mother, Merete Beyer* – (a student is chosen and placed on the chair next to Absalon) *lives in Absalon's house. Merete is 80 years old and is a strict woman. She keeps order in the house and is known for her excellent cooking. She is very fond of her son. In this house, there is also a young woman. Her name is Anne* (F finds another student. She is placed behind Absalon, with a hand on his shoulder)*. Anne has been married to Absalon for 5 years. She is only 22…*

Situation: A Changed Room Based on the experiences from the workshop series, the situation can be summarised as follows: The framing is not the same as an everyday school situation, even if it occurs in a classroom with all its' implicit connotations. The facilitators are guests, not schoolteachers. They do not know the group, and the group do not know them. Two different sets of knowledge and cultures meet. The supplies (copia) are different. There is an uncertainty of what to expect from each other. The setting has other "rules". The room and situation have changed.

The students are audience in this part and also potential actors. It is exciting for some participants. Others are disinterested, fear the unknown or dread the expectancy of speaking, doing, playing, or exposing themselves in front of the others. The facilitators sense this from the moment they enter the room, and they try to build a bridge through eye contact with each participant in the initial encounter, and send out positive signals like smiling, nodding, listening and responding (mimesis). The situation is coloured by the physical setting, the time, the culture and by the participants, including the facilitators (temporality). Each workshop calls for improvisation and new approaches.

Narrative The facilitators (F) have made a sequenced narrative "script". F will always include, directly or indirectly, elements of transactions through status, gender or language. The wording is one part of F's copia, the expression through voice and body is another. Copia is also present in F's mimetic expressions and will influence the communication with the class.

All three perspectives mimesis, copia and temporality are embedded in the act of narrating. Narrating involves complex signalling – in fiction and out of fiction – in a stylised, distanced and yet intriguing way: "He is 60, she is 22. They have been married for 5 years". Being in the space, telling the story to the whole group, and at the same time involving some participants in the depiction, happens as structured improvisation. It is an enactment depending on F's choices and the participants' reactions in the situation. Here is an example:

Workshop No 21 The class teacher arrives before the class. He says there are some very shy girls in the class, who are worried about taking part in drama. He allows them to be just observers. F accepts this. The three girls are standing "glued against the door" before the workshop starts (Log No 21).

> F invites the girls to take part. Two of them accept and sit down. F starts narrating and "finds" Absalon. He is now sitting on his chair and seems confident in the situation. Good mood, smiles, excitement in the group. F looks around for Absalon's mother. She meets the eyes of one of the shy girls sitting on the floor and moves towards her – the girl looks down and shakes her head. F stretches her hand out, takes the girl's hand, she resists. F whispers: *Don't worry – you are not going to speak.* Reluctantly, the girl sits down besides Absalon. F says: *She is 80* (pauses – the class laughs – the girl has a timid look) – *and rules the household quite strictly. She is a good cook – and a proud mother!* F looks at the girl, nods to her to show she has done well.

The choosing of a student that had signalled not wanting to be in the depiction raises questions about protection and safety. After all, as Dorothy Heathcote says: "The actor in theatre, the TIE team and the teacher have all made a contract to allow people to stare at them, but the children have not made that contract" (Heathcote 1984, p. 162). In retrospect, F's intention (copia) of giving the girl an opportunity to break out from her group, and of the established expectations in the classroom, might have been a violation of her integrity in the moment. However, the three shy girls did take part in the acting out of scenes in the last session of the workshop.

2.1.2 Second Topos: A Solemn Drift to Music

The students line up by the walls.

> *Imagine that you are a person of high rank, living in the sixteenth century. When you hear the music, start walking in a slow tempo and fill the space. Greet when you meet. You are not to speak, but rather gracefully greet people, with a bow or a nod or make a curtsy before you move on.* (F exemplifies greetings in a slow and ritual manner). *You are never to stop, but to have a solemn drift to the music.*

The classroom is an open space. In the Exposition, there was a "stage" and an audience space. Now the students are going to fill the room with their bodies. The lining up is a spatial starting point. They are getting ready to move into something that for many is unfamiliar or strange. They are going to stride across the floor in a certain way. Through voice and body expressions, F must create this fictional space in an inviting way.

Language The topology of F's language has several layers: Framing the participants in a historical time, with a tempo and rhythm of movement, using stylization and awareness of others' position in the space etc. The open space in the classroom has become a fictional site – an undefined place in the 1560s where people of high rank greet each other. F's choice of words will change from workshop to workshop but are mostly expressed in a poetic style, which generally sets a mood for concentration and commitment.

F's log from workshop No 25 says: "The class was involved from the first moment. It worked well to have everybody in active mode from the start. When the framing is good, the greeting and striding works excellently." The teacher's observation from the session confirms this: "Clear instruction. The students knew what to do."

The Musical Space The music is also a part of creating a "different" room, a different landscape. It takes the participants away from the ordinary, and brings them into a flow of slow movements and into a solemn mood, which foreshadows the opening sequence of the theatre performance. F will keep the flow going for as long as it takes everyone to meet. The sensitivity to the musical space, timing and each participant, is crucial.

F's log from workshop No 1 says: "They didn't use the rhythm in the music. They walked faster and talked to each other." F's log from workshop No 10 says: "The greeting worked really well. It became a solemn and nice wandering. Never

before, have the students walked so equally to the music. Perhaps because the music was put on already when we gave the demonstration." These two logs show how the repetition of the workshop develops it.

Teacher observation from No 10 says: "They straighten their spine when the task is given. Walk slowly and reverently. One boy is standing still for a long time, but then gets going. One of the boys is very tired, but takes part." Demonstrating various ways of greetings and solemn striding seem to provide protection for the students. It is not a matter of imitation, but an offer of different modes. A standard and a mood are set. By coincidence, F discovers how music along with the exemplification gives more. *A solemn drift to music* is dependent on details like when to put on the music, the setting of the mood, the wording, exemplifying the stride and greetings, participating with the students in the fictional space and how F meets everybody with the same respect.

2.1.3 Third Topos: Sharing

The students have been working in groups with eight excerpts from the script, which they have explored on "the floor". In the sharing Stinnerbom's rhythmic piece "Slängpolska" is used to frame the presentations and to provide energy and pulse.

From the series of workshops, we can generalise that most students are not trained and used to making scene presentations. However, there are always *some* students in every class that has had theatre experience from before who enjoy the work from the first moment. In addition, there are often some inexperienced students who play with great self-confidence and enjoyment. Even timid or disinterested students generally accept taking part in the sharing.

Students as Actors Performing on "stage" is demanding for many students. From our experience, most students are more concerned with the oral presentations than the physical expressions. The lines are dominating their attention in their performance of the scenes. In general, there is a lack of bodily expression, sense of timing and stage awareness. Still, out of the 1026 students taking part in the workshop only 7 chose to be merely audience in the sharing phase. This can be interpreted in several ways: It is attractive to have an audience. It is difficult to say no. Group work creates commitment. It is interesting to work in new ways. A guest teacher can achieve more. The build-up of the workshop has made them ready. An illustrating comment was logged from workshop No 4, with a class that was described as very demanding by the teacher. "The sharing worked very well. Many interesting ways of staging and acting out the scenes. We were actually quite impressed with this class" (F's log). The teacher's observation from the same workshop says: "Nice presentations. This is taken seriously." The students' role as actors presupposes a role as audience. The tight structure for the sharing creates concentration and focus: "Everyone is participating when they plan and rehearse: good activity! Great presentations! Good concentration! The whole thing was great!" (Teacher's observation, workshop No 12).

> *Group 1 will start the sharing. When the music is put on, you enter the stage;*
> *and when you are ready to start, the music will be turned down. Before start-*
> *ing your scene, each one of you makes a bow or a curtsy and names your*
> *character. The scene is acted out, and the music comes back on when your*
> *scene is finished – and the next group enters. No applause and no comments.*

Generally, the sharing of scenes in a structured, almost "ritualistic", manner has been experienced as a very useful strategy, because the whole class participates. The music creates a drive, it replaces routines of (polite) applause and (shallow) commenting, and it endows the presentations with a sense of wholeness.

2.2 Quantitative Analysis

The workshop was offered to all 10th graders in the Bergen schools.

2.2.1 Students' Voices (Questionnaire)

In addition to the qualitative mapping of the students' responses, the project organisers – as well as the facilitators/researchers – were interested in a more distanced response in a quantitative form. A QuestBack[5] questionnaire was developed for the schools, and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) for data protection. The link to the questionnaire was sent out to the schools shortly after the performances in the city theatre. We could not send the link directly to each class but had to rely on our coordinating teacher contact in each school to access the questionnaire to the students, via their class teachers. This somewhat cumbersome approach may have delayed the feedback process and probably affected the feedback volume. Even after having posted a reminder, the total feedback turned out low: From a potential sample of 2400 students who were invited to see the performance Anne Pedersdotter at Den Nationale Scene, only 256 responded to the questionnaire, which is a response rate of 10,6%. Therefore, it cannot be interpreted with significance in respect to measurable effects of the total project. Yet, even with this low response, it is still of interest to the project to present some of the tendencies within that sample. The feedback involved a fairly balanced distribution between girls (52,6%) and boys (47,4%). Here are some of the results:

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[5] QuestBack is a person-based digital feedback platform headquartered in Oslo, Norway. Senior consultant, Dag Ove Vareberg, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, helped designing the questionnaire.

- 90% of the respondents have been to the theatre before. However, 70% of these had never been to the Den Nationale Scene, and 30% had been to this theatre only once.
- Only 2% answer that they have seen theatre before in their school "many times" and 8% "some times", while" 39% answer "a few times" and 32% answer "only once". Nineteen percent has "never" experienced theatre in their school.
- 7% have seen theatre "many times" in their own part of the city (in a community centre, youth club, after school activity, etc.) and 10% "some times". 37% have seen a theatre performance "a few times", 17% "only once" – and 29% have "never" experienced it.
- Similarly, 4% have seen theatre other places "many times", 9% "some times", while 37% tick off "a few times", 16% "only once" and 34% "never".
- 48% of the students have participated in drama/theatre work within school hours; 52% have not, and 19% have taken part in a drama group or a theatre unit in their spare time; 81% have not.
- 52% from the sample confirm that they made use of the pre-performance teaching material (historical maps and pictures, historical city walk, etc.); 13% specifically ticked that they did not use these materials; however, as many as 35% answered: "do not know".
- 71% confirm that they took part in our pre-performance workshop, 14% did not, 15% "do not remember".

This feedback shows that a clear majority of the respondents were newcomers to their main city theatre when they watched *Anne Pedersdotter*. A majority were not entirely without previous theatre experience but close to 10% had never experienced theatre at all, and 19% had never experienced theatre in secondary school. This is interesting considering the aim for the Cultural Rucksack: every student will experience at least one encounter with professional art every year – either in school or in arts buildings. 48% of the students had participated in drama/theatre during school hours. Considering that drama is not a discrete subject in the Norwegian curriculum, this is noteworthy. However, as to commitment to drama/theatre work after school, a clear majority (81%) had not attended such activities. 34% of the young people ticked "do not know" on the question whether the teaching materials for *Anne Pedersdotter* were used or not. This response is difficult to interpret.

As to the students' responses to the actual workshop experience, there are two discernible leanings: A fair majority register positive effects from the workshop. However, there is also an element of "do not know" in these responses, which is not easy to interpret. It could be a weakness in the form, or the question was simply too hard for some students to make a decision about. The following table shows the main tendencies in responses to some selected aspects (Table 1).

The QuestBack results indicate that there is a need for more drama and theatre work in schools. It also shows that the project has had positive learning effects. To a majority of the respondents, the workshop provided both a pre-understanding and a pre-interest for seeing the play. Even if the expectations of the performance were not satisfactorily met, there is a noticeable interest in seeing how the theatre presents "their" scenes from the classroom work – more so than in watching the scenes

Table 1 QuestBack results

To which degree did you…	Very well/quite well	Not well/not at all	Do not know
…get to know the main characters?	67,8	22,8	9,4
…get an impression of the story?	61,3	28	10,7
…look forward to go and see the performance?	51,2	37,1	11,7
Were your expectations to the performance met?	39,1	46,3	14,6
How did you like to watch "your" scene?	49,2	25,2	25,6
How did you like to watch the scenes of your classmates?	36,7	32,2	31,1

of the classmates. An interesting point of feedback has been voiced from the artistic personnel in the theatre (evaluation meeting with the dramaturge, June 11th 2015). The actors reported a positive surprise that the young audiences in the auditorium predominantly emitted interest and engagement through most of the performance. Therefore, the theatre accredited the pre-performance work for this effect. The teachers' feedback from the workshop is not in contradiction with that conclusion, and is mostly positive.

2.2.2 Teachers' Voices (Observation Forms Mapping Situations and Responses)

The observation sheet had an open form. We did not ask the teachers to use any specific terminologies, or to look for certain elements. Instead, we invited them to note down observations when they saw something that surprised them, and to comment freely on each phase of the workshop. The teachers chose to comment on the work in many different ways. Therefore, this open form gave us some challenges in finding manageable categories. We started looking for similarities – categories in which we could group the answers – and see if this approach could give us some interesting findings.

We grouped the responses into six categories: Engagement, rejection/discomfort, good atmosphere, enactment, satisfaction and commotion (Fig. 4).

The feedback expressed by the slices of this cake seems quite positive, and the teachers did seem in general quite positive. Nevertheless, a closer reading of the cake reveals a more nuanced picture: 152 times engagement was mentioned, while rejection/discomfort was mentioned 83 times. These are often considered as opposites but the same teacher can both note down engagement and rejection.

Good atmosphere was mentioned 64 times and satisfaction 76, while enactment 40 and commotion 36. Commotion can be perceived as a result of the playing activities in the room. The actual playing phases take up a relatively small part of the cake. This may mean that the teachers regard enactment as only "being on stage". The qualities of good atmosphere and satisfaction dominate in the forms. We are
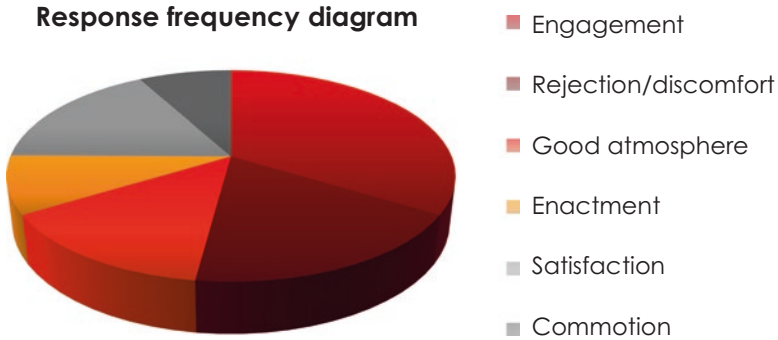
Fig. 4 Response frequency diagram

aware, though, that the facilitators were the ones who asked the teachers to do the observation. Maybe they were reluctant to be critical.

An interesting finding pertaining to the teachers' observations of facilitated activities is that the teachers tend to evaluate rather than comment on what they observe. The reasons for this might be that teachers are often put in a coaching situation for teacher students, so when they observe they tend to evaluate the way tasks are given, and how it creates engagement or discomfort.

3 Tuning Out

In this chapter, we have focused on a project of mediating theatre for young people. The performance *Anne Pedersdotter* constituted our starting point. The research involved a qualitative part (workshop) and a quantitative part (questionnaire and observation). A workshop has been at the centre of the analysis and was analysed from a topological perspective.

Conducting a sizable series of workshops has been a learning experience, both as facilitators and as researchers. It has been a mixed process of creativity, repetition, cultivation, reflection, and evaluation. It has been a process of refinement, through a series of "repetitions". Nyrnes investigates series in art, and relates how "series, as a phenomenon, could contribute to the discussion of quality promotion in arts education" (Nyrnes 2013 , p. 26). In our work, involving three researchers/facilitators, the material has developed through changes, adjustments and refinements, sometimes after evaluation, sometimes on impulse. Through the 45 sessions the repetitions of the original workshop have been based on resemblance and also to a certain degree on similitude (Foucault 1983). Similitude in our series is influenced by the consistent change of site for each workshop. The sites offer different atmospheres and this influences the organising in the room and the ways of communcating. The participants as a group also influence the structure, the choices and the energy in the room. Whilst we are three co-designers of the workshop, most of the

time we are two facilitators conducting the workshop. This also effects certain details of the workshop.

For the topological analysis of the selected parts of the workshop, video observation would have been the ideal tool – freezing the moments, going into details of the situation, the facilitation process, the communication and the artistic elements. However, from the start we knew that video observation was not an option, because of the data protection regulations and other practical considerations.

We have asked: How can we develop young students into critical and competent audience members for the theatre? In this small research project it is difficult to read a development of critical competence. Even if the Norwegian national strategy of the Cultural Rucksack programme is to contain a more long-term strategy for developing competence in arts through at least one encounter with professional art every year, the responses to our questionaire tell us that drama/theatre is very little present during their 10 years of schooling. A more long-term strategy for drama/theatre is needed. From what we have observed, there is also a lack of performing skills among the students. Still, the rehearsing and performing the scenes show that this kind of work creates interest, focus, concentration and learning. The From-Text-to-Theatre approach enables students to become familiar with the main roles and selected scenes of a play. However, the fact that 52% of the respondents to the questionaire say that they have not participated in drama/theatre work within school hours, indicates that there is a corresponding lack of drama competence among the teachers. Therefore, we end this project by asking: How can we strengthen teachers' competences so that they feel confident to apply drama/theatre in their classrooms?

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Irondale Ensemble Project: Creating Community in Neo-liberal Times

Peter Duffy and Terry Greiss

> *For me acting is my passion, if I didn't have theatre, if I wasn't able to come on the stage, then there's no meaning of life in front of me. This helps me get by. Through the swamp of school and all that stuff, it's just like heavy and dense and then coming, being on stage and performing in front of humans is like it's liberating for me.*
>
> Young Company teen ensemble Member speaking at a Talk-back after their performance of *Casablanca Reflections,* an original teen-devised piece

Abstract In recent decades, shifts in federal educational policy demand a variety of changes to how theatre companies meet their local educational goals. Since the George W. Bush administration, shifting educational policies privilege neoliberal concepts of education – that education should be standards-driven and geared to preparing twenty-first century workers. Theatre companies that work with students have been caught between seeking funding to continue their programs and doing the artistic, creative, empathic, and often-socially minded work that drives their missions. This chapter looks at how one theatre company, Brooklyn, New York's The Irondale Ensemble, has had to change, adapt and, ultimately, transform how they do their educational work in response to changes to federal educational policy.

Keywords No child left behind · Race to the top · Neoliberal educational policy · Liveness · Improvisation · Theatre · Students as artists

P. Duffy (✉)
Department of Theatre and Dance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
e-mail: DUFFYP@mailbox.sc.edu

T. Greiss
The Irondale Ensemble Project, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: info@irondale.org

The Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire reminds readers that culture seeks to either preserve or "transform social structures" (1995, p. 160). Art is never neutral; it always has a point of view. A musical like *Mame* mollifies a cultural status quo while *Hamilton* attempts to challenge it. Cultural institutions produce art that inevitably pursues one of the two goals as described by Freire. Furthermore, professor and drama therapist Nisha Sajnani elaborates Freire's idea of culture by underscoring that there is always a politics to representation through and witnessing of performance (2012, p. 190).

Like performance, education, and more specifically, educational policy is also never neutral (McLaren 1997). A curriculum is a narrative that supports systems of meaning (Au 2009). Even seemingly positive additions like "Black History Month" and "Women's History Month" to a school's instruction keep white men at the heart of the curriculum (Gore 2013, p. 58). In the end, curricula are as much political as educative. The current incarnation of education's politicization is easy to find. Neoliberal educational reformers like the Walton family and Bill and Melinda Gates endorse and fund curricula programs that focus on so-called market driven forces such as teacher and student accountability and charter schools (Reckhow and Snyder 2014). Educational critic and historian Michael Apple asserts that the neoliberal turn in educational policy supports "increasingly powerful discourses and policies […] concerning privatization, marketization, performativity, and the 'enterprising individual" (2001, p. 421). Renowned educational philosopher Henry Giroux (2014) expands on that definition stating,

> Market-driven educational reforms, with their obsession with standardization, high-stakes testing and punitive policies, also mimic a culture of cruelty and instrumental rationality that neo-liberal policies produce in the wider society. They exhibit contempt for teachers and distrust of parents, repress creative teaching, destroy challenging and imaginative programs of study, and treat students as mere inputs on an assembly line. (p. 492)

These forces impact education globally (Apple 2001). As will be discussed later in the chapter, the neo-liberal forces have reduced school districts, schools, and in particular arts education leaving many arts organizations scrambling to stay relevant.

The New York City-based Irondale Ensemble Project has been wrestling with in education tensions since its founding 34 years ago. Recent neo-liberal policy changes impacted the company profoundly over the past 10 years in particular. This chapter contextualizes Irondale within these changes in education and shows how they continue to meet their institutional goals of using performance as a language to educate and entertain and make sense of today's challenging world.

The Irondale Ensemble Project is a professional ensemble theatre company located in Brooklyn, New York. Terry Greiss, Jim Niesen and Barbara MacKenzie Wood founded Irondale in 1983 to create contemporary theatre in New York City beyond traditional Broadway fare. Currently, Irondale produces one to two major pieces of theatre each season in addition to their community projects like "To Protect, Serve and Understand" – an on-going "project that brings together civilians and police officers to create semi-improvised performances of monologues and

scenes" (irondale.org). Their main stage productions either re-imagine/reinterpret classic plays or devise new works. Irondale hires an ensemble of actors for a season who rehearse and serve in schools twice a week as teaching artists. Currently, their school programs reach about 2500 students a year which is down roughly 6000 students from the early 2000s. In comparison to other theatre companies, this number seems low but that is because Irondale commits to long-term residencies – sometimes lasting several years. Their operating budget is approximately 1 million dollars which supports the ensemble, their Young Company (a training program for actors ages 13–18), and their Junior Company (for younger actors ages 9–13). Both the Junior and Young Companies are low-cost to free theatre programs that meet once a week after school. Actors train the young actors in the same sorts of improvisational techniques that the full-time Irondale Ensemble utilizes and, like them, are tasked to create one to two new works each year.

1   Irondale: Theatre and Community

In an environment like New York City with its millions of people, opinions and scores of languages, it is a challenge to define community without essentializing it. Brunt (2001) states that

> A community is based on symbols or even attitudes, rather than concrete villages or urban neighbourhoods. In complex, pluralistic societies people have a multitude of identities that could generate the kinds of loyalties and motivations that constitutes communities. (p. 83)

As Brunt describes, communities are not monolithic identities, but rather a collection of individuals' identity markers that shift and align within situations and environments (Crenshaw 1991). Students from the same neighborhood are no more homogenous than the people sitting around our own dinner tables. Given this reality, is it possible for theatre to create community?

Irondale's artistic director, Jim Niesen is not sure. He asks,

> Is a community simply geographical? Do we make communities of interests or of mindfulness? Is that what you're really trying to reach out to in order to get a certain mass of people involved that make the community you're trying to make work? If you want to have a community of people playing soccer, to play it right you'll need, what, a community of 18 people in order to have two teams. [If you're working with people who are interested in listening to each other] making community is a continual process of being present with those people.

For Niesen, it is not enough for people to be in the same proverbial boat. He is interested in who shows up to pull on the oars to give it direction. He uses the term *tribe* to describe his vision of solidarity of intention and purpose. "Tribes are the people that get it. Communities are the people who either get it or there is the potential of them getting it."

Performance theory scholar and theatre practitioner Kuftinec (1996) helps contextualize Jim's notion of community by drawing upon, and then complicating,

Victor Turner's concept of *communitas*. She defines communitas as "the ephemeral sense of connectedness and bonding experienced by a group through the common experience of a unifying ritual" (1996, p. 94). Donald Weber adds a nuance of the dynamic nature of *communitas* saying it is "the ritual leveling process containing the potential for new social arrangements new forms of imagination, of ritualized play" (1995, p. 528). It is clear from these definitions that *communitas* centers on relationships, rituals, and common purpose.

A piece of theatre is, of course, a 'common experience of a unifying ritual,' but does that experience create a community? Kuftinec cites Anthony Cohen who suggests that a sense of *communitas* merely masks the differences within a group and creates a false sense of cohesion (1996, p. 94). While individuals have multiple identity markers, for a community to exist, its members must subscribe to commonly held "standards, expectations, obligations, responsibilities, and demands" (Kirk and Okazawa-Rey 2010, p. 13). However, in *The Anthropology of Performance* (1986), Turner wonders whether *communitas* can ever fully emerge within a group. "It is not being realized precisely because individuals and collectivities try to impose their cognitive schemata on one another" (1986, p. 16). In other words, Turner's notion of *communitas* dissipates the moment someone tries to control it. Just as an actor can ruin a scene by trying to control it, the strands of commonality within groups fray once agendas and normed identities are insisted upon.

2 Theatres, Schools, Neo-liberalism and *Communitas*

Niesen echoed Turner's concerns of imposing opinions and outcomes onto a group. In thinking about tensions actualized in Irondale's school programs. Niessen shared that theatre programs were "suddenly there to support the curriculum and to teach content" in ways they were not in the past. He said,

> [Changes in how schools funded arts programs] coupled with the teach to the test stuff just made the work in the schools in the last few years almost impossible – unless you just had a principal who was so with you who also had a coterie of teachers. You had to have that team in place because you didn't have the luxury of two years to see where are those little places that are developing in the school community. But I think being able to move more of our programs into the theatre, that's rejuvenated what we're doing as far as the quality of it.

What Jim articulates in the above interview excerpt is that ritual matters, location matters, but perhaps what matters even more are people showing up with similar aspirations. As Niesen's experience suggests, theatre artists bringing drama into schools became problematic as soon as theatre became solely a midwife to the curriculum.

Terry Greiss said that he always had a "love/hate relationship" with schools. On the one hand schools represented a site where they could work with young people and explore improvisation, theatre, and consensual meaning-making through drama. On the other, schools were a place of exhausted resources, teachers, administrators

and students. "More often than not," Greiss said of schools, "it was like butting your head against the wall."

Changes in funding for arts programs, a reduction in time due to standardized testing demands, limited resources, impositions of curriculum expectations, a lack of buy-in from administration, teachers and students, and work in forgotten and neglected neighborhoods in addition to a new emphasis on hiring certified arts teachers in schools, made working in schools a challenge. Consequently, Irondale began doing less work with its acting company in schools and more in its theatre. For a theatre company that had such a long and successful record of working in schools, it was a telling shift that in the early 2000s, Irondale's relationship with schools became increasingly problematic. This fraught relationship should not be surprising however, as Peck (2015) demonstrates, because the influence of conservative think tanks and other outside political forces increased over urban educational policy. Citing Cersonsky, Peck suggested, "education reform has become synonymous with a 'corporate-backed, market-driven, testing-oriented movement in urban education' (Cersonsky 2013)" (2015, p. 590).

One brief example was school funding. In mid 1990s the New York City Board of Education decided to decentralize the distribution of funds from a centralized central office to principals directly. The idea was to make individual schools more nimble to respond to and create the best programs for individual schools (Hadderman, and ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, E. O 1999). As an Annenberg report demonstrates, this so-called Fair Student Funding Initiative has been met with mixed results. As one principal noted, "The schools had an illusion of discretion, but contracts and staffing obligations left principals debating over what amounted to pennies in the end" (Foley 2010, p. 31). Many arts organizations were caught in the dilemma of what to fund with limited funds.

Theatre education professor O'Connor (2015) draws from Nussbaum's (2010) defense of liberal arts education to contextualize the impact of a neo-liberal educational reform agenda on the arts in schools. He stated,

> Alongside this highly functional and imagination-free pedagogy, it is clear that the curriculum content has shifted away from material that focuses on engaging and firing the imagination and instead training the critical faculties toward material that is directly relevant to test preparation. (p. 465)

Irondale Ensemble member Patrena Murray summarized her struggles in finding *communitas* in neo-liberal schools,

> Like I feel as far as the schools are concerned, I definitely feel burned out. And that's because, if you go into this atmosphere – and it's got its own atmosphere, and it's like thick. You know? It's like… the principal's not on board, the teachers are like ehhh, the students have their own… their own agendas… yeah, and if you face that over and over again… it's like… you know? If you're in a car and you're heading somewhere, you have a goal to get there and the car keeps stalling. I mean how many times are you going to put up with that before you say it's time to get a new car?

The combination of standardizing education and narrowing of curricula and pedagogies restricts who teachers and students can be in schools. This not only

forecloses on how teachers can teach in the classroom, but impacts who is served in schools. Chappell and Cahnmann-Taylor's (2013) research demonstrates that the neo-liberal overhaul most often targets minoritized students in so-called at-risk areas "who tend to be hypersegregated in schools with more limited budgets, less culturally and linguistically responsive practices, and highly controlled curriculum based on discrete skill development" (p. 247). There is little room for the arts in an age of "discrete skill development" when the skills of interest are STEM skills.

Theatre in schools can represent play, inquiry, imagination, investigation, and ensemble development. These skills can be at odds with a reform movement that requires standardization. Within such a top-down normative reform schema, any sense of *communitas* disappears and, consequently, Irondale had to adjust. For these reasons, Irondale committed to creating opportunities for young people within their own theatre space.

3   Coalitions of Practice: Irondale Moving Toward *Communitas*

Chappell and Cahnmann-Taylor (2013) researched how cultural institutions endeavor to meet the needs of young people outside of schools. In order to create programs of value for young artists, organizations must "regularly negotiate cross-cultural tensions, employ new technologies of communication, and teach through immersive pedagogies that result in explicit skill acquisition expressed in a plurality of texts" (p. 247). Irondale, like many arts organizations around the world, employed multi-layered approaches within their own programming to teach theatre skills to students outside of schools.

> **Peter:** So the relationship [with schools and Irondale] is changing and you're finding that with the Young Company and bringing them into the theatre space itself is having an impact?
>
> **Jim Niesen:** Yes! Just that because you're not in a room that's really a chemistry room where you can't move the bolted down seats and when the kids come in, just the fact that they're coming in to a… like when you're coming into a school that's kind of their house that they have other associations with, that's a challenge. Here, it's a space to make theatre with young actors. It's a big difference.

Students at the Irondale Center receive the space and time required to become an ensemble. It is the opposite impulse that is a cornerstone of neo-liberal reform efforts which are to make people concerned with their own individual performance rather than the growth and development of the group. Mitchell (2003) discerns this difference through examining a multicultural self versus the strategic cosmopolitan.

> In multicultural education there has been a subtle but intensifying move away from person-centered education for all, or the creation of the tolerant, 'multicultural self' towards a more individuated, mobile and highly tracked skills-based education, or the creation of the 'strategic cosmopolitan'. The 'multicultural self' was one who was able to work with and

through difference, and conditioned to believe in the positive advantages of diversity in constructing and unifying the nation. The 'strategic cosmopolitan' is, by contrast, motivated not by ideals of national unity in diversity, but by understandings of global competitiveness, and the necessity to strategically adapt as an individual to rapidly shifting personal and national contexts. (p. 388)

Irondale works to create immersive theatre pedagogies where young actors learn together how to work as *multicultural selves*. A principle rule often heard at Irondale 'your partner is a genius'. The focus is not on the individual actor's experience, but on the group's. To see yourself as part of a larger whole directly opposes a 'strategic cosmopolitan' dynamic. As is Spolin's sense that there is no group of individual actors, the goal must be the one artistic group (Spolin 1999, p. 10). To work in that group, actors must be open, vulnerable, present, and giving. As Hatton and Lovesy remind practitioners, playbuilding is comprised of three core practices: making, performing and reflecting (2009, p. 10). None of this happens while focused on self. Immersive theatre pedagogies are not fixed processes, but develop and shift as the youth companies change and grow.

Education researcher Shauna Butterwick interrogates these dynamics of difference and normed identities within groups by noting that the assumptions made about members of a particular group or community create "borders, exclusions, and dichotomies" (2003, p. 451) as is true within strategic cosmopolitan pedagogies. It is these borders that constrain the dynamic shifting and reintegration of groups that Turner sought through his idea of *communitas*. "Part of the difficult work of coalitions" Butterwick notes, "reflects the tension between creating a sense of belonging/community and not suppressing differences" (2003, p. 451). Butterwick draws on the work of Iris Young (1990) to move beyond essentializing notions of difference.

> [Young] calls for coalition practices that reflect a form of democratic cultural pluralism, where difference is about specificity rather than dichotomy. Here the aim is not to voice "principles of unity" but, rather, to allow "each constituency to analyze economic and social issues from the perspective of its experience (1990, p. 188)." (2003, p. 451)

A 17-year-old Young Company member captures the benefits to individuals within the artistic group when she says,

> I go to a performing arts high school but it is nothing like Irondale. I could never find a place like Irondale... it's not like reading a script and learning lines, it's about knowing who you are and expressing yourself without being judged. And that is what theatre is, and I think that when I go to school they don't enforce that. So when I come to Irondale I feel like, like I'm given a chance to be me." Young Company teen ensemble Member speaking at a talk-back after their performance of *Casablanca Reflections,* an original teen-devised piece.

This is at the core of Irondale's practice – to *analyze issues from the perspective of one's own experience.* For Irondale, creating *communitas* means using improvisation (based heavily on the work of Viola Spolin) to create a space where actors meet, develop rituals of practice and play with and explore ideas consensually on their feet. This for them is a roadmap to create a coalition of practices that instills a sense of *communitas* and a vision that influences their values and work.

4   Engagement

> **Patrena:** If society knew that you learn a lot while playing… if the world knew that. And somehow it's like, um… and it gets trickled down to the Board of Ed or whatever where it's seeped into the fabric of the institution where it's like in order for you to do something substantial, it has to be serious. This is how we know it's important because it's serious.

Irondale's work emerges from improvisation and devising. The insistence on improvisational principles (for example, accepting the offers of others, creating room for your scene partner, adding new information) requires an artistic and generous space of exchange and intellectual commerce. If the process is devoid of good art, however, process is not enough.

An additional complication to Irondale's work is that it is political and attempts to provoke its audience to think, react, and respond. Consequently, there is always a danger that too many influences dilute their work and muddy a clear point of view. Furthermore, an additional challenge, as applied theatre artist and professor Michael Balfour suggests, is the social engagement aspects of theatre might eclipse the aesthetic value of the work. According to Balfour, the "aesthetic is interdependent with the possibilities of social engagement" (Balfour 2009, p. 356).

As either the political/social nature or the improvisational orientations of Irondale's work could easily overwhelm its artistic merits, it is important to have a strong directorial vision. That is the charge of Irondale's artistic director, Jim Niesen. He summarizes the challenges and ways of working by saying, 'we have to say yes' to each other. This trope of improvisation theory is, of course, an instruction on how to create layered improvisational work, but when adapted as an institutional philosophy, rehearsal has the potential to become dynamic and organic. Niesen continues,

> … and this is such a Spolin thing, but she talks about thoughts and ideas emerging. We shouldn't think things up – especially in the schools where we try to solve things consensually. And that's what we do in rehearsal all the time and it's so easy to apply it to other situations.

Long-time company member Michael-David Gordon describes Irondale's process as,

> like a giant computer where we load all of these things, scene titles, music pieces, places that we've been- so that things will pop up and connect in ways that are intuitive, not intellectual – but intuitive.

While Terry Greiss describes the process this way.

> I guess so much of the way, or the philosophy is… is an absence of how. You don't want to give people your solution to the problem, because you'll just get a repeat of your solution. You want to set the rules, the focus and the evaluative criteria so they'll discover their own solution to the problem. That's the breakthrough moment of acting.

In his interview with Leese Walker, a former Irondale Ensemble member and now the founding artistic director of a professional theatre company call Strike

Anywhere Performance Ensemble, Terry asked whether she notices any traces from her time with Irondale in her work with her own theatre company.

> **Leese:** Well um, it's been so much apart of my life, it's hard to imagine actually not having had that so it's in some ways almost hard for me to answer but I know that it has deeply affected my own practice in the rehearsing room, how I structure rehearsals, because I've had so much time to learn experimenting in the classroom. In terms of how to structure a series of games, that they would work in the most efficient way. What various games and exercises are good for. I feel like I'm constantly improvising in the classroom and the role of the teaching artist and the way that I approach being a director in the rehearsal room; it is so similar. I feel like my role in both forums is as a facilitator, I don't really function like a traditional director. I really set experiments in motion and allow the participants to find the answer. I guide, I shape, I suggest but I try not to impose.

In the interview Terry picks up on Leese's idea about not imposing and setting experiments in motion. "You're able to do that because you listen to the students. There's a big difference between hearing and listening." Hearing is acknowledging that another has spoken. Listening is keeping open the possibility of being changed by what was said. As Freire suggested, "The [cultural] invader thinks, at most, about the invaded, never with them; the latter have their thinking done for them by the former" (Freire 1986, p. 102). Listening has a dimension of reciprocity and exchange. Listening is curiosity in others and asking what they are interested in knowing and learning.

Terry tells a story about working in one school where the entire session was absolute bedlam and an irate principal was trying to get an explanation from the teaching artists about why they would allow the students to behave the way they did. Terry was trying to explain that theatre teaches students how to think and it was clear that the students were unaccustomed to being asked to think. The principal erupted with, "I don't have time to teach them how to think. I have to teach them how to read!" Any good drama process, Irondale's included, is decentralized, intuitive, incremental, improvisational, and focused on the group. This is a way to think, despite the principal's protests. This process is a counter-narrative to neo-liberal dispositions that focus "upon individual rights and the increasingly authoritarian use of […] power to sustain the system" (Harvey 2007, p. 42). As theatre education scholar Jonothan Neelands wrote, it is the act of "being in drama together which was contributing to change, rather than a particular lesson or production" (2009, p. 181). It is about work over time, not an individual day's work.

5 Neo-liberalism and Liveness in Education

> *Live performance places us in the living presence of the performers, other human beings with whom we desire unity and can imagine achieving it, because they are there, in front of us. Yet live performance also inevitably frustrates that desire since its very occurrence presupposes a gap between performer and spectator. […] live performance inevitably yields a sense of the failure to achieve community between the audience and the performer.* (Auslander 1999, p. 57)

Auslander's understanding of liveness in performance is as true for theatre as it is for education. Theatre artists search for the illusive alive moment in performance like prospectors pan for gold. As Bundy et al. (2012) demonstrate, audience engagement during the performance may influence feelings of dissatisfaction and discomfort. Teachers try to bring content *to life* and to make material relevant. Terry noted that during the first few years of the company's existence, the search for *liveness* was a shared concern between Irondale and schools.

> **Terry:** We were trying to trap it [aliveness] onstage and the New York City Board of Education -or at least a few visionary educators – were trying to inject it into classrooms for students who saw school as a place of consistent failure. Our missions and methods, if not always in sync, were at least compatible. As we've always known, the most important thing in theatre is aliveness.
>
> **Peter:** What does that mean to you?
>
> **Terry:** I go back to Spolin again. She says what we think of as talent is our willingness to directly confront our own experience. And if you think about it, that's a very deep thought, I think. What does it mean to be able to confront your experience? You have to be completely vulnerable and open to it. You have to be so present. You have to take what's happened to you and you have to use that on stage, digest and face it and then confront it in front of others. And we're not just talking about tragic or extreme experiences, we're talking about any experience… the experience of really opening a door on stage, for example. We know when it's fake. We know when someone is reciting lines; we know when someone is having a real thought on stage. When someone's not being physical, when they're acting from the neck up. So it's that sense of the whole body is committed. It's the whole thought process that's happening in the present. It's being rediscovered, it's not frozen and repeated. It's not a piece of film – you only have to do it right once. Many times in the theatre, we settle for what is, as opposed to what's alive!

Terry's desire to create alive spaces with young actors is not exclusive to theatre artists. Teachers also want pedagogies that are innovative and engaging that challenge young people and teachers to learn through doing and enacting. For many teachers in many schools, such practices have been shuttered by district and state education policies. Smith and Kovacs (2011) surveyed one American school district with approximately 1000 teachers on the impacts of President Bush's reform policy called *No Child Left Behind*. The survey found that the implementation of this policy negatively impacted teacher recruitment and retention of experienced teachers. Teachers noted much less job satisfaction and their sense of value and worth as teachers plummeted. Moreover, their autonomy in the classroom to meet individual student's needs has evaporated. One teacher commented in the survey,

> I wish we could develop a system that recognizes monumental improvements made by students. I feel like we set them up to fail. How many times do I have to tell a child 'You tried real hard [sic], but you didn't benchmark!' What about the achievements made by students and teachers every day that can't be measured by test scores or words per minute? Why is everyone so happy to place that label on these kids who can't perform in a one-size-fits-all frame? Some kids have home lives that require more survival skills than reading skills! For those kids, education is not at the top of the list. (Smith and Kovacs 2011 p. 216)

Teachers are the ones who feel the changes most and that reality impacts theatre companies looking to work in their school. Smith and Kovacs' (2011) survey also

indicated that nearly half of the 488 teachers who responded to the survey reported that there was now little to no time left in the school day for the arts.

This is an important backdrop to remember. Smith and Kovacs (2011) cite a study conducted by the Center for Educational Policy showing that 71% of the nation's 15,000 school districts took instructional time from other subjects to increase time for math and reading. It is not only arts organizations that are getting elbowed out in the process – non-STEM teachers (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are as well.

An important ingredient to aliveness is time. It is cultivated and nurtured and grown through relationship. As Jim Niessen noted, Irondale no longer had the luxury of spending 2 years in a school to find those areas of mutual interest and overlap. True, Auslander (1999) and Bundy et al. (2012) showed that liveness can breed disappointment because of the gap between the performer and the audience is too great (like that between teacher and student). Additionally, research shows this gap exists due to the audience member's experience during the production. But what about the unspoken disappointments when such opportunities are removed from schools entirely? And if they still exist, how can partnerships between schools and theatres seek to create moments of aliveness in a 45 min block once a week?

Like so many theatre companies across the US, Irondale struggles to sustain partnerships with schools. Because of this, they were forced to decide either to adapt their programming and bend to the neoliberal agenda, or find other ways of working with students and create other places where aliveness can happen. Terry lamented this shift and a lack of interest in what Irondale does best in schools.

> What we really teach when we work in schools or with community groups, is *ensemble*, because isn't that necessarily the desired outcome for any community? Aren't those words similar in their intent? How can we come together as a group of individuals to solve problems? How can we develop the "group mind"? It is such an essential component of our process and it's a generous way of working together. We are smarter, more effective together because of what the other ones know. And schools don't seem that interested in that.

6   So What Does This All Mean for Irondale?

Two events coincided in 2008: the significant impacts of the economic downturn and Irondale moving into its permanent home. While Irondale had more programming flexibility due to having its own performance space, the devastating economic collapse of 2007/2008 impinged upon Irondale's capacity to operate its programs intentionally and sustainably. In response to this unforeseen and severe economic reality, Irondale's impulse was not to cut programming or employees, but to open their doors to as many artists and organizations with sympathetic missions and programming styles. Irondale had to work within its very limited resources, and the one asset that has always remained invaluable was the permanent ensemble. One of the innovations that grew out of this time was the development of Irondale's Young Company. This

commitment to company enabled Irondale to now bring students to its space, for now they had both people and space. This was a major shift in the group's previous school engagement programs and the move to bringing young people to the Irondale Center became a highly valuable artistic arm of the ensemble.

Moving out of the classroom has led Irondale to some new realizations. When Irondale went into schools, no matter how unorthodox the program, how innovative the teaching the artists were still seen by students (and teachers too) as agents of the Board of Education. Students were working in classrooms, gymnasium, auditoriums or multi-purpose rooms that were not designed for theatrical play. In fact, for many, these were the same rooms in which students were praised for behavior that was antithetical to such work. There were few spaces within schools that could be rei-magined as artistic playgrounds. Consequently, it was a consistent challenge to break through the "thickness" (as Patrena noted), of the institution's culture. But bring the student to the theater itself and no such baggage comes with them. They walk into the theatre and they are actors or students of acting, not students who are being forced to act. Work together proceeds at a faster pace and, in fact, it seems as if every hour spent in workshop at the theatre is equivalent to 5 40-min workshops in a classroom. The students immediately feel like they are professionals because everything around them signifies professionalism. "If I'm here, I guess I belong here."

It has been argued that in moving out of schools Irondale is working only with self-selected students and therefore misses the opportunity to find students and offer opportunities to some who might really need the experience. Irondale doesn't dispute this, and for that reason, Terry says the company will never completely abandon its work in schools. The actors in the Irondale Ensemble, he continues, are not missionaries, they are artists, seeking to discover what makes great theatre. Working with youth is a strategy in reaching that objective. Bringing the work to non-actors must be held to as high a standard as any rehearsal or training program they engage in with professionals. For the artists at Irondale the only way that theatre can do good is by being good. Anything else is a compromise.

There are no signs that corporate America's neo-liberal agenda will dissipate any time soon. If anything, the influence is growing stronger. This raises real questions for arts organization about how to stay true to their mission and values while continuing to work in an ever limit school system? How can meaningful partnerships be forged when time and commitments are being invested in the perpetuation of high-stakes testing regimes? Where are the places where students can work as artists first and are not only using art in service of the curriculum? Where are the places for students to use their own voice for their own purposes?

These are challenging questions in challenging times. While Irondale's journey is not a perfect one, they continue to negotiate the shifting foundations of educational programming with sincere interest and innovation. In a time of such transformation, are there things that will not change for Irondale? Yes, their core belief in creating young artists who exist as multicultural selves, a belief in ensemble, in play and in the benefits for both professional and young actors who work with and learn from each other. This way of working will not topple the neo-liberal structures dominating education's landscape; but it cracks them a bit.

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Acting Beyond Retirement: The Necessary Stage's Theatre for Seniors Programme

Prue Wales and Alvin Tan

Abstract In this chapter Prue Wales and Alvin Tan reflect on Theatre for Seniors, an innovative theatre programme designed for members of Singapore's ageing population. The Theatre for Seniors programme not only aimed to encourage seniors to stay active and keep learning, but also to explore potential late-life career prospects in the dramatic arts. The authors begin the chapter by contextualizing and tracing how The Necessary Stage, one of Singapore's preeminent theatre companies, initiated and implemented the programme. This is followed by a presentation of the descriptive narratives of three of the participants who successfully developed late-life semi-professional performing-arts careers. In these narrative case studies the seniors express their subjectivities about the Theatre for Seniors programme as they highlight their varied experiences. Finally, Wales and Tan identify the challenges and rewards the programme elicited for both the participants and facilitators, and discuss the continuing evolution of Theatre for Seniors.

Keywords Theatre for seniors · Theatre training · Community theatre · Silver arts · Ageing · Active retirement · Lifelong learning

Singapore, like many first world nations, has an ageing society. It has one of the most rapidly ageing populations worldwide with its citizens' average age doubling over the past 45 years from 19.5 years of age in 1970 (Teng and Gee 2015, p.3) to 39.6 in 2015 (Department of Statistics [DOS] 2016). In 2015 11.8% of Singapore's population were over 65 years of age (DOS 2015). Estimates provided by the Ministry for Social and Family Development (MSF 2015) claim that 18.7% of Singapore's

P. Wales (✉)
Research and Interdisciplinary Studies, The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Wan Chai, Hong Kong
e-mail: prueellenwales@gmail.com

A. Tan
The Necessary Stage Theatre Company, Singapore, Singapore
e-mail: admin@necessary.org

residents will be over 65 years by 2030. Government committees have chosen to focus on ageing as a matter that encompasses not only 'challenges' (such as a build up of pressure on the healthcare industry and concerns about seniors' financial stability), but also 'opportunities' (that can be fostered through continued employment possibilities, as well as healthy, active and independent living) (Teng and Gee 2015, p. 14). Productive seniors can be valuable citizens who contribute to the financial, cultural and social development of the nation. Consequently, policy makers are encouraging a range of programmes and initiatives to keep seniors active, social and agile (MCYS 2015). Many emerging schemes involve projects to engage seniors in the arts, as art makers and participants as well as audience members.

There is a small but growing body of literature concerning theatre for, by and about seniors (Basting 1995; Palmar and Nascimento 2002; Mason 2008; Lipscomb 2012). This includes writings about applied theatre projects and programmes whereby seniors have developed participatory theatre workshops and performances to initiate dialogue amongst seniors, healthcare workers and community members about health, ageing and cultural issues (Palmar and Nascimento 2002). Other research has reported on seniors participating in Reminiscence theatre projects in which they explored, documented and in some cases performed personal, historical narratives that can move beyond hegemonic master narratives of a particular time and empower the storytellers (Wales 2016; Schweitzer 2007; Wang 2006). Other theatre programmes have been developed as creative and social outlets for active seniors and been found to increase self-confidence, physical and emotional wellbeing, stretch mental faculties, as well as foster networking and social skills (Shaw 1989).

In this chapter we examine the development and implementation of *Theatre for Seniors*, a programme promoting active, lifelong learning and further employment opportunities for members of Singapore's ageing population, that was initiated by *The Necessary Stage* (TNS), one of Singapore's preeminent theatre companies. The uniqueness of TNS's *Theatre for Seniors* programme lies in TNS' Artistic Director Alvin Tan's belief that community theatre/theatre for and by seniors can be fun, engaging and community-building as well as aesthetically rigorous. This belief fuelled a programme that aimed to provide seniors with the skills and knowledge required to seek and undertake (semi) professional acting opportunities in Singapore theatre, film and television. We begin this chapter by providing some contextual background to TNS and the *Theatre for Senior's* programme before providing the narratives of three seniors' experiences and perceptions of the programme. This is followed by an exploration of some of the challenges and successes participants and facilitators faced, and a discussion on how the programme continues to evolve.

1   About the Necessary Stage

The Necessary Stage (TNS) is a non-profit theatre company in Singapore that was formed in 1987 by the company's Artistic Director, and this chapter's co-author, Alvin Tan. The company, which aims "to create challenging, indigenous and

innovative theatre that touches the heart and mind," (TNS 2015) has several strands to its business. These include (a) a Main Season, (b) an international component, (c) experiments via a laboratory platform (d) festival curating, (e) publishing, and (f) a Theatre for Youth and Communities division. Approximately two plays per year are produced for TNS's Main Season. These plays, scripted by the company's Resident Playwright, Haresh Sharma, generally involve intense periods of research and devising by the cast and members of the production team before any work is scripted. Once a full draft script has been crafted, the cast and crew are invited to comment on and critique the script as they begin to rehearse to further shape and refine the work. TNS's international component focuses on international and inter-cultural productions, which can crossover into the Main Season, as well as collabo-rations, workshops, training and intercultural dialogue. The work produced for the international component is usually presented in Singapore before going abroad; international works and partnerships have occurred in Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Australia, Croatia, Hungry, Russia, the UK, USA and many other locations. A new developmental programme, *The Orange Playground*, was launched in 2014 as a platform to collaborate with emerging and established local artists in creative, exploratory theatre processes through research and embodied experimentations. Showcases of works in progress have encouraged active after show discussions. TNS also curates and oversees the annual M1 Singapore Fringe Festival, a contem-porary arts festival that incorporates theatre, music, installation work as well as arts debates and forums, while the publishing arm of the company focuses on producing Haresh Sharma's plays as well as essays about the company. The final strand of the company is its Theatre for Youth and Communities, that has an applied theatre focus, and produces work for and by young people (assembly plays, theatre-in-education programmes and workshops), work commissioned by government, health, community and environmental organisations (forum theatre productions, community plays and workshops), and its *Theatre for Seniors* programme, which is the focus of this chapter.

2   Theatre for Seniors: A Contextual Background

Theatre for Seniors was established in 2008 when TNS unveiled its plan to initiate a 3-year theatre-arts training programme aimed at people 50 years of age and over. It was the first time the company had done anything like this. They would offer 50 places in the programme to seniors living in Singapore. Each year would consist of three terms and each term would focus on building different skills including acting, playwriting, devising, directing, with some arts management and theatre production training. During the third term of each year the seniors would work towards a per-formance showcase. Professional practitioners who were experts in the field would facilitate the courses: each module would tap into the skills and knowledge of local playwrights, actors, directors, arts managers, and technicians. Lessons lasting for 3 hours would take place once a week. The innovative programme is one of many

emerging learning opportunities that have sprung up for Singapore seniors after a government call to foster active and healthy ageing.

One of driving forces for TNS establishing its *Theatre for Seniors* programme was Alvin Tan's observation of his own parents shift into retirement in their early senior years. He noticed many of the activities they were undertaking were 1-day excursions to places like otah[1] or bazhang[2] factories. He began to wonder what these outings actually did for people like his parents and whether they were even productive. He identified a need for theatre programmes because he noticed that so many retiring seniors who had spent their adult lives raising families and working were now at a loose end, and struggling to occupy their time. He could see that they needed to start socializing and building new networks. Alvin has noticed that many Singapore seniors are experiencing "empty nest syndrome, the children have left home and so they are looking for a community. They are looking for friends."

Alvin strongly believes that working in theatre builds community spirit and social cohesion. This, he argues, is because people go out of their way to help each other, whether by assisting in making a costume or learning lines or bringing in food to share. Alvin believes that when people put on a play together they have a common goal and work together to achieve its conclusion. For seniors, mounting a play could provide a way to fulfil some of the void that develops on retirement. Alvin became more convinced about this when he started to interview prospective 'students' for the programme. At the interviews, he met women who talked about how they had dabbled in theatre in school but had to give it up when they began their careers and became wives and mothers. Women told him how they didn't have much to do anymore and they wanted to revisit acting and rekindle an old passion. Others talked about wanting to find a way to fill a hole in their lives. Government bodies and policy makers also recognised this issue had been striving to find ways to support and encourage Singapore's ageing population to lead active, healthy and content lives (MCYS 2015; C3A 2015; Lim 2015; Tan 2015). Government agencies helped set up a range of financial incentives to encourage this.

3   Sponsorship and the Numbers Game

Over the years, sponsorship for *Theatre for Seniors* was acquired from the Council of the Third Age (C3A), the National Arts Council and a local Buddhist temple. The majority of the funding came from C3A, which was set up in 2007 to foster the 'active living' and 'ageing' of seniors in Singapore. C3A's promotion of active lifestyles is generated through lifelong learning opportunities, social openings as well as explorations of options for continued employment (C3A 2015). However, the funding from Council for the Third Age was set as a reverse increment method. The

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[1] Otah (also known as otak-otak) are parcels of steamed fish wrapped in coconut leaves that are grilled over a flame.

[2] Bazhang (also known as bacang, bakcang, zongzi) are sticky rice dumplings.

funding would begin by absorbing 80% of the budget in the 1st year and descend each year of the programme. So C3A would provide 70% costs during the 2nd year and 60% in the project's 3rd year.

Over 200 seniors applied for the 50 places offered in the *Theatre for Seniors* programme. A significant number of the successful applicants were Chinese speakers with little English. Some were bilingual, comfortable with both English and Chinese. Others were solely English speakers or English with another mother tongue (including Malay and Tamil). Consequently, TNS divided the participants into two groups: a Chinese speaking group, and an English speaking group.

TNS decided not to do a normal audition. Instead TNS interviewed the interested seniors and Alvin 'told them that it's a learning training course, and that it's not *masak-masak,*[3] it's not a play-around thing'. He did this in order to manage their expectations and articulate that the purpose of this endeavor was not just about having fun but learning a discipline. Rather than sugarcoat the programme when speaking to the seniors, Alvin gave them a realistic description of what the course involved and the kinds of people they were looking for. TNS told the applicants, "You have to pick up the skills. So if you're not up to it don't waste your time, don't waste our time. Don't apply. So someone else can come in. And don't join knowing that you might give up half way because you will waste a space."

While TNS' approach to the interviews may have seemed fierce, Alvin saw it as a necessity to reveal their expectations to the 200 applicants because of C3A's rigorous funding restrictions. The C3A is stringent about its funding and TNS was informed that if the numbers in the programme dropped, then C3A would stop the financial installments going into TNS's bank account. This would severely impact TNS as the company would not be able to pay their artist facilitators and the drying up of funding could affect their day-to-day running operations.

As a contingency plan, and because there were 150 unsuccessful candidates to the programme, TNS saw a potential opportunity and a way through this significant problem. They decided to run a series of short-term workshops for seniors, each lasting for 8 weeks. If and when vacancies arose because people dropped out of the *Theatre for Seniors* programme, TNS could recruit replacements from their 8-week courses as a means of keeping their funding for the project flowing in.

This contingency plan was well founded as it had to be utilized during the programme when several seniors left for various reasons, which we discuss into later, however it did cause some tensions. Alvin had to call a meeting with the remaining seniors when a few people dropped out. "We had to tell them that there's a problem because the money is not coming in." With no incoming funding, the programme would have to be "stopped unless we bring [the numbers back] up to fifty, and in order to bring it back to fifty we have to invite people from the short term workshops." The seniors were asked if they would mind. Yet Alvin knew that they were all caught "between the devil and the deep blue sea". Luckily the core-members were agreeable to the short term members joining them.

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[3] A Malay term for child's play.

On the plus side, Alvin and the TNS team were struck by the cultural histories of the participants, their memories and their stories of Singapore's past, which they felt was a great asset to bring to the training of actors and playwrights. As actors they could draw on the breadth of their personal experiences and emotionally recall these lived events in the building of a character. As playwrights, their memories of past Singapore and their knowledge and understandings of the cultural and spatial changes that had occurred in the country since its independence could provide rich material for exploration.

Theatre for Seniors was a completely new area for TNS and Alvin took an intuitive approach to developing the programme. However, because TNS always work in a deeply reflexive way and are open to criticism from those around them such as the seniors, the trainers, theatre professionals, friends, colleagues and academics, Alvin felt fairly confident in taking on the project and running with his instincts: many of these proved effective but in retrospect he realises that there were some things he would do differently.

In the next section, we present the narratives of three *Theatre for Seniors* participants, all in their early to mid 60s, who for the purposes of this chapter we have called Peter, Rina, and Betty (pseudonyms[4]). All of them came to *Theatre for Seniors* with very different life experiences, and we reveal their thoughts, feelings and ideas of each about the programme.

4   Peter's Story

Peter is in his early 60s and retired from the building industry where he had worked for many years in 2006. He was looking for something to do "because by nature, I love to talk to people" and keep active. When Peter first saw the *Theatre for Seniors* recruitment advertisement he realised he had missed the application deadline by 2 days. He called TNS to see if he could still come in for an interview but was told that the 2 days of audition spaces were completely filled. Peter persisted and asked if someone pulled out of the auditions at the last minute would they call him. He promised them that if that were the case he would get down to the interview in half an hour. As luck would have it his persistence paid off and he received a call late in the afternoon of the 2nd day, and "rushed down and uh the rest is history, Haha. I got into the programme," he said. Peter had an "interest in acting because in school I was in the what you call the debate and drama society. And we put up small skits when I was in Secondary Three and Four." However, after school he built a career in the building trade and raised a family, and didn't pursue his interest in theatre any further until after he had retired. Although Peter had applied to the English language drama course, TNS asked him if he would go into the Chinese speaking drama class as the numbers were lower. Peter felt that his Mandarin skills were not 'good enough' as he had grown up speaking the Teochew dialect although he learned

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[4] Generic Anglicised names have been used to ensure ethnic and personal anonymity.

Mandarin at school as well as Bahasa Melayu and English. He felt he "was lucky, I still got in the English session".

Peter commented on the diversity of people within the group who range from early 50s to a few in their 70s, some of who were still in full time employment. He said, "We have people who are in business," one person who teaches in a "special needs school, and then we have a retired principal…we have nurses, and then like myself…retired from the building industry," where he worked for 23 years. There were housewives, a lawyer and one even ran "a fish and chips stall in a coffee shop". But for Peter,

> The moment when we're all together in theatre, we are all the same. A bunch of people who are very interested in acting and we start to click quite well during the first year. We even have outings, and after every training, we will go and you know…we will go to the hawker centre, the food centre, and then we sort of you know became a very cohesive group of people during the first year. Because everybody was innocent, just wanting to learn to do something.

The group contained "more ladies than men. It's always the case in Singapore, I don't know why". A grassroots leader,[5] Peter found a similar situation in his community volunteer work, "when we organise any activities, we always find that the percentage is always maybe 25% or 30%" men to around 70% "ladies".

Over the 3 years Peter learned about "basic acting, theatre expressions and so on, and then we were taught about history." He names a well known local actor, director and trainer who, "came in to talk to us about history of theatre in Singapore, and then we learn[ed] not just acting" but also "stage management, production…lighting, wardrobe and even scriptwriting." While Peter expressed delight to be "introduced to every aspect of theatre and theatre making" he recognised that "it's very surface kind of things. We don't really go in depth," because the course is only once a week for roughly three terms of approximately 12 weeks. The highlight for Peter was the end of each year, during the third term, when the company of seniors "would have to put up a production," *Encore* that would require them to go into "the whole aspect of theatre management, that means we would look into promotion, sale of tickets, organising the people who are doing the backstage, the front of house… so it is actually [a] total package." Despite living on the other side of the island and having to travel for over an hour to the workshops in the 1st year of the programme Peter "enjoyed everything because I find that every session when I go down once a week, it's always something I look forward to."

The work became deeper and more intense during the development of the end of year productions in the 2nd and 3rd years when the stakes were raised with the end of year performances, *Encore II*, and *Encore III*. "It's during the *Encore* that we are put to the forefront to get things run and because we know that we have to run it" so that there's an, "urgency to go deeper."

> For example, to organise we have to go into sales and marketing, raising funds, ticket sales, publicity, though of course there is guidance from TNS, but a lot of things we were left to

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[5] Grassroots leaders are volunteers appointed by the People's Association to serve their community.

work on. So I think that was the time we start to really go deeper into it, understand it more and I think the best part of it is because we have the practical experience.

What was particularly rewarding for Peter at the end of Year 2 and 3 was that the company,

> were actually acting on stories either written by members or stories that we have discussed and then we put it into a play, and we go into full development you know, from brainstorming, talking about the things that we wanted to write on or the play, and most of these stories were actual stories that we have experienced, either what we experienced, either by ourselves, or what we saw in the people around us.

Before he graduated Peter started to catch the attention of people in theatre as well as those with interests in local television, radio and film. Since graduating he has done some more theatre as an actor and director as well as a forum theatre facilitator, he has secured a little television work, been involved in an advertisement and taken on a small role in a Chinese language film.

5   Rina's Story

Now in her early sixties, Rina is a self-employed businesswoman who "always wanted to be an actress," but never had the opportunity. In 2001 Rina began to work with a local cultural theatre group that was recruiting and soon found herself "given a very small role, like two lines, because they were afraid that I would be suffering from you know, fear of the stage and all that." After proving herself Rina was awarded "a slightly bigger role" the following year, "but it's only like for one scene." In her third year she played a maid and as a result was approached by some "television people" who offered her the role of a maid in a local drama. The experience "was very challenging because it was my first TV experience and it was so fun and continued for twenty nine episodes." Rina began to build up her television and stage repertoire and tried her hand at writing.

When Rina first spotted the recruitment notice for the *Theatre for Seniors* programme, she was "skeptical because to me, *Theatre for Seniors* will be made up of old people. You know like I thought they'd be 70s, 80s, very boring and just doing it for fun." However, soon Rina began to hear about the programme in the media and from seniors she knew in the programme. Then she read that,

> Alvin was teaching them things like…how to write script, how to manage, stage management, sound and things like. I was interested 'cause I want to speak theatre language and I didn't just want to be an actress. I wanted to be in the background, writing, directing, if I could. So that's when I decided to join them.

Rina had attended one of TNS' short courses, qualifying her for a place in *Theatre for Seniors* 3rd year after someone dropped out of the programme. When she started she told the tutors, "I'm not here to act, I'm just here to learn." However, she quickly got "sucked into acting again" and excited by some of the community programmes

where the seniors brought theatre to the heartlands.[6] This excitement turned to frustration when she began performing at community centres with the group and found "the public were just there to get their gifts…then we would be performing and there would be no one watching us or maybe they just sit for less than five minutes and they're gone." Performances in the heartlands are often supported by the People's Association which encourages people to attend by offering free gifts. Unfortunately, some members of the public only come for the gifts and prizes rather than the performances. Rina found this "very demoralizing" and told Alvin she'd rather no longer be involved in the community theatre projects.

When the *Theatre for Seniors* programme ended Rina went on to take a train the trainers workshop and began to do some teaching as well as get involved in a few more professional productions but she admits to being choosy with the kind of work she undertakes. Since completing the programme, Rina has been in a TNS main season production and a couple of productions with other companies, including her own theatre group.

6 Betty's Story

Betty, a housewife and empty nester in her early 60s, came to the *Theatre for Seniors* programme from a small local theatre group for seniors. This small group had been running acting workshops as well as staging performances by and for seniors for several years. When TNS had approached the local group a few of their members decided to join *Theatre for Seniors* to build their skill set. Betty said,

> [at the former group] we were just taught about acting and things like that, whereas this workshop [the Theatre for Seniors 3 year programme], we were told we would be covering the whole thing about theatre which we were quite keen to know because at our age…theatre was something very new to us. We were just watching plays and not understanding a lot of things so we thought this would be a good opportunity for us to get into knowing what theatre is all about, how a play is …developed and things like that.

Like Peter, Betty found the end of year productions a powerful learning experience. "The annual one was ticketed sales, so it was an experience for those who had never been in a ticketed production, to be able to do [so] in front of a live audience. That was good…for us to experience," because Betty found that in her previous work most of the time her audience was made up of friends and family who came to support her and "only gave her good feedback." Betty realized that she had not been getting any "constructive criticism there," and was pleased to see how useful it could be. However not everybody felt the same way resulting, she claimed, in some leaving the programme.

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[6]A Singapore term for suburban towns that are filled with HDB (housing development board) apartments where the majority of Singaporeans live as opposed to condos and landed properties housing the elite classes.

Betty was one of the seniors invited to perform in a Main Season production with professional actors and she found that the company really pushed the seniors to be "not 100% but 200%" when preparing for these performances. This included encouraging the actors to research and observe people in real life situations to help them develop and understand characters they were playing. Betty believed that because the seniors "are late bloomers…we really need to be guided, we need to be pushed, need to be told, and things [have] to be explained to us." As a consequence she argues that TNS "needs a lot of patience," but she feels that sometimes a deeper understanding of each other's fears, motivations and working beliefs are needed to avoid a few "unhappy moments during the rehearsals." For instance, Betty noticed when working with younger performers that "they had to respect me for my age and at the same time they could get a bit annoyed because I was slower than them in, you know, grasping certain things that [have] to be done."

Despite articulating some challenges Betty expresses gratitude for being a part of *Theatre for Seniors*, romanticizing its beginnings and positioning Alvin in a paternal role. The programme "was Alvin's baby," she says. "He loved it so much. He loved each one of us, he had no preferences, he just loved every member…as if we were his parents, and you know his siblings." However, this allusion to Alvin as parent, child and sibling rolled into one is an impossible position for him to navigate and hints at reasons relationship challenges developed over time.

7   Reflections on the Theatre for Seniors Programme

In the early stages of the course participants approached their classes with excitement and enthusiasm, often arriving half an hour early for rehearsals. As Alvin predicted social relationships began to form, people started help each other with tasks, getting to rehearsals and even cooking for each other. This helped them shape a performance community of seniors. However, the programme did not progress without a few cracks appearing. Challenges ranged from basic fears about remembering lines to people's commitment and fractured relationships.

Many of the more significant tensions started to emerge when groups of seniors began to work on a semi-professional level with TNS.

8   Fun Versus Skills Development

Alvin identified three groups of people who participated in the programme: those who came simply to have fun, those who wanted to act but needed strong mentoring to develop the required skills, and those who already had a theatrical flair, were keen to come into the theatre industry and develop late life careers. Some seniors who joined the programme to simply have fun were disappointed to find developing skills and rehearsing could be tedious business. In one incident a group of

enthusiastic seniors were asked to carry chairs around and synchronize their timing when putting them down for a production. This involved some intense rehearsals as the director repeatedly worked with them to coordinate their movements. This group were very proud when they managed to achieve the correct timing and movement for the performance but some of their senior colleagues watching the final production cried out later, "Wah, you have to carry chairs and all that. I'm retired. I don't want to do this".

When Peter discussed this he talked about how some seniors began to express their own interests and push their agendas. "There are some people who say, 'Eh, I don't want to act, I just want to come here and have fun, you know' and there are some people who say 'Okay I'm only interested in acting but I'm not interested in anything else like backstage and helping to sell tickets'."

9   Commitment

Another challenge expressed by all the interviewees was about commitment to the programme. Peter felt that, "three years is actually a very long period of time for a senior to commit." Many of the seniors had problems coming to classes and rehearsals because of conflicting obligations such as caring for grandchildren. When TNS brought in replacements to fill the gap left by seniors who had left "tensions come in," according to Peter who said it altered the group dynamics. "People come in at different times, and then some try to be a little bit bossy and some try to show off."

10   Finding New Vocabularies

When rehearsing with some seniors for professional productions Alvin discovered that he needed to apply different vocabularies to those he uses with professional actors. He believes that this is because the seniors often don't recognise the shifting emotions and motivations of the characters they are playing so he finds himself having to "describe the architecture" of the play and explain what is happening. When he first started rehearsing with seniors he found himself having to start "using words like changing gear, instead of transition and change motivation…because [when] I said changing gear, they understand better. So when you are changing mental beats, you have to shift gear."

11   Stamina

The seniors' stamina became another issue when they began working in some TNS professional productions. TNS is used to working with its actors for long, intense periods of time but Alvin realised that the seniors "get really tired and you can see their concentration waning off" and "their rehearsals might not be so productive". When these moments occur he might "ask them to walk around the set, just to get familiar", but Alvin admits to finding this quite stressful and frustrating, although he knows that is something he needs to adapt to. Moreover, TNS has realised that because the seniors struggle with long hours of rehearsing and because more time is needed to explain character transitions, handling properties, and remembering blocking, facilitators have to compensate by spending less time than they usually would on devising during the first phase of their rehearsal and writing processes.

12   Balancing the Representation

One of Alvin's concerns is that TNS have not yet managed to capture an ethnic balance for the programme, which consists of mainly English speakers and a fair mix of Chinese speakers. However, there are few to no Malay, Indian or Eurasian recruits, although one Indian recruit has developed a strong profile. Moreover, the recruits tend to be very middle class with virtually no working class members. The company and funders have yet to explore how to encourage or cater to older (over 75s) and/or disabled seniors. An investigation by Felicia Low into Singapore's Silver Arts Festival[7] conducted for the National Arts Council identified that much of the arts work catered for seniors was for physically and mentally able people seniors who have money in their pockets. This is another consideration of representation that warrants further inquiry. TNS would like to see a more diverse and inclusive *Theatre for Seniors* in the near future.

13   Moving Towards a Sustainable Programme

After completing the 3-year *Theatre for Seniors* training in 2011 some seniors left the group to start their own seniors' theatre group. At the same time, the funding that came from C3A ended resulting a short period of low activity for workshops. However selected seniors started to be integrated into TNS Main Season production. The National Arts Council recognised *Theatre for Seniors* as an important addition to Singapore's arts landscape and began to fund the programme under

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[7]The Silver Arts festival is an annual celebration that aims to foster local making by, for and about seniors.

TNS' 3-year major grant. At the same time some of the more ambitious seniors, who were picking up community, applied theatre and television work, expressed a desire to have greater involvement in the industry. So, with NAC funding, TNS started to explore ways to keep *Theatre for Seniors* going.

Seeking to reignite the momentum they had developed when the programme was in full swing, TNS considered how the seniors' professionalism could evolve further, and how they could assist the seniors establish a sustainable practice in which they could continue to advance theatre skills, such as facilitation and forum theatre techniques and conventions, with regular training. In addition, TNS wanted to encourage seniors to interact with industry practitioners across age groups to broaden their scope and move beyond their niche, i.e. theatre for and by seniors. TNS sought to encourage seniors to initiate projects, and develop more opportunities to perform.

A range of opportunities arose which made that vision possible. This included another end of year showcase called *Encore IV*, a play in a community arts festival, and an event in a music programme organised by an arts venue. In addition to this, in 2014 a member of Theatre for Seniors was selected to be in one of TNS' interdisciplinary productions. TNS arranged further programmes, including one to train facilitators, and the first ever seniors' forum theatre production in Singapore, also in 2014.

The company came up with the idea of promoting a group of seniors whose interest in the programme moved beyond having fun to the serious business of theatre in 2015. They invited six seniors who demonstrated strong performance skills, expressed a commitment to theatre-making and in developing a late life career in theatre to become 'Senior Associates'. This became the Senior Associates Programme (SAP). The SAP provided a platform for Senior Associates to deepen their understanding of TNS's performance-making methodology and workshop processes. Moreover, the aim of having Senior Associates was to inspire other seniors and act as role models for the TFS programme. TNS helped the Senior Associates apply to develop and run programmes and productions through a range of avenues, which included developing and directing shows for the Esplanade (Singapore's premier arts centre), conducting basic acting workshops for seniors as part of the National Library Board's free programming offered to Singapore's senior citizens, and participating in a community programme touring homes. Also in that year TNS featured a number of the senior associates in their main season production. This production was held at the theatre in the National Museum. However, the nature of the Senior Associates Programme meant a selected group of seniors were tasked to lead while others were not. As a result, a few seniors who were not promoted expressed feelings of disappointment.

However, SAP was short lasting and did not work out. TNS found the associates were not ready to take up the challenge and lead programmes; rather there was still a great reliance on TNS to engineer programmes and productions for them. As a result, TNS continued to run courses for the seniors but the company sought and got help from external facilitators that they hired to conduct the workshops in 2015 and onwards. Short term workshops for the seniors were organised by TNS throughout 2016, and new members are able to attend. These courses are skill orientated work-

shops such as playwriting, devising, and acting. Plans are afoot to continue organising short courses as well as planning for productions from 2017 onwards.

On the production and performance front, TNS has begun tapping into programmes for seniors that have been popping up in Singapore thanks to government interest in projects promoting active lifestyles for Singapore's ageing community. The Esplanade festival,[8] *A Date with Friends*, which is oriented towards seniors occurred during the second half of 2015. TNS worked with the venue to develop, rehearse and present a double bill featuring some members of *Theatre for Seniors* along with professional theatre practitioners. There are, at the time of writing, currently plans for another double bill that will be featured in the next festival in 2017. In addition to this is the *Theatre for Seniors* 'Moral Home Tours'. This is a travelling performance of a skit that one of the seniors developed which toured to old people's homes during 2016 and will continue through 2017. The seniors continue to conduct this tour with administrative help from TNS, and they plan to take it forward into 2017. Seniors also continue to run short courses in acting for senior citizens through the National Library Board.

14 Conclusion

One of TNS's main concerns has been how to sustain the seniors' interest in and appetite for theatre and to find ways to keep challenging them to grow as artists who are hungry enough to continually develop and hone their skill set. Alvin sees his role as a director as a platform for advocating this and believes that "each time I do a new project with them, they become more skilled, more sensitive. That for me contributes to sustainability because it eventually takes less time to put a work out." TNS recognise also that any sustainability must be generated by what the seniors want and the kind of work they want to generate, in addition to what TNS and the industry wants them to get involved in.

TNS encourages its seniors to explore possibilities in film and television, undertake community work and tap into the 'silver arts' scene. With new members attending some of the short courses, and opportunities for productions opening up not only in *A Date with Friends* festival but also other festivals for seniors such as Silver Arts and Passion Arts festivals, as well as industry and community works, the *Theatre for Seniors* programme continues to survive!

The seniors seem to be thriving as they gain more experience. Despite having extensive acting experience Rina found delight in being directed by highly qualified professionals and being encouraged to teach others. Betty, who loves acting, said "the best skills that I learned was developing that character, you know like from being myself and totally forgetting who I am", to creating a character "the director wants to see and that's a real skill that I hope I will be able to achieve." For Peter *Theatre for Seniors* provided a platform that "empowered us to do the things we felt

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[8] Organised by the Esplanade Theatre.

we can do. You know many of us initially wasn't sure". He has found being up on stage has helped him bond with his family and friends who have supported his passion and come to see his performances. "My family is happy that I'm doing something that I enjoy after my retirement." He believes that *Theatre for Seniors* has also kept him and many of his fellow participants alert, because TNS have not mollycoddled them but encouraged them to stand on their own two feet. He said, "it was a fantastic programme" where "one thing has led to another". And this can be said to be true for many *Theatre for Seniors* participants.

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Part VI
Redefining Engagement

Theatres as Sites of Learning: Theatre for Early Years Audiences

Emma Miles and Helen Nicholson

Abstract This chapter asks what children learn from attending the theatre. The research project that informed the chapter followed a group of nine children aged between three and four, who visited Polka Theatre in South-West London a total of seven times over one year. The children watched theatre made specifically for their age group – often referred to in the UK as 'Theatre for Early Years Audiences'- a genre which has seen a proliferation in recent years. Focussing on the performance of *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* by Sarah Argent, this chapter critically interrogates the dynamic between young children's participation in theatre as audience members and their learning, as well as situating TEY within the context of wider theatre practice. In doing so, it considers both curriculum-centered learning outcomes and those analysed through the lens of Elizabeth Ellsworth's theories of learning as relational, sensory and somatic. The chapter argues that, although targeted outreach work may form part of a theatre's educational work with children, it is essential to consider the performance experience itself as a key site of learning.

Keywords Theatre for early years · Learning · Participation · Young children

For very small children, going to the theatre is an adventure. In May 2014, a group of nursery[1] children watched a dance performance inspired by the weather and seasons, all sitting close together, cross legged on the carpeted studio floor. Their

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[1] Nurseries in the UK provide education and care for children under five-years-old, the age at which they begin compulsory education. Nurseries may be private or state-run, separate from or attached to primary schools, and involve a mainly play-based learning environment.

E. Miles (✉)
School of Education & Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK
e-mail: emma.miles@anglia.ac.uk

H. Nicholson
Department of Drama, Theatre and Dance, Royal Holloway, University of London, London, UK
e-mail: H.Nicholson@rhul.ac.uk

engagement in this event, of course, began long before the two performers came on stage; from the bus journey through unfamiliar streets, to playing in the theatre foyer beforehand, to entering the darkened theatre space for the first time, it was an experientially rich few hours filled with different emotions, new places, sights and sounds. The children oscillated between excitement, trepidation, laughter and, later on the bus journey home, a sleepiness that compelled several pairs of eyes to fall shut. Back at nursery, there was lots to tell friends and teachers about.

This group of nine children, aged between three and four-years-old, were all participating in a research project in which they were to attend seven shows at Polka Theatre in London between May 2014 and May 2015. The children and their families who participated in the research were not regular Polka audience members and all attended Eastwood nursery, a government funded pre-school that offers free education to an annual intake of sixty children, many of whom live in a large development of public housing near to the nursery in Roehampton, London. Polka already had a learning partnership with this local nursery, having participated in a photography project culminating in an exhibition of the children's photographs at the theatre. This research was designed in consultation with the Associate Producer for Early Years Theatre and The Head of Creative Learning at Polka, and our interest was in interrogating how far – and in what ways – attending performances at the theatre might, in itself, become integral to the children's learning. For all of the children, this performance of *How Cold my Toes* by Travelling Light was their first visit to the theatre, but during the following year they were to become seasoned theatre-goers.

Learning takes place in many different settings, but there has been a curious reluctance to regard the theatre as a site of learning. The word 'outreach' affirms this hesitancy, inferring that learning is most effective or evident when it takes place outside theatre spaces. Many theatres in the UK rebranded their outreach departments as Creative Learning in the 1990s, and with this came a growing awareness that theatre-making is an important part of young people's cultural and creative education. Yet the pedagogical significance of audience membership has been less widely analysed, particularly in relation to children in their early years. At the same time, however, there has been a lively proliferation of Theatre for Early Years (TEY) audiences, or audiences from birth to five, with some companies developing innovative artistic practices that owe as much to immersive theatre or installation art as traditional theatre methodologies. Some productions have been acclaimed by mainstream theatre critics, with past shows at Polka including: *Skitterbang Island* in 2010/2014, described by Lyn Gardner in her four star review for The Guardian newspaper as 'delightful in every way' (Gardner 2010); an in-house adaptation of Anthony Browne's picture book *Gorilla* in October 2013; the innovative puppetry show *Three Colours,* produced with Norwich Puppet Theatre in 2013 and Fevered Sleep's *Brilliant* in August 2008. This research project aims to capture the energy of this interest in theatre for very young audiences by critically interrogating the dynamic between young children's participation in theatre as audience members and their learning, as well as situating TEY within the context of wider theatre practice.

This chapter focuses on one performance, *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too*, which was the fourth performance the children saw and was programmed in January 2015.

The theatre the children witnessed over the year-long period was innovative within its own creative field and, as part of Polka's varied annual programme, it was not orientated towards meeting any specific learning objectives. It follows that our aim in selecting these performances has been to move between theorisation of the theatrical and pedagogical, examining the intersection between these both during the theatre event itself and afterwards through Emma Miles' sustained engagement with the children back at nursery. The research methods Emma used to explore these theatre experiences with the children were designed to reflect this dynamic, remaining open to pedagogical discoveries rather than assessing previously identified educational goals. Over the year at Eastwood Emma and the children role-played, looked at pictures of the productions, listened to music, danced, played with props, drew and talked. In this chapter we specifically examine how the children's learning about and through narrative juxtaposed with their engagement with the performative qualities of theatre – both within and outside the theatre building – as well as how the TEY theatre space at Polka may be seen as pedagogical in its configuration towards embodied audience response.

1 Grandad, Me and Teddy Too: Polka Theatre as a Pedagogical Space

Opening in 1979 in Wimbledon, South West London, Polka was the first permanent UK theatre venue dedicated exclusively to theatre for children. Polka soon became both a producing house and a home for touring children's theatre companies, with an emphasis on new writing and innovation as well as the adaptation of classic and popular children's stories. It also has a long history of programming for the under-fives, established in the late 1970s and early 1980s when theatre for this target audience was nascent in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. In 2014–2015 when this research took place, Polka employed a Creative Learning department dedicated to ensuring that their work was accessible to the widest audience possible, as well as an Associate Producer for TEY, Jo Belloli. Belloli is also involved internationally in theatre for the very young through *Small size*, a European network for the diffusion of performing arts aimed at early childhood. The smaller of Polka's two auditoria, the Adventure Theatre, is a studio theatre with a capacity for up to 70 children and adults, and is known for its continuous programme of TEY. It was this space that became familiar to the children during the research period, and a part of their learning experience.

Grandad, Me and Teddy Too was produced in-house and researched, written and directed by Sarah Argent, a freelance theatre director who specialises in work for young audiences. It tells the story of Mia, a young girl (played by an adult actor) who speaks every day to her grandad in Argentina via Skype. During an opening scene the audience is introduced to the routine of Mia's conversations with Grandad, and we learn that he is finally coming to visit her in person. The rest of the action follows the highs and lows of the relationship between two people with much affec-

tion for each other, but who have very different approaches to play. The performance is gentle and slow-paced, taking place exclusively between the stage, which represents Mia's playroom, and the garden where the audience also sit, either on a floor area which mimics grass, or on the low garden-wall at the back and sides of the space. Grandad loves imaginative play and embraces magical possibilities, but Mia prefers to represent her actual experience through play, acting out tea parties and getting the sounds of her animal toys just right. Although this performance offers a model of TEY that is different from the highly interactive work with which the genre is often associated, its engagement with the sensory allowed modes of response that extended beyond the verbal.

TEY is well known for its engagement with the senses, especially since much work, particularly for babies and toddlers, cannot privilege language and representation in ways that might conform to conventional educational objectives. In her book, *Places of Learning* (2005), Elizabeth Ellsworth offers an approach to pedagogy that is appropriate for analysing the ways in which performance might be understood as pedagogical. She argues that privilege has been given to:

> …language over sensation, objects of experience over subjects of experience, the rational over the affective, and knowledge as a tool for prediction and control over learning as play and pleasure. (2005, p. 2)

Instead, she argues for a conceptualisation of pedagogy that can be found in relation, sensation and somatic knowledge; this is not a rejection of the learning found in curriculum and predictable outcomes, but an argument for simultaneously embracing learning and knowledge that is 'as yet unmade' (2005, p. 6). Ellsworth calls the experience of this emergence 'the learning self in the making' (2005, p. 5) which 'is invented in and through its engagement with pedagogy's force' (2010, p. 7). In reflecting on the children's responses to the performance of *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too,* Emma was interested in how far it contained 'qualities of...pedagogic volition' (2010, p. 7) akin to those described by Ellsworth in relation to the sites of art, architecture and performance that she chooses in her book.

The ways in which the theatre space is configured shapes children's sensory and embodied engagement with the performance. At Polka, this responsiveness is enhanced by the flexibility of audience seating, and the Adventure Theatre is completely adaptable in terms of its seating configuration where it can be played end-on, thrust, or as a completely immersive, free-play space. For *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* it was in its most usual configuration, with the stage end-on playing to an the audience who mainly sit on the floor, allowing them some freedom to move around. Although for the six children who attended this performance movement was not continuous, some children did use this freedom to move for any number of reasons, whether this was interest, hunger, a need for reassurance, or any other motive either kept private or expressed through words or patterns of behaviour. Ellsworth discusses learning as an embodied process, asserting that a body 'feels itself thinking' (2005, p. 118) or 'feels thought itself becoming sensible' (2005, p. 118). There were some moments in performance when this felt response was clearly visible. For example, Sarah Argent recounted in interview that one little girl reacted to a disagreement between Mia and Grandad by moving to the back of the auditorium.

From there, she talked quietly to herself to make sense of the situation, saying 'What's the matter with Mia? Mia is sad. Mia is very sad', clearly moved by what she had seen. Once the resolution between Grandad and Mia occurred, however, she came forward to re-join her grandparents. This embodied response physically echoed the distance she needed in order to process this moment, both cognitively and emotionally, and was made possible by the flexible approach to the TEY audience configuration. Ellsworth says that:

> Along with the fact of embodiment comes the fact of movement/sensation, which is one way to name the universal and shareable fact of being in relation. As living, moving, sensing bodies, we all exist only and always in relation even as our individual experiences of relationality are singular and unshareable. (2005, p. 166)

The performance aesthetic of *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* captured the sensory playfulness that Ellsworth might recognise as relational. In one climatic scene, Grandad brings Mia with him on an adventure into the imaginary, flying on a 'magic carpet' (Mia's playroom rug) to the North Pole to see the northern lights. As the lights on stage glowed green and pink, the same lights shone down from above our heads in the audience, touching on skin and including us all in this sensation. There was certainly something of the relational in this, as we held out our hands and looked around from glowing face to face, full of delight at being so included in the imagined journey. This was, of course, in many ways a visual experience, but it was also as though we were being touched by the lights, our whole bodies enveloped. There was something far more intimate about this sensory experience than that of simply looking. In his book *Feeling Theatre* (2011), Martin Welton describes this sensory quality of performance in relation to theatre for adult audiences performed in the dark:

> …spectating might be conceived as a means of getting amongst, rather than being distanced from, actions and events on stage. Similarly, the affective experience of spectators, rather than being a 'consequence' of perceiving these events and activities, can be bound together with them in an ecology of feeling. In darkness, as in light, we are in touch with what we see. (2011, p. 82)

This example from *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* similarly involved light, albeit its use rather than its absence, and this atmospheric change incited an affective change in the audience. What was particularly noticeable about this theatrical moment was that it was shared – the visual aspect allowed us to see this change upon others as well as ourselves, and we knew that this particular atmosphere was affecting the whole room (Fig. 1).

Welton frames the experience of spectating as dynamic, extending the ecology network contributing to theatre's affect to environmental as well as human factors. As Welton says, the mood, or feeling, of theatre is in between self and environment, a combination of the atmospheric conditions outside and those inside:

> …we are not only 'tuned in' to individual effects, or given even to particular emotions necessarily as a result, but are drawn instead to moods of indeterminate duration, felt as a condition of neither self nor environment exactly, but somewhere 'in-between'. (2011, p. 151)

Fig. 1 Katherine Carlton and Gordon Warnecke as Mia and Grandad, flying to see the northern lights. (Photo: Ludovic des Cognets Photography)

It is this state of 'in between' that, within Ellsworth's formulation, is the site of pedagogy, especially if the knowing created is not done 'solely through cognition' (2008, p. 25). What seemed to happen in response *to Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* was learning that was simultaneously affective and cognitive, which was often then expressed in an embodied way. In order to explore this more, Emma developed methods to extend these experiences outside of the theatre, with the aim of connecting both with what the children had experienced in the moment and with how this might translate to, or link with, learning back at nursery.

2   Grandad, Me and Teddy Too: Narrative, Dialogue and Learning

The affective experience of performance – as Martin Welton points out – is felt as part of an ecology of feeling rather than as a subsequent 'consequence' of the performance. This has, in itself, a pedagogical force and, as we have already argued, there is much to be understood about children's learning by close observation of their responses in the theatrical moment. To investigate how far their experiences at the theatre became embedded in their learning repertoires and extended beyond the theatre walls, however, Emma developed a range of research methods to use in the nursery. These drew initially on Matthew Reason's work described in his book *The Young Audience* (2010), in which he used drawing and the talk it triggered to explore older children's experiences of the theatre. Due to the younger age of these participants and the extended time Emma had to get to know them, these methods were augmented by ideas from *The Mosaic Approach* (2001) developed by Alison Clark

and Peter Moss, which encourages researchers working with the very young to use a variety of methods and be adaptable to their participants' abilities and preferences. Clark and Moss describe these as:

> …play(ing) to young children's strengths, methods which are active, accessible and not reliant on the written or spoken word. (2001, p. 13)

Adapting to children's responses, at times the methods used were not of Emma's invention, but arose out of play and the children's suggestions. In response to *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too,* these methods included playing with toys similar to Mia's in the performance, recreating Grandad and Mia's pretend tea party, looking at and discussing printed and online filmed publicity for the show, and drawing pictures of the performance. All of these methods happened within the context of a busy nursery school building and, although we usually found a quiet corner or room in which to play, sometimes this meant that we were joined by curious children who hadn't visited the theatre with us. This had the potential to be as enriching as it could be distracting, with the children who had been to the theatre explaining what they had seen to their peers. Alongside the group of children making repeat visits to Polka, almost every child from Eastwood had the chance to see at least one performance over the course of the year, so often these conversations were based on a shared point of reference. An aspect which emerged in this process was an understanding of how the children were engaging with the narrative of the performance.

Grandad, Me and Teddy Too was a narrative-driven performance, telling the story of a relationship between a granddaughter and grandfather. The arc of the story of Grandad arriving on a plane, spending time with Mia and then leaving was also clearly defined, with his journeys symbolically marked out by a toy plane suspended from the ceiling, lit to cast shadows as it spun around the room. In this regard, the dramaturgical structure *of Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* showed a deep understanding of its audience and was attuned to their emergent understanding of narrative. It was also careful to include elements that young children could connect with; Grandad and Mia, for example, have a pretend tea party, the props for which were readily available at nursery and which the children were keen to recreate. The Skype contact portrayed between Mia and Grandad was also something that Argent developed after feedback from children and grandparents during her research in children's centres. In terms of learning, this structure and detail supported children's ability to engage with the narrative of the story.

Part of the focus of this research has led to an understanding of Peter Baldock, whose book *The Place of Narrative in the Early Years Curriculum* (2006) argues for the factors which support young children in the development of what he calls their 'narrative competency', or the ability to understand and tell stories. In this, he notes how simplicity and repetition can assist young children to build a basic concept of story, from which they can later extend their knowledge. Within this argument, it is interesting to note that he sees performativity, using props and story maps, to be supportive to developing narrative competence. *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* certainly held moments of repetition, such as Mia and Grandad's habitual words of farewell to her toys, some of which the children in this study repeated themselves in

their play afterwards. Ruby, for example, used a trundle duck toy in the same way that Mia had done, taking it round the room and echoing the performance with her own adaptation of the 'buenos noches, duck' that Grandad had taught Mia (for Ruby, this sounded a bit more like 'benas nemas, duck' - an impressively close rendition!) The children participating in this research may not have been able to re-tell or play out the story in full – not that they were asked to – but in their play they showed just how much they remembered of elements which were both known to them and new. Indeed, their memories often seemed to hold more exact details than adults', for example Kyleah telling a teddy 'You sit here', with precisely the intonation used by Mia, or Ruby remembering about the northern lights referenced and shown in the production, despite this being a new phenomena for her. Baldock emphasises that children should experience both novelty and familiarity to aid them in the process of developing story knowledge (2006, p. 85), and the production certainly offered this.

In contrast with this simple narrative structure, the performance of relationship in *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* was far more complex; as Chris Wiegand from The Guardian newspaper put it, this was the performance of something 'gentle and authentic...(that) trusted and respected the young audience' (2014). There were many spaces in this story that required an audience to question or fill in their own interpretation, a dramaturgical choice which Sarah Argent reported in interview to have made quite deliberately. An example was the absence of Mia's mother on stage, an aspect which several children asked me about during our play afterwards. On one such occasion, two children were playing with props that had featured in the performance when Kyleah, aged four, stopped for a moment and asked, 'Where's the mum?' We talked together about where she might be, and their ideas ranged from 'there being no mummy in there', to 'maybe she's sleeping' and 'maybe she's in a different house'. The cultural psychologist Jerome Bruner, drawing on both Roland Barthes and Paul Ricoeur, argues that great stories offer an element of 'subjunctivity', or ambiguities and possibilities that require readers (or viewers, in this case) to construct 'a virtual text of their own' (1986, p. 36). Bruner uses the metaphor of maps to think about how we approach new stories, suggesting that 'first impressions of the new terrain are, of course, based on older journeys already taken' (1986, p. 36). It could be easy, with children so young, to argue that their store of 'maps' is too small to include such ambiguity. Yet, Ruby and Kyleah were showing that they were able to draw on their domestic experiences to engage with the ambiguity apparent in *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too*. In a later performance that we watched, *Casa* by the Italian company La Baracca Testoni Ragazzi, the final moments offered an ambiguous ending to a production that had been relatively abstract throughout. Ella could fill this ending with meaning, telling us that the characters had left the space to go shopping. This was not the more symbolic and emotionally complex meaning that the adults we spoke with took away, perhaps, but that is because their store of maps is far larger; both adults and children were still practicing the same process. Ella, starting this process early, has already begun to enrich the supply of story maps from which she can draw.

Joe Winston, in his book *Beauty and Education* (2010), discusses the fragility that may be found at the heart of beautiful experiences (2010, p. 57), as well as the 'deep, human sympathy' (2010, p. 138) that these can often convey. Sarah Argent reported to Emma several instances where the emotional complexity of the performance touched members of the audience in this way, including the previously mentioned example of the young girl moving to the back of the auditorium in response to the conflict between Mia and her grandad. Ruby, too, from the empirical study, clearly remembered the moment where Mia argued with her grandfather, telling Emma in response to a photograph of the production that this part was 'No, Mia!' and wanting to talk about what had happened and why. Winston, this time in *Drama, Narrative and Moral Education* (1998), argues that such complexities as this, and children's equally complex responses to them, need to be given space for exploration (1998, p. 68). Although he is speaking particularly about children's participation in focused Theatre in Education programmes and drama work, the way both these young children responded similarly indicates that they may become emotionally implicated in theatre just as they can in their own play and drama. Having the time and space to explore this – be it within the theatre space or afterwards, alone or with adult support – offers the means to hold and manage the possibilities of emotional conflict and ambiguity in ways that can be personally tolerable, outwardly tolerant and even productive.

In playing around the performances afterwards, as well as through our exchanges during them, these encounters became jumping off points for shared meaning making, or a context for relational exchange. Agnes Desfosses, former artistic director of Compagnie ACTA, has written on the co-presence of adults and children in the TEY that she makes. She asserts that her work is for adults as much as for children, especially since an adult showing a 'spirit of discovery' will be of great support to those embarking upon their first journey to the theatre (2009, p. 102). Furthermore, Desfosses perceives adults as:

> …doubly a spectator – both of the play and of the child, or children, watching the play. It is a triangular relationship between the adults, the show and the children. (2009, p. 103)

Describing a moment of a child reaching for a known adult for comfort during a performance, a phenomena that Emma witnessed at almost every production we watched, Desfosses quotes her artist colleague Laurent Dupont:

> Sometimes children need the adult's knees and sometimes they are even stuck in the adult's embrace in 'that extreme fear which is tied to an irresistible curiosity'. (2009, p. 103)

Desfosses thus illustrates that the relationship between perceiver and performance in TEY is not uniform, but punctuated by other relationships and exchanges within the theatre, be these to support or distract from the process of aesthetic engagement. This triadic conceptualisation of the adult as independent spectator of the performance, spectators of their own children, and guide to their child's sense of engagement and security can, we would argue, flow in both directions, with children also offering enhancement of a production to adult spectators. Sarah Argent, again, gave an example to illustrate this, involving a young audience member who, on arriving

in The Adventure Theatre, had confidently left his own grandad at the back of the auditorium to find a place at the front. When Grandad crept from Mia's room, however, this boy turned around for the first time to seek his own grandfather out, before finding a way across the room to lay his head against his grandfather's arm. Perhaps this gesture was an embodied response to him finding points of connectivity between the performance and a relationship that is important in his own life. Ellsworth talks about the pedagogical power of such moments as sites of relation 'between inner realities and outer realities' (2005, p. 48), asserting that this is a pedagogical address because it can create 'a space between that reforms both the self and the other, the self and its lived relation with others' (2005, p. 48). Ellsworth uses Donald Winnicott's theory of transitional objects to illustrate how we may use objects, places or ideas creatively and imaginatively to form new ways of engaging with the world:

> Winnicott sometimes called transitional space *potential space* because we meet and imaginatively do what we will with it or "create it". (2005, p. 60)

This boy, in watching *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too*, was arguably able to use it as a place of meeting between his own inner reality and outer realities, giving him new formulations and ideas about both. The TEY experience might offer children support in this process, whilst also offering shared experience and a reinforcement of interpersonal bonds.

Perhaps there were elements of this drama that the children did not follow, aspects that were forgotten or ignored, and moments which were hard to make sense of using their existing knowledge of the world. However, from a position that views audience comprehension as secondary to young children's dialogical engagement with productions, every child showed that they had taken something away in their reactions within the theatre space or their talk and play outside. Sometimes, this was a moment of deep relational resonance akin to the reaction of the boy mentioned above. At other times, this was as simple as copying Mia and Grandad's experimentation with the squeak of air escaping from a balloon, a part that Raj found funny and charming during the performance and delighted in re-enacting. As Baldock, who acknowledges so readily that understanding of narrative is something that develops over time and with exposure, argues:

> To speak of possible limitations on the narrative competence or general understanding of the pre-school child in relation to stories they definitely seem to have enjoyed is to risk limiting our expectations of them unnecessarily...they can exhibit an apparent ability beyond what they have really achieved, but this is part of the business of establishing their confidence in the narrative task. (2006, p.84)

Ellsworth discusses the work of the artist William Wegman, who suggests that in non-teleological playfulness, misunderstanding may be as important as understanding (2005, p. 75). His proposition that 'there are layers of my work that simply wouldn't occur to adults' (2005, p. 75) seems entirely fitting to the diverse ways that the children in this study responded to the theatre we watched at Polka – cognitively, physically and affectively. Within this, it is perhaps presumptuous to assume that

engagement with narrative will predominate, even with a performance as driven by narrative as this was. Ellsworth suggests that:

> As teachers, we are always in danger of offering lessons and posing lesson-filled questions that our students are not ready or willing to accept or that preempt their own half formed thoughts or ideas. (2005, p. 76)

The head teacher[2] of Eastwood, in our final evaluation session, praised the project for encouraging engagement with 'literacy via another medium'. Theatre visits certainly have the potential to offer this, especially through an understanding of pedagogy which pre-empts and shapes learning. Indeed, if the methods had shifted their emphasis towards this outcome, narrative engagement might have been further built upon. Yet, when Raj was playing with the balloon, his 'half formed thought or idea' was not an engagement with narrative, but with the material and performative. In this final section, we consider the potential of TEY as a site of aesthetic and performative learning.

3   The Sensory and the Beautiful: Learning Within and Beyond the Theatre

Grandad, Me and Teddy Too was, to many of us, beautiful to the senses, a physically performed story inspired by the lives of young children and offered to them as an audience. As the initial section of this chapter argued, within the performance itself there were many instances of aesthetically and sensorially led audience inclusion and response. The children's responses outside of the theatre were equally physical, often showing rather than telling the moments that they had found engaging. Their focus on these moments, rather than the overall story or message, was hugely significant, and, as in regards to the TEY event itself, often grounded in the sensory. When Rayan played at making tea as Mia had done in performance, Emma noticed how his delicate, precise movements in adding sugar and stirring mimicked those he had seen on stage. Meanwhile, Ella wanted to draw a picture of the cakes that had been at this tea party, as well as the lights from the flying carpet journey described earlier in this chapter. The way she drew these lights, as great swathes of scribbled colour over the top of the page, struck us as almost a form of synaesthesia, mimicking visually the more complete sensory experience of the whole room being bathed in light (Fig. 2).

Martin Welton, in his chapter of Sally Banes and Andre Lepecki's edited volume *The Senses in Performance*, suggests that:

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[2] In the UK, this title refers to the manager of a school and its staff, who is usually a highly experienced teacher overseeing teaching, learning, feedback to school authorities and the management of school resources.

Fig. 2 Two of a series of pictures by Ella, responding to *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too*

> …representation, if not an overemphasized concern in both critical and practical approaches, too often obscures the necessity of experience, which is always grounded in the sensual. (2007, p. 154/155)

Or, as Winston puts it, whilst 'beauty reminds us that emotion and cognition are inseparably bound together…neither can be learned outside of experience.' (2010, p. 134). Within Banes and Lepecki's book, it is interesting to see that several chapters associate work that foregrounds the sensual with a regression to a younger state. These adult writers find their expertise in engaging with the sensory in a younger sense of self, one prior to the crowding influence of intellection. Ellsworth argues that:

> We feel beauty, attraction or allure not merely as affect or intellection – we feel them materially as processes, as events of the body. (2005, p. 269)

The material process of Ella's engagement with the lights *within* the theatre was, fittingly, expressed *outside* of the theatre through a new form of material engagement; her engagement with beauty was sensory and embodied both in reception and in further exploration. As such, the performance of *Grandad, Me and Teddy Too* proved a source of affective engagement beyond the linguistic, offering aesthetic experience that children could readily engage with through a mode of their choice. As we mentioned earlier, Ellsworth does not set such learning experiences up as in opposition to more cognitive or predictable learning. Indeed, the narrative capabilities that we previously argued for remain important outcomes of the children's theatre-going. Instead:

> We may recognise...that the value of aesthetic experience to education is that it moves us out of such binary oppositions. In aesthetic experience and in the experience of the learning

self, explanation and poetry pass into and out of each other...Artworks set us in the midst of knowings that are not tell-able, but those knowings *are* 'sense-able'...In this way, aesthetic experience is like the experience of the learning self. (2005, p. 161/162)

As such, these sensory, affective elements that the children explored are as much a part of a 'literacy of performance' as those which are more narrative based. These initial theatre experiences thus form a basis from which children become educated *in* theatre-going, as well as *by* theatre going; not only is there potential to access 'the experience of the learning self' through participation in the theatre event, but children can build a knowledge of what it means to be an audience member, an understanding of what 'theatre' might be, and an awareness of the presence of theatre buildings as part of the infrastructure of towns and cities. Polka Theatre's Creative Learning team do offer a number of targeted, 'outreach' projects that take place outside of the theatre. However, they are equally dedicated to bringing as wide an audience as possible into it, for example through their 'Curtain Up' scheme which offers free theatre tickets to schools who would otherwise be unable to afford a theatre trip. Perhaps this is precisely because, without even considering their specific outreach work, Polka are offering rich educational experiences through their varied programme of theatre. This is something different to outreach, a learning that happens in the theatre and extends beyond it, and which is owned by no one but the children themselves.

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Reach Out and Relax: Extending Access to Theatre for Families Living with Disability

Andy Kempe and Sarah Gregson

Abstract A peculiarly British custom, pantomime mixes traditional folk or fairy tales with comical contemporary references, songs, technical wizardry and audience interaction. The leading male is traditionally played by a young woman while his mother, the 'Dame', by an older man. Given that one aspect of autism is frequently a compulsion for things to be straightforward and predictable, such a confusion of signals may well be thought an inappropriate introduction to theatre for an autistic child. However, for many children in the UK their first and often only experience of live theatre is the annual pantomime, while for many local venues the panto represents a major community event. To exclude families living with autism from this is tantamount to excluding them from live theatre per se.

This chapter describes and discusses how an arts venue in a small town in England undertook to include a 'relaxed performance' of *Jack and the Beanstalk* in the light of research into factors that may contribute to the development of social and communication skills in children with autism. The chapter presents evidence of the impact the event had on local children and their families and influenced the venue's subsequent programming.

Keywords Disability · Autism · Access · 'Relaxed performances' · Family · Pantomime

A. Kempe (✉)
Institute of Education, University of Reading, Reading, Berkshire, UK
e-mail: a.j.kempe@reading.ac.uk

S. Gregson
Learning and Participation, Newbury Corn Exchange, Newbury, UK
e-mail: sarahg@cornexchangenew.co.uk

1 Context

Over the past two decades there has been a considerable shift from 'outreach' pro-
grammes organised and managed by mainstream theatres in the UK to more 'in-
reach' activities (Ball 2013, pp. 155–156).

One sector of the community that this shift has hitherto made little impact upon
though is the families of children with special educational needs. London's Polka
and Unicorn theatres for children and West Yorkshire Playhouse have pioneered
work aimed at widening participation in the theatre for children with disabilities
while companies such as Bamboozle (http://www.bamboozletheatre.co.uk) and
Oily Cart (http://www.oilycart.org.uk) have taken theatre to children with special
educational needs into their school context. Conversely, Nottingham Playhouse has
funded the creation of a purpose-built portable theatre especially designed for small
audiences of young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and
autism.

People with a disability have significantly lower rates of attending the theatre
than those without and family members of children with a disability are similarly
less likely to take part in cultural activities (Shah and Priestley 2011). For UK arts
organisations there is an increasing imperative to undertake activities specifically
designed 'to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences to help arts organ-
isations develop ongoing relationships' (ACE 2011, p. 2). Implicit in this is a need
to understand the lived experiences that will enable arts organisations to develop
their practice by removing actual and perceptual barriers to participation. One such
initiative has involved theatres offering 'relaxed' or 'autism friendly' performances,
defined as being:

> creative, safe and inspiring public theatre performances for children with special needs,
> including Autistic Spectrum Conditions and/or learning disabilities and, crucially, their
> families. Performances are specially designed to give those who otherwise might feel
> excluded the chance to experience live theatre. (Prince's Foundation for Children and the
> Arts 2013 n.p.)

Founded on the success of autism friendly cinema screenings, the Autism Theatre
Initiative, was launched in New York with a performance of Disney's *The Lion King*
on October 2nd 2011 (Theatre Development Fund n.d.). Subsequently, following a
complaint regarding the treatment of a boy with autism and his family at a show in
London's West End (London Evening Standard 2.8.11), a pilot project was under-
taken in the UK to explore the challenges involved in mounting specially adapted
performances for such an audience. The Relaxed Performance Project culminated in
a conference aimed at sharing best practice in September 2013 (Kempe 2014a).

Between one in 80–100 people are estimated to have an autistic spectrum disor-
der. If the entire gamut of learning, sensory, social and communication disabilities
were taken into account then this ratio would obviously be considerably higher.
What is known is that many families living with disability are wary of visiting the
theatre for fear of disrupting the performance or upsetting other audience members.
The resultant self-exclusion is being recognised and theatres in the UK are

increasingly acting to change the perception that they are 'off limits'. In this sense, the appellation 'autism friendly' is problematic in that it suggests an event exclusively for a very specific target audience, while the term 'relaxed performance' might suggest that the professional integrity of the performance has been compromised in some way. In practice, relaxed performances aim to make as few changes to the show as possible but rather adjust the organisation of the front of house and auditorium in order to reduce anxiety for those attending.

Relaxed performances are on the increase, from under 5 globally in 2011 to just over 120 in 2014 (Fletcher-Watson 2015). A particular rise in UK theatres can be attributed to The Relaxed Performance Project and a subsequent industry wide conference in 2013. Many of these RPs are pantomimes.

A peculiarly British custom, 'panto' blends traditional folk or fairy tales with comical contemporary references, songs, technical wizardry and audience interaction. The leading male is traditionally played by a young woman while his mother, the 'Dame', by an older man. Given that one aspect of autism is frequently a compulsion for things to be straightforward and predictable, such a confusion of signals and sensory stimuli may well be thought of as inappropriate for an autistic child. However, for many children their first, and often only, experience of live theatre is the annual pantomime. To exclude any family from this is tantamount to excluding them not only from live theatre but an integral aspect of community celebration. This chapter reports on how one arts organisation embraced the findings of the Relaxed Performance Project in order to extend its own provision to the community it serves.

2   A Small Town in England

Newbury is a market town in southern England (pop. 32,000). Newbury Corn Exchange (NCE) is a small to medium sized multi arts organisation and receiving house, offering a comprehensive programme of touring theatre, dance, music, comedy and family shows as well as a range of participation work for all ages. The annual pantomime is produced in-house. In 2013 the organisation was a registered charity funded through the local authority, trusts and foundations. It was not, at the time, an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) i.e. in receipt of regular funding, but has since become an NPO. The quest to offer a relaxed performance may be seen as a marker of its ambition to operate at the same level as larger organisations such as those that took part in the Relaxed Performance Project. The idea was thus supported by the management team as a potentially essential part of an audience development strategy.

The drive to produce a relaxed performance came from the Learning and Participation Manager (LPM)

(a) Feeling that they had a mandate, as 'access champion' to pursue a solution to an enquiry from a patron who could not attend the panto due to photo sensitive epilepsy;

(b) Having personal interest in the social justice possibilities of widening participation in pantomime, an annual theatre and family tradition;

(c) Discovering the emergence of a relaxed performance practice in the UK (SOLT 2013) and

(d) Finding that a personal drive to offer this kind of access to a section of the local community chimed with the organisational and perhaps national ambition for theatre.

In 2013 the Learning and Participation department consisted of one full time manager and a part time assistant. RPs sit within the department's wider aims in addressing a particular sets of needs and ensuring that NCE offered a positive welcome to marginalised groups e.g. families and people with a disability. The relaxed performance sat naturally as a joint project between the Learning and Participation team and Front of House, given their experience of welcoming a wide range of groups with particular needs. The organisation was positive about, though not entirely undaunted by, the challenge of mounting a relaxed performance of *Jack and the Beanstalk* as part of the 2013–2014 panto season.

The LPM was aware that engaging with the reality of how difficult the theatre experience might be for some families would challenge accepted working practice. In order to 'understand and know' (ACE 2011, p. 2) an audience group, an insight into their situated knowledge can be helpful. If 'each of us constructs different knowledge from experiences within our own historical and social contexts' then each person's knowledge will 'shape the way they interpret experiences' (Lang 2011, p.89). This situated knowledge adds a specific validity to their voices and makes consultation essential for audience development initiatives. In this case local support groups, the local branch of the National Autism Society and two local special schools were contacted. From the subsequent meetings, three 'situated partners' came to work with the LPM throughout the production process and provided training in autism awareness for staff and volunteers in all departments. A tour of the venue with a member of a local support group (a parent of a child with autism) proved invaluable in highlighting small changes that could be made to the environment. While Fletcher-Watson (2015) notes how the number of relaxed performances has grown exponentially, he questions the extent to which the voices of autistic people themselves have been accessed in the initiative. While this may be a valid challenge to set before theatres intent on widening participation to mainstream theatre generally, NCE saw their target audience as the whole family. In order to cater for those members of the family with autism it seemed most appropriate to ask for advice from those best able to offer it, that is, the rest of the family.

3 The Arts and Autism

The question 'What is known about children with learning, sensory and communication difficulties?' is too broad to address fully in this chapter but needs to be considered in order to understand why families of children with ASD tend not to

come to the theatre. ASD is a 'spectrum disorder': those individuals with a diagnosis of 'autism' are as different from each other as anyone else. However, an overview of the spectrum is useful when considering families' experience of a live theatre event. People with autism may 'experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours' (NAS n.d.). Relaxed performances need to be mindful of all manner of sensory impairments. Given that theatre by its nature sets out to provoke internal and external feelings by offering what Hurley calls 'super-stimuli' that 'concentrates and amplifies the world's natural sensory effects' (2010, p. 23) it is clear that the danger of over-stimulating those who are already ultra-sensitive while trying to accommodate those who need or crave heightened stimulation presents a challenge which may, inevitably, result in some degree of compromise. Some children with learning, sensory or communication disabilities lack an awareness of the thoughts and feelings of those around them. This presents a challenge in the social setting of the theatre. NCE's work with 'situated partners' highlighted some particular difficulties, for example, the noisy and confined nature of the Front of House space. Grandin and Barron (2005) insist that children with autistic spectrum disorders need direct experience and live interaction in order for social skills to become 'hard-wired' in their brains. With careful planning, the unique social dynamic that can be fostered in the theatre can be utilised to help develop social and communication skills. A central element of the Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional Support Model (SCERTS), which aims to address deficits in social and communication skills, is the notion of 'joint attention' whereby the child follows what a partner is very deliberately pointing to or gazing at while using 'exaggerated facial and verbal responses to an unexpected or anticipated event' in order to emphasise appropriate social reactions (Shore and Rastelli 2006 p. 173). The actors' aim, complemented by what Hurley (2010, p. 28) refers to as 'feeling-technologies', is to draw the attention of the audience to the stage. An integral facet of panto is certainly the use of exaggerated facial and verbal responses and an active encouragement of the audience to make their responses visible and audible. If the actors are successful in this then an attending child will not have just one partner to refer to in terms of 'joint attention' and associated response but the entire population of the auditorium! In Bundy et al's research, 'Several young people spoke about being aware of the responses of other audience members. Some indicated that they experience pleasure when their own responses were affirmed by other people's apparently similar reactions' (2013, p. 156). Thus, the act of jointly attending with a group and the object of that attention may be seen as efficacious in the development of social skills while also representing a rich aesthetic, cultural and communal experience.

A major barrier, however, continues to lie in attracting such an audience in the first place due to the social conventions, perceived or actual, that surround how audiences are expected to behave in the theatre. Theatres can represent a degree of challenge and alienation. In order to avoid the embarrassment of contravening an unknown or misunderstood code people may simply not go even if they'd like to (Ball 2013). The cost of going to the theatre may also be prohibitive, a fact that

doubtless adds to the fear of having one's child interfere with another audience member's enjoyment. One parent in Newbury said:

> I don't think you can underestimate how excluding it can be to go to things and just worry about people disapproving of your child. Every parent with a kid with autism will tell you, because they don't look different, people just think they are badly brought up and just look at them, being cross. It's really debilitating.

What might be learnt from such responses is that engaging with a performance can lead to experiencing negative feelings from others. In a relaxed performance the audience is invited to engage with the action in whatever way they wish; that other members of the audience are doing likewise may lead to the recognition that theatre is a good space in which feelings can be physically and verbally expressed.

4 The Learning Organisation

With an awareness of some of the challenges of ensuring that an RP truly reaches its intended audience it is essential that a whole organisation comes on board with the process. Having just one informed staff member making a one-off event happen by force of will would not make for a sustainable model of practice. If such initiatives are to be agents of change then consideration must be made of how an organisation learns and to what end.

In the current UK cultural sector, funding is difficult to access, and notions of accountability, value and impact are omnipresent. In 2013 NCE was subject to these forces and faced local authority funding cuts of up to 52%. In such a climate organisations and funding bodies ask 'what are we/you here for?' Loss of stability for arts organisations requires a '*continuous* processes of transformation' (Schon 1973, cited in Smith 2011). The skills of those within learning and participation teams to engage with situated knowledge can be of use to organisations in undertaking audience development that addresses these fundamental questions. However, as with any shift in practice, introducing RPs can be challenging. The work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schon on organisational learning suggests that where there is a problem to solve there are two possible learning responses: Single Loop Learning, in which the operational norms of the organisation remain unchallenged and the error or difficulty is managed, or Double Loop Learning, in which 'the error is detected and corrected in ways which involve the modification of an organisation's underlying norms' (Smith 2011).

Newbury Corn Exchange strove to operate as a reflexive, 'double loop', learning system by allowing situated knowledge to inform practice. However, a true double loop learning system operates a number of feedback loops through which the information and impetus behind change can reverberate around the whole organisation. When norms are being challenged with a view to direct action then these feedback loops can act to ensure that connections to new and potential audiences are more than skin deep.

5   Relaxing Jack: A Case Study

The process of delivering an RP began with a review of the current status of the organisation in terms of autism awareness and accessibility. The LPM and the Commercial and Sales Manager referred to the Arts Council England's *Family Friendly Toolkit,* which provides a practical guide 'designed to support arts organisations wishing to make a commitment to families, making it easier for families to take part in the arts as audiences and participants' (ACE 2007, p. 2). An audit based on that proposed in the toolkit was undertaken at NCE with the aim of raising awareness and promoting discussion in order to identify possible improvements. They then worked closely with the marketing and box office teams to evolve a clear message about what a relaxed performance is and who it can be useful for. The wording on the website explained the nature of event carefully so as to be inclusive:

> We welcome everyone to our relaxed performances, which are slightly amended and designed with people with autistic spectrum disorder, learning disabilities and photosensitivity in mind.

The box office team contacted each booker directly after they had purchased tickets to ensure they knew that they had booked for a relaxed performance and understood its nature. Specific press releases went out and the LPM also worked with situated partners to promote the event.

All staff and volunteer stewards were offered autism awareness training, preshow briefings and e-mail updates and meetings were held with the creative team and cast about adapting the show. Changes to the show, requiring rehearsal and re-plotting between performances, initially caused concern. However, few changes were ultimately made. Pyrotechnic explosions were removed from the finale, sound levels were lowered slightly throughout and inflatables that were dropped from the ceiling into the audience were dropped instead onto the stage. (Feedback later suggested that this last change would have been unnecessary as long as advance warning was given). The biggest change for the cast was that the auditorium lights were raised throughout. While relatively few actors may have received specific training in theatre for children and even fewer will have had extensive experience of working with children with autism, performer feedback on the event was very positive. The actors enjoyed interacting more directly with this new audience; a view endorsed by Alex Gaumond who played Miss Trunchbull in a relaxed performance of *Matilda The Musical* (Fletcher-Watson 2015).

Two 'visual stories', focused on enabling families to prepare for the experience, were sent out and hosted on the website in an editable format so that parents and teachers could edit them and use the parts they felt their child would benefit from. (http://cornexchangenew.com/visitus/access). The first covered the experience of

visiting Newbury Corn Exchange picturing the features of and spaces in the venue, along with some commentary and guidance. For example:

What happens in the theatre?

When the show is about to begin, the music will start and the lights will dim.
Then the actors will come onto the stage and the show will begin.

Are there rules for how to behave?

Not really!
You can wear what you are comfortable in.
You can bring ear defenders or noise filtering headphones if you like.
During the show, some people might make some noise. People will clap at the end to show they have enjoyed the show.
You can join in if you like.

The second story pertained specifically to *Jack and the Beanstalk*. This contained pictures and details of the different characters and outlined the storyline and pantomime traditions, for example (Fig.1):

THINGS TO KNOW – It is a Pantomime tradition that
this role is played **by a man, dressed as a woman**.
This is supposed to be funny! The Dame has lots of
costume changes.

Advice from parents and guidance from the NAS (http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/leisure-and-environments/theatre-and-autism-guide.aspx) suggested that the visual story should explain the stage lighting; give a warning that the chairs flip back; state that pantomimes are noisy, and that dry ice would be used which has a slight odour to it. Very importantly it should emphasise that it would be OK to call out because in a pantomime this 'is NOT being rude'. 'Familiarisation Visits' in which families could visit the venue with their child in advance of the performance were also on offer and a Google street view tour of the building was available on the website (http://cornexchangenew.com/tour).The main focus of adaptation was the venue environment on the day of the performance. Taking into consideration social anxieties and the potential for sensory overload the following adaptations were made:

• Hand driers were turned off
• Flashing toys were not sold
• All staff wore a large 'Can I Help?' badge
• A quiet space was provided during the performance
• Furniture was removed from the foyer to create space
• The auditorium was opened earlier than usual to avoid crowding
• Green lanyards were available for anyone who did not want to interact directly with the cast
• A quiet area was set up

Evaluation showed that all adaptations, except the Google virtual tour tool, were used and found to be useful.

Fig. 1 Dame Trott. (Picture courtesy of Farrows Creative)

6   The Impact on Children and Their Families

The positive reception of *Jack* mirrored the picture gained from the Relaxed Performance Project as a result of which a relaxed performance of *Aladdin* was programmed for the 2014–2015 season. Many of the same strategies were refined and re-employed.

The fact that a relaxed performance was to take place was regarded as a good thing and worth trying. Such a view seems to have rippled throughout the British theatre network. In the 2014–2015 season there were at least 48 relaxed performances of pantomimes illustrating an increasing willingness to embrace the initia-

tive. A common response was that the relaxed nature of the performance appeared to have an effect on the behaviour of many children. Simply knowing that they could go out and that no one was likely to be bothered by anything they did resulted in greater attention to the performance and provided a relief for many parents (Kempe 2014a, b). One mother commented:

> There's no two ways about it, taking Ella to a relaxed performance was an incredible liberation because to be in a place where you know that if she runs about no one's going to be cross…If we get anxious because we think people are cross, she'll get anxious and she'll play up more. So actually the whole thing of everyone just being chilled is great.

Aged 5 when she saw *Jack,* Ella, who is described as 'under-sensitive to stimulus', had run around a good deal in the performance, though when she attended a different panto with her school she stayed sitting still for longer. However, this was put this down to pressure from her teacher to stay still with the consequence that, 'when she went, she really went!' One year on Ella's mother stated that:

> Last year we were thinking with Ella that there's no way could we have this experience if it wasn't like this (i.e. a relaxed performance). There's still no way could Ella not talk so what we're doing is getting her used to talking quietly! Since last year's relaxed performance there's been a huge change in her ability to sit and pay attention. There may have been a lot of factors at work here but at least the relaxed performance is one of those factors. A massive extra bonus about it is that it's something we can do as a family. That's huge.

Conversely, Harry, who has Asperger's syndrome and ADHD and was 6 years old when he went to see *Jack,* was taken to see the mainstream performance of *Aladdin.* His mother reported that he had become restless due to its length but conceded that he was much happier going to the theatre now and had attended other mainstream performances in the intervening year, his attendance at the RP being a factor in his preparedness. While she had some reservations about relaxed performances serving to unnecessarily mollycoddle children like Harry, she shared the view that they were a safe place to find out more about the child's responses to different sensory and social experiences. Sustainable attendance and integration into mainstream events is one of the stated intentions of the whole relaxed performance initiative.

Children's recollections of visiting the theatre can last a lifetime (Freshwater 2009) while director Ann Bogart (2010) states that, 'Experience and sensation become memory via emotion. The more emotion that is generated in the heat of experience, the more likely the memory is to stick. If a primary aim of theatre, and most especially panto, is to generate experience and sensation, then adding the family into the equation may help create not only an especially potent memory but more immediate development of social and inter-personal relationships. Two weeks after the performance of *Jack*, 5 year old Fay's mother noticed how she was replicating the way one of the panto characters spoke as she played with her toy birds:

> I'd never seen her do this before, she's like, 'Budgie,' she said, 'I can tweet best.' And then she changed her voice, 'No, I can tweet best!' which is what Beansprout (*a character in the panto*) did – 'I'm the best.' 'No, I'm the best!' and all this kind of chat, chat, chat, chat, chat. It was just like, oh, amazing! I thought it was anyway.

A year later Fay's mother was able to note another significant development which she saw as being directly related to attending the relaxed performance of *Aladdin:*

> Fay was fidgety and talkative but responsive and really involved with what was going on. At the end she said, 'Hooray! It's over!.... Oh no! It's finished!' She was really relaxed afterwards. We went for a pizza. We don't get to do things like that. Ever. But she was really calm talking about the performance. Maybe it's because we were all chilled out. It was good. That doesn't often happen. It was lovely to do something as a family. I can't remember the last time we went out to somewhere where you had to wait for a meal. So yes, it's had a massive impact

In terms of the effectiveness of the special preparations and adjustments made by the NCE, the visual stories prepared for *Jack* were appreciated by parents but seemed of little interest to the children. A year later both Fay's and Ella's mothers reported that both girls had been more willing to look at them and this had prompted a number of questions about the show. Ella was especially interested in the picture of the quiet space because she had noticed a toy of Peppa Pig, a popular character on children's television, in the space. She was a little upset when, on the day, the toy wasn't there, prompting her mother to advise:

> if you take a picture of what the quiet space is like it really needs to be like that because if it's not there can be a real problem! The visual sense is so strong it has to be that exact.

This kind of attention to detail is vital. Fay's enjoyment of her visits to NCE could have been very different. Arriving at the theatre to see *Jack* she was in need of the toilet but immediately became anxious because of previous bad experiences with the noise of the hand driers. On that occasion though she was able to read the sign that said the driers were turned off and visibly relaxed. When attending *Aladdin*, Fay remembered that there would be no problem with this.

Attending the theatre affords opportunities for aspects of socialisation not always available through formal education where children with ASD may find themselves 'in a bubble with a few adults' (Kempe 2015). Nine year old Jay's mother recounted how well he had dealt with another boy's behaviour during the relaxed performance saying that it made her realise 'how hard he has to try in other social situations and I think this is what makes his behaviour worse because he gets anxious about it. But here you learn to get used to it and just accept it.'

For social justice to be achieved for children with ASD and other individual complex needs, awareness and understanding must be raised within the broader community. Relaxed performances can play a part in this. A group of Scouts attended the relaxed performance of *Aladdin* because the date suited them. However, following the event the troupe leader commented that:

> If the dates suit next year we'd probably choose to come to the relaxed performance again. It certainly hasn't done any of them any harm to share an experience with all the other children that were here.

Similarly, a teacher who accompanied a group from a residential school for children with autism noted that while her students attracted 'a few looks from other audience members' it was a good thing for members of the public to be exposed to them just as it was certainly good for her students to be able to spend time in public places.

6.1 The Impact and Wider Implications of the Relaxed Performance Initiative

Drawing on a database constructed using Google searched in English, Fletcher-Watson identified that 54% of 300 relaxed performances mounted between 2009 and 2014 were children's productions, while 22% were pantomimes. The database also reveals that 'there is currently a lack of provision for adults with autism and others who may wish to enjoy traditional drama but require a degree of accommodation in order to be able to visit the theatre' (2015, p. 5). Fletcher-Watson's question 'what does the autistic theatregoer want from a theatre performance, relaxed or otherwise' (2015, p. 8) has yet to be adequately researched, but even when it is, there is no guarantee that theatres will oblige if the financial implications resulting from increased workload and reduced audience capacity are seen to outweigh the benefits accruing from being seen as more socially just in their programming.

Analysis of audience figures showed that 70% of the audience that attended the RP of *Jack* had never previously booked to see a show at NCE. While only 9% rebooked for the RP the following year, two of those bookings were large groups. The RP of *Aladdin* sold at 100% capacity suggesting that the event had attracted further new audiences. In addition, bookers for the first RP were found to be more likely to book for another event at the venue, demonstrating the initiative's ability to bring this new audience into the wider cultural experience of theatre.

A particular challenge for the LPM lay in balancing the competing needs, levels of understanding, and relative involvement in the process across the organisation whilst keeping the workload manageable. For example, one actor commented, 'I felt the depth of rehearsal before the show, which created this sort of impending doom on the cast, was not needed'. In contrast, a member of the technical team felt that amending sound cues was 'not an easy process, so a little more rehearsal time with the performers and musicians would have helped greatly'. Similarly, where 70% of staff felt that autism awareness training was 'useful to them in their work and career', one volunteer asked, 'Why not just brief people in the extended briefing before the performance. Local SEN schools have been bringing students to the performances for several years, so this was not a new concept'.

For the individual who assumes responsibility for an RP in any venue these balances are constantly being renegotiated alongside other demands and any negative feedback can feel personal and demotivating. In this instance the active attempt to harness both staff and audience feedback, whilst time consuming, enabled the LPM to build on the positives.

Since the first relaxed performance 60% of staff and volunteers reported feeling that they are more confident in their understanding of autism. The wider impact of this in the local community is difficult to measure and perhaps warrants wider investigation. The organisation have also come to realise, through active discussion, that other events can become 'relaxed' events with small changes and a heightened awareness and confidence in staff delivering them. In effect, the organisation has

realised a latent potential for accessibility that has been highlighted by the relaxed performance process.

At present, relaxed performances appear to be manifest primarily in the USA and UK. Hadley (2015) has noted that this may be due to the fact that both of these countries have legislation requiring venues to address issues of access and engagement for people with disabilities. However, developing and sustaining inclusion is more likely to be achieved through will and grace rather than legal obligation. Thus, there may be no reasons why relaxed performances should remain an Anglo-centric phenomenon once their nature and potential is brought to the attention of the industry worldwide.

7   Conclusion

Though the practice of double loop learning, fostering new partners, new approaches and new creative practices is time consuming the dividends and opportunities for further development are significant. In particular, an approach to audience development focused on dialogue with marginalised groups based on the model employed for the first relaxed performance is emerging. Such an approach will acknowledge the limitations of what NCE can offer audiences while continuing to strive to address particular needs. This reflexive approach to welcoming existing and new audiences to the building has been central to the creation of the NCE's 'approach to audiences' policy. This has involved all paid and volunteer front of house staff and has led the Learning and Participation team to actively create new opportunities for face to face contact with community groups. The challenge inherent in this role will be how to make such contacts meaningful so that situated knowledge informs programming whilst managing diverse expectations.

The positive response to NCE's initiative implies an imperative to develop and sustain opportunities for this new audience. Focusing on the observed benefits of 'joint attention', further exploration of how to apply aspects of the 'relaxed' approach to other events in which children and families may actively participate is an important next step. Finally, it seems that it would be a failure of NCE's endeavour if all of this new learning was smugly pocketed as an example of a new form of 'in-reach' at a local level. Such experiences and resultant learning deserves to be shared in order for art organisations and educationalists to consider how they might apply the emerging ideas to new situations. The reality for too many arts and educational endeavours is that taking the time to reflect on how they might 'reach-out' in order to achieve quality 'in-reach' is often the silent victim of cuts and outcomes-based oversight. However, by embracing dialogue with those who feel marginalised, new audiences may be nurtured while more is learnt regarding how their needs may be catered for creatively. Most importantly, the impact of reaching out in this way is not confined to the individuals and families being directly targeted, but serves to inform and reflect the nature of the entire community in which they live.

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The Dance of Life

Judith Mc Lean and Sally Chance

> *Babies and young children are like the R & D division of the human species*
> (Gopnik et al. 2000, p. vii)
>
> *To have a child is to discover a piece of your heart in another's body*
> (Anonymous poet, cited in Cozolino 2002, p. 21)

Abstract The chapter focuses on the particulars of a partnership amongst artists, an academic, audiences i.e. babies and family carers, and a performing arts centre's staff, namely the commissioning Festival Director, offering a deep dive into the complexities of education and the performing arts. It introduces the concept of Dance Play, an original term coined by choreographer and dancer Sally Chance (Adelaide, Australia), describing a hybrid art form that encompasses the genres of dance, theatre, intentional play, song and music to create particular aesthetic, social, physical and emotional vocabularies for a specific audience – babies. Chance, in conversation with Professor Judith McLean (Brisbane, Australia), explores: the origins of dance play, its practical manifestation through a commissioned performance work for an early childhood festival Out of the Box (QPAC) entitled Nursery (2014, 2015), and the concomitant early developmental theories underpinning the form.

Throughout the chapter there is a polyphony of voices from the two worlds of education and theatre that together explore exciting developments happening in the nascent areas of performance for babies and early childhood. Dance play interro-

J. Mc Lean (✉)
Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia
e-mail: Judith.Mclean@qpac.com.au

S. Chance
Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

gates the nexus between audience as passive recipient and audience as active and discerning participant in support of Alison Gopnik's claim that "babies and young children are like the R & D division of the human species" (Gopnik et al., The scientist in the crib: what early learning tells us. Harper Collins, New York, p vii, 2000). This chapter looks into the petri dish as a contribution to raising the criticality of arts based experiences for human development at the most formative period of development, early childhood.

1 Introduction

The chapter charts an ongoing professional conversation between Judith McLean (JM), a Queensland based academic, and the Adelaide based artist, Sally Chance (SC), exploring Chance's arts based practice and accompanying infant developmental theory. The chapter entitled 'The Dance of Life' is a collaborative writing venture between teaching artists Chance and McLean. Defining the term teaching artist is a slippery venture as Eric Booth (2009) explains, "Perhaps a term like teaching artist must be sounded, gestured, drawn or performed in a room with engaged learners to capture its genuine connotation" (p. 3).

Together the authors offer 'sounds and gestures' on a unique crucible experience which meshes together artists and audience and is comprised of: a musician, two dancers, a 'holder' of the performing and learning space (Winnicott 1971, p. 97–100), babies, carers, mostly mothers, although always present were a number of fathers and grandparents.

As Scholar in residence at QPAC, McLean proposes that commissioning *This [Baby] Life* and *Nursery* are important in addressing – aesthetic, social and emotional – literacies for babies.

In the chapter there are three content areas addressed: a description of the origins of dance play and its workings aesthetically, socially and emotionally; its contribution in developing a baby's inner life; and, a summary of the main theories underpinning the work.

The chapter oscillates between discussion from developmental theory and the practical implications manifested in the works. McLean and Chance's voices are pooled in the discursive text although in places they are heard verbatim through interviews and field notes.

2 This [Baby] Life and Nursery

Dance play is an original term coined by Chance. The form encompasses the genres of dance, theatre, intentional play, song and music creating particular aesthetic, social, physical and emotional vocabularies. As Robert Love (Director, Riverside

Theatres, Parramatta; JM field note, 2011) explains, *"This [Baby] Life* comes back to the very core of what theatre is all about – play".

Chance's two performance works under review *This [Baby] Life* and *Nursery* (the latter work being the chapter's main focus) were made especially for babies 4–18 months. As with any audience they view dance images and enter the performance space – if they wish to – taking part in an activity termed "attunement" (Stern 2004, p. 241; Tronick 2007, p. 104–105) or in Chance's view, *matching*, where the performers join in with the sounds and actions of the babies. Matching is described in detail below. There is no clapping along, no requirement for group singing, but there may be quiet conversation as adults respond to their babies' observations.

This [Baby] Life takes place in an open space, designed by Gaelle Mellis, defined by a large rectangular floor mat with a single piece of furniture referencing a handed down nursery Table. A small image pops up at baby eye level depicting blue birds on a branch. The idea is that the babies have entered a pleasant nest. The work consists of a suite of images drawing on familiar objects, games and sensations – blankets, egg-shaped shakers, peek-a-boo, three iterations of the song *row your boat*, – interwoven within an originally composed score performed live.

Feedback from an early year's educator after the first showing at an Adelaide care centre inspired the title:

> I believe the children seemed to feel entitled to the performance and not at all surprised or concerned by this presence in their space – 'Of course these people and this sound is here, we are babies, *this is our life.*' (SC in conversation with nursery educator Nikki, Gowrie Adelaide, 2009)

A driving concept behind *This [Baby] Life and Nursery* is *The circle of* security (Circle of security international n.d.), an interactive protocol used in the field of infant mental health, which maps the constant rhythm of a baby moving out into the world to explore, then returning to the safe haven provided by their primary carer. The images and choreographed sections in the performance work reflect this constant ebb and flow, the deeply human experience of voyaging out and coming home, and this is echoed in the responses of the babies using their adults to explore the performance in the same way.

Nursery adopts the same format, but attempts to be more conceptual in its content, aiming to be a kind of secular baptism in which the message 'welcome to the world' is expressed musically, kinetically and through spare, poetic text. *Nursery* is experienced in the round, which appears to encourage the babies to be braver in their exploration of the space, perhaps because they can see other babies across the circle.

Designer Wendy Todd created an intriguing, non-fussy circular floor mat, with an external and internal circle, representing a peaceful garden. Here things are growing and the adults present are both nurturing and playful. Birth and growth are represented by art works described by their creator, visual artist Hiromi Tango, as chromosomes, stitched into the floor mat and danced with by the performers.

3 Commissioning Work for Babies: Contested Territory

This [Baby] Life and *Nursery* are atypical as creating new work for babies in Australia is infrequent in the arts world. *This [Baby] Life* premiered at Come Out Festival, 2011, Adelaide and has toured throughout Australia, as well as to the New Victory Theatre, New York and to *Imaginate*, Edinburgh. *Nursery* was commissioned by the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's (QPAC) Out of the Box Festival (Queensland Performing Arts Centre 2014), premiering at OTTB in June 2014. *Nursery* was subsequently presented at: Awesome Festival, Perth; Artplay, Melbourne (2014); and Come Out, Adelaide (2015).

The genesis of both Chance's works is marked by a rigorous and robust dialogue about the viability of creating performance for such young audiences. The works' merits need justifications beyond box office returns and arguments are scrutinised by those commissioning the works. In the following interview Brett Howe (BH), OTTB 2016 festival director, explains his rationale in festival commissioning, especially subsidised work. He says:

> Festivals should not be about the status quo, they should be about the new, the next and the untested. They should be a place for experimentation, and investigation as well as exploration and development. They should push artists, and audiences and industry into new places, new ideas and new ways of thinking. They need to be both disruptive and sustaining in their innovation. It is in commissions, that we create a touch point for the argument or the research or the development to sit within. It is through commissions that we can explore and create and test and hypothesise. It is through commissions that we grow bigger, and bolder and greater than our previous selves. (JM interview with BH, 2015)

John Kotzas, QPAC Chief Executive, and Brett Howe, OTTB festival director, fervently believe in fostering new art forms, artists and nurturing as yet unspoken conversations with and for young audiences. Artistic Director Jude Kelly (Southbank Centre, London) confirms that the sector is under represented and asks why work for children and babies is usually confined to festivals, she asks "how would adults feel if they could only see works made for them once every two years?" (Keynote address, Connecting the Dots, OTTB Festival Symposium, 2012). OTTB, with its 24-year history, applauds Kelly's provocation and along with Sue Giles Australia's ASSITEJ representative, hopes that "practitioners and audiences will take up the call for stronger, better and more of, because the situation has declined so dramatically" (Giles 2015, para. 7). Chance acknowledges the importance of the support of organisations such as QPAC's OTTB, Awesome Festival (WA), Come Out (SA) and ArtPlay, a Melbourne City Council facility dedicated to the cultural lives of children.

4 Dance Play as Creative Form: Aesthetics, Social and Emotional Literacy

Chance explains the term dance play as one with deliberate intentions of inducting babies into a cultural conversation. In making dance play Chance creates a performance form that deliberately encourages and celebrates a baby's self-expression and subjectivity through intimate exchange between baby and performer. Whilst the performance is closely witnessed by the carers whose presence is a pre-requisite for the babies' safety and psychological security, they are not overtly invited to participate. Significantly, Chance aims for her works to act as a catalyst in bringing the 'dance of life' between baby and artist to consciousness.

She explains:

> Daniel N. Stern (*Diary of a Baby*, 1990) describes "the well choreographed pas de deux" between baby and mother. In *The First Relationship,* he says that "the mother – infant interaction… is an elaborate dance choreographed by nature" (Stern 2002). I see my work (which I describe as dance play) as highlighting this dance, observing what's already happening and adding to the vocabulary, making it conscious in many ways (because a dance of some kind is always present, whether it's hesitant, delightful, unconscious, interrupted, playful or even dysfunctional for whatever reason, whether conscious or unconsciously. (JM interview with SC, 2013)

The spark for creating work with babies first occurred for Chance in 2001 when she began her role as Artistic Director of the Come Out Festival (Adelaide). She elaborates upon a moment of epiphany:

> In November 2001, I was having my very first day as Artistic Director of Adelaide's Come Out Festival. (I curated three biennial festivals in 2003, 2005 and 2007.) With no idea how and where to begin I sifted through a huge pile of glossy pitch material on my desk and came across a project directed by Christine de Smedt at Les Ballets C de la B in Belgium. Each year, at least at the time, C de la B ran a community-based dance project called 9 × 9 involving a different population per project in making a performance piece. This project involved 81 babies and their adults. Apparently it was performed with completely different casts in different cities between 2000 and 2005 – incredible! This was the start of a train of thought for me about the existence of a cultural life for babies, their right to this life and how fascinating it would be to find a performance form which meets this cultural need.
>
> By the time I left Come Out I'd rustled up an Australia Council Fellowship – a self-devised two-year program exploring the cultural lives of babies through dance and in the company of community-based groups, babies and children in child care, mother-infant groups, educators, psychologists, theatre makers and social workers. (JM interview with SC, 2013)

Chance sees the antecedents of creating dance play emanating out of her previous experiences as an artist working in the community cultural development and disability sectors. Perspectives taken from these fields include: her observation that specific populations embrace the expressive possibilities of dance with an urgency

borne of a strong need to communicate in a world that privileges verbal expression; and, her resolute belief that the arts in the community and art form development are non-hierarchically positioned along a continuum of practice which explores the cultural lives of specific populations and how they take part in the arts; and lastly, when the art form evolves under the influence of that population as creator or as audience exciting possibilities emerge. As Chance explains, "It's about meeting a particular 'group' and working through improvisation and devising to make work with and for that population" (ibid).

5   Experiencing Dance Play

Dance play combines and juxtaposes professional artist with baby, rehearsed material with improvisation, and set piece with spontaneity. Whilst the performance is choreographed and has a repeatable structure it is paradoxically an "open work" (Eco 1979, p. 47) as the dancers, together with the babies, share and create their own unique sound and movement vocabularies. With so many variables and the complexities of bringing together 20 or so babies it is reasonable to question whether a chance of "aesthetic engagement" or an arts experience is possible (Abbs 1987, 1989a, b).

For Chance this question was resolved in the context of a rehearsal to re-mount *Nursery*. She details how a new cast, having reached a point some two thirds into the work, had to stop for a pre-scheduled group of babies, who arrived as a practice audience for the new dancers. The babies were completely engaged until the precise moment the dancers had reached within the work when their rehearsal had to pause. This made clear to Chance that the youngest of audiences perceived the prepared images and precise intentions of the performers until these were less clear through lack of familiarity on the dancer's part (SC field note, 2014).

Rhona Matheson (RM) Director of Starcatchers Edinburgh purports that babies can cope with abstraction in ways adults cannot, she states:

> [Babies] are amazing, they are always honest, they never cease to surprise artists, they inspire their parents...They are incredibly clever and can be challenged creatively. They are not afraid of abstract work – abstract work links to how very young children play, so I think they can cope with it in a way that a three- or four-year-old (or an adult) can't. (Matheson cited in Urszula 2012, para. 1)

McLean's (2015) response to the question "can aesthetic engagement for babies really occur and is it art" is detailed:

> It does happen in an almost indescribable way, complete with rocking, pulling, clapping, jumping, dancing, and even acting by the babies in a gentle and calm way. This is not the meaningless colour and movement performance for young audiences, not the 'look whose behind you', genre of performance, but carefully orchestrated and well researched with the artists' intentions and movements deliberately planned to invite the baby into the work. This is apparent in every gesture between baby and artist. It is participative performance, co-created by the performers *and* the babies, working together to make meaning with each

other. There is nothing of the mysterious performer creating 'magic' for the audience to wonder at and admire. (JM field note, 2015)

The performance begins in an intensely poetic moment as the musician, Heather Frahn, uses her artistry, the beauty and power of voice, to invite the babies to come together and become an audience. She invites them, or to use Dewey's (1934) aesthetic term, she 'inducts' (p. 46) them into the aesthetic space. Seconds before the performance begins the crawling and sometimes fractious babies create a non-harmonious- hubbub, but as performer Frahn begins intoning almost instantaneously the babies turn their attention to the circle and the artists. An annotation records the phrase "falling into a spell" (JM field note, 2015). Everything about the invocation is soft and gentle, inviting the babies to enter into the performance. Frahn explains her interest in "sympathetic resonances" (JM field note, 2015; Goldman and Sims 2015), and how the resonances plus the intentionality behind them brings about a holistic experience for the babies.

Frahn's theory is based in her study of Vedic traditions creating sound to invoke holistic mental, emotional and spiritual connectivity by creating long and deep soothing sounds; however, she does not confine her composition to gentle sound. The score can rise and fall in volume and intensity just as any performance score requires light and shade, as long as nothing is introduced too suddenly or unexpectedly for the babies.

The dancers Stephen Noonan and Ade Suharto/Felecia Hick have an equally subtle and rigorous task, dependant on observing their audience and working together until the performance becomes more a co-creation than an exposition. As previously explained the dancers make use of two types of performative material – set sections of choreography interspersed with rehearsed activity – described by the company as 'matching' referred by Tronick as attunement (2007, p. 288), and understood as "special moments of authentic person- to-person connection" (Tronick 2007, p. 412). Ostensibly 'matching' is a deceptively simple activity however it requires the performers to be "astutely watchful" (Brennan 2012). When the set sections are also invested with this 'watchfulness' the ensuing mutual delight creates the momentum for the performer-baby exchange within the pre-rehearsed and spontaneous images. Dancer Noonan also describes his artistic process as "matching with intentionality" (JM field note, 2015). The musician is also involved in matching using the sounds offered by the babies. The word 'matching' as opposed to 'mirroring' is used, because it implies that the performers have a deeper task than copying the baby's external moves, instead responding to the baby's offers as a communication, as a manifestation of their inner world.

A child makes an offer with sound or movement and the performer 'attunes' (Stern 2004, p. 241) to it, extends it in interplay, the exchange is repeated and transforms into an act of performance. The offer lasts as long as the baby focuses and finally the performative act yields with the performer moving on to take up yet another offer. What occurs is an aesthetic and social gestural exchange between baby and performer, dependant on the baby's permission and initiation within the exchange. Chance explains, "for the performers, settling in allows them to turn

every image into an exchange through mutual gaze and play, at which point the reason for the show kicks off" (JM interview with SC, 2013.) Chance calls dance play "an egalitarian performance form" (ibid) where the power of the event lies in sharing and co-creating, baby and performer tapping into each other's abilities to self-express.

The time together is deliberately curated to spark artist and baby's curiosity. It makes specific use of the word "curious" within a series of short texts created for the work by author and poet, Janeen Brian *"whispering, singing and chanting – over and over – willing it into the babies' unconscious"* (JM field note, 2015). Chance recalls that the composition and integration of this simple word 'curious' into the work proved surprisingly complex until the company came to the collective understanding that a baby's capacity for curiosity depends on the security of a carer, the baby's inner self evolving through exploration within a safe adult relationship. Chance reflects that it may seem counter intuitive to use words that the target age group does not understand in a literal way, however suggests that from birth babies understand the feeling tone created by the words around them.

6   Creating an Inner Life

Developmental theorists (Cozolino 2006; Karen 1998; Schore 2012) suggest that long before language arrives, if conditions are optimal, play (arts) experiences create significant impact aesthetically, socially, emotionally, each contributing to babies' cultural literacy. Chance's awareness of psychological concepts such as attunement, matching and non-verbal communication marries developmental theory and dance play.

In building cultural literacy, paediatrician and psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott (1986) writes of the centrality of nurturing a baby's inner life. He boldly states it is the inner life that "makes one person richer than another, and deeper, and more interesting when creative" (Winnicott 1986, p. 35). Christopher Bollas (2011) points to the repercussions of a neglected inner life as having a "normotic illness" (p. 23), which he claims is a psychological condition found in many functioning adults, often identified by a lack of curiosity and inability to self-express. He defines a "normotic personality" (p. 31) as someone who obeys orthodox behaviour and norms, without asserting their sense of self. For Bollas (2011) such a person is fundamentally disinterested in subjective life identifiable by "deadening of the complexity of inner life" (p. xxvi) leading to what Kristeva (1995) calls "malady of the soul" (p. 1).

The case pursued is that self-expression through arts participation contributes to critical neurological activities in an infant's development. For it is in the first 3 years that babies lay down neurological pathways, creating what Daniel N Stern (2002) calls RIGS, described as repeated "representations of interactions that have been generalized" (p. 6). RIGS become instantiated acting as internal working models which reflect a child's "relationship history, codifying the behaviours…and defining how he will feel about himself" (Karen 1994, p. 204).

Karmiloff-Smith et al. (cited in Cozolino 2006) explain how experiences of multiple sensory, corporeal, motor, cognitive and emotional processing streams also contribute to a baby's "emergence of social intelligence" (Karmiloff-Smith et al., cited in Cozolino 2006, p. 11; Gehardt 2004, p. 35). Schore (2012) speaks of the baby's social intelligence being connected to what is called "a psychological birth" (Mahler et al., cited in Schore 2012, p. 32) claiming that it is the preverbal matrix (internal working model) that in his words forms "the core of the incipient self" (Schore 2012, p. 32).

Though formal spoken language is not a distinguishing feature of the infant's experience, multiple corporeal and vocal languages do exist – feeling, crying, movement, sensing, vocalising, gurgling – each contributing to a baby's knowledge of themselves and the world. Bollas (2007) explains how this early knowledge is felt, yet is not cognitively thought through (p. 34). He calls it the "unthought known" (ibid):

> Before articulation, there is knowledge that we have 'in our bones', that we enact through our very character without thinking it, and that is seen as being at the root of much of our reception of and acting upon the world. (Scalia 2002, p. 4)

The conceptual ideas – inner life, unthought known, cultural literacy – provide a spring-board for describing and evaluating the impact of *Nursery*. Here the deeply complex term 'the unconscious' is used in the Bollian (2007) sense of a "symphonic score" (p. 24) a gathering of corporeal, sense and feeling memories. Although words, music and dance movements are not cognitively understood they are nonetheless felt, viscerally experienced and stored within the baby's body and brain.

Bollas (2007) explains this is the process of building the psychic architecture of the self. The 'dance of life' between artist and baby literally builds neurological pathways in both the limbic and neocortex brains (Lewis et al. 2000; Gerhardt 2004; Siegel 1999; Siegel and Hartzell 2004). Recorded as "unthought known[s]" (Bollas 2007, p. 34), these healthy and positive experiences form the basis of what Bollas describes as "the foundational knowledge of one's self" (ibid). Chance is at pains not to impede the baby's exploration, encouraging them to freely interact in the space with the performers and each other. When real connections are made, described as "special moments" (Tronick 2007, p. 412) between performer and baby, the thrill, joy and excitement is palpably recorded on faces and within bodies.

Neuroscientist, Amy Banks (2015) outlines how when positivity and creativity are present the brain's reward system releases dopamine hormones, she states, "more dopamine, more interconnection" (p. 59) literally birthing new neurons to build a self. In dance play babies simply do what babies do; exploring everything and anyone present. In the security circle nothing is off limit. The space is open for their subjectivity to be freely expressed, offering them the antithesis of Bollas' (2011) idea of normotic behaviour.

7 Dance Play as Learning Space

What is distinct about both dance play works is the clarity surrounding the intention of outcome between baby and performer. The organising principle is that all humans are social creatures desiring connection. Bruner explains "humans are makers of meaning about their relation to the world" (cited in Tronick 2007, p. 2). Babies are no different, and are purposeful in their exploration through their senses seeking human connection. Chance puts this theoretical intention into her words:

> Most importantly…my works create a context in which babies demonstrate the complex ways in which they perceive faces, read the intentions of the people around them, notice feeling tones and interactions and actively invite the input of adults. American paediatric psychiatrist Daniel N. Stern (2004) calls this "implicit relational knowing." (pp. 112–121) (JM interview with SC, 2013)

Chance's curatorial choices are aesthetic, social and practical including: making use of a carefully chosen performance space, ideally with natural light, managing the logistics of pram parking and all the equipment required for an excursion with a baby, encouraging both adults and babies to take off their shoes and generally get comfortable, and rigorously adhering to a maximum 20 babies per performance.

Meeting these conditions maximises the babies' opportunity to demonstrate the sheer sophistication of their focused scrutiny of the people, objects and sounds offered by the performance. Chance builds out of the concept of *The circle of security* (Circle of security international n.d.), an attachment protocol which at its simplest it provides a simple image for the theatrical design. *Nursery* takes place in the round, providing the literal safety of a circle of carers inside and around the performance space, as well as the metaphorical safety that is a pre-requisite for offering a suite of performative images to such young audiences.

Interestingly, after the premiere performance of *Nursery* (QPAC) the authors spoke about concerns that some of the adult audience had not accepted the invitation into the circle of security, demonstrated by their continuing to talk amongst themselves. McLean's suggestion to Chance to find a way to help those whose ears were 'blunted' to retune into the circle is outlined below:

> I'm so grateful for the remark you made about blunt ears, as this inspired me to re-think the very top of the show again, so during the last few shows I scripted for myself an initial offer of a series of mindfulness questions via the babies but really for the adults: Can you hear the birds in our garden? Can you see the people in our garden? Can you hear music? (SC field note, 2014).

Chance explains how as director she constantly re-works the performance, attempting to turn its "rules of engagement" into aesthetic offers, to achieve what she calls "the mindful connections", she explains:

> I dramatically changed the beginning, by inserting sounds, especially Heather's warm voice speaking the language of the babies by matching their sound offers, then by being more assertive with my own words to lay down the protocols of the space for the adults. (SC field note)

Chance believes that young audiences tolerate any change or intervention providing change is gradual and repetitive, calm and non-threatening. The *Nursery* space alters from the quotidian day world to the theatrical illusory world gradually. In learning terms, the conditions, the designed space, the form, and performers all act as "scaffolds" (Bruner 1986, p. 75) lending "their consciousness" (ibid) to the babies.

8 Building Curiosity

In this chapter the importance of self-expression has been made as a pre-requisite for developing an inner self. Reinforcing this idea Dr. Ros Powrie, Perinatal, Infant and Child Psychiatrist, and consultant to Chance's work, speaks of the importance of a carer's ability to "see their real baby" (JM field note, 2015). Powrie urges carers to engage with the real baby and not the fantasised one which happens when feelings, attributions or ideas are projected onto the baby by the carer. Chance and Powrie's focus is to create a space for the carer to consider the baby as a separate agent with capacity to make clear their own wishes and preferences.

Powrie states that dance play offers carers a lens to bring to consciousness how they understand the concept of 'use'. How is it carer, baby and artist 'use' objects, human and non-human? During the performance of *Nursery* small "seed" props scatter from a large ball. The seeds are small enough to be hand held and generate intense experimentation, as the babies roll, drop, shake, suck and throw them. Sometimes they generate concern among carers who might attempt to remove the seeds from their baby, perhaps anxious about their cleanliness or the sharing of these objects in the space.

By engaging with both performers and the seed props, Chance provides structured opportunities for the baby to connect emotionally with him/herself and others and to internalise these "objects" as part of themselves (Cozolino 2006, pp. 139–150).

To illustrate how the process of internalisation can be unintentionally interrupted, I observed and spoke to audience member Liz (pseudonym) post show whose child after his initial foray into the inner circle looked back for assurance from his mother which circle of security protocols would identify as normal behaviour. The field notes tell the story:

> The mother quickly bundled baby Thomas (pseudonym) up and sat him on her lap for the rest of performance feeding and distracting him, tacitly reinforcing the baby's uncertainty and impeding his ongoing self-propelled dance of curiosity. Later Liz, the mother, rationalised her decision to hold onto Thomas because "he was teething". Reflecting she commented that perhaps she had misread the situation and had inadvertently modelled for Thomas the dance of "It's not safe to go into the circle". It is interesting to hypothesise on the neurological dance pathway laid down for Thomas around safety, public space and strangers. (JM field note, 2015)

Other carers commented on different experiences for themselves and their baby. The authors suggest reading these comments in the voice of the baby: "I felt instantly safe and warm, part of an environment and welcome in the circle" (Billie and Violet 8 months),"I felt relaxed and zen" (Jane and Thomas 3 months), "calmer and gentler"(Alistair and Skye 16 months), and "it was an emotional, joyous experience" (Danielle and Janni 18 months), and "it was a challenge to get here, planning around naps and feeds, I think this made the experience more profound" (Trish and Madison), and "I was crying tears of joy, I don't remember having a childhood and the babies and artists being together touched my heart" (Pam and Liam 12 months) (JM field notes, Brisbane and Adelaide, 2014, 2015).

According to Winnicott (1986), nothing is as important as the "holding space" (p. 11) for human development, to go on being without interruption. He used the word "sacred" to describe a person's capacity for "going on being" (Winnicott 1986, p. 34). The idea of the circle of security as the "holding environment" is pre-eminent in dance play. Chance acts as an overall 'holder of the space' and creates a Winnicottian third space dubbed a transitional space, which is neither an inner nor outer space, but a "third space" (Winnicott, cited in Epstein, 2007, p. 188). According to Winnicott (1986) it is in this third space where a person's emotional foundations are laid down and their subsequent capacities to exist, to "go[ing] on being" (p. 34) to think and to create are established.

9   Significance of Dance Play

Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl's (2000) claim above that "babies and young children are the R & D division of the human species" (p. vii) and that "we can learn as much by looking in the cradle and the nursery as by looking in the petrie dish or the telescope" (p. vii) resonated in dance play.

The critical idea proffered in this chapter is that arts and intentional play experiences such as those demonstrated in dance play protect against the concept of the normotic personality.

As discussed, subjectivity, aesthetic, social and emotional literacies are present in dance play. Together they contribute to developing an inner self as Chance (2009) writes:

The adults' "bigger, stronger, wiser and kind" presence scaffolds the baby's explorations and helps them to "experience being experienced" as Edinburgh-based Professor of Child Psychology, Colwyn Trevarthen would say. Perhaps this is what… Donald Winnicott meant when he said "there is no such thing as a baby" …which has clear and direct implications for our cultural practice!

Trevarthen's writing... his idea of the psychologically critical need for a baby to feel noticed and endorsed by the people all around as a pre-requisite for the development of their sense of being a "self" and how early in life this manifests, has exciting implications for how we meet babies culturally. (JM in interview with SC, 2012)

10 Conclusion

To conclude Chance shares an email from a mother who understands the value and immensity of the importance of this work.

> Thank you, for the wonderful gift you gave. My son, Dexter, is 12 months old and often sits quietly enjoying nature sounds and just loves music and vibrations, so I suspected he'd enjoy a tailored dance program, but nothing prepared me for the depth of his experience. He was transfixed, thoroughly immersed in the show and participated when he felt it was right to do so. I was teary watching him absorb the goings on. The dancers were just fluid magic, and my heart and soul were both caressed by the magic of the show. Thank you again for the gift, Dexter may not remember, but I'm sure it has touched him also.

As teaching artists we know that Dexter's experience of being met through the performance in the warm company of his mother will have allowed him to see himself reflected in a secure and communicative world. Dexter with his secure home base and his engagement in the world seems in little danger of acquiring a normotic personality.

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Education as Arts Talk? Canada's National Arts Centre and Praxis Theatre's SpiderWebShow

Barry Freeman and Michael Wheeler

Abstract This chapter focuses on SpiderWebShow, a collaboration between Canada's National Arts Centre in Ottawa and a Toronto-based theatre company, Praxis Theatre. SpiderWebShow is part blog, part place of theatrical experiment, and part social networking site with an ambition of becoming a space for a national conversation on Canadian theatre. The authors think through how SpiderWebShow is implicated in the evolution of a national theatre's relationship to public education, a shift specifically from a patronizing attitude of bringing culture to the masses, toward one of being a facilitator of artistic development and critical conversation locally and regionally.

Keywords National theatre · Nationalism · Outreach · Digital · Technology · Public education

1 Introduction

The National Arts Centre (NAC) in Canada's capital city of Ottawa features programming and educational activities in both of Canada's official languages of English and French and now also produces a season of indigenous theatre. Opened in 1969 on the energy of Canada's 1967 Centennial celebrations with a mandate to act as a catalyst for performance, creation and learning across the country, the NAC has just marked its 50th anniversary. It recently changed its brand and unveiled a new tagline, "Canada is our stage", reflecting its intention to play a vital role in the

B. Freeman (✉)
University of Toronto Scarborough, Toronto, Canada
e-mail: barry.freeman@utoronto.ca

M. Wheeler
Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

National Theatre School of Canada, Montreal, Canada
e-mail: michael@spiderwebshow.ca

performing arts all the way across what is a very large country. Also, it is undergoing a physical facelift that will see the brutalist concrete facade of its building, situated nearly across the street from Canada's parliament buildings, replaced by a spacious glass-walled atrium, and many new performance and event spaces. Part of the facility opened on Canada Day 2017, in celebration of the country's 150 anniversary (National Arts Centre "Renovations" 2015d).

The NAC's physical facelift manifests a wider reorientation in the arts toward institutions and spaces that are more inclusive and welcoming. The monolithic, fortress-like structures built to house the arts in the 1960s and 1970s were supposed to make you feel as though the culture produced within them was as strong and permanent—"this nation is great and lasting," their imperturbable facades seemed to say, "and so will be its art." But such buildings also buttressed a normalizing nationalism that had its exclusions. They rarefied the activities they hosted by hermetically sealing them off from the society they were to serve, a situation allowing the work taking place there to detach itself from its surroundings, from history, a stage from which to launch new entries into the annals of Great Art. In recent years, this ideological-architectural principle has been revised (Fair 2015; Wilmer 2004). In North America, overturning this notion has been especially championed by scholars in the field of arts management such as Doug Borwick, Andrew Taylor and Michael Kaiser, all of whom preach various forms of revolution in the arts toward a new era. In *Building Communities, Not Audiences,* for example, Doug Borwick writes, "there is a real danger that they stand upon gradually melting icebergs drifting further and further from solid ground. The fundamental cause of this drifting is a lack of direct, meaningful connection between those organizations and the communities in which they exist."

Because this shift involves rebooting arts institutions' relationship with the public, their education and outreach efforts play a key role in reimaging the social relations taking place through and the cultural discourse occasioned by the art. In this chapter, I want to consider how the NAC is matching its physical transformation with a small but impressive experimental side-project called *SpiderWebShow*, a website enabling a different form of discourse and conception of space than its other more traditional education activities such as artist workshops or educational guides. Part experimental performance website, part online theatre magazine, *SpiderWebShow* demonstrates that digital technologies and social media can help a large institution such as the NAC foster a more democratic and egalitarian relationship with its meaning-making audience. What *SpiderWebShow* accomplishes is illuminated for me by Lynne Conner's "arts talk" model, explained in her book *Audience Engagement and the Role of Arts Talk in the Digital Era*. In Conner's view, performance practices in the Western tradition have for the most part been highly engaged, responsive audiences equipped with the tools to engage in practices of what she calls "social interpretation": dialogue, discussion, debate. Only in relatively recent history did the paternalistic view develop that theatre bestowed intellectual and moral sophistication through arts experiences. Digital technologies, Conner reckons, are currently enabling a gradual turn—or a return—to those earlier more social practices. Here, then, I will measure *SpiderWebShow* against the idealism of the arts

talk model by offering its creators' take on its successes and some limited empirical data supporting the quality and reach of the discourse it has generated.

2   The Centrifugal Logic of the National Arts Centre

The NAC was established with an explicitly paternalistic attitude toward culture, that it would be where the country's best culture was showcased. It was not unique in this; the very notion of a national theatre had this agenda from its beginnings in eighteenth-century Western Europe, but the cultural revolution of the 1960s through-out the West seemed to inject it with some renewed energy. In Canada, the NAC's creation was catalyzed by a wave of cultural nationalism in the country coinciding with 100th anniversary of Canadian confederation in 1967. When that nationalism had somewhat waned in the 1980s, particularly as it dovetailed with the official policy of Multiculturalism in Canada enacted in 1988, conversations around culture began to shift across toward how the institutions supposedly reflecting the country could be more fully representative of its diversity. Soon after it had been estab-lished, then, the NAC began to already look like an anachronism, and this seemed to set its administrators a bit adrift as well. As a retrospective commentary on the NAC's evolution published in 2009 has put it, "the flame that had nourished the boldness of its original vision gradually burned out, as the Centre became increas-ingly complacent." With the hire of a new President and CEO Peter Herrndorf in 1999, the NAC prepared a new strategic plan in which it acknowledged that while the NAC had been involved in educational activities since it opened in 1969, "the educational role has never been given a central focus in the organization" but that "youth and education activities" would become their "core activities in the years to come" (National Arts Centre 2001). New initiatives would include a young artist's Program involving classes, workshops and sponsored tickets for youth, a Young Audiences Programming initiative to program content appropriate for younger audiences, and the development of new study materials for students to be distributed through a new website. When, 7 years later, the NAC reviewed its own progress, it admitted it had made only modest improvements in education, particularly on account of a lack of an operational plan to put the suggestions of the 2001 report into action.[1] The institution reiterated its commitment to education, this time expanding its education efforts beyond Music, where it had focused its attention, to Theatre and Dance, proposing to take advantage of technology by creating a new website of resources called ArtsAlive.ca, as well as through what it dubbed "tele-mentoring", webcasts and podcasts that would see professional artists mentor stu-dents unable to travel to participate in education activities in Ottawa. The report

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[1] The new report did tout that over the intervening 6 years "more than 600,000 young people have been part of education efforts at the NAC". What success they had had, however, was largely in Music, with a highly successful and free Summer Music Institute (National Arts Centre "Strategic Plan" 2008).

suggested that Arts Education was in decline in Canada, and that it could fill the gap by providing resources and programs for teachers, students and classrooms (National Arts Centre 2001).

In a wry critique of the UK's National Theatre, Roehampton theatre professor Joe Kelleher writes that that theatre's programming has a "centrifugal logic" that shows up in "an educational rhetoric of 'outreach' and 'access' and 'bridging the gap' between the theatrical stage and 'new audiences' out there" (Kelleher 2005). Even after the NAC's self-studies and its twice-declared formal commitment to education, much of its activities still seem based on a centrifugal logic of distributing Great Art to the Masses. Such activities have value, but they remain based in an idea of an arts institution in which education or outreach is attached to the value delivered to the public by the work itself; that is, an artist conducting a workshop transfers expertise directly to the public, and an educational brochure is intended to enrich and amplify the value contained in the work on offer. At an extreme, this can make outreach look like advertisement, and one can find examples of NAC outreach that have this flavour, for instance, an "Arts Education" YouTube video (National Arts Centre "Arts Education at the NAC" 2015c) that effectively dramatizes a press release that encourages youth to attend theatre matinees (National Arts Centre "Arts Education: An Opportunity" 2015a). Another problem with the NAC's outreach activities, one it was trying to mitigate by developing a website and telementoring, was that its outreach activities were mostly of benefit to people in the Ottawa area, and of far less visibility and relevance to those elsewhere in the country. This problem of being nationally relevant has dogged the institution since its inception. As the theatre critic for Toronto's *Globe and Mail* J. Kelly Nestruck recently put it, "The National Arts Centre's English Theatre has always been a conundrum—it's a theatre with a national mandate, but a regional audience, charged with putting on artistically ambitious works in a commercial-sized house" (Nestruck 2013). This leads the NAC to make what are sometimes strained gestures toward the national, for instance, the claim in its 2008 report that offers as proof of its national reach its having produced Calgary's Crazy Horse Theatre's play *Time Stands Still* and an English and French language production of Wajdi Moawad's play *Incendies*, the English version in co-production with Toronto's Tarragon Theatre; both make connections elsewhere in the country indeed, but idiosyncratic as representatives of any imagined Canadian totality (National Arts Centre 2001). The report claims national reach, in other words, in terms of the plays it produces, rather than in any of its education or outreach activities. Whatever the success of its education initiatives, they have remained rooted in the notion of an arts institution being the arbiter and distributor of culture in the form of knowledge and expertise.

3   The Centripetal Logic of *SpiderWebShow*

But change is afoot at the NAC and not just in its architecture. The NAC brought in two new people who have been reshaping its English Theatre division: Jillian Keiley, the Artistic Director of the innovative theatre company Artistic Fraud of Newfoundland as Artistic Director of English Theatre (National Arts Centre "NAC English Theatre" 2015b), and Sarah Garton Stanley, a Canadian director and dramaturge known in Canadian theatre for promoting the development of new Canadian work, as Associate Director of English theatre (National Arts Centre 2012). These two younger, well-respected artists had a fresh perspective on the 'national' of the NAC's mandate, Keiley for coming from Newfoundland, a province that joined confederation with Canada only in 1949 and which has a distinct identity in the country, Stanley for being arguably the Canadian theatre artist most thoroughly connected to the work happening across the country. Stanley and Keiley have played a role in shifting the NAC to being a centripetal institution, meaning toward one that is the recipient of culture rather than its distributor. As Stanley put it to me:

> The more big institutions can support the means of production (instead of holding them) the better. […] Every good idea that is showcased at the NAC should (in my opinion) be an idea that was hatched and produced/shared elsewhere. The NAC is a place to share that which shines super bright. In my opinion it is not our job to tell people what defines them culturally (democratization of culture and teaching non-English speaking immigrants Shakespearean sonnets, for example) […] It is our job to receive, from the ground, from our ground, what our culture is. (Stanley "Personal Email" 2015a)

In this spirit, Stanley curates 'The Collaborations', a developmental initiative at the NAC which puts the institution's resources in the hands of artists developing projects in different parts of the country, and sometimes over multiple years. (National Arts Centre "Collaboration" 2015e).

> The *SpiderWebShow* project emerged out of this new disposition. Whereas the NAC's ArtsAlive.ca website is a platform for distributing arts education resources, largely to educators, *SpiderWebShow* is conceived as a meeting place for educators, artists and audiences to showcase and discuss exciting new work. It is a dynamic and multi-faceted website that aims to be a gathering place for important conversations about Canadian theatre and performance. Rather than broadcasting information out to the public, it aspires to gather the public in a kind of accessible digital space for discourse about theatre. This gesture of welcoming artists in, rather than outreach, characterized the initial gesture behind the project, for which the NAC partnered with Praxis Theatre, a small, young theatre company based in Toronto, led since its founding in 2006 by Michael Wheeler (Praxis Theatre "About" 2015). Stanley reached out to Wheeler because Praxis had established by that point a reputation for growing discourse about the art and business in the theatre community partly through Praxistheatre.com, an online space for dialogue about the art and business of professional theatre. This can be seen as part of a larger trend in the industry toward large institutions capitalizing on the expertise of smaller and more community-based ones. For example, Ruth Howard of Jumblies Theatre also of Toronto, in a review of Doug Borwick's *Building Communities, Not Audiences* book, notes: "For those of us who have chosen to venture 'outside the arts mainstream' in order to seek social purpose and connection in our work, it might feel surprising, even suspect, that the mainstream arts world is suddenly casting an interested eye on us: that books are being written about 'mainstreaming' the sort of

work we do" (Howard 2014). The close relationship these smaller organizations enjoy with their audiences has in recent years become the envy of larger institutions who want to shift their ethic to be more open, democratic and participatory. As Lynne Conner writes, "the twenty-first century audience is retrieving its historical position as the centrepiece of the arts apparatus." (Connor 2013 p.2)

How does *SpiderWebShow* implicitly reimagine "the audience", how does it relate to the NAC's national education objectives, and what sort of model does the project provide large institutions that are rethinking their public role?

To start with, *SpiderWebShow* reimagines the 'national'. Stanley notes that that *SpiderWebShow* came from a desire to freshly imagine the NAC's national mandate: "the *SpiderWebShow* grew out of a desire to build a space that could hold a national imaginary" (CTR 14). In contrast to the way the original design of the physical building of the NAC supported the idea of a monolithic and enduring national cultural tradition, Stanley in particular frames *SpiderWebShow* as a more pluralistic and ambivalent space to 'imagine' the national. Stanley writes that while in Canada "the national imaginary was far from confident," it seems nonetheless desired: "shared attacks on its lack suggested a space that could hold it was enduringly longed for" (Stanley "Spinning" 2015b. p.16). But the national should celebrate contradiction and embrace diversity, and what the NAC was able to do by collaborating with Praxis was to create a less controlled space, one that would not be about its own promotion or marketing, nor one devoted to either one or the other of professional discussion or artistic development (Wheeler speaks of audience engagement not in terms of outreach or publicity, but as what he calls "social design" (Praxis Theatre 2013)). This permits the website to serve several purposes at once, potentially helping meet three of the NAC's expressed strategic goals: artistic excellence in the production of new work, expanding its national role, and focusing on education for theatre and dance. And by being centripetal rather than centrifugal, the benefits could thus return to the NAC, or, rather, be multidirectional across local communities throughout the country. The unexpected title of the website, the fact of it being billed as a "show", and described by Stanley and Wheeler as a "co-production", making the site not informational, but a kind of multifaceted dramaturgical and social media experimental space (Stanley "Spinning" 2015b p.17), the "show" being in Stanley's description "multi-entendu": "show it, make a show about it, join the show" (Stanley "Personal email" 2015a).

Rather than a set of documents, it becomes something more like an event, a centripetal "bottom-up" virtual place of exchange for people across the country to show work, share ideas, and debate. Visitors to Spiderwebshow.ca land on a home page that tells them they are in the "lobby" of a "theatrical space where Canada, the internet and performance minds intersect," and can from there drop into one the sites several experiments in performance or dialogue. The most fulsome element of the site is an online digital magazine with the Twitter-ready title #CdnCult (which is an echo of the popular #CdnPoli hashtag on Twitter for discussing Canadian federal politics). #CdnCult features an eclectic collection of writing from Canadian theatre (and other) artists, educators and enthusiasts, collected together in themed editions, which are in turn gathered in groups of ten to form a 'volume', of which there were

8 since #CdnCult first began publishing, though it has now moved on to a different style of presenting the writing) (SpiderWebShow "CdnCult" 2015a). The writing gathered together in #CdnCult is vastly variable in form and includes among other things artists' descriptions of ongoing projects, artistic directors and programmers explaining their choices, editorials about professional challenges in the industry, and an ongoing dialogue between three artists located on the East, West and North coasts of the country. Other sections of the site layer over top of this polyphonic space other spaces for multimedia experiments in dialogue and performance, an aspect that has jumped off the site and materialized in the form of a new experimental digital theatre festival based in Kingston, Ontario called FoldA. Another section, 'Sounds', collects together multiple audio projects: 'Secret Selfies', recorded audio self-portraits by artists, a project coordinated by Halifax's Secret Theatre company; but as well three podcasts created by Canadian theatre artists, Simon Bloom's 'TheatreUX' podcast about theatre and tech, a story podcast created by a group of theatre artists in Calgary, and two others about Canadian theatre by Toronto-based artist Jacob Zimmer's Small Wooden Shoe theatre company (SpiderWebShow "SpiderWebSound" 2015d). Another area of the site is perhaps its most intimate experiment, something Stanley and Wheeler have called 'Thought Residencies'—a series of recorded audio monologues made by a theatre artist on a subject, and of a nature, of their choosing; these offer a wonderful snapshot of an individual's thinking, unconstrained by the niceties or habitual expectations constraints of a typical "arts panel", a kind of personal "hot take" on something of pressing importance (SpiderWebShow "Thought Residencies" 2015f). And there are other, ongoing experiments as well: a map locating and visually interconnecting artists who contribute to the site (SpiderWebShow, "Map" 2015b), a gallery of image-based dramaturgical experiments (SpiderWebShow "SpiderWeb Gallery" 2015c), bite-sized five-minute "Talk Show" video interviews with artists from across the country by Stanley (SpiderWebShow, "TalkShow" 2015e), and a Performance Wiki (SpiderWebShow 2016), a knowledge-building project about Canadian theatre that could, if developed, supplement the existing Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia maintained by the University of Athabasca (Athabasca 2016). These are the basic elements of the site, but the platform is malleable, and invites its contributors—who may be anyone—to propose new ideas. When Vancouver-based theatre artist Adrienne Wong joined the project as an Artistic Associate and Head Researcher, she welcomed proposals in any shape: "We will only understand how theatre and technology work together by making things and letting them fail or succeed. Join us in these experiments."

4   Education as Arts Talk: Indications of Success

Appraising what the 'success' of a project like the *SpiderWebShow* looks like we have think about what the 'success' of such an initiative could look like at all. Looking at *SpiderWebShow* through the lens of Lynne Conner's "arts talk" model reveals it as an excellent experiment in audience relationships certainly with some

successes. Arts talk, for Conner, does not just mean literal "talk", but also "a spirit of vibrancy and engagement among and between people who share an interest in the arts" (Connor 2013 p.5). Connor takes as her premise in the book the idea that in arts experiences, audiences take their pleasure foremost from engaging in acts of social interpretation in the form of dialogue, discussion and debate. She argues that the institutionalization of the arts in the late modern period, however, coupled with rarefaction of spaces of 'high art', has alienated art from its audiences. Over time, this has left many without the interpretive "tools" to engage in interpretive practices and limited art to only that constituency of society that feels equipped. Connor contrasts this situation with that in sports, where there is a very robust and lively practice of social interpretation in which a broad cross-section of society feels empowered and equipped to respond (Connor 2013 p.32). How, her book asks, might the practices of arts audiences become more like those of sports fandom?

What feels particularly contemporary about Conner's view of public arts that is democratic and accessible is its openness to digital spaces and technology as platform, not as a discrete separate sphere of public discussion, but a public space fluidly intersecting with any other physical public space. Wherever it happens, the goal of Conner's arts talk model is to:

> build audience-centered learning communities as spaces (physical and digital) offering programming that (1) create a conscious relationship with the audience that is transparent in its goals; (2) offer productive facilitators and/or facilitation structures that ask, listen, and request rather than tell, lecture, or direct; and (3), begin and end with the audience's interests in mind. (Connor 2013 p.99)

These goals are interesting in relation to *SpiderWebShow*, and to the evolution of theatre 'outreach' more generally. That the first is about creating a relationship with explicitly defined goals itself arguably marks a change from a paradigm in which this is assumed to be understood already as a self-evident public good. For the NAC, this was a specifically national 'good', the creation and dissemination of Canadian culture presupposing an ideologically laden transaction with its audience—Conner proposes instead that this ought to be rethought, and once it is, made explicit. Her second goal suggests that at least if outreach is to reach beyond a core audience who is prepared by experience or education to engage in art, then more open arts talk spaces will still need to be facilitated, curated, guided. Multiple challenges arise, however, in realizing that vision. How to create such spaces without imposing values, language or particular vectors of interpretation on the audience, however subtly, in a fashion that essentially becomes coercive and discouraging of genuine open dialogue and dissension? Also, how can one curate digital spaces, given the internet's ethic of individual expression and openness?

The matter of how to curate and brand the website with the 'stamp' of the NAC is thus important to the kind of discursive space it is, and who feels welcome to voice what opinion within it. Partnering with Praxis Theatre and offering the site as a neutral space of exchange, rather than one branded by the NAC and seemingly originating from Ottawa, would support this idea of it as a virtual, dislocated platform upon which anyone from across the country could feel welcome speaking. Today, some years after the project was launched, in fact, one can still interact

extensively with the site without detecting its association with the NAC. Reading the writing on the site today, a careful reader can detect the NAC's voice; Artistic Director of English Theatre Jillian Keiley writes, for example, about how the NAC is telling the Canadian story partly through an emphasis on work focused on indigenous peoples; Métis artist Cole Alvis talks about his experience working on 'The Cycle', a research and development project at the NAC, one of the site's contributors, Laakuluk Williamson-Bathory writes about a show she did in partnership with the NAC, and a piece by #CdnCult editor Michael Wheeler imagines, tongue-in-cheek, what could happen if Canada's parliamentary Senate, which many in Canada regard as an obsolete, undemocratic element of the parliamentary system, could be replaced by a performance venue connected to the NAC by a tunnel, since the latter is just across the street. Still, the NAC is not overtly part of the *SpiderWebShow* brand, which goes back to the notion of understanding nation, among the artists of the younger generation at the Centre, as something self-consciously and inherently imaginary, rather than something that must be identified and made concrete. As Stanley herself has written on the site: "a National Theatre does manifest here in the action of revealing the breadth of Canadian theatre. […] The question and the idea of a National Theatre must reflect the diversity of peoples and their individual expressions and practice, instead of attempting to discern one unifying principle" (Stanley 2013).

To evaluate the "success" of SpiderWebShow, then, is not to look at who is learning what, but in assessing whether it has successfully created a space to, as Lynn Conner has it, "to ask, listen, and request rather than tell, lecture, or direct" (Connor 2013 p.99). As a digital project, one way to describe the scope of that space is in analytics data for the web traffic it generates. Full statistics were not available, but by way of a snapshot part way through its history: between January and September 2015, *SpiderWebShow* averages about 1500 "sessions" per month (a session is a period of time where a user is actively engaged with the site), or about 50 per day. Over the same period, the site had 30,000 individual "pageviews" (total number of pages viewed, including reloaded pages).[2] Another hard measure might be the way people engage with the Twitter hashtag #CdnCult, which is *SpiderWebShow*'s main discussion forum. A rough analysis using the Twitter analytics website Keyhole of the #CdnCult hashtag reveals impressive numbers. Randomly selecting two 2-week period as a sample of the hashtag's typical "reach" (defined by the number of unique people who may see it) the reach in 2 weeks of September 2015 was 83,000 and in December 2015 was 283,000. The number of "impressions" (the number of potential views involving the hashtag, including in some cases the same users' views) are double these figures for both 2-week periods. Uses of #CdnCult, it is worth pointing out, are not just those 'broadcast' by @SpiderWebShow on Twitter*,* although those count; it also includes uses of the hashtag by other artists, academics and institutions in the theatre community, its take-up in the community demonstrating the website's influence itself.

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[2] My thanks to Michael Wheeler for making these analytics about *SpiderWebShow.com* available.

The numbers in the analytics sound stratospherically high, and they do vastly exaggerate the number of individual social media interactions at stake; in the September period, a search on Keyhole suggests there were 58 unique Twitter users engaging with the hashtag, and 78 in December, bringing the numbers back to earth. But rough and rowdy as these data are, they aren't completely insignificant. Consider that despite the size of the country, Canadian theatre is a relatively small professional community; for example, *Canadian Theatre Review*, the main professional journal of Canadian Theatre, has a subscribership of about 600, and that for bilingual peer-reviewed journal *Theatre Research in Canada* about 300 (bear in mind that these are just paid subscribers to the print editions; the actual numbers for online readership have been steadily increasing and make those readerships larger). But while those publications are different in orientation and readership, there is some overlap, and what is additionally interesting in comparing them with *SpiderWebShow* is that the latter appears, judging at least by Keyhole's analytics of the #CdnCult tag, to be accessed nearly half of the time away from a desktop computer on a mobile device, and about 20% of the time on an iPhone, suggesting a more mobile reading experience than is likely the case with the other Canadian theatre publications.

But whatever the analytics reveal about *SpiderWebShow*'s impact, the story of its success probably lies elsewhere. As Sarah Stanley writes:

> Success comes in many shapes with a project such as this. The key indicators for me—outside of traffic—are the following: being referred to as a source for what is going on, leading the conversation (and practice) on digital cross-overs from real world theatre to digital world theatre. Contributing to the way we work across time and space. Being the archive of record for theatre/performance in English Speaking Canada (all of Canada would be better).

And echoing Stanley, Wheeler writes specifically of the #CdnCult element of the site:

> As Editor of #CdnCult I have two measures of success: One is the degree to which we our articles will become the 'Journal of Record' in Canadian performance. And I mean this in a different sense than *Canadian Theatre Review* (which I have written for several times), which I perceive as the journal of record in academia. But the self-publishing revolution has created a different body of work and contributors online – especially in creative industries. I want the #CdnCult magazine to be the go-to place for that material.

Whether the website is *the* 'leader' or *the* journal or archive 'of record' is not, it seems to me, not ultimately quantifiable, nor really the point. What matters is what space the site creates within the discursive field surrounding Canadian theatre and what can get said in that space. Though *Canadian Theatre Review* is not limited to academics—it is not refereed, and publishes as many non-academics as it does academics, and, full disclosure, I (Barry) am one of its Associate Editors—Wheeler is identifying something important about what may make *SpiderWebShow* important in the Canadian theatre discursive landscape: its diversity of voices, and the responsiveness of the whole platform to issues arising in the industry. As he suggests, the barrier to entry on this platform is in practical terms low, such that anyone might propose to contribute, and in just about any form they want.

What this means most critically, and this is perhaps the most important way that *SpiderWebShow* becomes a key 'education' initiative, is the grassroots advocacy role it is able to play. By being a platform on which a conversation can spring up without professional or academic barriers, or without the interference of a large bureaucracy of an institution, new and surprising, diverse and raw, perspectives can spring up that do not fit perfectly well into a pre-determined theme or mandate. And one feels that quickly when going through the material on the site: it is rough and rowdy, eclectic and novel. There is really no sense that it adds up to any perspective, and no sense that such is its intention. In that 2008 Strategic Plan cited above, the NAC mentioned advocacy as an important objective: "The NAC should be using its unique position to be an advocate for the arts and arts education with opinion leaders, the media and the general public ... and continue to promote dialogue among artists, arts organizations and arts educators" (National Arts Centre 2001 p. 4). Though the site may not look like the typical sort of advocacy effort of a large institution, it is certainly a space where open dialogue is promoted. When asked about how the website can be best understood as a platform for education, Wheeler pointed to advocacy:

> I am really proud of the work we have done around equity issues. Probably our most important (and most read) Edition was on the Blackface controversy at Theatre Rideau Vert [in which a white actor performed in blackface as black hockey player P K Subhan]. Although there had been a number of editorials in the media, incredibly no one had asked black theatre makers in Montreal what they thought about this. So I felt we filled a space in a way that was needed by being a non prescriptive platform for a community and urgent topic. […] We are committed to continuing to be inclusive of performance practice by all peoples here and there is an educational component to that.

As if in demonstration of his point, now Vancouver-based theatre artist Jivesh Parasram wrote in #CdnCult, responding specifically to the practice of writing argumentative 'open letters' in the Toronto theatre community in recent years, but in a way that argues for just the space in which he is writing:

> Theatre, live performance, whatever it is we *do…* is like a village square. To extend the metaphor – an open letter is a fortress. A fortress constructed and crafted from an often well researched argument. It *concept*ualizes its statement and works to create barriers – or castle walls – to any disagreement. It's almost totalitarian in that way, whereas the city square is relatively democratic. I don't want to come to your castle to be lectured at–it's pointy and cold. I'd rather live in the village square. And the reason? Because there, we talk. (Parasram 2015)

It is easy, of course, to romanticize radical openness of any discursive space. For his part, Parasram has a problem with the way some conversations are playing out online, and sees, at least for the moment, value in moving these conversations into non-virtual spaces where people might offer their ideas differently—lending some irony to the fact that his opinion is presented in the online platform of *SpiderWebShow*. But one needn't get categorical about the division between virtual and non-virtual spaces, and in fact it a distinguishing feature of Praxis's work, of the *SpiderWebShow*, and also of Conner's arts talk model, to fluidly shift between online and 'real-world' discursive spaces to optimize the virtues of each. *SpiderWebShow* is an ongoing,

evolving experiment in precisely this, and it can make at least some legitimate claim on being an open 'village square' for arts talk, despite its being co-produced by one of the largest arts institutions in Canada. The NAC would do well to recognize and build on what works about this space, such that its building's transformation in Ottawa from a concrete to glass facade in its renovation can be matched, as it should, with equally transparent and welcoming practices within its walls.

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