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Looking for Shakespeare: Anatomy of a Theatre Outreach Project

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Abstract

The Looking for Shakespeare theatre outreach program for young people aged 12 to 18 years was produced by New York University's Program in Educational Theatre at the Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village. This study, designed as a short-term observational research project conducted over a period of five weeks, looks into the young people's production of *Cymbeline*, which was performed as a play within a play, with each actor creating a contemporary character as well as a Shakespeare character. The study's focal point is on the vital tension between the process and the product. The results are directly relevant to educational practice. The authors hope to generate a renewed dialogue on the significance of doing theatre projects with adolescents.

Extrait

Le programme théâtral 'En cherchant Shakespeare' visant à atteindre les jeunes de douze à dix-huit ans a été produit par le programme de théâtre éducatif de New York University dans la salle Provincetown Playhouse à Greenwich Village. Cette étude, conçue comme un projet de recherche d'observation à court terme et conduite sur une période de cinq semaines, se concentre sur la production de *Cymbeline* par ces jeunes gens, jouée sous la forme d'une pièce à l'intérieur d'une autre pièce, chaque acteur créant un personnage contemporain en même temps qu'un personnage shakespearien. Le point central de cette étude est la tension vitale entre le procédé et le produit. Les résultats s'appliquent directement à la pratique éducative. Les auteurs espèrent générer un dialogue renouvelé sur la signification de mener des projets de théâtre avec des adolescents.

Resumen

La *Búsqueda de Shakespeare* un programa de extensión del teatro para los jóvenes de 12 a 18 años de edad fue producido por el Programa del Teatro Educativo de la Universidad de Nueva York en el Playhouse3 Provincetown del Pueblo de Greenwich. Este estudio, diseñado como un proyecto de investigación de observación a corto plazo conducido a lo largo de cinco semanas, observa la obra elaborada por personas jóvenes de la obra *Cymbeline*, la cual se realizó como una obra dentro de una obra, en la cual cada actor creaba un personaje contemporáneo, así como un personaje de las obras de Shakespeare. El punto focal del estudio estriba en la tensión vital entre el proceso y el producto. Los resultados son de directa relevancia a la práctica educativa. Los autores esperan generar un diálogo renovado sobre la importancia de hacer proyectos de teatro con adolescentes.

Authors' biographies

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The study

In this study, we focus on the vital tension between process and product in a theatre outreach project for

young people aged 12 to 18. Our analysis of Looking for Shakespeare is located in a set of 'fields of vision', which provide an anatomy of the main issues that constitute the project. The word 'anatomy', taken from Northrop Frye's (1957/1990) book *Anatomy of Criticism*, means dissection or analysis. We adopt it as a convenient term for our analysis, which identifies critical elements in this theatre outreach project.

Usually we hear about theatre outreach projects that serve as examples of excellence (e.g. Martin-Smith 2000), but our intention in this study is not to evaluate the project, nor to assess the quality of the art, nor to look at the young people's development. Rather, our intention is to look into the dynamics that operate within the project in order to understand the model of collaboration among the young people themselves.

Relatively little research in theatre education has been devoted to how non-school-based knowledge is created and how it is translated into school-based knowledge. The non-school context provides different learning opportunities for 'making sense' of experience. If we concede that this kind of theatrical project became a significant aspect of the young people's experience that deserves support from parents, educational institutions and foundations, we have to ponder how these young people came to learn Shakespeare in the summer of their own free will and in their own free time. Why did they struggle for hours and hours to memorise difficult lines from Shakespeare when they are not required to during the academic year? Why do young people choose to continue to participate despite their disappointment at not getting a central role in the production? No one dropped out. All 24 participated until the end of the project. All of them appeared on stage, performing all five acts of *Cymbeline* before an audience.

When we asked the young people during the audition why they came to the project, many believed the primary purpose of the project was to teach them 'to act'. Even with the clarification during the auditions and in a subsequent letter sent to parents that this would be an educational theatre experience, the young people wanted to experience 'acting'. For many of them, as we would learn from the reflection sheets they wrote, their expectations shifted during the process; the social gathering became their most significant experience. We wondered about the extent to which this shift in their expectations represented a different kind of meaning-making.

How can a theatre outreach project create spaces where students *want to* and *are able to* test the limits of their abilities with respect to language, memory, intellectual ability, acting skills, improvisation, aesthetic choices, cooperating in a team, coping with stress, and with the appreciation and the criticism of their peers? We argue that the private and the collective pleasure that they extract from the project is a special experience, what Dewey would have called 'an experience'. Our recognition of the implications of Dewey's concept leads us to think about how it might be possible to transfer this new knowledge to other curricular projects conducted in school settings during the academic year.

Theoretical framework

This study is driven by a quest for a greater understanding of artistic experience with and for adolescents. How can we 'make sense' of their artistic and aesthetic endeavour? A major premise of this project is that 'theatre in context' is a virtue embedded in the nature of artistic learning. This premise calls for reflections on Looking for Shakespeare as a dynamic cultural experience that young people, educators and parents may embrace as the young people move from less formal improvisations to the more structured experience of theatre performance. Another premise of this project is that young people are frequently fascinated with things that adults might consider rude or uncouth (Grace and Tobin 2002). Since we encouraged the youngsters participating in the project to create their own text, we were aware that we had to allow them to cross the boundaries and 'bend' some of the norms of everyday life at school. We needed to validate their humour and their needs to create their own space — what Victor Turner (1982) calls 'spontaneous communitas'. Turner claims: 'Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous communitas become totally absorbed into a single synchronised, fluid event.' (1982: 48) He claims that it has something 'magical', 'a deep style of personal interaction' (1982: 47). Elsewhere, Turner (1977) defines this term as 'freedom coexisting within structure' (1977: 129). Finding the balance between freedom and defined structure was one of our main concerns. How could we find the appropriate relationship between structure and evolving spontaneous communitas? How could we create meaningful experiences under certain given circumstances of time and place and within a specific group of young people? How could we build an experience that would encourage the artistic and the aesthetic flow?

With these questions in mind, we turned to Dewey's systematic consideration of art in *Art as Experience* (1934). He invites us to think of experience, as Jackson (1998) claims, not as an essentially psychological concept, not as something that happens exclusively within us, but as a transaction:

The objects and events are as much a part of experience as we are ourselves. When we are fully immersed in experience, its components so interpenetrate one another that we lose all sense of separation between self, object, and event. (Jackson 1998: 3)

It is mostly when a situation becomes problematic or interesting enough to study that we pause to reflect upon it. Thus we chose to pause and look into the anatomy of the experience gained in the project, based on Dewey's sense that:

Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication. (Dewey 1934/1980: 22).

Dewey differentiates between *experience* and *an experience*. While the first occurs continuously, the latter runs its course to fulfilment:

A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualising quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an experience*. (Dewey 1934/1980: 35).

It is in this vital sense that we define Looking for Shakespeare as *an experience*. The anatomy of Looking for Shakespeare is, therefore, looking into the details of an experience to bring into sharp focus the quality of experience that creates its unity, as the participants construct a sense of meaning for themselves.

Research design and methods of inquiry

The study was designed as a short-term observational research project conducted over a period of five weeks. It started on 1 July and ended on 3 August. It is a specific type of applied theatre research, the results of which are directly relevant to educational practice (Schonmann 2002). Twenty-four young people of various ages (12–18 years), and from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, energy levels, interests and degrees of maturity participated. Thirteen adults led the project, including a crew of seven graduate students (GS) and six theatre education professionals: the director/researcher, a costume designer, a dramaturge, a stage manager, a fight choreographer and a researcher. The project was planned for five weeks during the summer vacation from school, and took place each weekday, Monday through Friday, from 9.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. The Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village was the venue for most of the activities and rehearsals, as well as the two performances. Two written texts were employed: Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, which was shortened and adapted to the project, and another text composed by each of the young people to reflect their contemporary points of view.

We decided that the Britons and the Romans would be two contemporary Greenwich Village tribes, the Army of Darkness and the Royals, who were put up to staging the play at a medieval fair, as a way of settling their turf war over a pizza place non-violently. The transitions between the contemporary and Shakespearean characters were often startling for the audience, as the young people changed role spontaneously, often in the middle of their Shakespeare scene, outraged by the contemporary implication of a comment made by their scene partner from the opposing gang. In the aftermath of 9/11 in New York, finding a peaceful way to settle a violent conflict, as the Britons and the Romans did during the reign of Cymbeline in Ancient Britain, gave everyone something to think about.

Seven graduate students, guided by us, documented the project on the basis of day-to-day participation. Their role throughout the project was that of participant-observers, shifting back and forth during the process from observers to participants. In this respect, our research is a form of action research (Noffke and Zeichner 1987), in which the graduate students, as researchers, could reflect on their own work and improve upon it as the project progressed. They wrote in their journals; they wrote interim and final reports; they also took photos during the course of the project and interviewed the young people, using the photos as mediate objects. The use of photos as a research tool sharpened their powers of observation, forcing the researchers to focus on the youngsters' interpretations of the photos that were exhibited in the stairwell of the theatre. In addition to these observations, one of the graduate students

made a video documentary, so that we could see changes in the young people's engagement during the process.

As the young people grew more comfortable with the project and became more relaxed with the adults working with them, we could include their interpretive comments as an integral part of the research, and considered them to be part of the *interpretive community* that was emerging. The voice of the young people participating in the project was heard also through the material they had created during the project (personal logs, writing their own contemporary text, drawing their self-images and those of their characters, that we referred to as 'skin and guts'). Their voices grew stronger as they revealed new aspects of themselves through participation in the matinee and the evening performances. The young people's data sources served as checks and balances to the data that the graduate students gathered. We gathered a lot of rich material; not all will be analysed for this study, but it will serve as a source for further research, which will focus more closely on the young people's viewpoints.

The method used to conduct the project allowed the process to develop with its inter-dynamic forces, improvisation, open-ended procedures and organic development. On the other hand, there were several procedures that were carefully planned ahead. These were based on the experience achieved from previous theatre outreach projects.

When we started Looking for Shakespeare, it was with the conviction that young people could rediscover Shakespeare if they could make a connection between the play's themes and their own lives. We decided that we would help the adolescents build a bridge to Shakespeare by encouraging them to create contemporary characters, and then providing a way for their contemporary characters to play Shakespeare as a play within a play; each young person would play a role within a role (Martin-Smith 2000). The history of the project can be traced back to 1999's summer with scenes from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Much Ado*. Then in the next summer it was *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the third summer, the focus was on *As You Like It*, set in a fictional Arden Correctional Facility for Exceptional Juveniles. In the fourth summer, we decided to work on *Cymbeline*. Over these four years, the artistic team got much better at weaving elements of contemporary life and Shakespeare together in a way that resonated with the young people.

With shared interests, experiences and learning opportunities, a safe environment was developed that allowed questioning to be at the core of the theatre outreach process. The young people, the graduate students and the staff conducting the project were constantly asking questions about the procedures, the goals, the content and the form, as well as the social and ethical aspects of the project. As the questioning process became an integral part of the research procedure, it was given a formal slot in the timetable, usually when doing *check-out* at the end of the day: *What are we doing? Why are we doing it? How are we doing?* Such questions allowed us to reflect on the process at different points of time in the project. These sessions were well documented on chart paper and on the video.

Fields of vision

We defined five fields of vision that enabled us to see different dimensions of the tension between process and product in any theatre outreach project. The fields of vision emerged in an emic exploration (Headland et al. 1990), while reading, reflecting and researching the written and visual documents. The emic mode of analysis enabled us to reveal nuances in each participant's relations with their peers and with the theatre professionals. We analysed the data in an emic mode, deriving the fields of vision as follows:

- patterns of participation;
- breakthrough moments, as well as moments of concern;
- chaos and order;
- the spiral construct and its complexity;
- aesthetic enjoyment.

Patterns of participation

On 1 July, the project began. The young people came to the theatre rather hesitantly and awkwardly, trying to find a comfortable spot, looking for possible new friendships, new connections. Everyone was restrained and reserved in their interactions with others. Even playing with the balloons did not help to lower the tension in the air. 'Did you have fun?' they were asked. All together and mechanically, they answered 'Yes'. Then came the warm-up exercises. This was the beginning of a thaw, an opening up, and things began to flow. The individuals became small groups, which gave participants an opportunity

to find their place and, with this, the confidence to open up to new social contacts. After three hours of first encounters, they were ready for the snacks that had been carefully prepared ahead of time. Then they came face to face with *Cymbeline*: Shakespeare's complex play was introduced.

For the first three days, everyone was on his or her best behaviour. It would take a few more days to rid the adolescents of their angst, to shed their shyness, to fully participate in the adventure, as was the case with Kevin. Kevin loved to be the centre of attention, making the others laugh. This boy has a:

unique centre of gravity that captivates an audience with his radiant smile. Not only does he shine on stage, but he also shines with the rest of his peers, having become one of the most popular students among the group (GS3).

Such words could well describe at least six other young people whose openness and ability to comprehend beyond their age group placed them at the centre of participation. They are the *group leaders*: the ways they participate in the project have a tremendous effect on the others. They are:

the young people with a bit more experience in theatre and in life, [who] began to take the other less experienced students under their wing. I watched student [participants] helping others, thereby becoming teachers in their own right (GS1).

Within this pattern of group leaders, there was a special sort of child who had difficulties in their school but here, out of their school context, far from the other students that knew and judged them, began to flourish. As GS2 observed:

Dan has likewise found his own paradise at Provincetown and he has taken full advantage of it, with no one to interfere with his experience.

The group leaders' pattern of participation is the pivotal power for the flow of social life, which has in turn a major impact on the artistic development of the project. As GS4 described it:

Some began actively taking a forceful leadership role and demanding that others pick up the pace and pull their weight, while others began leading by example through preparation of knowing their lines and staying in character and focused during rehearsal.

When the youngsters arrived in the morning, it was fascinating to listen to their conversations, which focused on political ideals or current events, and not on the project or their roles in the play. It was as if, parallel to the development of the artistic project, they maintained another world of reality in which other important things were happening. The group leaders became the leaders of these morning and snack-time conversations. As Greene (2001) would say, as teachers we are obliged 'to open spaces for the students *meaning-making*, for their interpretations — which are bound to be manifold' (2001: 144). This obligation of creating spaces for the students' meaning-making depends to a certain extent on the ability of the group's leaders to direct the work to deep levels of meaning.

It's surprisingly difficult for me to abandon the habit of assuming responsibility for the room. As a teacher, I'm used to being hyper-aware of my relationship to everyone around and the need to be ready to 'step up to the plate'. After the first day or so I decide I'm talking too much and should try to be more ghost-like. (GS5)

Did the 'teacher-as-ghost' metaphor, as GS5 chose to describe his role in the project, create space to allow the young people to become more creative? Does the 'ghost' metaphor help to create spaces for the youngsters' meaning-making? As we approached week three, one graduate student commented:

The goal of having student ownership of the project seems to be moving forward successfully. (GS4)

This pattern of the group leaders setting the tone enables the organic process to proceed. The question of identifying the style of leadership is important since it relates to an understanding of the nature of the teamwork. When a collection of diverse students seeks:

to foster mutual respect and trust in order to successfully complete the task of developing an original interpretation based on Shakespeare's Cymbeline, it is important that conscious effort will be made to minimise self-importance and elevate team unity . (GS4)

This viewpoint is basically referring to a set of questions, such as: How can a theatre group achieve a sense of unity? What will be the result of their bonding together? At the heart of this set of questions is the notion of 'ownership'. This is the understanding, in Turner's terms, that something 'magical', a deep style of personal interaction, has emerged — the magic of 'individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous communitas'.

Breakthrough moments, as well as moments of concern

As the project proceeded, we were able to identify how the authority on stage shifted from the hands of the director to the group's adolescent leaders. Giggling and lack of focus were controlled by the tone the group leaders set. However, there were numerous incidents that represented difficulties between graduate students and the younger participants. Some of the adults:

have maintained a condescending tone (GS6).

When a few graduate students criticised some of the rehearsal procedures, they influenced some of the youngsters. In spite of this, as the play progressed it developed a definite shape, and as the day of performance grew nearer, the organic artistic process and the power of the group leaders prevailed, and carried the others along with it.

Sometimes young people's response to the authority of the director and the professional team was unquestioning. However, in the check-out sessions at the end of each day, the young people in Looking for Shakespeare were encouraged to raise their concerns. Rina, for example, expressed her feelings (in the second week) that:

the play had fallen too deeply into the adults' hands (GS6).

Her resistance to what she saw as the adults' control of the young people's ownership of the direction of the play helped us to understand that they were ready to take more responsibility for how the play should proceed. The young people's resistance to the adults' control of the process seemed to increase in direct proportion to their level of trust in the process. The interplay of trust and resistance became one of the important dynamics of the process.

One clear way we could identify the degree of trust within the group was in the 'skin and guts' drawings the young people began to create in the second week. The young people worked with a partner to trace a full-sized silhouette of their bodies on butcher's paper. Inside their silhouette, they wrote words and pasted drawings from magazines to represent their self-image. Outside their silhouette, they wrote about how they imagined others perceived them. When they felt they were ready to share with the group, they talked about and answered questions about the choices they made. Several participants reflected that the design of their 'skin and guts' drawings revealed internal and external feelings about themselves, what others thought of them, and their connection to the roles they were portraying:

The stakes of mutual trust were raised quite drastically as the risks of personal transparency were on display. Despite their vulnerability, students who shared showed strong confidence and sense of pride in telling some their most personal dreams and thoughts. Equally important was the reaction of the group that encouraged, validated and supported each individual. This was a breakthrough moment and, had it been tried earlier in the week, I don't think the impact would have been as powerful. (GS4)

The most interesting thing for GS1 was:

that when students traced themselves and then looked at their silhouettes, they were surprised at what they looked like. This was a foreshadowing, as later they would be surprised at what they would write on the outside and on the inside of their silhouettes. Any fear of being judged was diminished.

What GS1 thought of as a kind of activity that the young people might resist turned out to be one of the peaks:

I truly saw the individual walls break down and the trust become the new wall that surrounded the entire group.

Casting decisions have a profound effect on the behaviour of any ensemble. These are the moments when people can withdraw if they are not happy; these are *at-risk moments* that can create chaos or establish order. The casting method was that the young people were asked to make three choices about which characters they would like to play in the production. This gave them an input into the casting decisions, but the director made the final decision after consulting with the creative team. When the director revealed the roles:

in a quiet side conversation which added mystery to the process (GS4)

there were moments of great tension surrounding what part they would play. This way of casting was perceived by GS5 as an act toward shared ownership, as the director:

calls them over one by one and more or less whispers the name of the offered character, hopefully to inspire them toward 'ownership' of the role by considering their input.

The reactions to the casting decisions were unpredictable — it was:

most interesting to note that despite the assignment of roles, the togetherness of the group did not suffer. Perhaps this was due partly to the contemporary script which provided roles for all those not given 'major' parts in Cymbeline. (GS6)

The structure of the play within the play was a conscious strategy that addressed the problem of major and minor roles in Shakespeare, as we will elaborate in the fourth field of vision, the spiral construct and its complexity.

Chaos and order

The days after casting were days of confusion, a troubled period followed by a period of understanding. However, the reactions were, at some points, extreme: Ethan was happy with the casting, but he was disappointed with the production of the show for a little while. More than disappointed, he was confused ... after finding out that he was going to do a combination of a *self-created contemporary play* and *Cymbeline*, he was not so sure he:

wanted to keep partaking in this project (GS3).

Eventually he stayed. The concern for Dan, who was cast as Cloten, was also resolved:

[His] skin and guts drawing indicated that he wanted to play the smooth-moving Iachimo, since that is perhaps more the way he sees himself. (GS2)

However, Dan accepted the director's suggestion. These incidents indicate the depth of the young people's engagement in the process, as exemplified by both their resistance and willingness to trust:

Many students were questioning the framework of Cymbeline and how it was going to fit into the contemporary production itself, and for that matter, would Cymbeline itself actually be produced. Throughout many activities, especially the art project where they were asked to paint their characters, the confusions just seemed to grow. Not until the students began to hot-seat their [contemporary] characters did the moment of clarity come. Suddenly, they understood what their roles were and how everything was going to fit together. This moment was an amazing one to watch. (GS1)

There were moments of great confusion, such as the day the group improvised its contemporary ending:

Many later expressed their confusion as to the structure with which the improvisation was being created, not knowing when to enter or how to engage in the action. This trouble was most apparent in their overall difficulty giving focus to others within the group. Unclear of their intentions, the action on stage quickly became chaotic and then stagnant and the activity was ended, leaving all feeling discouraged. (GS6)

One graduate student (GS5) shared the notion of this ambiguity very clearly:

Chaos reigns as every transition requires the entire group to fragment and to reform. Some of our most gifted students are in danger of imploding ... Was it a question of too many distractions, too much text and too little time?

At that moment on stage, the cast succeeded at a game they had tried many times unsuccessfully:

Each day we gave them a new opportunity to focus together successfully as a group: standing in a circle, they had to count to 20 without more than one person saying any given number twice. 'Then suddenly, impossibly, a cry rings from the circle of actors on stage: 'TWENTY!' A chorus of cheers splits the rafters and all hell breaks loose ... dumbfounded, my mouth opens.

I take it all back. Everything will be fine! (GS5)

This graduate student called the moment of transition from chaos to order the 'miracle factor'. That is to say, out of the chaos — in an unexplained way — came a moment when everybody perceived the notion of order and the flow of things. The organic process that we began on the first day was nearing its fulfilment. Everyone in the cast knew at that breakthrough moment that they were ready for the final rehearsal. We all sensed that somehow our play would be ready in time for opening night!

In the third week, one graduate student coined a root metaphor that described our organic process:

All of a sudden it seemed that a synchronicity of engagement seems to be occurring. Like braids of a rope which combine to add strength, the melding of the three strands (acting, writing, visual art) are weaving together to reinforce the whole process. (GS4)

In the fifth week, as the process reached its fulfilment, this root metaphor resonated for the entire group: they were bound together as a cast with deep commitment. Out of the struggle between *chaos and order*, the main structure of the process emerged: the *spiral construct*.

The spiral construct and its complexity

As we look deeply into the structure of our organic process using the rope as a root metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), we can make the following observations: though the individual strands of the rope (consisting of improvisation, visual art, the contemporary text written by the young people, and the text of *Cymbeline*) are in themselves separate art forms, having chosen to weave them together, they reinforced each other, becoming more resilient. Since our objective was to help the young people discover a deep connection between their world and Shakespeare's world, the young people needed to *work obliquely*, moving back and forth between both worlds. As Shakespeare advised: 'By indirections find directions out.' (*Hamlet* 2,1).

From the very beginning, we tried to make it clear to everyone that the process would involve the staging of a production of *Cymbeline*, set within a contemporary frame. The nearer we came to the date of the performance, the more everything depended on:

the play within a play mode, which: relates the literary text to the contemporary situation; provides a safety net for students who have difficulty memorising Shakespeare text; and offers more equal acting opportunities for those playing larger and smaller Shakespeare roles (GS2).

As we noted above, the play within a play structure evolved as a strategy to help young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds discover their own style of acting Shakespeare.

Setting up the contemporary frame so *Cymbeline* became the play within a play provided a sense of ownership for the young people; it helped them to construct a bridge to embodying Shakespeare's characters. As noted above, for their contemporary text they decided to create characters that belonged to two teenage tribes or gangs, the Royals (who played the Roman characters) and the Army of Darkness (who played the Britons). After discussing the themes of *Cymbeline*, in which the Romans and Britons fought over territory, the young people decided to set the play in their own lives' metaphorical equivalent: two tribes fighting over territory at a pizza place in Greenwich Village. As they forged connections between their Shakespeare character and their contemporary character, they spiralled back and forth between the two texts.

This dynamic motion created a productive dramatic tension in rehearsal that allowed them to continue the process of discovering connections that helped them flow between their contemporary world and Shakespeare's world in performance. As the contemporary text evolved, we kept underpinning it with the text of *Cymbeline*; the spiralling action wove the strands of the rope more and more tightly together, resulting in a sense of timing that was bound by the flow of the performance. As the performers trusted each other enough to release themselves into the flow of the spiral construct, they continued to make new discoveries and connections between the two texts. The separate strands of drama, improvisation and visual art that we began to weave from the first day now made a strong aesthetic rope that tied all the fields of vision together in a unified performance.

Aesthetic enjoyment

Young people are drawn to theatre because of its power to bring a fuller enjoyment into their lives. They demonstrate their aesthetic enjoyment through their movement and gestures while on stage, and by the ways they choose to commit themselves to the success of the project. Here is a sensitive account about one young person, Leland, that demonstrates the spirit of the aesthetic and artistic challenges involved in such a complex project:

'I thought these would be talented young people. Not young people who wanted to learn how to act. Or young people who do not know how to act ... I felt as if this was a cheap high school version of Romeo and Juliet.' At times, Leland became aware that there was nothing he could do about it, but he still wanted to change things. He wanted to jump up and make things right. He wanted to encourage those who were messing up and tell other students to be quiet. Leland noted there were some [other] professional students who tried just as hard as him: 'We would tell them to stop fooling around or joking around,' [he] said. Despite these comments, at times Leland felt discouraged with the entire process, and on the Thursday after the dress rehearsal he questioned his journey through the program ... Despite these feelings of mistrust, Leland gripped himself together and focused on ... '[being] a family, so let's not doubt each other, and hope for the best'. There were students in the program [with] whom Leland did not get along. Yet he learned to keep his comments to himself and work with them. Despite disputes or disruptions, he admits he loved this acting experience. (GS3)

Though the members of the youth group bonded through the scripting process, as well as the warm-up, snack time, and checkout, they had yet:

to find a common level of investment in the theatrical work itself. This was most apparent in the slight altercations which took place on stage from time to time (GS6: 3b).

The graduate students noted two contrasting views of the individual actor's function in relation to the cast that existed within the group: first, the actor as star; and second, the actor as member of an ensemble. Ami, for example, approached his role:

with an astute awareness of his own acting and of essential acting principles (GS2: 4).

In contrast, another graduate student claimed:

the community of artists which has been formed in order to create the contemporary script has seemingly prevented the participants from encountering the obstacle of adolescent cliques common among youth groups (GS6: 5).

Despite these tensions, the fact that the young people performed *Cymbeline* for almost three hours, moving seamlessly from their own language to Shakespeare's language, demonstrates that they developed sufficient artistic and aesthetic abilities through the process to enable them to share what we believe Dewey would have called *an experience*.

The development of artistic skills and aesthetic ones went hand in hand. The ability to memorise and perform Shakespeare can be considered an artistic skill. However, the ability to seamlessly weave contemporary and Shakespearean worlds together in performance demands, in addition, aesthetic skills. Aesthetic education has to do, as Maxine Green (in Uhrmacher 2004) argues, 'with the kind of encounters that Dewey talks about when a work of art becomes an object of your experience and transforms yours experience and makes you see things in your experience and in the world you never saw before' (2004: 220). We realised that the young people attended in that way and got involved in that way. They devoted hours every day to improvisation, progressing from improvising simple scenes to more complicated ones. The transitions from contemporary scene to Shakespeare scene, using their aesthetic skills to find a sense of flow for the entire play on stage, and their ability to enjoy their experience as an aesthetic experience helped them to *live through* the frightening moments when they forgot their lines. By aesthetic enjoyment we refer to their ability to confer order upon the worlds they play with, as Eisner (1998) claimed 'to confer aesthetic order upon our world is to make that world hang together, to fit, to feel right, to put things in balance, to create harmony' (1998: 38). Such harmony was achieved when they balanced and integrated their personal experiences with the object of their dramatic art, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

Concluding thoughts

The more familiar we become with the dynamics that constitute this project, and with the relationships among the young people, the more fully we begin to understand the richness and complexity of a theatre outreach project as it unfolds through the emerging five fields of vision:

Much of the theatre experience is not fully realised until after the process has been completed and the participants come to terms with all that they have come together to create. (GS6)

By looking at the anatomy of a theatre outreach project, we aimed at generating a renewed dialogue on the significance of theatre productions with adolescents. Our study was designed to be relevant to the needs and the interests of practitioners working in the field, and our questions were intended to be thought-provoking. Further studies, which have still to be undertaken, may examine the long-term impact on individual young people who participated. For us, Looking for Shakespeare was *an experience*, with 'pattern and structure', consisting of relationships in which the 'action and its consequence must be joined in perception' (Dewey 1934/1980: 44).

Using an apt metaphor, GS4 asked:

Was the meal well cooked and well served?

His thoughtful point of view will conclude this study:

Individual students will have mixed reactions about their experiences. Some may be grateful that it is finally over, while others can't wait to return next year. Certain leaders will claim it was a terrific success, while others might wonder if they missed the mark. Some parents may marvel at the fact that their child could memorise Shakespeare, while others will be disappointed about some amateurish elements of the performance. But of the 24 students who started the program on 1 July, 24 completed the program, immersed not only in the text of the English world's greatest playwright, but also in developing life skills of negotiation, tolerance and mutual respect.

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